

## County has duty to air both sides

Camden County Board of Commissioners will have a lot to consider next month when it decides whether to uphold or overturn the planning commission's decision to allow the subdivision of private property on Cumberland Island.

Two parties have appealed the decision of the planning commission, which was made after briefly hearing from each side. County commissioners will now get to make that call at a Feb. 7 meeting in Woodbine.

Although the planning commission received about 1,000 written comments prior to its Dec. 7 meeting, there was no indication whether each member had even read them all in the time frame they had available before the vote.

At the meeting, the citizens who came to speak out learned that they had to pick a side — “for” or “against” — and then each side could speak for 15 minutes. It is understandable why many of those citizens would feel disenfranchised after that meeting and want another opportunity for their voices to be heard.

There is no explanation of how the planning commission hoped to gauge the level of support for each side. To put each side on equal footing could only serve to dilute a majority opinion.

This method of collecting public comment also left no place for those who had concerns but were still undecided.

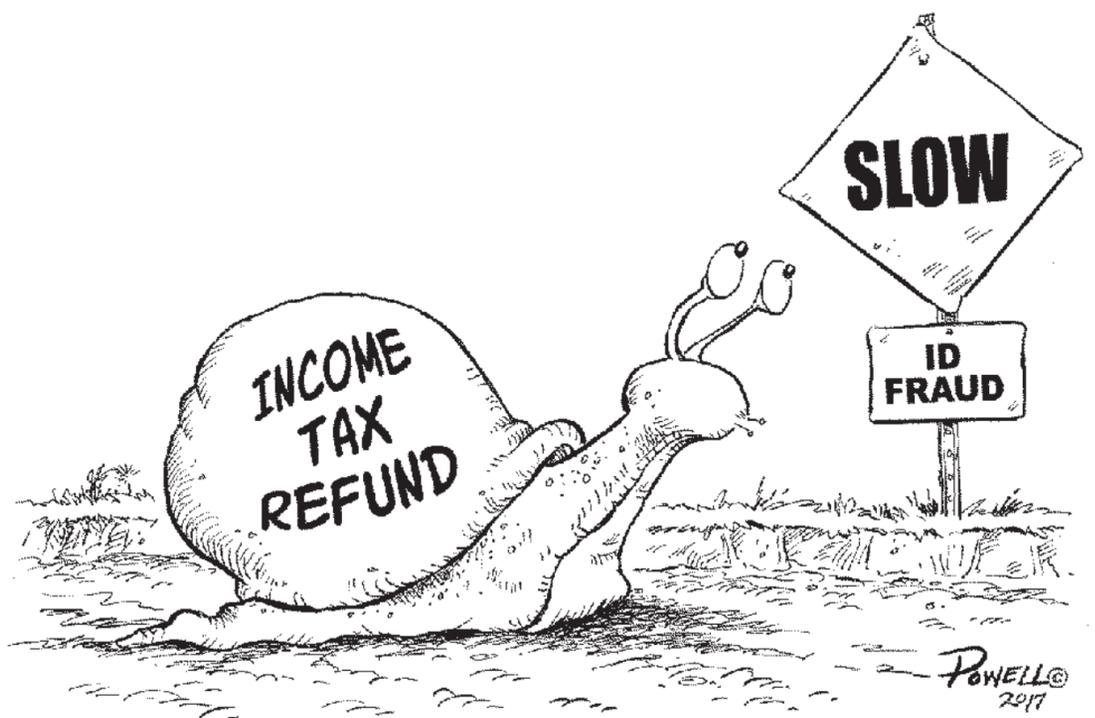
Knowing there was significant opposition to the request, the planning commission made no attempt to explain or justify how they were about to vote. Citizens deserve to know the reasoning behind controversial votes.

Planning commission chairman Ben Casey, who resigned from the commission when he assumed an elected post this month on the board of commissioners, was the only member to voice an opinion during the Dec. 7 meeting.

