

# Stewart County Commission News!



## Stewart County Commission's Initial Report on Hurricane Michael

Hurricane Michael was the first-ever hurricane to hit southwest Georgia. On the evening of October 10, Michael flung its fury at Stewart County.

Recognizing the power of the storm as it landed in Florida, the Stewart County Commissioners asked the director of Stewart County's Emergency Management Agency, Greg Stewart, to open a refuge, and he did. The County's emergency shelter is the old Stewart-Quitman High School. Director Stewart opened the shelter on Wednesday, October 10 through Thursday, October 11 for a total of fifty people.

Director Stewart also secured nine pallets' of bottled water from GEMA, as well as one pallet of meals, ready-to-eat. Some of these supplies were distributed to shut-ins during the extended power outage in southern part of the county, while other county citizens picked up supplies at two different distribution points.

Georgia DOT cleared state roads on Thursday. The Commissioners thank J.D. Abercrombie (Area Engineer in the Columbus office of GDOT) for his team's work in clearing debris from the county's state roads.

The county's road staff, headed by Road Superintendent Gene Haynes, began clearing roads during the storm and after. They cleared all inhabited roads in the county by Saturday morning. Thanks to them all!

During the hurricane, the Stewart County Emergency Medical Service (EMS) fortunately had to deploy for only one call. Further, Stewart County EMS Director Ed Lynch indicates that he received no reports of storm-related injuries, either during the storm or in the clean-up to date.

The Commissioners also are thankful for the crews of both Georgia Power and Sumter Electric Membership Corporation, which worked tirelessly after the storm to restore power to the homes and businesses in the county. All customers had electrical service by Wednesday, October 17, one week after the storm.

We have identified seven damaged homes in Richland, one of which was destroyed; one damaged in Red Hill; one damaged on Moore's Store Road; and one damaged in Lumpkin. The only other major impact of the storm seems to be a tremendous loss of trees, especially in household yards and along roadsides. The Stewart County Commission has been able to add a reservoir of experience to its tool kit for use whenever we may have natural disasters in the future. God bless you all.

## Stewart County Summit Empowers the People!



September 19 focusing on 66 ideas.

Well over a hundred people attended because of a desire to see Stewart County become its potential. These included State Representative **Gerald Greene**, District Attorney **Lewis Lamb**, Richland Mayor **Adolph McLendon**, Lumpkin Mayor Pro Tempore **Barbara Cullefer**, and Stewart County Sheriff **Larry Jones**.

The Regional Representatives

of Senators David Perdue and Johnny Isakson, **Kathy Burns** and **Laura Gower** respectively came and supported the effort. Stewart County Coroner **Sybil Ammons** and School Superintendent **Dr. Valerie Roberts** also attended.

***“What can the Stewart County Commission do to make the county a better place to live, learn, work, worship, and play?”***

This question was the basis of an event which took place on

### Stewart County Town-Hall Meetings.

The Stewart County Community Group members are: Sherry Ammons, Edwina Turner, Priscilla Barrington, Allison Slocum, Kathy Blackburn, Victoria Barrett, Ruthie Hamlin, Jean Beall Armour, Georgia Moye, Lisa Fort, Chip Jones, Judy Butts, Sandra Dunaway, Orateen Dabbs, and Roman Stankus.

It was an event ten months in the making. The Commission formed a “Stewart County Community Group” in October, 2017 to bring the citizens of the county together in a common purpose. Then, this Spring, the Group held town-hall meetings with the citizens of each of the five political districts.

Led by the individual Commissioners in their own districts, those town halls resulted in ***66 ideas***. Among these, a consensus developed towards **entranceway beautification, anti-littering campaigns, youth recreation, revitalization, Neighborhood Watches, a Shop Locally campaign**, and a **health facility in Richland**, among others.

## Speakers.

GBI Director **Vernon Keenan** began the event by putting our local law enforcement in perspective with that across the United States. Director Keenan indicated that Stewart County is fortunate to have good law enforcement.



Dr. **Linda Buchanan**, President of Andrew College in Cuthbert, encouraged the citizens to work together and to be enthusiastic about communities. In her experience, she said, people have a tendency to feel guilty about the distant past. Dr. Buchanan noted that things change, and we have to change with them. We can re-purpose old buildings, and we can focus on educating the current generation, among many of our initiatives, as ways of using our existing resources to improve ourselves.

*Patricia said, “I have been a part of community projects in Stewart County since the 1980s. We’ve talked about all these things before. But, here we are, still talking about them. What we need is ‘follow-through.’ We have to make our words become deeds.”*

## Committee #4:

### Recreation

- Help State Parks
- Help Bicycle Trail
- Library Services and Locations
- Crime and Drug Problems
- Youth Activities
- General Recreation
- Cell, Broadband, and Internet Reception
- Use of SQHS for Emergency Refuge/ Recreation?

## Committee #3: Education.

Educational Improvement	Library Services and Locations
Cell, Broadband, and E-911 Reception	Crime and Drug Problems
Publicize Emergency Plans	Day Care
Youth Activities	Relations with Law Enforcement/STYLE
County Unity/Communication/Collaboration/Break Down Barriers	Promote L4GA ("Get Lit!") and Talk With Me Baby
Discard Personal Agendas	
Help State Parks	
Adequate & Affordable Housing	
Ministerial Alliance	
Outpatient Care Facility	
Grocery Store in Lumpkin	
Jobs	

### Break-Out Sessions.

After a break, the attendees chose a "break-out" session suited to their individual interests. These sessions were led by professionals and local Community Group members, including **Amanda Peacock** of the Georgia Department of Economic Development; **Randy Butts** of the Stewart County Historical Commission; **Vernon Keenan** of the GBI; **Bari Geeslin**, former principal at the elementary school; **Linda Buchanan** of Andrew College; **Becky Glisson** of Columbus Parks and Recreation; and Dr. **Ricky McCorkle**,



Principal Viola Fedd welcomed the Summit participants to Stewart County Elementary School.

