



INTUCKER

NOVEMBER 2020 | VOLUME 4 | ISSUE 11



TUCKER CARES

FEDERAL DOLLARS DISTRIBUTED AT LOCAL LEVEL TO ASSIST TUCKER BUSINESSES AND RESIDENTS IN THEIR TIME OF NEED

EDITOR'S NOTE



There are a lot of adjectives you could use to describe 2020. "Optimistic" is not one of them.

Now that we are several months into the pandemic – and almost through the very contentious election season – I thought it was time for a change; a bit of optimism. And that's exactly what you'll find in the November issue of *InTucker*.

As Mayor Auman shares on page 3, the City, with help from the federal government and DeKalb County, is working hard to support Tucker residents and business owners through the CARES Act. If you've been struggling as a result of the pandemic – and who hasn't struggled some? – there may be support for you.

Things are on the upswing in Tucker's Peters Park community, too. Our Parks and Recreation and Planning Departments have been working with the folks in this community on a number of initiatives, including a massive overhaul of their beloved park and its antiquated playground. On page 14, you can read all about how the City leveraged local and federal support to make it all happen.

Finally, we have our always optimistic Citizen of the Month feature on page 11. This month is particularly poignant as we introduce you to a man who hasn't just served the Tucker community; he's served his country, as well.

I hope that as we move into the holiday season you keep smiling. Regardless of the challenge, it – like 2020 – is only temporary, and much brighter days lie ahead.

MATT HOLMES
INTUCKER EDITOR

IN THIS ISSUE



ON THE COVER

The City of Tucker and its community partners are working overtime to help during the pandemic. On page 3, discover how the CARES Act programs may be able to assist you.



LEARNING ACADEMIES

A couple of local churches are stepping up to help working parents while school is being held virtually. On page 12, take a look inside and learn how they are making the best of a bad situation.



BUSINESS BOOM

What is an Urban Redevelopment Plan? How would it impact Tucker? John McHenry provides these answers and more on page 8 in the Business Boom.



RAY OF LIGHT

Tucker is full of amazing volunteers, many of whom wear several hats. Very few wear as many hats as our Citizen of the Month. Get to know him on page 11.



ASK RIP

It's the most ambitious project the City of Tucker's Parks and Recreation Department has ever taken on. On page 14, Rip looks at the massive overhaul of Peters Park.



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From the Mayor:

CARES Act

Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act

I've written at length in this space before about government's limitations. We have a continual need for participation by individual citizens, community groups, churches, and others to make things work for all of us, because one thing government is not capable of is loving its neighbor. We're in the midst of a time of great need, and many selfless folks in Tucker are doing their part to help.

One thing government can do is spend money. And one way it's doing that on a large scale right now is through the CARES Act.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act passed the House and Senate this spring and was signed into law by President Trump on March 27. CARES is a \$2 trillion stimulus package designed to bolster the economy by supporting everyday Americans, including the businesses and other organizations through which they earn their livelihoods. There were a number of different aspects to the distribution of that \$2,000,000,000,000. About \$300 billion was allocated for cash payments to individuals and families. Chances are you saw a check show up in your mailbox back in April or May. Another chunk, around \$500 billion, went toward aid for large corporations. Nearly \$700 billion went toward forgivable small business loans under the Payroll Protection Program. And finally, just shy of \$350 billion was distributed to state and local governments.

As a large local government (500,000+ population), DeKalb County received a little over \$126 million at the end of April, intended for relief for DeKalb's residents. They took a while deciding how to spend it, and even longer to decide to allow the cities in DeKalb to spend some at their own discretion within their cities. In September, we finally reached an agreement that awarded a little over \$4.1 million to Tucker for coronavirus relief, which we received near the end of the month.

While we had been planning how to most effectively spend the money, we didn't know if or when we would receive

it. Neither did we know how much we might have to work with, and we certainly couldn't know what would be the greatest needs at the time we actually received it.

The good news is that Tucker worked hard and quickly once the money was on its way, and despite the challenges, the money is already getting into the hands of those who need it. We're sprinting to put the money to work in our community. Part of that comes from the desire to help those in need as quickly as possible. Part of it is driven by the December 20 deadline to get it spent.



