

## Incumbents Get My Vote

As the elections draw near, it is time to decide for whom to vote. As I look at Web sites of Doug Canavello, Alicia Flowers, Clancy Laizure, George Waldrep and Don Wendelken, I see lofty goals of low/no taxes, fiscal responsibility, everyone's voice should be heard, respect, and preservation of private property rights. These sites are well done, but I don't see any real solutions. How are their budgets going to be more fiscally responsible than those of incumbents Bob Williams, Dena Barnes, Carolyn Collins and Mark Brown?

I appreciate wanting to allow every voice to be heard, but how are they going to decide whose voice needs to be heard? Until some of these candidates threw their hats into the race, I had not even seen most of them at a council meeting. How are they getting their information on what is important to the town of Summerfield? The incumbents have been more than willing to get out and talk to the citizens. They attend many town events, sit on committees, answer e-mails, letters and phone calls. How will the new candidates get out and get involved with the people? I know how the incumbents stand on these issues and the experience they bring to the table.

There also seems to be some misinformation on these Web sites – like the \$1 million amphitheatre. The amphitheatre is an event center and will cost nowhere near that amount of money. Phase II of the park will contain more paved walking trails and other items besides an event center. An event center will be a place for an outdoor learning classroom for the school children and can be used for other community events. Also, the grant could not be used on the ballfields. The grant has to be used for the purpose that was written.

There is also mention of the sheriff's substation on some of the Web sites. This gives citizens the idea that land was purchased in 2004 for a sheriff's substation, when in fact the town purchased the land for a new town hall. The council was trying to plan ahead. The building was going to have space for a sheriff's substation. At the time there had been concerns about safety and the council thought the sheriff's substation would alleviate these concerns. A small group of citizens formed a special interest group called the Concerned Citizens to block the building of the town hall.

Candidates Canavello, Flowers, Laizure, Waldrep and Wendlken believe that the form of government should stay a mayor-council form of government. I can respect that, but Ms. Flowers actually believes that it

shouldn't be put to referendum and that the people of Summerfield should not be given the right to decide whether they want to change the form of government. Do the citizens of Summerfield not have a right to be heard?

What I would really like to know is how are these candidates going to handle finding septic for the town core when the septic systems on small lots start going bad? What is Summerfield going to do about water if wells start popping hot with contaminants similar to Stokesdale? How are they going to handle high staff turnover? How are they going to handle a member going behind the rest of the council members' backs to undermine an issue already voted on? How are they going to handle criticism from the public? How are they going to bring Summerfield back together and heal the rift that the Concerned Citizens started? These are the questions that deserve answers. Because I know that Dena Barnes, Mark Brown, Carolyn Collins and Bob Williams have seriously thought about these issues and care about the citizens, they will be my choices for town council and mayor when I cast my vote on Nov. 6. Who are you voting for?

— Beth Kaplan  
**SUMMERFIELD**

## Substation Facts

**3/2/2004** - Mayor Barnes asks council for motion to purchase property for the construction of Sheriffs substation



**4/28/2004** - Council directs staff to negotiate for contract with architect for construction of Sheriffs substation.



**5/4/2004** - Staff discloses as part of budget message that construction of Sheriffs substation is council's first priority budget item for FY 2004-2005



**3/1/2005** - Council member Mike Stewart states town purchased property for a sheriff's substation only.





## Summerfield Town Council

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in the amount of \$500 per day could be levied. Many people were originally unaware of a sign ordinance, but all have now been informed and only two have requested a permit. Signs cannot be allowed in the right-of-way and temporary signs are not legal.

- Councilman Stewart said he felt businesses need a way to advertise, and the town wants businesses to thrive. Councilman Williams said he agreed but some businesses abuse the ordinance. "I don't think we need to strong arm mom-and-pop businesses," Stewart said.

- Councilwoman Doggett said she felt \$500 per day was a steep penalty, and asked if the amount could be changed to \$100 per day. She said she felt violators should be penalized without being taken to court. Councilman Brown said the penalty could be changed, but the ordinance should be enforced.

- After reading the section on penalties, Attorney Trevorrow said violators could be charged with a misdemeanor and fined up to \$500 per day per violation, or could be issued a citation for a civil penalty and fine which would not require going to court.

