

Make your voice heard in election

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

With less than two weeks left before the Nov. 7 election, residents are beginning to vote and candidates are headed toward the finish line. As campaigns wrap up, it's important to remember that candidates and voters should focus on the issues facing Kingsland and Woodbine.

We need real leaders who will step up and make decisions that guide each city toward bigger and better things — even if those decisions sometimes prove to be difficult.

We also need leaders who will not let personal feelings get in the way of their service to our cities. Everyone is entitled to their opinion, just as everyone is entitled to agree or disagree with those opinions.

The important thing is that leaders consider all voices when making their decisions.

Most of all, it's important to elect leaders who believe wholeheartedly in the public's right to know about the activities of their government. Maintaining a transparent and open government allows residents to feel fully involved in the decisions being made and enables them to have the facts they need to reach informed opinions on the issues facing our communities.

To help voters gather this information, the Tribune & Georgian has published a voters' guide on pages 8A and 9A in this edition. Readers will find biographical information about the candidates who participated and their views and ideas on each city's issues. Sample ballots can be found online at www.mvp.sos.ga.gov after you type in your first initial, last name, county of residence and birthdate. You should see the specific sample ballot for your district and information about your polling place.

The countdown to Election Day is underway with early voting open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday through Nov. 3 at the Board of Registrars' Office in Woodbine. Saturday voting will not be held for this election.

During early voting, Camden residents may vote in Woodbine regardless of their address. On Election Day, residents must vote between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. at their designated polling place.

Make time to make your voice heard and make your vote count.

Commissioners should clearly explain their plan

Dear Editor,

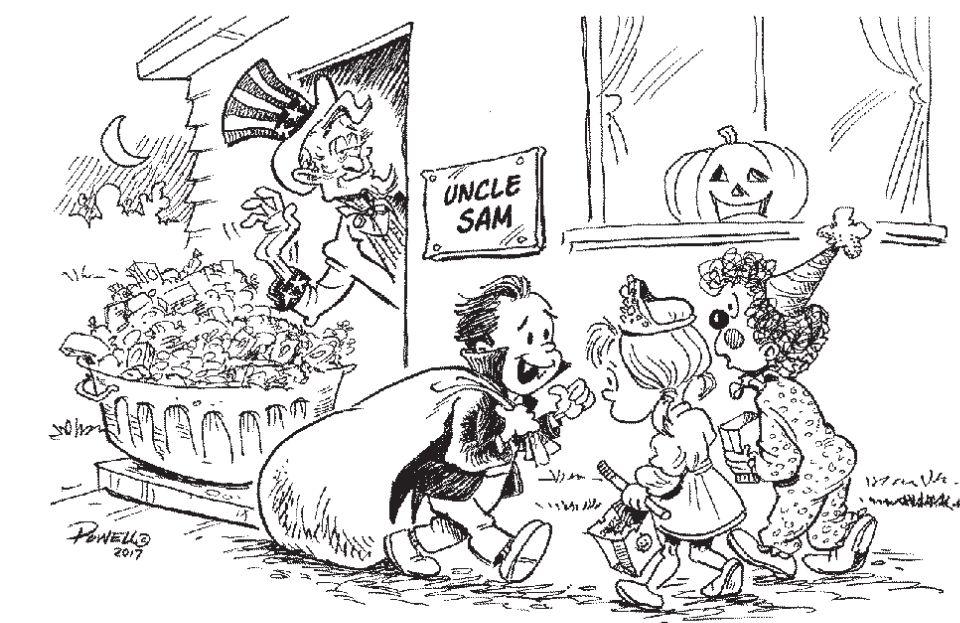
On Thursday, Jan. 10, 1963, United Press International published a press release in the Rome, Georgia News-Tribune announcing the proposed construction of a solid-fuel rocket motor building and testing complex in southeast Georgia.

The release stated that Thiokol Chemical planned to invest \$10.5 million in the facility. A spokesman for the project said that "Plans call for an initial employment between 500 and 1,000 with expansion expected to place up to 5,000 persons on the payroll over a five-year period."

C.G. Russell of Kingsland, then chairman of the Camden County Board of Commissioners, commented that residents were "pretty excited. Most of us hope we can keep up with the tremendous growth that is going to take place. This propels us into the space age."

Gov. Ernest Vandiver welcomed the millions of dollars and technical jobs the project would bring to Georgia.

Considering that Camden County's population in 1963 was about 10,000, and that the \$10.5 million Thiokol investment would represent more than \$83 million in 2017 spending power, Camden residents had every



"Hey, that guy will give you all the candy you want! Says he just adds it to something called the National Debt!"

reason to be excited. And this was capital that private industry, not local taxpayers, was providing.

A sharp turn, unfortunately, derailed this story's happy ending. In 1965, soon after the plant became operational and conducted its first major test, the government decided to use liquid-fueled motors instead of the solid-fueled motors that Thiokol was developing at its Camden plant. C.G. Russell's concrete words about the growth "that's going to take place" and Vandiver's embrace of the high-tech jobs that "would" be created suggest they misunderstood the forward-looking, speculative wording of Thiokol spokesmen's "plans" and "expectations."