“This condition was created by the applicant, the way I see it. They bought the property knowing the zoning, how it was. Evidently they've already got property on the island. I don't see necessarily the hardship that they have. That's just my opinion,” he said.

Having already voted in favor of this issue as a planning commission member, it is likely Casey may abstain from voting a second time as a commissioner, which leaves the other four county commissioners to sort it out.

We trust that the Camden County Board of Commissioners will come to the Feb. 7 meeting having done their homework by reading the applicable ordinances and the comments that citizens took the time to submit. We hope they listen and carefully consider the different opinions and points before reaching a decision.



## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Why do seniors pay school tax?

Dear Editor,

Some three months ago the now president-elect complained that “the system was rigged.” As it turned out, it was rigged all right but not the way he meant but the other way around.

Admittedly, I have not had the pleasure of personally meeting him; in fact, other than by inference I do not know him from Adam. Nevertheless, a Democrat friend from New York City, whom from now on I will call Ezra to protect his identity, claims to know him from many years of doing business in the Big Apple.

While Ezra affirms that the trumpeter loves the habit

of reading super hero stories as they commonly appear in cartoons, comic strips and comic books, Ezra is also suggesting that such reading material could well be his likely source of ideas and visions of grandiose he plans to use to deal with the problems of our nation. When I heard him saying that, my reaction to such insinuation was a loud: “May God help us.”

As Ezra heard my plea, he replied, “I would advise you to not be counting on God for He has turned His back on us; He is either indifferent or gone altogether.” His position sort of reminded me of a certain similarity with Gautama Buddha's way of impeaching and rejecting God by predicating that “a God who allows so much

suffering does not deserve to be God.”

So much for Ezra and Buddha, I am going to put this matter to rest for now since there is enough said in the above three paragraphs to awaken all the local self-righteous to come up with their gracious rebuttals.

In another order of things, during the Camden County Commission meeting of Dec. 6, 2016, a retired senior couple on a seemingly fixed budget brought up the question of why should they have to pay for school district taxes if they do not have any children or grandchildren attending local schools. Although this thinking has been going on for years, let alone that it was directed to the wrong board, however, their question is still con-

tentiously valid; indeed, why should they?

Leave it to the public and they will come up with dozens of reasons for and against this reasoning. Some may say that since “it takes a village to raise a child” (does that sound familiar?) everybody in the village should contribute to it. It is indeed a pretty clever idea, isn't it? However, the primary and ultimate responsibility in raising that child rests with his/her parents and they should be the ones paying for it.

Whether we like it or not, the reality is that for the same reason the senior couple of the story is entitled by law to a homestead exemption, they should also be fully entitled to a school tax exemption.

Ruben Gomez  
Kingsland

## A look at the state of the city

*Editor's note: St. Marys Mayor John Morrissey delivered his annual state of the city address at the Jan. 5 town hall meeting. He is sharing the address as his column this month.*



**John Morrissey**  
Guest columnist

As 2016 began, council was facing challenges on several matters having long-range implications for the city and the year included a time in which our staff was challenged to respond proactively to the winds of Mother Nature.

The council was not afraid to make difficult decisions and the staff proved well trained and responsive to their challenges.

The capstone of a busy year came Christmas Eve when President Obama signed legislation to authorize the Navy and the Federal Aviation Administration to make necessary arrangements to close the St. Marys Airport. There were various opinions on this issue but from the city's perspective the most important fact was that we finally brought closure to a situation that has hung like a black cloud over our city for a decade and a half.

By convincing appropriate agencies at the highest level of government to take responsibility to resolve an issue only they had the authority and financial ability to achieve, we set the stage for creation of a viable resolution. Now the city has 278 valuable acres of prime light industry property to market and bring more diversity to our economic base. It was a very positive conclusion to a year that saw us move forward on several fronts.