That's right – every penny we don't spend on qualified expenses by December has to be returned, and I have no intention of letting that happen. Whatever your situation, I want to make sure you know exactly where the money is going and, if you find yourself in need, how you can apply for help.

The largest piece of our \$4.1 million allotment will go toward a small business grant program. The application window is now closed, but we received over 100 applications last month from businesses of all types. As a small business owner myself, I believe this piece will be critically important to getting our city through a tough time.

(continued on page 6)

City Council Update

Tucker's Mayor and City Council gathered twice during the month of October, taking on some significant issues that will have short- and long-term impacts on the City.

At the meeting on October 13, Council voted 6-0 to approve a CARES Act project list to send to DeKalb County, roughly outlining how the \$4.1 million in federal money will be spent. The main components of the City's plan include funding a small business grant program, rent and utility assistance for homeowners and renters, food assistance for those in need, and support for select virtual learning centers in the City. The City faces a December 20 deadline to spend the money.

They also voted 6-0 to approve a resolution to adopt an Urban Redevelopment Plan within the City of Tucker. A 2021 meeting calendar was subsequently adopted by a 6-0 vote. The final action of the night was approval of a resolution by Council to allow the Parks and Recreation Department to pursue a grant through the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program. The grant money would go toward improvements at Johns Homestead.

Earlier in the meeting, Council voted to approve:

- an ordinance for post-construction stormwater management
- an ordinance for litter control
- an ordinance for illicit discharge and illegal connection
- a new set of internal financial policies

On October 26, Council held a work session and brief meeting. The highlight of the work session was a lengthy discussion on the subject of taking over maintenance of streets and sidewalks from DeKalb County. Ultimately, Council decided to leave the issue alone and work with DeKalb County on a new intergovernmental agreement (IGA) that would provide Tucker with an increased level of service.

The meeting saw unanimous approval of a resolution to authorize the Parks and Recreation Director to pursue a \$500,000 Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant for improvements at Fitzgerald Park. Council also received a report from the City's Finance Director on the City's September finances.

The next meeting of the Mayor and City Council will be November 9 at 7 p.m. at the City Hall Annex (4228 First Avenue).

DATES TO KNOW

November 2
Downtown Development Authority

November 4
Traffic Court

November 9
City Council

November 11
Veterans Day
(All City buildings CLOSED)

November 18
Municipal Court

November 23
City Council

November 25
Municipal Court

November 26-27
Thanksgiving
(All City buildings CLOSED)

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



 Nextdoor



Mayor Auman presented his third annual Mayor's Business Award to FODAC CEO Chris Brand during the City Council work session on October 26.

ON THE BEAT with Lt. Schoeppner

Lt. D.G. Schoeppner is Tucker's liaison to the DeKalb County Police Department and can be followed at [facebook.com/dgschoeppner](https://www.facebook.com/dgschoeppner) or emailed at dgschoeppner@dekalbcountyga.gov



The overarching purpose of most of the DeKalb Police Department's community outreach programs is education. It would probably surprise you how many people either don't know or are misinformed

about how government, and police departments in particular, work. There are many reasons for this. Not least of which is that government bureaucracy can be confusing by design. Another reason is that the police have been portrayed inaccurately so many times in TV and movies that people have come to believe that is how they really work. So much so, that even people that work in government can benefit from ongoing education.

Last month, Tucker City Clerk Bonnie Warne and Danielle Greene from our Court Clerk Office both graduated from our virtual Citizen's Academy. They were two of 50 citizens who graduated this year. This month we will talk about some of the things they learned. Hopefully, this will spark interest in some of you to participate in future academies and become more familiar with how our system works.

This year's Citizen's Academy was six weeks long. All of the students attended virtually by Zoom Meeting.

These classes covered a wide variety of police related topics. They included investigations (Homicide, Property Crimes, Internal Affairs), traffic enforcement, specialized units (SWAT, Arial, K9, etc.), uniform patrol, and crisis intervention. There were also classes on how the police department overlaps with the court system (Superior, State, Juvenile and Traffic) and the 911 Call Center.

