



CELEBRATING OUR PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

# INTUCKER

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## FROM THE MAYOR

Starting April 1, you may notice a small change to your bill when you go shopping. That's because the sales tax on most items across DeKalb County is going from seven percent to eight percent; a result of the new SPLOST that passed with 70+ percent support last November.

If your initial reaction is one of skepticism, I hear you. I have never been one to advocate for a tax increase. But if you're going to consider a tax increase, this one was done the right way – with a fully transparent public process and vote, with real accountability built in.

For Tucker, this SPLOST is a game-changer. While DeKalb County will be collecting the additional penny tax, the City of Tucker will be given a share of that revenue proportionate to our population. That comes out to about \$32 million over the six-year life of the SPLOST. We decide what we do with it. No one else gets to tell us which projects we fund as long as we stay within the bounds of the allowable types of projects. The math is simple: we spend at least 65 percent toward road and drainage improvements, at least 20 percent toward multi-modal transportation projects, and we have up to 15 percent of funds that can be designated for improvements in Parks and Recreation and improvements to public safety, including fire facilities and citywide safety equipment.

You've seen the state of some of our roads and you're hopefully aware of our infrastructure needs. This is a huge opportunity for us to put into practice what we preached from the start of the cityhood movement: some decisions are best made at the local level. The projects funded by this SPLOST are a perfect example of that.

Inside this month's newsletter, you'll meet Ken Hildebrandt, our City Engineer who has been working diligently for months to make sure Tucker hits the ground running once these SPLOST funds start coming in. You'll also gain some insight into which roads the City can and cannot spend SPLOST funds to repair – important when you wonder why we're not repaving or regrading certain roads.

I hope that once you read up on the steps we're taking, you'll see that this SPLOST is going to bring about some much-needed improvements across all areas of the City of Tucker, making it an even better place to call home.

## DATES TO KNOW

**April 2-6**  
Spring Break for DeKalb Schools

**April 4**  
Construction Board of Appeals

**April 9**  
City Council

**April 11**  
Community Council

**April 23**  
City Council

**April 26**  
Planning Commission



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

# CITY COUNCIL UPDATE

Tucker's City Council held two regular scheduled meetings during the month of March, taking up a pair of rezoning cases that have drawn significant public interest. The first case, in which developer Ardent Companies is calling for 24-single family detached homes, was approved by a 6-1 vote at the Council meeting on March 26. This development will be located on the north side of Lawrenceville Highway at Henderson Drive.

A second rezoning case, also petitioned by Ardent Companies, was granted a deferral by a 5-2 vote at the meeting on March 26. This project, as constituted, would bring 54 townhomes to the south side of Lawrenceville Highway at Bishop Drive. The developer asked for a deferral with the goal of working with the City Council to refine their plans. A first read of the project is now scheduled for April 9 with a second read and anticipated vote set for April 26.



Also at the meeting on March 26, the Council voted unanimously to approve an annexation petition by a group of property owners along E. Ponce de Leon Ave. The annexation brings Graphics Packaging and Eagle Rock into the City effective April 1.

## ALL IN THE FAMILY: NEW PRINCIPAL HAS DEEP ROOTS AT TUCKER HIGH



### 1. LOCAL BOY

Dr. Parker's Tucker roots run deep. Before he ever set foot on the Tucker High campus, a young Eric Parker attended Smoke Rise Elementary School.

"The support that the Tucker community provided to me just made me at an early age want to go into education."

Now a father, Dr. Parker hopes to instill that same sense of community in his children, as well as in the students he'll be leading at THS.

### 2. FAMILY MAN

Dr. Parker lives with his wife and three daughters (ages 15, 13 and 9) in a home where he readily admits he's in the minority.

"It's a house full of women. Between my wife and the three girls, I am well-managed and well-supervised. They're keeping me straight."

Dr. and Mrs. Parker actually met during their days as students at Tucker High.

### 3. HOOPS HERO

When you meet Dr. Parker, the first thing you'll notice is his height. At 6'9", he towers above the crowd in the hallways...and on the basketball court.

Parker was a letterwinner during his time at Tucker High, catching the eye of college coaches and eventually signing to play at Division 1 Radford. During his senior season, he led the Hilltoppers to the first NCAA Tournament appearance in school history. A 16 seed, Radford was subsequently thumped 99-63 by top-seeded Duke.