In my December Tribune & Georgian column, I high-

lighted additional 2016 accomplishments, but in this, my third state of the city address, I want to focus on today, tomorrow and the future of St. Marys.

I want to begin with what most residents feel are the two most important elements of any city's health: financial stability and the continued provision of vital city services and public safety. I am confident this city council will continue to be fiscally conservative in its expenditure of tax dollars. It is simply the way we do business. We will continue a policy of limiting our debt and will remain committed to pay down the water and sewer debt with SPLOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax) funds recognizing that redirection of SPLOST funding will challenge us operationally.

Provision of daily services to citizens has long been a priority for the city and that focus will continue in 2017. Whether police, fire, streets, sidewalks, ordinance compliance or other basic services, we will continue to find ways to motivate all employees to be innovative and creative in delivering quality services with limited resources.

But let's take a look at the bigger picture, at what citizens and businesses tell us they want St. Marys to look like in the near and long term. The master plan steering committee, which has been citizen-driven since the beginning, will be issuing its final report in March after 18 months of extensive study, interviews, public input and specialized consultant analysis. That plan is intended to give us a framework from which the council and staff can better design goals and objectives to meet the long-term expectations of those who live and work here. It will provide some very specific recommendations but also lay out some long-term ideals from which the council can measure any project before it is undertaken to gauge whether such an endeavor will move us a step closer to our ultimate vision. It will permit us to better evaluate and prioritize when and where we spend limited tax dollars.

Early reports from the steering committee have confirmed that no matter what neighborhood someone lives in, there are visions for a better St. Marys most citizens share. They want to maintain the small-town feeling that has kept lifelong residents here and lured new residents. They want a more vibrant economy with increased job opportunities while protecting our environment and casual lifestyle.

They want clean, attractive streets, buildings and inviting entrances to all neighborhoods. They want a city they can be proud of and brag about to their friends and relatives who live elsewhere. As mayor, I

share that vision and I know the council does as well. We recognize that the city has a role to play in setting goals to reach that vision, but that we are only a part of it.

The city can and will provide all the incentives available to us to encourage new businesses to locate here. We can and will make zoning ordinance changes and create ordinances that motivate property owners to spruce up their investments. We can and will do our part by maintaining city property and grounds. We can and will promote and encourage growth, development and tourism.

But we cannot do it all. Citizens, property owners, businesses all need to take responsibility in making St. Marys a more attractive, vibrant and inviting city. The city needs to do its part and we will. Tonight I am asking others in our great city to commit to do the same.

I have spent time this past year in Washington, D.C., and Atlanta because I know that building those relationships and making those leaders aware of St. Marys is important to our future growth and our viability as a city. But I have also spent a lot more time this past year locally talking with neighborhood residents we do not usually hear from. I have learned a lot and I am asking each of our council members to personally conduct more of that kind of outreach this year.

Yes, we need to listen to citizens who approach us with ideas and concerns, but let's make that extra effort to reach out to people we do

See MORRISSEY, page 5A

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### OUR MISSION

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# New faces on school board



**New school board members (from left) Mark Giddens and Jason Chance began their terms last week by attending the first board work session of 2017. Chance represents District 1 and graduated from Camden County High School in 1996. He has worked as the life skills coordinator for the Methodist Home for Children and Youth since 2006. He has two children, Jaily and Kendall, in the school system. Giddens represents District 5 and graduated from CCHS in 1984. He is the store manager for Winn-Dixie in Yulee, Fla. Giddens also has two children, Maelah and Keith, in school.**

Submitted photo

## BRIEFS

### Head Start accepting applications

The Camden County Head Start and pre-kindergarten program in Woodbine is accepting applications for the 2016/2017 school year. There is no cost for the program and transportation is provided from Kingsland and St. Marys.

Eligible students must be 3 or 4 years of age by Sept. 1, 2016. Applications may be completed at Head Start, which is located at 1501 Georgia Ave. in Woodbine. The following items are needed to complete an application: birth certificate, immunization certificate (Form 3231), proof of income, Social Security number, Medicaid, Well Care or

private insurance card. For more information, call (912) 576-5923.

