

A call could save a life this summer

The numbers show a heartbreaking reality: 43. 39. 25. 32. 44. That's how many children have died in hot cars each year from 2017 through 2013, according to the non-profit KidsAndCars.org. That averages out to 37 children annually since 1998, or one child every nine days. Already this year, six children have died in hot cars.

And children aren't the only vulnerable ones. A dog just died two weeks ago after being left in a car — with partially rolled down windows — for hours on a day that the thermometer registered 91 degrees.

Even in cooler weather, vehicles heat up quickly and cracking a window doesn't slow the process or lower the temperature. It bears repeating: Cracking a window does not make a difference.

A pet or a child can be seriously injured or die from being left in a car on an overcast or rainy day that doesn't seem hot to you. On a 70-degree day, the temperature in a vehicle can rise to 99 degrees in just 20 minutes, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association. Even after 10 minutes, the temperature in a car rises by nearly 20 degrees whether it's 70 degrees outside or 90. Children, who overheat five times faster than adults, can die of heatstroke in cars on cloudy days when the temperature is below 70 degrees, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

KidsAndCars.org and the highway administration advocate these tips to help protect children.

- Never leave children alone in or around cars, not even for a minute or if the car is running.
- Keep your car locked at all times. About one third of child vehicular heatstroke deaths are caused by children getting into cars on their own. This just happened to a child in St. Marys. A little boy went missing because he got into an unlocked car, locked the car and couldn't get out until one of the police officers searching for him checked the vehicle. He had been missing for about 30 minutes and he came out of the car sweaty and flushed.
- Always look before you lock. Get in the habit of checking the back seat before locking the car and leaving.

As for pets, the American Veterinary Medical Association advocates a "love 'em and leave 'em" philosophy. If you love your pet, leave him home where he will be safe and happy instead of sweltering in a car with the windows cracked while you run into the store for just a minute.

We can all do our part to help protect children and pets. Be alert and notify emergency personnel if you see a child or pet alone in a vehicle by calling 911 or the non-emergency dispatch line at (912) 729-1442.

Making that call could save a life.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

City hearings are just a formality

Dear Editor,

The St. Marys Planning Commission will be holding the first of two public hearings tonight on the revisited zoning ordinance that was voted down by the commission last November. It should be clear that these hearings are nothing more than a formality; the decision has already been made.

Many citizens of St. Marys urged the commission back in November to not pass this change and their voices were heard. In March, the Tribune & Georgian reported that our mayor wanted the ordinance to go back to commission so that it could be handled fairly, properly and after doing their homework. It was also stated by council members that the commission did not take into account the input of the citizens, that council members did not get a chance to talk about items in the proposal because it was voted down and that commissioners did not understand the ordinance.

I was a member of that planning commission. With the exception of council member Bob Nutter who regularly attends planning commission meetings, how would any of the council members know? They were not in attendance at these meetings. We did listen to the citizens who came and their voices were heard.

Immediately after the November meeting in which the ordinance was legally voted down, council decided not to renew two members of the planning commission who voted against the proposal. Two newly appointed members joined the remaining three members, one of which was actually involved in the writing of the ordinance and actively sought out ways that commission members could communicate on how to approach the re-addressing of the ordinance without violating



This Memorial Day, remember those who paid the price.

open meeting regulations.

Subsequent to the article in the Tribune on March 8, the other two original members, myself included, resigned, clearly understanding that the mayor and council felt we had not done our job because they did not get the result they demanded.

Personally, I was surprised by the article I read in March. In January, I called the mayor to discuss what I felt were problems with what was happening with the planning commission. He promised to look into what I had brought up and get back to me. He did not. Instead he is quoted in this paper as stating we, the commission, did not do our homework. Apparently he did not do his either but was OK in blaming a volunteer committee for what he saw as not doing theirs.

Jeff Adams, who was the community development coordinator at the time, stated that St. Marys was losing out on opportunity for growth because of the decision of the commission. I would argue that it is more the policies and procedures of the city planning department that have for years impeded our growth. This is something that, as the vice president for small business development for the Cam-

den County Chamber of Commerce, I, along with other chamber leadership, met with Mr. Adams personally about, without any change or improvement.