When the Citizen's Academy meets under normal circumstances, they also put on some basic use-of-force training. This includes scenarios where students are exposed to stressful situations and asked to respond accordingly. This is an excellent tool to show citizens how difficult it can be to make split second decisions during emergency situations. It really opens people's eyes to the sometimes life and death situations that police officers face.

We typically put on one Citizen's Academy every year. Even this year, we managed under these unusual circumstances. The next Academy will likely start next July. Please keep an eye on social media like Facebook and Nextdoor for notifications on when to sign up. I hope that you all will consider attending. You would be surprised the perspective that can be gained by pulling back the curtain on how your government works.



Bonnie Warne (third from left) and Danielle Greene (third from right) completed the DeKalb County Police Citizen's Academy. (Credit: DeKalb Police Department)

Tucker Funds Distribution



	Small Business Grants \$2.55 million
	Resident Relief \$900,000
	Distance Learning Support \$500,000
	City COVID Safety Expenses \$150,000

** dollar amounts are estimated and subject to change*

The grants aren't huge – \$5,000, \$10,000 or \$15,000 – but for a restaurant trying to make rent or a childcare center that needs to purchase PPE, these grants can mean the difference between staying open or shutting down. And for the people who work there, it can be the difference between paying for food, utilities and medicine, or going without.

In addition to keeping people employed and businesses operating, we want to help our citizens who cannot earn a living due to the pandemic to meet their basic needs. In many cases, that means simply helping them stay in their homes. We allocated about \$900,000 toward helping residents in need, including rent and mortgage assistance. It can also go toward help paying their utilities or affording a trip to the grocery store. There's not enough money in the world to address every need, but we do have funds to help a lot of folks through this most difficult financial time.

In the same vein of government's limitations, we know government can't do everything all by itself, or be an expert

in every field. We just can't. We know the community, but we don't have the expertise to run programs like these as well as those who are on the ground and in the trenches every day. So, we did something smart; we partnered with David Fisher and his team at NETWorks Cooperative Ministries. For years, David, his staff, and his volunteers have kept food and assistance going to those in need across Tucker and surrounding areas. When we needed an efficient way to get these resources out in a very limited period of time, we knew we needed NETWorks as a partner. To date, they have helped us with processing more than 100 applications for assistance. Those are your friends, your neighbors, the family you go to church with. Because of the federal assistance and the work of NETWorks, those folks may have food to eat and gas to heat their homes this winter.

We did something similar, hiring Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) to administer the business grants program. They are the nationally recognized leader in this

field, and are well-equipped to be sure the money is granted properly, effectively, and objectively to those who qualify.

Another facet of Tucker's program is virtual learning, and it's another example of partnering with those best equipped to respond. Tucker is fortunate that the faith community stepped up and offered students a place to go with schools closed for the pandemic. Well before we received the CARES Act money, Rehoboth Baptist Church and St. Andrew's Presbyterian had set aside space and resources to welcome students to a safe learning environment with internet connectivity and the other resources necessary to continue learning while away from the school building. But their generosity came at a cost. As you'll read on page 12, these churches had to retrofit classrooms to allow students and teachers the ability to remain socially distant as they learned. I am proud of their efforts to help working parents by giving them a place to send their children, and I am glad the City is reimbursing them for some of the expenses they incurred, so they can continue to provide this valuable service well into next year.

Lastly, the City has incurred expenses throughout the pandemic, and we will reimburse ourselves for those expenses. That will help us continue to respond in the future without having to add an extra tax burden to our citizens and businesses. Some of those expenses you'll never see directly. We installed a Global Plasma System inside Tucker Recreation Center. It sounds fancy and it is. This system ionizes the air, making particles in the air that could carry COVID too heavy to float so they fall to the ground. We purchased Plexiglas partitions for many of the desks inside City Hall. And, as you hopefully know by now, we distributed around 40,000 masks to residents and businesses all over Tucker. I'm proud of these efforts and, in lean fiscal times, I'm glad that we will be reimbursed for those expenses.

