



CELEBRATING OUR PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

# INTUCKER

Published by the City of Tucker, GA

FEBRUARY 2018



## FROM THE MAYOR

Tucker's spirit of volunteerism is a subject that I've spoken about at length and written about in this very space. It's a source of personal pride, as well as a hallmark of how others perceive our community.

Our volunteers were at their very best – and busiest – during the month of January. Take a look at the back cover of this newsletter and you'll see exactly what I mean. On the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service, we had more than 100 people show up to help paint the walls of Tucker Recreation Center. That same morning, a couple dozen brave souls went to Henderson Park to plant daffodils and make improvements to the hiking trails.

It was a day off from work and temperatures were in the twenties. Yet these people donned their long johns for the betterment of their community.

Speaking of the weather, dangerously low temperatures led volunteers at Tucker First United Methodist Church to open their doors for most nights in January as a place of refuge for people who needed to get out of the cold. The selflessness of those volunteers changed – and may have saved – lives.

Looking forward, I'm grateful for the service of a new group of volunteers.

I had the opportunity to swear in our new City boards and commissions last week. These men and women come from diverse personal and professional backgrounds. They are all volunteers who will be lending their expertise on our Community Council, Construction Board of Appeals, Downtown Development Authority, Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals. You can find specific descriptions of the responsibilities of each of these boards under the "Government" tab on our website, but know that these folks will be dedicating hours – mostly in the evenings – to serve and improve the City of Tucker.

I hope you don't mind me bragging on these volunteers and the hundreds more in our community just like them. May their stories be shared and inspire others to find ways to make a difference.

## DATES TO KNOW

February 12  
City Council

February 14  
Community Council

February 22  
Planning Commission

February 26  
City Council



Want to look back  
at everything that  
happened in Tucker in  
the month of January?

Check out the *Tucker  
Rewind* feature on our  
YouTube page!

# CITY COUNCIL UPDATE

January was a big month for the Mayor and City Council, as they were sworn in during the January 8 meeting. Mayor Frank Auman and Council members Matt Robbins and Michelle Penkava all took the oath for a second time, while District One Councilwoman Pat Soltys became the body's newest member.

During that January 8 meeting, Council approved \$36,860 to fund a pavement management study. That money will come out of the City's SPLOST funds. Council also confirmed the Mayor's nominations of 28 people to serve on the City's boards and commissions. Most of those people were subsequently sworn in at the Council's January 22 meeting.

Because of the length of the agenda, the January 8 meeting carried over to January 9, where the Council held five public hearings on land use cases. The only case to actually have a vote was a proposed 19-unit single family development near Montreal Park. Council voted 7-0 to approve the rezoning and concurrent variances needed to move the project forward.



Council held their final meeting of the month on the 22nd, taking up two land use development cases. The first was a 6-1 vote to deny a proposed residential development on Saren Court. They then voted to approve construction of a Speedway gas station at the intersection of E. Ponce de Leon Ave. and Mountain Industrial Blvd. A budget amendment, including \$30,650 for painting and repairs at Tucker Recreation Center, was approved on a unanimous vote.

## “LIGHTS OUT” AS NEW BAN TAKES EFFECT



In a few weeks, you'll notice a big change in certain commercial areas of Tucker. That's because on February 28 a ban on linear lighting goes into effect all across the City.

Your first question may be 'what is linear lighting?' It's a term that applies to rope lighting, neon tubes and other lighting typically seen outlining storefronts and signs.

Next you might ask 'why does this type of lighting need to be banned?' The ban had already been applied to the Mountain Industrial Overlay District, as well as the Northlake and Downtown Tucker Overlay Districts, but an October 9 vote by the Mayor and City Council extended it to the entire City. This means all businesses in the City including the northern (Chamblee Tucker Road), eastern (Lawrenceville Highway) and western (Hugh Howell Road) commercial parts of town will be pulled into this ban.

Councilwoman Anne Lerner was one of the driving forces behind the change.

"Sign clutter is an issue along our commercial corridors. Not only is it a safety concern with distracted driving, but it began looking like a carnival as some business owners tried to outdo each other first with feather flags, then bright rope lighting and now we are seeing bright

blinking rope lighting. Where does it end?" Lerner asked.

"We've heard from Tucker residents and business owners that they want a pleasing look that helps build a sense of place and, according to their input, that place is not the Vegas Strip."

