

## MARIETTA DAILY JOURNAL

METRO ATLANTA'S ONLY CONSERVATIVE EDITORIAL VOICE.

Otis A. Brumby Jr., Publisher

Otis A. Brumby III, Executive Vice President

Wade Stephens, VP, Advertising

Jay Whorton, Associate Publisher

Joe Fernandez, VP, Production

Matt Heck, Circulation Director

Billy Mitchell, Managing Editor

Joe Kirby, Editorial Page Editor

Bill Kinney, Associate Editor

Harris Kettles, VP, Operations

## GUEST EDITORIALS

## TSPLOST

## Drivers needed

Were it not for jawboning by the state and local chambers of commerce, plus quite a few hometown newspapers such as ours, the ballot question on July 31 regarding a special added penny of sales tax that will run for 10 years solely for transportation projects wouldn't have a prayer of carrying in most of the state. It still may not.

Indeed, this area's voters can be excused for somehow thinking they are voting on a new tax to build a ton of new highways in the Atlanta metro. The pro-tax advertising bombardment has already begun there on TV that spills over into homes in Floyd, Bartow, Paulding and other counties where the fate of local new road projects — not dreams of untangling interstates — are actually on the ballot.

As noted before, rarely has such a major issue been sent into such a hostile environment ... or been so confusing.

First, this is actually 12 separate referendums for various parts of the state. In Northwest Georgia, the total vote of all the counties involved decides — Floyd could lopsidedly support it but get nothing; Floyd could overwhelmingly oppose it and still have to pay the new tax (and get its road projects).

There's even a "poison pill" in the legislation that won't show on the ballot: Any region that defeats it will, in the future, have to ante up 30 percent in local "matching funds" to get any state road work done instead of the current 10 percent. Win (pay new tax) or lose (extract more local taxes) the state picks up more transportation money.

And, other than in the core Atlanta area where Democrats still offer up competing candidates, most of the regions will lure primary voters that are heavily of Republican leanings including the Tea Party faithful, already on record as opposing the measure because it is a tax. So, for that matter, do some environmentalist groups, such as the Sierra Club, because they want most, if not all, future "road" money to go to mass transit, not paving.

The balloting deck is stacked against passage in those areas where supporting campaign dollars and feet-on-ground organizational efforts are not overwhelming.

No citizen should really like this proposal as it is a forced selection between the devil and deep blue sea. However, no citizen — particularly in these parts — can really afford to do anything but support it. Why? Because it is likely the last, best chance for this neck of the state-forgotten piney woods to ever see long-sought key highway improvements.

For greater Rome, this may well be the only way those alive today will ever see a widening of Ga. 140 from U.S. 27 to Ga. 53 and then a four-lane to Adairsville, a total rebuild to four lanes of Ga. 101 from East 12th Street in Rome to U.S. 278 in Rockmart — the deadliest stretch of highway in these parts — plus firm funding for the U.S. 411 Connector to I-75.

Even that wouldn't be "soon" — look at the timetable on the project list and all these are on the back end, some 7-10 years out — but at least, like the

local SPLOST line items Floyd voters are more familiar with, they represent firm commitments. There's also a large kitty (25 percent) of the revenues set aside for purely local projects to be determined by the home folks.

THE  
ROME NEWS-  
TRIBUNE

And that, frankly, would be far, far better than what seems likely to happen if the TSPLOST is voted down.

As Angie Lewis, who heads the local chamber board, put it: "Not having a direct connection to Interstate 75 has cost this community countless jobs over the last four decades. If we do not support this tax, we can add another 10 more years to the wait for more jobs and greater economic growth."

Actually, it could be more like 20 ... if not 50 years.

State leaders have said there is no alternative transportation plan if the TSPLOST is defeated but have already signaled what will happen.

Former Gov. Sonny Perdue already gave the General Assembly and executive branch concurrent control over the selection of all state highway projects with the Department of Transportation, in effect emasculating those who know about roads in favor of those who know about politics, bringing home the bacon and such.

Gov. Nathan Deal has warned: "You may not get the General Assembly to be able to delegate that authority back down to local levels of government to participate in the project selection process again, if this proves to be unsuccessful."

House Speaker David Ralston, chimed in: "If it fails, then I think it is going to be difficult to have the General Assembly go back and re-do something that's failed. I don't think there's going to be any point in trying to dress up a crashed car."