I point all this out because your government should be transparent with your money. To track money from the federal level to state to county and down to city can be daunting. Rest assured, this \$4.1 million is being put to good use. If you know of a neighbor who is in need right now, there are still resources for them. Have them visit www.tuckerga.gov/CARESAct.



FRANK AUMAN
MAYOR

A Piece of the Pie

DeKalb County is allocating \$32.6 million in CARES Act funding to its incorporated cities. Here's how that breaks down by city:

 = \$1 million dollars



Brookhaven - \$6.3 million



Stonecrest - \$6.2 million



Dunwoody - \$5.6 million



Tucker - \$4.1 million



Chamblee - \$3.4 million



Decatur - \$2.9 million



Clarkston - \$1.4 million



Doraville - \$1.1 million



Stone Mountain - \$712,391



Avondale Estates - \$354,891



Lithonia - \$264,382



Pine Lake - \$85,519

BUSINESS BOOM

by John McHenry, Community and Economic Development Director



Mayor Auman and the City Council recently approved a resolution to adopt an Urban Redevelopment Plan for part of the City of Tucker, with a defined Urban Redevelopment Area. So, what's this about, and what can it do for the Tucker business community? In a word: opportunity!

Even in 2020, Tucker has experienced vigorous commercial and residential economic activity with a new flex warehouse on the market, numerous subdivisions being built out, and even new retail and restaurants on Main Street. Still, there are dilapidated or underutilized properties in the City that are not meeting their current highest and best use, and their inclusion into the Urban Redevelopment Area opens a variety of economic development tools to spur that revitalization. Primarily focused in the Tucker Summit Community Improvement District (CID), the designation recognizes that while there are many worthwhile attributes to the building stock in the Tucker Summit CID and that it is a dynamic corridor of industrial and flex warehouse spaces, there are also some key parcels that need assistance so that the area can reach its full economic potential and redevelop successfully over time.

Mayor Auman saw that this was an opportunity to assist some of the City's more challenged properties and to promote economic success across the board.

"To the extent that we have blighted areas in the City, this is a powerful tool to redevelop those [areas] in a way that benefits the whole City," he said.

This speaks to the City's clear-eyed approach to a holistic strategy to economic development.

"If and when we reach a point where we declare an area blighted, we better be committed to doing something about it," Mayor Auman explained.

This will also afford the City opportunities to apply or be considered for a variety of state and federal programs within the plan such as Opportunity Zone designation. Opportunity Zones are significant tools in an economically distressed community where new investments, under certain conditions, may also be eligible for preferential tax treatment, such as job tax credits for new or existing businesses. As an economic development tool, they are designed to spur stimulus and job creation.

If you are a business owner who would like to receive periodic emails from the City about important updates and relevant business information, send your email address to abrooks@tuckerga.gov.



BUSINESS OF THE MONTH

THERMO PAC

One of the most important businesses in Tucker is one that you most likely have never heard of. Thermo Pac packages food for the U.S. military, hurricane victims and food insecure families. Products like jellies, ketchup, sauces and nuts are processed in the Thermo Pac factory off Lewis Road and distributed across the nation and around the world.

“We have been here in Tucker since the very start,” Thermo Pac Director of Operations Vic Ortega says of the company’s founding nearly 30 years ago. “Safety is our number one concern. Keeping our employees safe and our customers happy.”

Visitors to the plant go through a rigorous safety and cleanliness routine including handwashing, shoe sanitizing, wearing safety goggles, masks, hairnets and earplugs. The creations du jour are no secret as, on this day, the plant smells of sweet fruit smoothies and fresh garden salsa. Those, along with individual servings of butter, are being packed up by Thermo Pac’s loyal longtime staff.

“The main reason we are still here in Tucker is our workforce,” Ortega explains. “We are very fortunate to have the majority of our workforce here for 20-25 years.”

Like any business, Thermo Pac had to adapt to manufacturing during the coronavirus pandemic. Ortega says that, in addition to more widespread use of masks, they had to implement temperature checks for staff and visitors, as well as social distancing along their manufacturing lines. They’ve made those changes and business is still booming; in September they shipped 4.5 million cases of food supplies to their distribution chain.

You can learn more about Thermo Pac on their website www.ameriquagroup.com/thermopac.