Much like the restrictions the City placed on feather signs last year, Code Enforcement has reached out to businesses around Tucker to proactively let them know they will need to come into compliance.

"We have personally spoken with most of our Tucker business owners to discuss their concerns and explain how this will be implemented," says Code Enforcement Manager Maricela Perdomo.

Code Enforcement will continue to talk with businesses up to the February 28 enforcement date. Businesses utilizing linear lighting beyond that date will go through the typical Code Enforcement process: they will be given a notice of violation along with time to come into compliance. Should they refuse to remove the linear lighting, a citation will be issued to go before a judge in environmental court.

The linear lighting ban will be a fundamental change to Tucker's commercial areas and, just like the feather sign restriction, one that should greatly enhance the aesthetics of City businesses.



# ON THE BEAT WITH LT. SCHOEPPNER

Now that 2017 is in the books, the Tucker city leaders and I have been looking back and evaluating our law enforcement activity over the past year.

The verdict for 2017 has been mostly positive. The highlight is that violent crime in the City has gone down by 30 percent. Property crime in Tucker is down by five percent. This is not quite as good as the violent crime reduction, but it's moving in the right direction.

I'm sure that if you have been the victim of one of these crimes it is little comfort to hear that "crime is down". To that end, our objective now is, not only to maintain, but to improve on the progress that we achieved last year. There are several things that we are doing to make this happen:

- Constant monitoring of crime trends in Tucker and DeKalb County. Once we identify these "hot spots" where crime is occurring, our watch commanders make sure that there are increased police patrols in these areas.
- Improve community involvement. Ms. Donna Mann is our Public Education Specialist and she is constantly working to keep the community informed of important issues. She is also instrumental in organizing and supporting our community watches. A large part of the progress that we made last year can be attributed to the community and police working together.
- Finally, a major objective of the year is for DeKalb P.D. to add more officers to our force. Over the last several years, law enforcement agencies all over the country have struggled to maintain manpower. DeKalb County Police have not been immune to this trend. This year we are looking to add an additional 200 officers to our force. Ideally, we would like to recruit those officers from the neighborhoods that we serve. This is truly the ultimate form of being involved in your community. Anyone who may be interested can contact our recruiting office at 770-724-4554.

In closing, I'll say that even though 2017 was a very positive year, I think we can do even better in 2018. I'm looking forward to working with you all to make that happen.



**NOW HIRING!**  
**DEKALB COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT**

A collage of four small images showing police officers in various settings: one with a child, one with a dog, one with a group of people, and one with a police vehicle.

**Minimum Requirements:**

- At least 20 years of age
- United States Citizen
- No Felony or Domestic Violence Convictions
- High School Diploma or GED
- Valid Driver's License
- Veterans must have an Honorable Discharge

**Salary:**

- Starting Salaries:
- \$38,151—base pay
- \$40,059—bachelor degree
- \$41,343—certified officers with 2 years experience
- \$1000—bonus for certified officers

**Benefits:**

- Medical Insurance
- Pension/Deferred Compensation/401(a)
- Opportunities for promotion
- Paid Holidays/Vacation/Sick days
- Tuition Reimbursement
- 4 days on 3 days off (work schedule)
- Take home vehicle

**APPLY TODAY!**  
[www.dekalbcountyga.gov](http://www.dekalbcountyga.gov)  
**770-724-7445**

A black and yellow DeKalb County Police helicopter, marked N90DK, flying over a city skyline at dusk.

## POLICE BLOTTER

**"CASES CLOSED"** - Our Tucker Precinct officers were able to close five cases in January involving Eugene Hunter. This is a guy you probably saw covered in the papers and on TV. He made news for his alleged role in fraud cases all over the Metro Atlanta area. After being arrested in Gwinnett County last year, Mr. Hunter ended up on our radar. We are proud to have been able to bring him to justice.

**"YOU BETTER CHECK YOURSELF ..."** - On January 5, officers responded to the SunTrust Bank at 1849 Mountain Industrial Boulevard. The alert bank staff had determined a suspect was attempting to cash a check for \$1,200. Only one problem: the check was a fake. The suspect was taken into custody without incident and charged with forgery.

**"BURGLAR BUSTED"** - On January 16, DeKalb Police assisted agents from Woodstock with a search warrant for a house in the 4000 block of Lawrenceville Highway. While executing this search warrant officers located items from several burglaries and entering autos from both Tucker and Woodstock.