### 4. SAFETY FIRST

With multiple school shootings leading the news this year, any principal can expect questions from students, parents and faculty about how school can be safer. Dr. Parker says he comes in prepared to lead on the issue of school safety.

"While I was working at Eastern Kentucky University, I worked with the Kentucky Center for School Safety," Parker remembers. "We had the opportunity to do learning opportunities and provide professional safety audits. [You] definitely focus on school culture, on school safety...and that's where the bullying comes in, the cyber security comes in."

He says he's got three children at home and considers himself the "School Dad" of another 1,800 children.

### 5. GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Not only does Dr. Parker have experience leading at the middle school, high school and collegiate levels, he's also taken to studying how countries educate their children around the world.

"Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to spend three weeks and visit schools in China. I went to Beijing, Shanghai and Chongqing. I visited about 15 schools and it was amazing to see how education looks different," Parker says. "The students in China are very serious. Seeing that first-hand, we have a lot of work to do and a lot of catching up to do."

You can contact Dr. Parker by calling (678) 874-3702 or emailing [eric\\_parker@dekalbschools.ga.org](mailto:eric_parker@dekalbschools.ga.org).

In the classic film *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy clicks her heels together three times and declares, "There's no place like home."

While he doesn't wear anything resembling ruby red slippers, the new principal of Tucker High School can understand where Dorothy's coming from.

"I'm excited to be home. Tucker High School is a special place for me," says Dr. Eric Parker, a 1994 graduate of Tucker High.

The Tucker native – he says he looks forward to reconnecting with old Main Street haunts Matthews Cafeteria and Cofer Bros. Hardware – takes the leadership role at his alma mater at a crucial moment, when he has a chance to build on some of the great academic successes achieved under longtime THS Principal James Jackson.

If you haven't met Dr. Parker, here are five facts to help you get to know him.

# ON THE BEAT WITH LT. SCHOEPPNER

While I'm interacting with many of you, it is common for you to ask what it takes to become a police officer and what it is like to actually be one. In an effort to answer these questions I'm going to talk about the hiring process and the Police Academy at DeKalb P.D.

Like any other job, working for DeKalb P.D. starts with the application. Applying here is similar to the application for any job, except it asks for more details. On top of name, address and prior work history, applicants have to list any traffic citations or crimes they have been charged with. DeKalb P.D. even wants to know if you've committed any crimes where you haven't been caught. Applicants also have to chronicle any previous drug use, debts and whether they've had debts turned over to collection agencies. Once the applicant submits their application, it gets assigned to a detective for a background investigation.

During the background process, applicants also have to take a physical fitness test. This test consists of push-ups, sit-ups, sit-and-reach, an obstacle course and a timed run.

After the background investigation the applicant must take a voice stress test (lie detector), undergo a psychiatric evaluation

and have an interview with several supervisors. If the applicant fails any of these steps, or if anything is discovered to be missing, false or outside of departmental policy, the application is discarded.

If the applicant completes the application process, they are offered a job and begin the Police Academy. The Academy is a boot camp-style environment where potential police officers are taught law, firearms qualification, emergency vehicle driving, defensive tactics and first aid. This process is 23 weeks long. Cadets have to pass 56 tests from various classes in these previous topics to become certified as a police officer.

After graduating the Academy there is little time for celebrating. New officers are assigned to one of DeKalb's four precincts. There, they will spend the next nine weeks riding along with an experienced field training officer. This phase is a practical test where the new officer applies everything they've learned in the Academy. It is not uncommon for someone to go through the entire hiring process and Academy only to wash out during the live-action portion of their training.

Once the nine weeks of field training are over, the new officer is ready to operate on their



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own. Of course, this doesn't mean the training has stopped. Every police officer must take yearly classes and firearms qualifications to maintain their certification.

I hope this kind of in-depth report will give you a better understanding of how your police department works, what it's like to work here and maybe make you think about a career in law enforcement.

## POLICE BLOTTER

### **BUSTED!**

On March 8, Officer J.C. Gaddis and the Tucker FIT team were on patrol in the area of the Stone Mountain Inn. While there, they located a vehicle that had been taken in an armed robbery in South Precinct. The two occupants of the vehicle were arrested. A gun and drugs were also found inside the vehicle.