TEAM TUCKER *Spotlight*

HENRY BOULDEN, BUILDING INSPECTOR

What is a Building Inspector's main set of responsibilities?

As the designated agent for the Building Official, it is my responsibility to perform inspections as required by the International Code Council and the local jurisdiction to ensure compliance with applicable codes, construction documents and specifications, and standard and accepted construction practices. The purpose of these inspections is also to ensure that the completed project is safe for all potential occupants.

What were you doing before you came to Tucker?

My last position was as a quality assurance inspector on a 2 million square foot parking structure at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. It was my responsibility to ensure compliance with codes and all construction documents for the largest parking structure in the state of Georgia.

How has your experience been so far working in Tucker?

In the short time I have been here, I have been fortunate to work with a great group of individuals and citizens.

What do you like most about your job?

Helping contractors and property owners build safe structures.

Why is a Building Inspector's job so important?

Improper construction practices can lead to injury and even loss of life. Unfortunately, it is impossible to eliminate this entirely, but by ensuring codes, plans, and specifications are adhered to, we can help minimize these occurrences.

Off the Wall

What is your proudest accomplishment?

Being happily married to the most wonderful woman I could hope for for the past 19 years.

Tell us something your co-workers don't know about you...

At one time, I built casino tables for a living. Three of those tables were used for entertainment purposes at one of the night clubs at Disney's Pleasure Island in Orlando, Florida.

Who is the most famous person you've ever met?

Not the most famous, but the one I am proudest to have known was United States Air Force General Norma Brown. She was the base commander when I was stationed at Chanute Air Force Base, Rantoul, Illinois. At the time I knew her, she was the highest-ranking female officer in the United States military.



CITIZEN OF THE MONTH

RAY GANGA

If you look up “Tucker Volunteer”, you’ll likely find Ray Ganga’s face. Following in his father’s footsteps of giving back to his community, Ray dedicates his spare time to many of Tucker’s community groups. He is a founding member of Main Street Theatre, where he continues to serve, recruiting volunteers and promoting the shows and the theatre at large. He is currently the chair of the Friends of Tucker Recreation Center, where he also organizes clean-up days throughout the year. With the Tucker Civic Association, Ray has organized and hosted the annual Rivers Alive event that attracts a large number of volunteers to spend the morning getting mucky cleaning up a local river. Each year’s treasures are more impressive – and depressive – than the last.

In 2016, Ray founded the Tucker Job Fair, which he continues to organize each year. The event focuses on helping veterans seeking employment. As a veteran, Ray continues to fight for those who fought for our country. Ray’s contributions extend outside of Tucker, as well, volunteering with Atlanta Track Club, where he served as Race Director and waved the flag at the Peachtree Road Race to start each wave of runners after the Mayor started the elite runners and wheelchairs.

There is no doubting that Ray’s hard work and passion betters every group he is a part of but, more than that, Ray works to bring groups together to make their impact even greater. So, while he is officially part of many of Tucker’s community organizations, Ray serves the City of Tucker every day.

Nomination by Sabrina Chambers



(Credit: Main Street Theatre)

MAKING THE BEST OF A BAD SITUATION

VIRTUAL LEARNING ACADEMIES POPPING UP TO GIVE WORKING PARENTS A CHOICE

Pick up and drop off are a little bit busier these days at Rehoboth Baptist Church. The church, which opened a very popular preschool in 2018, recently made the decision to start a new venture this school year: a virtual learning academy.

“It started with me being a mom,” recalls Rehoboth Preschool Director Dr. Mollita Clark. “My oldest is in middle school, but I didn’t want to put that responsibility on her to make sure that my first grader was doing her work because my middle schooler, she’s in her class all day. I thought, well, if we need this, then the community needs this.”

The emergence of these virtual learning academies has met a definite need. The DeKalb County School District is currently waiting on COVID cases in the County to drop below 100 cases per 100,000 to enter the school reopening phase. But even when that happens, students would only attend for face-to-face instruction once, or at most twice a week. That’s a reality parents will most likely be facing for the remainder of the school year.