### Thanks to All!

County Manager **Mac Moyer** observed that the Community Group has done an excellent job of bringing attention to the things that people in the county want. "We learned many things from our Town Halls," he said. "But probably the biggest insight is that the people of the county care a lot about Stewart County. Now that the Summit is over, we hope our core group of volunteers will expand to a genuine force to be reckoned with!"

**Committee #1: Tourism and Economic Development.**

*A young **volunteer** for a better Stewart County!*

- Jobs
- Beautification/Entranceway Beautification
- Littering
- Tourism Signage
- Perception of Crime and Drugs
- GPS, Broadband, and E-911 Reception
- Derelict Buildings, Abandoned Cars
- Cell and Internet Reception
- Help State Parks
- Tourism Trail
- Promote Bicycle Trail
- Adopt-a-Highway
- Projects through Economic Development Authority



*The Commission thanks the Storm Shelter volunteers: **Anne Bennett, Joe Houston, Mitzi Lynch, Peggy Mitchell, and Shirley Kisor.** Thanks to **Rinnie Hardwick** for helping with logistics of the shelter and water distribution. **EMS Director Ed Lynch, Chad King, Ian Stewart, Emily Stewart, and Pepper Grimmatt-Drew** helped with water distribution.*

**Committee #2: Health, Safety, and Sanita-**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Derelict Buildings, Abandoned Cars, Cell, Broadband, and Internet Reception | tion  |
| Publicize Emergency Plans   | County Unity                                    |
| County Unity/Communication/ Collaboration/Break Down Barriers               | Youth Activities                                |
| Discard Personal Agendas  | Ministerial Alliance                            |
| Preservation  | Library Services and Locations                  |
| Adequate and Affordable Housing   | Relations with Law Enforcement                  |
| General Recreation  | Neighborhood Watches                            |
| Help State Parks  | Promote L4GA ("Get Lit!") and Talk With Me Baby |
| Grocery Store in Lumpkin  | Day Care  |
| Brinson Hill Infrastructure   | Relations with Law Enforcement/STYLE            |
| Animal Control  | EMS Building                                    |
| Litter  |   |
| Regulate hunting camps  |   |
| Crime and Drug Problems   |   |
| GPS, Broadband, and E-911 Reception   |   |

*Summit photos by **Chris Usry**, Stewart County School System*

*Edwina said, "The Education discussion at the Summit was mostly about the exciting L4GA grant in the schools. We have volunteers who will read to the kids. Everyone should have a reading buddy!"*

## 2019 SPLOST

The Stewart County Commission has proposed a special local option sales tax, which will take effect when the current one expires on March 31, 2019. If you vote “yes” on the SPLOST, the sales-tax rate in the county will remain at 8%.

If you vote for the SPLOST, the revenue will go to specific projects for the City of Richland, the City of Lumpkin, and the County of Stewart.

The County’s share will go to EMS, fire protection, E-911, repair of buildings, roads, and recreation.

Lumpkin’s share will go to fire protection, streets, water and sewer services, public safety, and recreation.

Richland has asked that its share be used for police, fire, and playground.

Contact Mac Moye at the Stewart County Commission (229/838-6769) for more information.



The Stewart County Emergency Response Agency provided emergency supplies of water and meals, ready-to-eat (MREs) to the citizens of the county following Hurricane Michael.

The 2018 Stewart-Webster Cancer Ride raised \$17,700 to help local people with cancer.



## Proposed Amendments to the State Constitution

**Georgia Amendment 1:** Dedicates up to 80 percent of revenue from the sales and use tax on outdoor recreation equipment to the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund to fund land conservation.

**Georgia Amendment 2:** Establishes a state business court and establish procedures and rules for judicial selection, term length, and judge qualifications for the court.

**Georgia Amendment 3:** Allows the legislature to change the formula used to calculate the tax on forest land conservation use property and create a new land designation for commercial timberland and to establish a percentage of local grant assistance funding that could be retained by the state for administration. **The Stewart County Commission has expressed concern about the possible impact of Amendment 3.**

**Georgia Amendment 4:** Adds specific rights of crime victims, together known as a Marsy's Law, to the Georgia Constitution.

**Georgia Amendment 5:** Allows a school district or districts with a majority of enrolled students within a county to call for a referendum to levy a sales tax for education purposes.

**Georgia Referendum A:** Provides for a homestead property tax exemption in certain municipalities equal to the difference between the home's assessed value for the current year and the adjusted base year value of the home.

**Georgia Referendum B:** Clarifies that an existing tax exemption for nonprofit housing for the mentally disabled can be applied to housing constructed or renovated through financing from businesses.

Stewart County Commission

**Joseph B. Williams**, *Chair and District 2*

**Arcola Scott**, *Vice Chair and District 5*

**Joe Lee Williams**, *District 4*

**Ernie Brown**, *District 3*

**Tyrone Nelson**, *District 1*

**Mac Moye**, *Manager*

**Jacqueline Sutton-Ball**,  
*County Clerk*

**Ed Lynch**, *EMS Director and Fire Chief*

## Thank you, CoreCivic!

**CoreCivic** provided lunch for all the participants of the Stewart County Summit. Unit Manager Johns, U/M Richardson, Chief Blackmon, U/M Lane, Chief Hood, Warden Gray, Business Manager Norman, U/M Babb, Secretary Willis, and Warden Peterson.



Through the taxpayers of Stewart County, the Commission funds and houses the county's elected and appointed officials and provides various services, facilities, and authorities.

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*"Enjoy the Bounty in Stewart County."*