### **HOLD YOUR FIRE**

On March 10, Officer G.E. Snide responded to Oxbow Road in reference to someone firing a gun. While at the location, the officer heard the shots as well. His investigation led him to a residence where several gunfire calls had been reported in the past. He located and apprehended the person responsible, making an arrest for possession of crystal meth and false report of a crime.

### **QUICK WORK**

On March 18, Officer C.J. Lee responded to an entering auto call at 7200 Tree Mountain Parkway. Upon arriving, the officer made contact with residents at the location who pointed out one of three suspects breaking into cars at the complex. This juvenile was arrested on the scene. The investigation identified the other two suspects whose arrests are pending.



# EXPERIENCE COUNTS: CITY ENGINEER POISED TO MAKE TUCKER'S SPLOST A SUCCESS

When DeKalb County voters passed the penny SPLOST in November, each incorporated city had to figure out who was going to coordinate their SPLOST projects and provide the expertise to keep the projects on track.

For the City of Tucker, the decision was easy.

Ken Hildebrandt has been Tucker's City Engineer since 2016, working with other engineers and developers to ensure that projects are constructed to meet city and state guidelines. Over the course of a nearly 30-year career, the Georgia Tech graduate has done engineering work in the private sector, as well as in five different cities around Metro Atlanta. He enters Tucker's SPLOST process knowing the City faces some obstacles.

"Our overall road conditions are poor," Hildebrandt explains. "One of the biggest challenges is that \$32 million sounds like a lot of money, but when you look at the condition of our roads, simply bringing them up to an acceptable level is going to take a lot of money."

Hildebrandt would know. During his 16 years as City Engineer for Smyrna, he oversaw that city's SPLOST, a five-year, \$43 million fund. He says he learned valuable lessons about the need to be proactive, not just reactive, with SPLOST money.

"You want to balance repaving with other transportation needs to improve safety, as well as operational improvements to your corridors," Hildebrandt says.

While advising the Mayor and City Council on SPLOST, Hildebrandt has also been working in preparation for the City's first-ever Transportation Master Plan, a six-month process to study the immediate needs and long-range goals of how people get around in Tucker. There will be ample opportunity for the public to get involved, which Hildebrandt says is a necessity.

"When I was in Smyrna, one of the big projects we did was the Spring Road corridor. The initial concept was to do two lanes in each direction with a reversible center lane. That was not acceptable to the citizens. So, we redesigned that project for a boulevard with a landscaped center median, heavy streetscaping and a multi-use trail. It was a collaboration with the community and you know what? It was much better than the original plan."

The Transportation Master Plan was put out to bid and should be awarded by a vote of the Mayor and City Council at their meeting on April 9. A stakeholder committee will then be appointed, followed by several public meetings to gain input.

"We want to be forward-thinking," Hildebrandt explains. "We need to prioritize the type of projects that will shape the City of Tucker now and into the future."

The man guiding those efforts into the future has hit the ground running and he's ready to help change the driving experience around Tucker.



## ROAD REPAVING: LEARN THE TERMS

As you start to see certain SPLOST-funded projects begin around town, it may be helpful to understand the lingo that our City Engineer is using when he talks with the Mayor and City Council about which roads to repave. Here's a brief guide to make you better informed on road repaving:

**LOCAL ROADS** – These are the more internal subdivision streets. They generally have low traffic volumes. SPLOST funds can be used for repaving these roads.

**COLLECTOR ROADS** – These are higher volume roads designed to provide access to residential communities. SPLOST funds can be used for repaving these roads.  
ex. Idlewood Rd., Fellowship Rd., Midvale Rd.

**ARTERIAL ROADS** – These are generally two to four lane roads, which see heavier volume. Their primary role is to move traffic between collector roads and expressways. SPLOST funds can be used for repaving of some of these roads. Others – like Hugh Howell, Lawrenceville and Lavista – are state routes and are maintained by GDOT.  
ex. E. Ponce de Leon Ave., Hugh Howell Rd., Lavista Rd., Lawrenceville Hwy., Mountain Industrial Blvd.