While some parents have the resources to keep their students at home, others have turned to virtual learning pods, where a group of students meet at someone’s home and a parent or other facilitator assist them in completing their classes. The only other alternative is the virtual learning academy. Staffed by individuals with at least some classroom experience, these academies offer students the chance to grow in their studies, as well as socially.

“We thought about what it would look like. The classrooms, they would need to be big classrooms where there’s lots of space so that they can social distance. We have about eight students per classroom. They’re adult classrooms, [so] that means they’re bigger spaces,” Clark explains.

Rehoboth and St. Andrew’s Presbyterian are two churches here in Tucker that have opened virtual learning academies amid the pandemic. Combined, they are serving about 50 elementary and middle school age students each day. Recently, they teamed up with the City of Tucker to receive funding from the federal CARES Act. Now these two churches will be reimbursed for capital improvements they had to make in order to accommodate their virtual learners.



As for the students, they are in virtual class on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from about 8 a.m. until 2 p.m. Wednesdays are reserved for a mental break, as well as catching up on work. This is a markedly more relaxed schedule than what they are accustomed to, but there are other advantages, as well.



“Some [are making] better grades than they’ve had in the past,” Clark observes. “There’s just not those distractions that there are in public school. I had this one student, in particular, he’s in middle school, and he told me ‘I like it here...the bullies aren’t here.’”

“Some families, even if there is an opportunity to send them back, they’re just not ready yet. So we want to provide them that opportunity.”

“My oldest daughter, she wasn’t necessarily bullied, but there was so much attention on fitting in and all of that’s gone. She can actually put attention on schoolwork and completing assignments in class so that you don’t have a lot of homework.”

At some point in the distant future, students will head back to class and life will get back to normal. When it does, Clark says she won’t necessarily be closing down her virtual learning center.

“Some families, even if there is an opportunity to send them back, they’re just not ready yet. So we want to provide them that opportunity.”

It’s not the traditional definition of “school choice”, but in this age of pandemic, the choice is working out well for parents and students.

Tucker Cluster

Updates & News

IMPORTANT DATES

November 9
DeKalb County Board of Education Meeting

November 23-27
Thanksgiving Break

BRAG SHEET

IDLEWOOD ELEMENTARY

- Two Idlewood teachers became ESOL Endorsed. Congratulations to Evangline Anoka and Heather Woods on their accomplishment!

LIVSEY ELEMENTARY

- Livsey is honoring its 2020 Employees of the Year. Natasha Adebiyi is the Teacher of the Year, Janet Sloane is the Educational Support Professional of the Year I, and Ellen Jenkins is the Educational Support Professional of the Year II.

MIDVALE ELEMENTARY

- Midvale is honoring its 2020 Employees of the Year. LaKisha Childs is the Teacher of the Year, Vanessa Mullen is the Educational Support Professional of the Year I, and Sarah Chapman-Phillip is the Educational Support Professional of the Year II.

SMOKE RISE ELEMENTARY

- For the second year in a row, Smoke Rise has been highlighted as a Title I Distinguished School. The Georgia Department of Education released the 2019-’20 Title I Distinguished Schools’ List, which is comprised of the highest performing, top five percent of Title I schools in Georgia.
- Fifth-grade teacher Robert Mason received the acclaimed 2020-’21 Teacher of the Year honor. Mr. Mason is known for his powerful work ethic, love for teaching and math expertise.

TUCKER MIDDLE

- Eighth-grader Elizabeth Gates served on a state STEM panel talking about her experiences in Tucker Middle School’s STEM program.

“ASK RIP”

Answers Your Park Questions

Rip Robertson is the Parks and Recreation Director for the City of Tucker. He brings to the job years of experience in Parks and Rec, as well as Public Works.



Here in the Parks and Recreation Department, we love sharing good news. That news typically has to do with improvements being made throughout our parks system. Sometimes they're exciting (new bathrooms at the Henderson Park tennis courts) and sometimes they're less glamorous (new air conditioning units at Tucker Recreation Center). But this month I want to write about a project that has been a long time in the making and is finally coming to fruition.

