



The City News Express

Spring

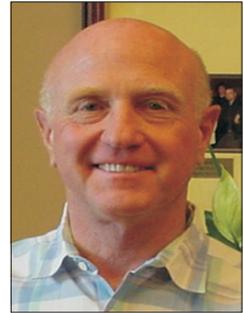
Connecting Austell Government With Its Citizens

2013

State of the City Address

Mayor Jerkins delivered his annual "State of the City" address to the members of the Austell Business Association at their January 15th meeting at the Threadmill Complex. Like other cities across the state and the nation, Austell faces fiscal challenges. He said "It's not good news, but we're hanging in there."

According to the Mayor, lower revenues from the Gas System due to a mild winter and increased health care costs have negatively impacted the city's budget. For the first time since 1990, the city raised the millage rate. It was raised from 3.123 to 4.0 mils. He said for the first eleven years that he was in office, the millage rate was reduced by one quarter mill each year until it came down to 3.123 and has remained at that rate until this fall. This slight increase was needed to balance the budget. Even though taxes have increased slightly, they are still the lowest in Cobb County and the surrounding areas. Because Austell has its own Fire Department, our residents receive a 3 mil discount from Cobb County so that our effective tax rate is 1 mil.



Joe Jerkins, Mayor

The Mayor told the audience that in 2012 the Police Department answered 4,704 calls; handled 278 accidents and wrote 4,241 citations. The Police Department was busy last year, but so was the Fire Department. Each of the two stations have three firefighters on duty at all times, and in 2012 they handled 1,278 emergency calls with an average response time of 4.8 minutes. The city also operates its own 911 system.

The effects of the 2009 flood are still being felt. He stated that the city lost approximately 700 homes due to the flood. Twenty-five qualified homes were bought out for a total of \$1.96 million. The city's portion \$294,000. FEMA recently notified Austell that forty-seven additional homes have been approved to be purchased at a cost of \$5.75 million. Federal and State funding will be available to purchase these homes.

Two new projects will be complete in the very near future. A Disk Golf Course is being installed in the Douglas County portion of Louise Suggs Park, and a ninety-foot flagpole will be erected at soon to come Veterans Memorial Park on VMH.

Highlights of 2012 in Austell include the completion of a remodeling project for 25,000 square-foot building located at the rear of the Threadmill Complex. This building will soon be available for rent. The Mayor said that currently the Threadmill is ninety-five percent occupied. In December, the Downtown Streetscape improvements were completed, and last summer the city purchased a new \$459,000 Fire truck that is now in operation.

The fire truck and other improvements have been possible for us because of the SPLOST funding. The city has received \$4.6 million from SPLOST, some of which will fund improvements to our 911 center. According to Mayor Jerkins, "This sales tax is a very good thing for the City of Austell."

Disc Golf Comes to Austell

Although you may not have heard of the game, Disc Golf has caught the attention of sports enthusiasts around the country!

Throwing discs has been around in one form or another since the early 1900's. In the 1960's college students from coast to coast were throwing Frisbees. A strong interest in throwing this round object has continued, and this sport is currently riding a new wave of popularity. Now it's enthusiastically played in more than forty countries around the world.

The object of the game is to throw a disc shaped like a Frisbee, from basket to basket on a pre-set course in the fewest throws. The discs are tossed into baskets from designated tee pads, and can be played by individuals or in groups.

There are a number of Disc Golf courses around the Atlanta area, and one other course is located in Cobb County. The Mayor and Council approved building a twelve acre course, Frog Rock Disc Golf, located in the fifty plus acre Louise Suggs Memorial Park. Since then, Disc Golfers have been calling to find out how soon they can play!

We have been working on the Austell Course for several months, and now it's almost ready for all who want to throw a disc! There will be a Ribbon Cutting on Tuesday, May 21, 2013 at 2:00 p.m. to officially open the Frog Rock Disc Golf Course.

We cordially invite you, your family and friends to join us at the Grand Opening.