**EXPRESSWAYS** – These are federal highways and routes, which carry the heaviest volume of traffic. As the USDOT and GDOT share responsibility for maintenance of these roads, SPLOST funds cannot be used for repaving.

ex. I-285, Stone Mountain Freeway

# TEAM TUCKER SPOTLIGHT

**Will Wiggins - Building Official**



## OFF THE WALL

**What's your favorite food?** Most anything with the word "seafood" in it.

**What do you do in your free time?**

My grandchildren are my priority, so I try to spend as much time as I can with them. I also like fishing and spending time in my yard.

**Most exciting place you've ever vacationed?** That would be the Grand Turks, which is a beautiful place.

**What is one thing your co-workers don't know about you?** That I am a great cook, at least I think so.



**What is your professional background?** Most of my younger life was spent as a police officer/detective with local police departments in DeKalb County. I also worked part-time with Grady as an Emergency Medical Technician. I was a Deputy Fire Marshal with Gwinnett County Fire Services serving as a Senior Fire Inspector and Arson Investigator.

I then got into building inspections, serving as a Senior Building Inspector with DeKalb County and as Building Official for several municipalities in the metro area.

**What is a typical day like for a Building Official?** My day starts out by getting into the office early so that I can review the inspection requests for the day and review my emails and voice mails that I have received after hours. I prepare the inspections schedule for the day, return phone calls and emails. I answer any technical questions that we receive throughout the day from residents and contractors. I perform building and trade plans reviews for Code Enforcement prior to the permits being issued. I assist the permitting technician and work in the field as needed.

**What do homeowners or contractors most need to understand about Building and Permitting in the City of Tucker?** I would like for them to know that the staff is here to ensure construction and installations are being performed to the state required codes so that the residences and the public are safe in their homes and businesses. This is our main objective – SAFETY. We also want to make sure the residents and business owners are getting what they paid for.

**How is Tucker unique from other municipalities where you've worked?** The staff here in Tucker is outstanding, a real pleasure to work with. They show the true meaning of teamwork that you often do not have in government settings.

**What do you enjoy most about your job?** Knowing that at the end of the day I have made a difference in the community. That I have helped someone to see their dream come into play, may that be a family having a new home to move into or a new building for a business owner to start seeing their dream come true.

## RESIDENTS SWAP OUT DEKALB RECYCLE BINS AT TUCKER REC CENTER



Hundreds of DeKalb Sanitation customers came out to a recycling roll cart event at Tucker Recreation Center on March 24. The County – which is asking all customers to replace their old recycle bins with new roll carts by December – actually ran out of roll carts at the event. For those customers who did not get the chance to swap out their old bin, they can do it in person at the DeKalb Sanitation facility at 3720 Leroy Scott Drive in Decatur.

# TUCKER COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

## BUSINESS OF THE MONTH THE FREAKIN INCAN



The team at The Freakin Incan created a splash last fall when they brought their Peruvian street food concept to Tucker's Main Street. While their *saltados* (stir-fry) and *piscos* (cocktails) quickly became staples of the Tucker food scene, the Incan team has continued to fine-tune the dining experience, exploring new ways to make themselves feel at home in Tucker. Enter the "Hasta Lavista".

"It's a secret menu drink," explains restaurant owner Mikiel Arnold. "We would like to invite all the residents of Tucker to come in and have their own little drink that's [off-menu] and get a drink that's made specifically for Tucker."

The "Hasta Lavista" (pronounced like Lavista Road) was created in conjunction with the kick-off of Incan's new happy hour, where customers can enjoy half-price small plates on weekdays from 4-6 p.m. Arnold says he hopes it will tempt curious foodies, as well as those who are regulars, to get their evening started a little earlier on Main Street.

"As a new restaurant, we're trying to become a part of the community [and] become involved in the community."

The Freakin Incan is located at 2316 Main Street, Suite C.

## CITIZEN OF THE MONTH JAMEY WILSON



"Nothing says Tucker quite like Jamey Wilson and nobody loves Tucker like Jamey Wilson."

Jamey has been part of Tucker his entire life, as he is part of the Cofer Family. He has always approached his service and involvement in Tucker with a servant's heart.