And then Deal named a political pal and power broker, Toby Carr, former head of the Georgia GOP, as the state's transportation planning director with the most say on future project selections. Carr, by the way, has his degrees in finance and agricultural engineering likely meaning his background in road planning is limited to driving where his GPS tells him to go.

Without the TSPLOST, and its mandated project list in coming years, it will be influence and power under the Gold Dome, of which Greater Rome in recent years has had very little, that will determine who dominates the feeding trough and who gets treated like the runt.

Additionally, it is unlikely the ruling legislators will find the state's \$2 billion annual gas tax income sufficient to feed their appetites for pork. Hence it is a pretty good guess that if the sales tax is defeated they will replace such lost income by doubling or tripling the state's lowest-in-the-nation motor-fuels tax (7.5 cents). Voters wouldn't get a say on that one.

Even though it involves an added tax, the TSPLOST at least grants this region road improvements it has long begged for. That's a lot better choice than turning this region's future over to political devilry.

Now, would somebody please get into the driver's seat before this thing runs off the road?

## AROUND TOWN

## SHOVEL READY

## MHS to break ground for auditorium on Thursday

IT'S BEEN A SCANT TWO MONTHS since Marietta voters approved a \$7 million bond issue to help fund a new auditorium at Marietta High School, but school system officials aren't wasting any time. Groundbreaking ceremonies are slated for 6 p.m. Thursday at MHS.

The Marietta school board is using \$2 million from its Building Fund to jump-start construction on top of the bond money. The bonds, in turn, hopefully will be paid off with revenues from an extension of the 1 percent Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax next year.

The 750-seat auditorium would house visual arts, dancers, actors, vocalists, the band and orchestra. It also would serve the system as a setting for competitions and staff development events, according to Superintendent Dr. Emily Lembeck.

Otis Brumby, Bill Kinney, Joe Kirby  
AROUND TOWN COLUMNISTS

Daylily Garden" from 5 to 7 p.m. Saturday at Bill and Diana Waldrop's Kennesaw Mountain Daylily Gardens, 310 McDaniel Road in Marietta.

**POLITICS:** Former state Sen. Chuck Clay (R-Marietta), who was the beneficiary of a trial balloon floated by a friend last month who told Around Town that the former west Cobb Commissioner was seriously thinking of running for chairman, tells AT he has no plans to do so due to the competing demands of his job and helping play dad to four young boys. ... And Marietta

Mayor Steve Tumlin, who last summer was weighing a run for chair, officially ruled out any such move.

"I just am not as enamored with the rest of the county as I am with Marietta," he told Around Town. "Serving as mayor is a true labor of love."

Meanwhile, you'll recall that former east Cobb Commissioner Thea Powell, one of the early possibilities

mentioned last year as a potential foe for incumbent Chair Tim Lee, took herself out of the running after accepting a new job as development director for St. Jude's Recovery Center in downtown Atlanta. She resigned from that job in March, so now that she has time on her hands is she getting "political fever" again?

"Not at this juncture," she told Around Town on Monday. "I'm supporting (chairman candidate) Mike Boyce."

Added Powell, "I think a lot of people don't realize that it will be a done deal by the end of the primary July 31st. They don't have until

fall to start paying attention. Maybe after qualifying is over and the field is set, they'll start paying attention."

Meanwhile, there'll be competing fundraisers Thursday for two candidates seeking to be the next Cobb Commission chairman. Bill Byrne will host a fundraiser from 5 to 7 p.m. Thursday at Schillings on the Square. And candidate Larry Savage will host a fundraiser from 6-9 p.m. Thursday at the Paper Mill Grille, 305 Village Parkway in east Cobb. ...

B.J. and Parri Abbott will host a fundraiser Saturday for Cobb Juvenile Court Judge Greg Poole, who's running for Cobb Superior Court, reports spokesman Jon Hutson. The Backyard Caribbean Buffett will take place from 2-5 p.m. at 91 Hermitage Court in Powder Springs, with the food provided by Iron Horse Restaurant. ... And Scott Smith of Cobb County KIA and state Sen. Judson Hill (R-east Cobb) will co-host a fundraiser for Poole from 5:30-7:30 p.m. May 22 at The Atlanta Country Club.



An architect's rendering of the Marietta High addition.

The project would remedy what many "True Blue" Mariettans see as a major shortcoming — the fact that MHS is the only high school in Cobb that lacks an auditorium.

So to the brass that will be lined up shovels in hand on Thursday, we say, "Dig in!"