### Radio museum relocates

The Georgia Radio Museum and Hall of Fame will be moving to Forest Park in the Atlanta area. The museum had been housed in a city-owned building since 2014 in St. Marys. After negotiations for more display space with the city failed to yield any results, volunteers sought a new home for the collection of radio memorabilia, equipment and artifacts through the Georgia Municipal Association's newspaper. "The response was overwhelming," according to museum CEO and co-founder John Long. "We

eliminated those which did not fit our criteria then met with the remaining candidates. Forest Park officials were the most proactive and worked very hard to be our ultimate choice."

The museum will open in late spring at its new location.

### Scholarship open

Applications are currently available for the Dr. Bob May Scholarship on the Camden County High School website. The deadline to apply is Jan. 31.

Applicants must have a B average and be a graduating senior of the class of 2017. Students with an interest in community service are encouraged to apply.

## Morrissey

from page 4A

not know and those who do not attend meetings or email us. I am asking each of us to put pet projects or personal agendas aside and consider what is best for all citizens, not just a few. I am also asking the city manager and his staff to reach out and do more listening to all citizens. We cannot only listen to the most vocal among us.

Every neighborhood in St. Marys is unique in its own way but they are all a part of "One St. Marys." We need to step up our collective efforts to recognize that the City of St. Marys is not one neighborhood but many that stretch from I-95 to the waterfront and north and south of Spur 40 to the city limits. It is this combination of all neighborhoods, citizens and businesses that make St. Marys a community. It is our responsibility as mayor, council and staff to focus on all citizens and all neighborhoods and I am urging us to broaden our radar and recognize both the differences and similarities in each neighborhood as we forge a plan to achieve a One St. Marys.

We began to create much needed momentum in 2016 and we must continue that momentum in 2017. When we and other Camden cities gave our commitment to combine our economic development efforts into a single re-organized Joint Development Authority that would become the county's single economic development vehicle, we knew it would take time to create the professional entity necessary to get the job done.

We now see that investment coming to fruition and we will continue our strong working relationship with JDA so that St. Marys can benefit from the many op-

portunities on the horizon. We cannot back off the momentum currently underway but rather redouble our collaborative efforts.

We have made strides in creating stronger state and federal relationships. That momentum needs to continue because the competition for attention and potential funding never fades.

We facilitated bringing new businesses to the community and that momentum has to move forward at an even faster pace.

We made great strides in developing more productive collaboration with other Camden cities and the county government and we need to increase those efforts to share resources, ideas and innovative ways to better utilize all tax dollars that St. Marys residents put into government services.

Yes, our focus and priority is St. Marys but in this ever increasingly global economy, we cannot afford to be isolated. We cannot afford to be left out or fall behind whether it is in technology, access to funds or innovative methodology.

Momentum cannot con-

tinue without focus, commitment and hard work. I pledge that I will do everything in my power to continue that momentum and tonight I ask city council members, the city manager and all board, authority and committee appointees to do the same.

If we are to take advantage of our current momentum and the opportunities that lie ahead, then 2017 cannot be business as usual. We all need to be in the frame of mind to be more creative, innovative and flexible. Let's keep the momentum rolling in 2017.

Just as we made tough decisions in 2016, we plan to do it better, faster and smarter in 2017. I repeat that we cannot do this alone. Let us all commit to working together to get one step closer to the vision of St. Marys we all desire.