So there will be meetings but the outcome has already been decided. You, the citizens, do not actually have a voice in this.

Doug Cooper
 St. Marys

Wayfinding signs are poorly placed

Dear editor,

I am embarrassed by the "wayfinding" signs at I-95 Exit 1, the Highway 40 exit from St. Marys Road and maybe other locations I have not yet seen. All of the other signs are similarly constructed. Notice the number of flimsy braces used to support the sign. It is very amateurish and reflects the finest in Rube Goldberg engineering.

I doubt this kind of engineering meets any highway signage standards because I have never seen such questionable construction on any interstate or state highway before. When the grass begins to grow underneath the sign, it will become labor intensive to cut because no PTO tractor mower nor even a riding mower will fit

under the numerous braces supporting the signs. These signs will only become a worse eyesore than they already are.

When I and others started to express disappointment with the signs, council member Linda Williams told us that the bracing is temporary and will be removed. However, there are other issues with the signs.

Also, the size of the letters and the number of panels on the sign make it useless at interstate ramp speeds. There is a reason that signs on the interstate highway ramps have huge letters and symbols instead of a large number of small print messages. They simply can't be read if they are small.

The sign on the Highway 40 ramp from the Osprey Cove side is on a curve and cannot be read in the period of time available as a car passes. The sign comes into view and a car passes it before there is even time to read it. Aside from that, slowing or stopping on the ramp is dangerous as there is no place to do it safely and it is a perfect set-up for a rear-end collision.

(Hint: Yes, Mr. City Attorney, there it is. Your public notice that a potential liability issue has been created

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Patience produces results



John Morrissey

Guest columnist

year. For those who watch this area, that will include the last sailboat sunken in the marsh and numerous dock platforms spread out all over the west marsh. Permitting has taken considerably longer than one might think, but we stayed on it, worked with the DNR and we will finally see the results of our persistence.

Our boat ramp rebuild is also subject to environmental scrutiny. Based on the latest permitting requirements of the DNR, we will see the ramps rebuilt using new designs. The target for completion of the new ramps is fourth quarter of this year, hopefully in October if all the necessary paperwork moves along as scheduled.

Another example relates to the 50-acre marine center development, called the

Wharf at St. Marys, being planned by the Joint Development Authority (JDA) and a private developer on the prime acreage of the former mill site along Meeting Street. Quite naturally, environmental concerns are high for this location but JDA has completed enough due diligence that a developer has been identified and is excited about moving forward with the project as soon as final clearance from DNR is received.

The City of St. Marys signed a joint agreement with the developer and JDA last week to take the next step towards moving from vision to reality. I liked developer Bruce Benton's comment at the signing when he said that he wanted to create a place that will help St. Marys "achieve the right kind of growth, prosperity and environment to preserve the quality of life for future generations of citizens, visitors and wildlife." The process may always be slower than desired, but the rewards will be worth it.

Another government entity we spend a lot of time with is Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). Ever since I came into office, I have been pushing for safety and development improvements at Exit 1. (And,

no, I was not the one who suggested cutting down all the trees as a desired safety feature.) But we have been diligent in seeking better lighting, a safer semi entrance to Haddock Road and making continued pleas for on- and off-ramp safety.

We have just learned that GDOT is presenting a proposal for public hearings that will include a double rotary for Haddock Road and the northbound entrance to I-95 at Exit 1. There are no local funds required as a match because this is a state-funded project. We understand that public hearings may be as early as June of this year. When we have specific dates, we will post them because public comment will be very important to move this project forward.

Yes, working through these important agencies does take time, energy and persistence. Maintaining positive momentum is critical to accomplishing change and improving our city and economy. I expect to report on more progress as we move into the summer months. Patience does produce results.

John Morrissey is the mayor of St. Marys. He can be contacted at john.morrissey@stmarysga.gov or (912) 510-4041.