**MARIETTA WARD 4** City Council candidate Andy Morris will hold his inaugural fundraiser on Sunday at arguably the most notable location of any of this year's fundraisers — "Tranquilla," the columned antebellum mansion on Kennesaw Avenue now owned by Greg and Beth Griffin.



Andy Morris

Co-sponsors of the 5 to 7 p.m. event are JoAnna and Paul Conyngham, Kathy and Wyman Pilcher and Carrie and Jud Thompson.

Morris served on council from 2002-05 after defeating Van Pearlberg by six votes. Pearlberg is now running for Cobb Superior Court and his wife, Patti, is running for his old seat.

Morris's father, Luke, served on council in the 1950s and his grandfather, Mace Morris, was Marietta's first paid fire chief.

Morris says his top issues are supporting WellStar's planned expansions; redevelopment; and preservation. The candidate and his wife, Donya, have three children each and 14 grandchildren. He's a 1965 MHS grad and works as an independent subcontractor doing Section 8 Housing inspections. Bill Campbell of Marietta Mortgage is chairing his campaign and his sister, Nancy Morris Dorsey, is his treasurer.

**THE COBB DEMOCRATIC WOMEN** will host "An Evening in the

**COBB RESIDENTS** won't just be voting on TSPLOST and a new commission chairman on July 31, but also on whether to authorize Sunday alcohol sales in unincorporated Cobb. A judge canceled the results of the March 6 referendum on those sales and ordered the July 31 revote, saying that all county voters should be allowed to vote, not just those who live in unincorporated Cobb. The judge acted in response to a suit filed by Marietta lawyer Justin O'Dell on behalf of plaintiff Roger Hines. That has meant an extra five months of "dry" Sundays in unincorporated Cobb, five months in which those who are thirsty likely had to

find relief elsewhere.

Joked O'Dell to Around Town on Thursday, "I'm still waiting on that nice 'Thank you basket' from 'the Fulton County Package Dealers Association.'"

**NOTING** that a recent MDJ story on the renovation of Hickory Hills Park included effusive quotes from Marietta Councilman Johnny Sinclair about the makeover, one wag noted to Around Town last week, "I wonder if Johnny still opposes the parks bond?" Sinclair was a leading opponent of the city's \$25 million parks bond passed by voters in 2009.

**PEOPLE:** United Community Bank and the Chattahoochee Tech Foundation will hold a reception for new Chattahoochee Technical College President Dr. Ron Newcomb from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Thursday at the Strand Theatre. ... Apologies to Southern Polytechnic State University student Brandon Camadine, recipient of this year's Fred and Drucilla Beck Scholarship from the Marietta Kiwanis Club, whose name was inadvertently left out of Sunday's column that listed the names of the winners.

**FORMER** Gov. Roy Barnes will share memories of growing up in then-rural Mableton and stories of his early political career on Thursday evening, when he'll be the special guest at the Marietta Museum of History's "Evening with History." Barnes's talk will begin at 7 p.m. ...

Five Marietta and Cobb County organizations will host a reception Monday to showcase their strides in historic preservation. Sponsors are Landmarks & Historical Society, Cobb Preservation Foundation, Marietta Historic Preservation Commission, Cobb County Historic Preservation Commission and Marietta Historic Board of Review, reports Becky Paden. The event

will be from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the historic Anderson House at 65 Whitlock Ave. The public is invited. ... Maj. Theodore "Dutch" Van Kirk, the final surviving crewmember of the Enola Gay, which dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, will be featured at a two-day book-signing event this weekend at the Aviation Wing of the Marietta Museum of History. Van Kirk will be on hand from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday and Sunday signing copies of his book, "My True Course: Northumberland to Hiroshima." There is no admission fee to the Wing site, but there will be a \$5 parking fee on both days.

**A LEMONADE STAND FUNDRAISER** for cystic fibrosis will be held from 3:30 to 7:30 p.m. Friday at 180 Freyer Drive by the "Kids on Freyer Drive" in honor of their former neighbor, Gavin Bartlett. Gavin, his brother Sebastian and, parents Nikki and Toby Bartlett lived in Cherokee Heights on Seminole Drive and recently moved to Charlotte. The "Kids on Freyer" have held the fundraiser for the past six years raising approximately \$5,000, reports neighbor Laing Heidt. Some 90 percent of the money raised nationally goes to research.

## THE DRAWING BOARD