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

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**\*THE BYE BYE MAN (PG13)**  
(Fri-Mon: 12:45 3:00) 5:15 7:30 9:45

**\*MONSTER TRUCKS (PG)**  
(Fri-Mon: 1:45) 4:45 7:15 9:40

**\*LIVE BY NIGHT (R)**  
(Fri-Mon: 1:30) 4:25 7:25 10:15

**\*PATRIOT'S DAY (R)**  
(Fri-Mon: 1:20) 4:15 7:10 10:10

**\*SLEEPLESS (R)**  
(Fri-Mon: 1:00 3:15) 5:30 7:45 10:00

**\*HIDDEN FIGURES (PG)**  
(Fri-Mon: 1:10) 4:00 7:00 9:50

**\*UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS (R)**  
(Fri-Mon: 12:30 2:45) 5:00 7:35 10:05

**SING (PG)**  
(Fri-Mon: 1:45) 4:35 7:05 9:35

**ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY (PG13)**  
(Fri-Mon: 1:00) 4:00 7:00 9:55  
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# Traveling exhibit highlights international child poverty

in hope.

Compassion International, a humanitarian aid organization that focuses on sponsorship to release children from poverty globally, will bring its tour, The Compassion Experience, to the Kingsland area Friday, Jan. 13, through Monday, Jan. 16. The tour will be open from 11 a.m. to 6:40 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Monday and 11 a.m. to 5:40 p.m. Sunday.

The event will educate visitors about the realities of life in poverty as well as provide an international experience to visitors who may not ever have the opportunity to travel abroad to a developing country.

The four-day event will be set up in the parking lot of Christ's Church Camden, located at 201 Kings Bay Road in Kingsland. Visitors will be invited on a self-guided journey where they will be immersed in the lives and stories of two children living in Uganda or Bolivia. Each child's story starts in hardship but ends

The experience includes more than 2,000 square feet of exhibit space, featuring replicas of the homes and environments of these two Compassion beneficiaries. The event is free and family friendly.

"We built 'The Compassion Experience' in order to really bring the developing world to America," said Mark Hanlon, Compassion International's senior vice president of global marketing and engagement. "When people think of poverty, they often think of the lack of things, the lack of stuff, the lack of money. Those are all symptoms of poverty. The real issue of poverty is the lack of hope. Through our holistic child development program, Compassion stirs hope in children. And you will see that hope come to life at this event."

The tour is highly interactive using individual iPods and headsets to offer visitors a sense of what life is like in

extremely poverty-stricken areas around the world where the World Bank estimates that 700 million live on less than \$1.90 a day.

In the areas Compassion serves, nearly one in five children die before the age of 5, mostly from preventable causes, and 124 million children worldwide do not attend school, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Tour-goers will have the opportunity to "change the story" of children living in poverty by learning more about the issue as well as Compassion's child sponsorship program which tackles global poverty one child at a time. Compassion currently serves more than 1.9 million children in 26 of the world's most impoverished countries.

For more information, visit [www.CompassionExperience.com](http://www.CompassionExperience.com), [@compassion\\_exp](https://twitter.com/compassion_exp) on Twitter and [www.facebook.com/CompassionExperience](https://www.facebook.com/CompassionExperience) on Facebook.

# Throwback Thursday #tbt



Reprinted from the July 11, 1961, edition of The Southeast Georgian

**31 members of the Kingsland Methodist Sunday School were awarded perfect attendance awards at the conclusion of the worship service Sunday morning. The pins and bars ranged from 3 months perfect attendance to 8 years. Front row, left to right, Mike Barlow, 1 year; Dianne Funderburke, 9 months; David Atkinson, 1 year; Kathy Rawl, 1 year; Lisa Rush, 1 year. Second row, Jimmy Bruce, 3 months; Sandra Johnson, 3 months; Jackie Wade, 9 months; Denise Atkinson, 1 year; Nancy Peeples, 9 months; Susan Tiller, 1 year. Third row, Janice Bruce, 1 year; Sheryl Kerry, 4 years; Debbie Rawl, 1 year; Jimmy Lucree, 5 years; L. W. Bruce, Jr, 6 months; Johnnie Gray, 3 months; Richard Bruce, 6 months; Dianne Rawl, 3 years. Back row, Howard Davis, Jr., 8 years; Derinda Lucree, 5 years; Bera Tyre, 2 years; Buddy Peeples, 9 months; Danny Atkinson, 1 year; Danny Bruce, 9 months; Norman Bruce, 3 months; Pat Dasher, 6 months and Ellen Gray, 6 months. Making the awards were Sunday School superintendent Talmadge Crosby and the pastor Rev. Sam G. Rogers. Not pictured were Rolf Rawl, Roddy Campbell and Beckie Gowen, 3 months each.**