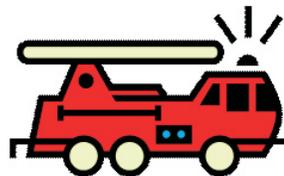


Council Members

Ward 1 - Kirsten Anderson
Ward 2 - Scott Thomas

Ward 3 - Martin Standard
Ward 4 - Virginia Reagan

At Large Post 1 - Trudie A. Causey
At Large Post 2 - Suzanne Thomason



News from the Fire Department



Lt. Bach receiving gifts as mementos of his service with the City. L-R Asst. Fire Chief Pat Maxwell, George Bach, Mayor Joe Jerkins and Fire Chief Tim Williams.

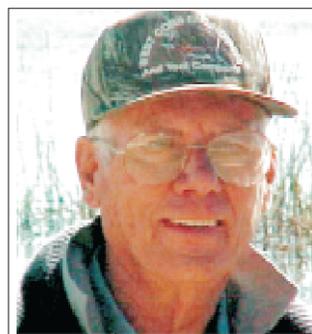
Fire Lieutenant George Bach has retired after 36+ years of service to the City of Austell. He was honored at a retirement reception on February 27th at the Community Center. Congratulations and Best Wishes to Lt. Bach.

A couple of reminders...a state outdoor burning ban begins on May 1st and will continue until October 1st. Outdoor burning is currently allowed through April 30th...this is a good time to change the batteries in home smoke detectors because smoke detectors save lives, and we will have our annual boot drives for Muscular Dystrophy and the Firefighters Burn Foundation again this spring. Our Drive was successful last year, raising \$6,524 and we hope to do at least as well this year.

We recently filled one of our vacant positions with EMT Matt Landrum who comes on board as a certified Emergency Medical Technician.

Ribbon Cutting for Austell's I. T. and Lodemia Terrell Community Garden and Educational Center

Windy Lane was home to I. T. and Lodemia Terrell from 1956 until the flood of 2009 overwhelmed their home. The Terrells were good neighbors to everyone in Austell and were happy to lend a hand to those in need. In fact, their generosity and their garden were known far and wide. Lodemia won prizes for her flowers and the whole family pitched in to plant a prize garden every year. If you stopped by for a visit, you left with a bag full of vegetables!



Prize Anemone from flower garden

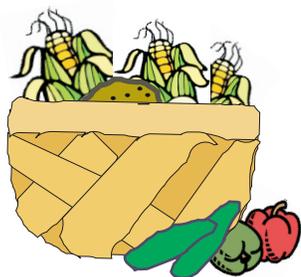
Since homes cannot be rebuilt on flooded land, the City of Austell has been turning that land into neighborhood green spaces. In discussions regarding these plots of land, a decision was made to build a community garden and educational center. There is no place better suited than the Terrell property! The old garden that had produced so abundantly over the years will come to life again, and the memory of I. T. and Lodemia will be honored. This wonderful couple, married sixty-six years, loved God, family and their community. They gave of themselves freely, expecting nothing in return. Once again, people can enjoy the produce that comes from I. T and Lodemia's garden.

As ideas took shape, Craig Carpenter, who is in charge of Austell's Stormwater Management, contacted many resources inquiring about grants for the project. He brought together the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Cobb County, Georgia Soil and Water Conservation, NRCS, Floodplain Management Services, Inc., Carastar and Lowe's to get involved with our community in this visionary project.

An educational component to the garden includes an outdoor classroom for classes in gardening or horticulture. Master gardeners can offer their expertise to small to medium sized groups in this lovely setting. Teachers can bring their classes so that school children can learn about nature. And, of course, everyone is welcome to come by and enjoy the space whenever possible.

We are already planning to build walking trails through the woods so that anyone can experience the wonderful feeling of the outdoors in this natural setting. Blueberry bushes have been planted and there is a gigantic fig tree and pecan tree for all to enjoy. Visitors, feel free to enjoy the berries, figs and pecans in season!

Initially, twenty-four raised garden plots have been built for use by the community. These spaces can be rented for \$48 per year. In the future, twenty-four more will be built. The resident is completely responsible for planting, watering, harvesting and tending to his/her space. For more information on the Community Garden, please visit our website www.austellga.gov.



I. T. and Lodemia Terrell's children revisit their childhood home to cut the ribbon officially opening Austell's Community Garden named to honor their parents.

Left to Right Shirley Terrell Dozier; Wade Terrell; Regina Terrell Tilley and Mike Terrell