Camden's commissioners now plan to build and operate a commercial spaceport

on the former Thiokol site. We have an opportunity to avoid a mistake if we learn from the experience of every other non-NASA commercial spaceport in the United States. All of them promoted the same high hopes about creating high-tech jobs, space-related factories and riches for their communities that Thiokol spokesmen used in 1963 and the Camden commissioners are now using to promote Spaceport Camden.

But, like Thiokol, these earlier spaceports have a history we can study to see how well they have done over time (and) how much their proponents' projected benefits have delivered for their communities. The unavoidable answer is that they have done badly and that taxpayers are on the hook to provide continuing cash

infusions from raised taxes. Our commissioners must clearly explain how Camden's spaceport would succeed when the others have failed. At least Thiokol funded its own high-stakes gamble on the halting, jolting, lurching pace and uncertain path the space industry would take.

When salesmen seek to lull reason with alluring visions and seduce taxpayers into footing the high-risk bill for building and operating a spaceport, demand transparency, accountability and explanations. A cynical marketing campaign that manipulates our hopes and fears and, worse, the fresh dreams of our young, is not a business plan.

Jackie Eichborn
Harriets Bluff

See **LETTERS**, page 5A

Volunteers help recovery efforts

St. Marys is still in Irma recovery mode but the progress made in just over one month is truly remarkable. Beyond the immediate actions to make sure basic services were restored, the city's other focus was clearly addressing the devastation on the waterfront with an all-out effort to get the economic engine running again. We demonstrated our city's resolve by holding the Rock Shrimp Festival and the Scarecrow Stroll on schedule just weeks after the storm.

The collaboration of federal, state and local government units was outstanding. The Coast Guard took on the challenge of removing 29 Georgia and four Florida boats from the wreckage of public and private boat docks. Many were deeply submerged one on top of another, so accomplishing this task in just 30 days was phenomenal. We cannot thank the Coast Guard enough.

The boats were raised and then transported to the former airport where the new task of notifying owners and disposing of the vessels begins. None of this could have happened without the full cooperation of the Department of Natural Resources, the National Park Service, the Corps of Engineers and city staff, all under the watchful eye of FEMA liaisons who helped make sure we documented every action properly for complete federal reimbursement.

Simultaneously, it was critical that the ferry service to Cumberland Island begin as soon as possible. With the docks at the National Park Service and Lang's Marina destroyed, the only option for a short-term solution was the city dock at the gateway site. It was damaged but not



John Morrissey

Guest columnist

destroyed. Working with all the government agencies and the Lang family, the NPS ferry provider, we crafted a dock repair plan and garnered all the necessary approvals that will enable the ferry to hopefully begin running by the second week in November. Again, the collaboration of so many different groups was heartening to witness. We all had the same objective: get the St. Marys waterfront back in business as quickly as possible.

I cannot begin to express how much the city and its citizens appreciate and respect all the players who put personal agendas aside and worked as a team to put us months ahead of where we thought we might be.

As I thank all the organizations and professionals who continue to bring us back from Irma, I also want to thank our unsung citizens who never hesitate to step forward in any crisis to help their neighbors. We also set up a special volunteer unit, St. Marys Irma recovery hotline, a volunteer group that matched people who needed recovery help with volunteers willing to jump in and deliver assistance. I am sending a letter of appreciation to all those for whom we have addresses but I know there

A thank you to volunteers

Dear Irma recovery volunteer,

Your willingness to step forward and help those neighbors most affected by Irma was a tremendous contribution in helping our city and county recover more rapidly from the destruction caused by the storm.

Whether you put tarps on leaking roofs, cut trees blocking driveways, assisted in getting food and water to those without, helped the elderly clean their lawns or joined forces with others to clean our historic cemetery, your decision to put time and energy into a quickly organized and tremendously effective volunteer effort is appreciated.

Local, state and federal government units are assigned specific tasks following any disaster with many working around the clock in the aftermath to get city services functioning at full force, clearing major streets so power can be restored and, in the case of Irma, getting 37 boats out of our harbor. There was no way any government entity could respond completely to individual calls for clean-up assistance.

If it were not for those of you who individually stepped forward and those who responded to the call for volunteers via the temporary St. Marys Irma recovery hotline or email, hundreds of people needing assistance simply would not have been helped. More than 660 volunteer hours were contributed in the days following the storm demonstrating once again the great spirit of neighbor helping neighbor in our community. While the hotline is now closed, I hope we can count on you again should a disaster require volunteer support for neighbors in need.

On behalf of the City of St. Marys, its citizens and the citizens of Camden County who were aided by your efforts, I extend a heartfelt thank you for your volunteer contributions.

Mayor John F. Morrissey

are many others who individually and selflessly helped neighbors and friends and deserve recognition as well so I am using this column to reprint that letter.

We are still in basic recovery mode and probably will be until the end of the year, and beyond, but in areas most visible to the public we see light at the end of the tunnel. Vegetation waste is being hauled away. We have made one full sweep of St. Marys streets and another is on the way. We are still removing trees that fell after the storm; it will take

time. Again, we have followed every rule put forth by FEMA to make sure we are doing what is necessary to file for reimbursement.

As I said last month, we are going to build back better. I am confident that with the kind of community support and collaboration we've seen in the past weeks, we will be successful. The task is huge but our commitment and our spirit are strong. We will make it happen.

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