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**SCHOOL LUNCH MENUS**

<p><b>Camden High School</b> <b>Monday, January 16</b> HOLIDAY <b>Tuesday, January 17</b> <b>Hot Lunch:</b> Chicken Alfredo, steamed broccoli, fruit choices, salad station and gelatin <b>Wednesday, January 18</b> <b>Hot Lunch:</b> Cheesy bread sticks w/marinara dip, seasoned corn, fruit choices, salad station and cookie <b>Thursday, January 19</b> <b>Hot Lunch:</b> Lasagna, garlic toast, seasoned squash, fruit choices, salad station and gelatin <b>Friday, January 20</b> <b>Hot Lunch:</b> Calzone, green peas, fruit choices, salad station and cake with fruit topping</p> <p><b>LUNCH PRICES</b> Elementary Students - \$1.85 Middle School Students - \$2.00 High School Students - \$2.25 Reduced Price - 40c Teachers - \$3.10 Visitors - \$4.00 <b>BREAKFAST PRICES</b> Students - FREE Teachers - \$2.00 Visitors - \$2.25 Menu subject to change due to cost and availability.</p>	<p><b>Middle Schools</b> <b>Monday, January 16</b> HOLIDAY <b>Tuesday, January 17</b> <b>Hot Lunch:</b> Beef or chicken taco with hard or soft shell, cinnamon puff, savory black beans, whole kernel corn, fruit choices and salad station <b>Wednesday, January 18</b> <b>Hot Lunch:</b> Oven roasted chicken, roll, green beans, mashed potatoes, fruit choices, salad station and cookie <b>Thursday, January 19</b> <b>Hot Lunch:</b> Fish sticks, grits, cornbread, baked beans, coleslaw, fruit choices, salad station and gelatin <b>Friday, January 20</b> <b>Hot Lunch:</b> Lasagna, roll, glazed carrots, green peas, fruit choices, salad station and pudding</p>	<p><b>Elementary Schools</b> <b>Monday, January 16</b> HOLIDAY <b>Tuesday, January 17</b> <b>Hot Lunch:</b> Burrito, seasoned corn, Savory Black beans, fruit choices, salad station and brownie <b>Wednesday, January 18</b> <b>Hot Lunch:</b> Chicken nuggets, roll, mashed potatoes, gravy, seasoned corn, fruit choices, salad station and gelatin <b>Thursday, January 19</b> <b>Hot Lunch:</b> Deli sub with toppings, baked beans, fruit choices, salad station, frozen fruit slush <b>Friday, January 20</b> <b>Hot Lunch:</b> Hot dog, coleslaw, black eyed peas, fruit choices, salad station and pudding</p> <p><b>Breakfast Menu</b> <b>Monday:</b> Pancake or waffle and sausage link, or cereal &amp; yogurt, fruit, juice &amp; milk <b>Tuesday:</b> Chicken or sausage biscuit, or cereal &amp; yogurt, fruit, juice &amp; milk <b>Wednesday:</b> Scrambled eggs, toast &amp; grits or cereal &amp; yogurt, fruit, juice &amp; milk <b>Thursday:</b> French toast sticks or cereal &amp; yogurt, fruit, juice &amp; milk <b>Friday:</b> Breakfast taco or cereal &amp; yogurt, fruit, juice &amp; milk</p>
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**Pizza and PB&J Power Pack Bundles offered daily in addition to entree choices.**