Many of you reading this now came out on March 10 to enjoy the Tucker Chili Cook-Off. Jamey is the driving force behind that event, as he is with Christmas on Main Street. He also is a driving force with the Tucker Cruise-In and helps with the set-up for Tucker Day. He does all of this just for the betterment of Tucker. He has never asked for anything in return.

It is for this reason that I believe Jamey would be a great candidate for the Citizen of the Month. Tucker is a wonderful place and a large part of it is because of citizens like Jamey, who work so hard to make it awesome!"

*Nomination by Art Wood*



## COMMUNITY CORNER

### 4/14 – Livsey Elementary School Color Run 5K 7:30 a.m., 4137 Livsey Road

Livsey's PTO welcomes you to join us as we run, walk and jog while raising health and wellness awareness for our school. My School Color Run is an untimed fun run featuring a 5K course. Throughout the course participants will experience color splash zones where they will be doused in color. There will also be a final color toss celebration and a post-run celebration featuring vendors and a bounce house!

### 4/14 – Great American Cleanup 9 a.m.-12 p.m., Tucker Nature Preserve

Friends of Tucker Nature Preserve are hosting the Ninth Annual Tucker Great American Cleanup. We will be cleaning up the trails, mulching and removing invasive plants. We'll also be collecting books for the Preserve's Little Free Library. We are especially in need of children's books, so dust off those books your kids have outgrown and bring them by!



# “ASK RIP” ANSWERS YOUR PARKS QUESTIONS



**Matthew Stancil – When will the crumbling entrance sign at Henderson Park be fixed?**

Matthew, you’re not the only one who’s noticed that crumbling old sign. Every time I enter the park on the Livsey side it looks like another stone or two have fallen away. That’s not the kind of signage we’re going to have in Tucker parks.

That sign, as well as other immediate maintenance issues, will be addressed as soon as we assume responsibility for our parks later this month. Our team has been planning and taking inventory of what needs to be fixed in the short- and long-term. That sign, for many a first impression as they enter Henderson Park, is at the top of our list.

**Linda Mabee – Does your Recreation Center have activities or exercise programs for senior citizens?**

Linda, we have offerings for people of all ages and stages, but some of our most popular programs are for our seniors. If you take a look at the course listing here, you’ll get a sense of the variety we offer our seniors.

What you won’t see is the impact. It’s not just that these programs are helping folks to stay mentally and physically active in their later years, these are opportunities to foster new relationships or, in some cases, rekindle relationships that go back a half-century or more. I sure hope you’ll consider joining us!

ACTIVITY	MON.	TUE.	WED.	THU.	FRI.	SAT.
ART STUDIO		9AM-2PM				
BRIDGE					12PM-3:30PM	
CANASTA			11AM-2PM			
ELDER ORPHANS						12PM-2PM
EXERCISE		9AM-10AM		9AM-10AM		9AM-10AM
MEDITATION			11:30AM-12:30PM & 6PM-7PM			
MAHJONG	11:30AM-2PM				11:30AM-2PM	
PEOPLE MAKING PROGRESS				7PM-8PM		
RICHARD SIMMONS (Silver Fox)			10:30AM-11:30AM			
TUCKERCISE	10:30AM-11:30AM				10:30AM-11:30AM	

**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.**



## COMMUNITY CORNER

**4/21 – Earth Day Celebration & Trail Dedication**

9-10 a.m., Henderson Park

Come celebrate nature at Tucker’s largest and most used park. This is your opportunity to meet the folks who sponsored improvements to the newly redesigned White Trail, as well as to meet the friends and volunteers who did the work. Meet up on the Livsey side of the park near Lake Erin.

**4/21 – Document Shredding hosted by Smoke Rise Community Association**

10 a.m.-1 p.m., Smoke Rise Elementary School

Free, secure, on-site destruction of confidential, private and all other types of paper. Please segregate your paper waste from binders, cardboard, plastic bags and metals as these cannot be shredded.

# TUCKERGA.GOV

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## TUCKER CHILI COOK-OFF

Tucker's 2018 Main Street events kicked off on March 10 with the always popular Tucker Chili Cook-Off. Make sure to mark your calendar for May 12, when Downtown Tucker comes alive for Tucker Day.



**PLEASE DELIVER TO:**