# INTEREST BOOMING IN TUCKER RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT



January 9 was a first for Tucker's City Council. The Mayor and Council members reported for a continuation of their meeting from the previous night with five land use cases on the agenda.

"If they hadn't split the meeting into two nights, this would have gone well past midnight," explains Deputy Director of Community Development Courtney Smith.

Such is the reality in a city where developers are lining up to invest. Minerva USA is one of the development firms that was on the agenda that night, asking the City Council for a rezoning and concurrent variances that would allow them to build 19 single family homes near Montreal Park. Managing Partner Brian Davison says Minerva isn't alone in looking to Tucker for new development.

"Tucker is close to 285, close to the interstates and close to jobs," Davison explains. "We saw Tucker as somewhere you can see positioned for the future. There's a positive trend in retail, focus on livability and master planning. We're in the early stage of a fairly major evolution of Tucker's residential base."

It's true that, since beginning City operations almost two years ago, Tucker has seen an increase in interest from families and first-time homebuyers. Developments that had stagnated are once again under construction and land use applications are being submitted for projects in just about every part of town. Longtime developers like Davison say that wasn't always the case.

"Tucker was located in what was referred to 20 years ago as the 'Ring of Death,'" Davison explains. "Areas that were five-to-ten miles outside the Perimeter were too far to be 'intown', but too close to be 'suburban'. Developers knew people weren't looking there. You can see that changing."

While new construction is in demand, so too are the charming brick homes built around Tucker in the 1960s. Rachel Cheng and her husband Tim moved to Metro Atlanta from Minnesota and bought their first home last year off of Idlewood Road. She says during the house hunting process, Tucker pretty much sold itself.

"When we were looking for a house, we would see neighbors out in the neighborhoods and go talk to them. They all speak so highly of Tucker," Rachel recalls. "We didn't even realize it before we moved here, but Downtown Tucker is really cool."

The couple, who are getting ready to welcome their first child, cite many of the same advantages that are drawing other young families to move to Tucker.

"Living where I work is very important," Rachel explains. "We have a lot of friends who have moved to Tucker. We love that Tucker is diverse and a place where you can find an affordable house with so much yard."

What does all this renewed interest in Tucker mean? From a development standpoint, it means the City Hall Planning staff has a full plate; more proposals to review and more meetings with developers looking to move into Tucker.

"The workload is significant, but that's a good thing," Smith says. "We have builders, developers, people wanting to move to the area coming into City Hall everyday to ask questions and get information. It's a sign of a flourishing community."

And if it means more long nights for the City Council? They probably wouldn't mind that, either.

# TEAM TUCKER SPOTLIGHT

Joe Stewart - Recreation Leader



## OFF THE WALL

**What is your favorite sport?** Basketball when it's cold, golf when it's warm

**What movie could you watch over and over?** Back to the Future

**What is one thing your co-workers don't know about you?** I worked a ski season at Keystone resort in Colorado out of college. So, I know how to "shred the gnar" as they say.

**You are stranded on a desert island and can only have three things. What are they?** Multi-tool (practical), all seasons of *The Office* and *Parks and Recreation* (entertainment) and photos of family and friends (inspiration/motivation).



**How long have you lived in Tucker?** I lived in Tucker from childhood through high school and a couple years out of college. I went to Midvale Elementary, then Henderson Middle (before there was a Tucker Middle) and Tucker High. I played basketball for Coach Hartry (not many minutes, but Coaches Award winner) and played on the golf team (Tiger Award). I also helped start Tucker Habitat for Humanity with my mom.

**Where did your passion for Parks and Recreation come from?** Leslie Knope (*Parks and Recreation* TV show joke). Seriously, though, I love being outside and active. I think recreation time is the most undervalued part of our life and providing opportunities for people to see that is very rewarding.

**What do you see as the benefits of having a strong Parks and Recreation Department?** A strong Parks and Recreation Department means a more connected community and a more active community. That translates to a better standard of living for Tucker.

**Five years down the road, how would you like to see Parks and Recreation changed in Tucker?** To quote the great Dabo Swinney: "The best is the standard". I expect our Parks Department to be the standard for our state.

**What has been the best thing about coming back to work in the town where you grew up?** Giving back to the people and community who gave me so much.

## VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION

### TFUMC COLD WEATHER REFUGE

With wind chills plummeting into the single digits in January, volunteers from Tucker First United Methodist Church staffed an overnight shelter for men needing an escape from the elements.





# TUCKER COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

## BUSINESS OF THE MONTH SAGE DENTAL

Sage Dental is a name you wouldn't have known a couple years ago. Now, after a rapid expansion across the Metro Atlanta area, Sage is the new name in dentistry.

"We started out in the Marietta location," says Rhonda Cox, the Director of Operations for Sage Dental. "We opened our East Cobb location. We moved into Johns Creek and we've continuously been building. We're in Cumming, Buford, Tucker, Suwanee."

That's a lot of activity in just about 12 months' time. Cox and her team cut the ribbon on their newest location at Tucker Meridian Shopping Center on January 11. She explains the Sage Dental approach of prioritizing patients is what has enabled the company's rapid growth.

"We value relationships...building relationships with each one of our patients," Cox says. "We want them when they come into our office to feel like they are our only patient."

Whether someone is a patient or not, Sage Dental is hoping to connect with people in these new markets by getting out and serving the community.



"We are firm believers in outreach programs," Cox explains. "We like to look for areas where we can go into the community, build relationships and give back to the community and get the area healthy, as well."

Sage Dental's new Tucker office is located at 4280 Lavista Road. You can find them online at [www.mysagedental.com](http://www.mysagedental.com).

## CITIZENS OF THE MONTH CURT & KATHIE WALKER

"I would like to nominate Curt and Kathie Walker for Citizens of the Month. Curt and Kathie are long-time Tucker residents.

"A few years ago, they helped found the Tucker Running Club. In 2015, I moved to Tucker and didn't know one person. After joining the running club, I now know people all over Tucker. Curt and Kathie are the epitome of hospitality. They welcome everyone into the group, whether beginning walkers or competitive runners. Though they compete in the Masters Elite teams with the Atlanta Track Club, they are always willing to slow down and encourage everyone. They schedule runs around Tucker and we visit Tucker restaurants afterward to refuel. When we have runs outside of Tucker, we represent Tucker in force, wearing our TRC shirts, always with a photo taken by Curt and posted on social media."

*Nomination by Dr. Priscilla Hammond*

"Curt Walker maintains Tucker Running Club's enthusiasm and morale by constantly creating events and having a steady routine that gives us a sense of belonging to a solid effort.

"I think Curt is an outstanding member of the Tucker community. He looks out for the physical and mental health of the club members and the community. And I know the club members appreciate that very much, as I certainly do."

*Nomination by Teresa Ducuara*



# “ASK RIP” ANSWERS YOUR PARKS QUESTIONS



In this issue of *InTucker*, you'll meet or – for many of you – reacquaint yourself with our Recreation Leader Joe Stewart. Joe is a Tucker native and representative of the type of professional we are looking to bring into our Parks and Recreation Department.

I want you also to know the name Tom McDermott. Tom is our Recreation Center Manager and someone I've had the privilege of knowing and working with for a number of years. He will oversee a staff that, collectively, has several decades of

experience working in the recreation field. These Recreation Assistants are Kay Hendricks, Louisa Joseph, Orin Romain and Arthur Taylor.

Please make sure to stop by Tucker Recreation Center and get to know these folks. I'm sure you'll be as impressed with them as I am.

Now on to the questions ...

**Andrew Gladu - What are the plans to ensure the litter around the Rec Center is picked up on a daily basis?**

Andrew, the City of Tucker has brought on an active staff, who will be monitoring both interior and exterior maintenance issues. If I, or any member of my team, see so much as a bubble gum wrapper, we will remove it. More importantly as we move forward, we plan to have a landscape contractor who will be responsible for ensuring that the grounds around the Rec Center, as well as the Tucker parks, are maintained on a regular basis. As we go through this process in the coming months, if any resident has a concern about rubbish at our Rec Center or our parks, I want to know about it so that we can address it immediately.

**Cara Schroeder - I have had a ton of folks asking important questions about dogs (i.e. leash laws vs. restrained vs. DeKalb rules). What will be your stand on this issue, Rip?**

We want to make sure that we have policies in place to ensure safety and enjoyment for all the visitors to our parks, including those with four legs. There are new dog waste stations in Henderson Park for this very purpose and, once we acquire the parks from DeKalb County, we plan to install dog waste stations in all our parks. To answer your question, we will enforce DeKalb County policy in regard to any leash laws. We will be better able to enforce these policies and install signage to that effect once we acquire the parks on April 1.