I started with the City of Tucker back in 2017. It was around that time that I really got to know our parks and some of the needs that each one had. One by one we were able to make improvements to the parks: a new playground here, a new pavilion there. The one drawback with parks improvements is that they cost money. Oftentimes they cost a lot of money. So where we can find alternate funding sources, we definitely do all we can to take advantage.

That's where the Peters Park improvement project came in. Back in 2017, I worked with the brilliant Beth White Ganga to write a federal grant proposal for Peters Park. The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program is a federally funded program administered through DeKalb County and it's one way that we can pay for much needed improvements without burdening our city budget.

In the spring of 2018, we were

awarded the grant. I think much of the community was thrilled at the news and ready to enjoy those park improvements, but things don't always work that fast. We went through two years of studies; one a historic background study and the other a flood zone study. Of course, with this grant running through DeKalb County, all plans had to be approved by the County, another step that took time. In January of this year, we put the project out to bid and in May, we chose Willow Construction as our contractor for the project.

So what are the improvements to Peters Park? I'm glad you asked.

The first thing you'll see is a brand-new parking lot. No potholes, no faded striping, just nice new asphalt ready to welcome folks to the park. Next, you're going to see our adult exercise area. This apparatus is something we've wanted to bring to a Tucker park for a long time and we're excited that Peters Park will be the site. With so many people in Tucker being workout enthusiasts, I expect this will be a popular feature of our parks system. You're going to see brand new benches, water fountains, trash cans and landscaping.

But the most noticeable feature of this park will be the new playground. Much like the playground at Kelley Cofer Park, this will be an ADA accessible structure with swings for infants, as well as special needs children. New safety fencing will be installed around the perimeter of the playground. You'll see no rust, no splinters, just a new and exciting structure that I think will attract kids

from all over the community.

Now, I think it's worth sharing that we faced a major challenge in renovating this park. As a result of the flood zone study I mentioned above, we discovered that about two-thirds of the park was inside of a flood way. Why does that matter? The federal government, who provided the CDBG grant, does not allow funding for anything inside of a flood way. So, we had to change some of the scope of the project, including relocating the playground and holding off on resurfacing the walking track. We also regraded some of the park to establish proper water runoff. In other words, we took some lemons and made lemonade.

I want to make sure everyone knows that the CDBG grant was not the only source of funding for this project. At roughly \$247,000, the grant funded most of the work, but there were others who chipped in. The City of Tucker contributed about \$120,000. Park Pride contributed \$5,000 for the adult exercise structure, while Friends of Peters Park raised about \$4,000 to cover the rest of the costs. It was a true partnership in every sense of the word.

Now, I want to invite you to come get a first-hand look at the renovations. We are planning a ribbon cutting on Saturday November 14 complete with hot dogs and beverages. We'll eat and fellowship, with proper social distance, of course, from 12-2 p.m. This park improvement is one of our largest undertakings, both in terms of money and man hours. I expect it will quickly become a focal point for the entire Tucker community.





TUCKER Community Corner



11/6 – Tucker Job Fair **10 a.m. – 1 p.m., virtual**

The Tucker Civic Association and Goodwill Industries proudly present the sixth annual Tucker Job Fair. Thirty-plus employers are participating and it is free for job seekers. Traditionally an in-person event, this year's job fair will be held virtually. To learn more or register, go to tuckercivic.org.

11/7 – Electronics and HME Recycling Day **9 a.m. – 2 p.m.** **3969 Lawrenceville Highway**

The Rotary Clubs of Tucker and Stone Mountain are hosting an Electronic and HME Recycling event to benefit FODAC. Working and non-working electronics and gently used home medical equipment will be accepted for recycling at no charge.

11/14 – Third Annual Women's Business Expo **9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.** **4315 Church Street**

The annual event is back to continue supporting start-up and small businesses. Featured vendors include free health checks, health and wellness, home health care, aromatherapy, arts and crafts, food vendors, and more.

11/14 – Campfire Night **4 – 7 p.m.** **4259 N. Park Drive**

Join the Tucker Parks and Recreation Department at Kelley Cofer Park for Drive-Thru Campfire Night. Participants are required to stay in their cars as they pick up all the yummy ingredients needed to make the perfect s'more over the open flames...safely in your own backyard.