**Rip Robertson is the first Parks and Recreation Director for the City of Tucker. He takes the job with years of experience in Parks and Rec, as well as Public Works. Rip is a former Military Intelligence Analyst for the U.S. Army and is active with the Army Reserve.**



## **TKR** COMMUNITY CORNER Tucker, GA

### **2/2 - Open Mic Night, Tucker-Reid H. Cofer Library**

Feb. 2 @ 5:30 p.m., 5234 Lavista Road

Come sing, dance, rap, play an instrument, slam poetry or just hang out! Ricky and Bambi from Radio Cult and the Possum Kingdom Ramblers will host. All ages are welcome. Sign up in advance or on the day, but space is limited. Please call or visit branch to register!

### **2/13 - TCA Tucker Lifelong Community Meeting**

Feb. 13 @ 7 p.m., Hearthside Club Room, 4358 Lynburn Dr.

The Lifelong Community Committee is made up of Tucker residents of all ages who have a vested interest in the community and its growth. Anyone can join or, if you do not want to join “another thing”, feel free to come to the community meetings or send an email to the Tucker Civic Association and share your ideas.

### **2/17 - UMCH Flea Market**

Feb. 17 @ 9 a.m., United Methodist Children's Home  
1967 Lakeside Parkway

The United Methodist Children's Home (UMCH) long-standing and popular flea market is free to the public. The flea market includes an array of items on sale including furniture, electronics, clothing, art, collectibles, jewelry, toys, books, glassware, appliances and many other objects. Proceeds of the sale help UMCH reach more children and families in crisis in new communities across North Georgia.

### **2/22 - TCA Membership Meeting**

Feb. 22, @ 6 p.m., Tucker Middle School, 2160 Idlewood Rd.

The Tucker Civic Association is hosting its Winter Community Meeting at Tucker Middle School. Hear a presentation from Tucker Parks and Recreation Director Rip Robertson, as well as the announcement of the TCA Member of the Year.

# TUCKERGA.GOV

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## TUCKER'S VIRAL DO-GOODER LOOKS FOR NEXT CHALLENGE



Carolyn Collins has become something of a cult celebrity around the City of Tucker.

The Tucker High School custodian has quietly provided necessities like coats, shoes and food for homeless students for the past three years. It comes from community donations to her "Giving Closet", a formerly empty storage closet inside the high school.

But that closet isn't empty anymore.

"My closet is full. I don't have enough space!" Collins says with a laugh.

That's because after Collins was profiled on 11Alive News in December her story spread like wildfire. A Facebook video produced by 11Alive's parent company drew almost 1.7 million views. Suddenly, instead of some altruistic teachers or community leaders making small donations, the Giving Closet was getting donations from all over the country.

"There's been a change," Collins explains. "It went from something small to something big."

In the aftermath of the attention, Collins was faced with a previously unthinkable dilemma: having to reject donations because she had nowhere to store them.

When other school leaders around Tucker got word that the Giving Closet was at capacity, they wanted to help. Midvale Elementary School is exploring storage options, even hoping to tie the Giving Closet concept into their fifth grade International Baccalaureate service project. Other schools in the Tucker cluster, inspired by Collins' compassion, are looking at how they can adopt the concept to serve underprivileged students in their own classrooms.

"I want this to get bigger and bigger," Collins says. "There are homeless kids in every school: elementary, middle and high. It's in every school. I want every school to get some kind of closet to be able to help the kids in the community."

As for the attention her efforts have gotten, Collins admits that her 15 minutes of fame aren't quite up. In recent days she says she's gotten phone calls from Steve Harvey and the Atlanta Hawks, both asking if they could honor her. That's fine, she says, but the real rewards come from the students she's helping.

"They hug me and they say 'thank you Mrs. Collins.' They just want to be loved."

## COMMUNITY IN ACTION

Volunteers spread out across Tucker on January 15 to take part in a Day of Service. Projects included painting at Tucker Recreation Center, as well as plantings and trail work at Henderson Park.



Photo by D. Martin Photography



**PLEASE DELIVER TO:**