- Stewart said he felt word would get out once fines are imposed and hope-

fully other violators would voluntarily comply.

### EXECUTIVE SESSION

Council went into executive session at 8:17 p.m. to discuss personnel and property matters, and returned at 9:20 p.m. Upon return, they stated that discussion was held on purchasing property for a sheriff's department substation. Motion was made to purchase property at 7300 Summerfield Road for \$55,000 for the substation and was approved unanimously. Discussion was also held on making appointments to the Board of Adjustment. Council voted unanimously to appoint Bill Peterson, Bob Fox, Darrin Taylor, Gene Grubb and Ron Willis to the Board of Adjustment, and then voted to appoint Bob Fox as temporary chair.

### BUSINESS FROM COUNCIL

- Councilman Williams said there was a problem with mud on Bronco Lane due to houses under construction, and asked if the town had any recourse. The county's Erosion Control is responsible, and if they are asked to inspect, must do so within 24 hours.

- Councilman Stewart said he had talked with the mayor of the Town of Davidson, who has offered to show

Council and staff their ordinances and tour the town, and suggested dates of March 30 or April 1. Text committee members might also be interested. Stewart will contact those interested in going.

### BUSINESS FROM TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

- Brandt stated that programs on state economic incentives and grants are offered at GTCC.

- The town needs to buy pine straw for the area around town hall.

- Brandt suggested Council consider a resolution for liquor by the drink for either the July or November ballot.

- Discussion on an early pay discount should the town levy a property tax needs to be held at the next meeting, as it must be passed by April 30 if it is going to be. "Just because you establish this doesn't mean you will have a tax," Brandt said. "But be prepared to pass (the early pay discount) if that is your choice."

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

The Summerfield Town Council meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Summerfield Community Center. The next meeting will be on April 6.



**Patti Stokes**  
*Publisher/Editor*

I hope Shakespeare will forgive me for paraphrasing his famous line, but levying a tax is something facing northwest area towns as they prepare their annual budgets. While Stokesdale residents won't be dealing with this issue this year, Oak Ridge and Summerfield citizens might.

Last year's decision by the county commissioners to change the method of sales tax distribution caused the towns in Guilford County to lose the majority of their income. The cities

and towns which charge a property tax, however, are eligible to collect at least some of that money. The commissioners' decision forced the towns to look at the tax issue much sooner than they would have otherwise. If the towns want to continue to exist, and if they want to grow and provide services for the residents who live there, the funds must come from somewhere.

No one enjoys paying taxes. At meetings in the past, some residents

## To Tax or Not To Tax – That is the Question



**Sandra Smith**  
*Managing Editor*

have been adamant, saying they do not want to pay any property tax to the towns, even if it means no services will be provided. Some people have even said that they moved here because there is no property tax.

But many people say they wanted their town to incorporate so that local people could make decisions on local issues, not some group of people who live somewhere else and may not care about the repercussions.

Growth is inevitable, and I believe with that growth comes responsibility. If the local towns want to ever be more than "paper towns," as they have been labeled in the past, the leaders will have to step up and make some uncomfortable decisions. If they decide not to charge a tax, money will have to be taken from savings just to continue to exist.

Summerfield is looking at building a sheriff's substation, an expenditure that would benefit not only their residents, but those in surrounding towns. They are also deciding

whether to hire their own town planner and building inspectors rather than contracting for those services. Constructing a town park, building a water system, paving roads, paying for library services and money for conserving natural resources are also being discussed.

Oak Ridge leaders are also talking about how to raise funds for a municipal water system. Other items being discussed include hiring a town administrator, building a town hall, hiring a sheriff's deputy and providing garbage pickup.

All the local towns are struggling with having enough facilities for the youth in the community. Ball fields and gyms are filled to capacity with the young people who want to participate in recreational sports.

As the towns finalize their annual budgets, the leaders are grappling with decisions that will guide the towns into the future. Any way you look at it, the answers are not easy.



Patti Stokes  
Publisher/Editor

At their June 1 meeting, the Summerfield Town Council voted to levy a property tax on their citizens. By the time you receive this issue, the Oak Ridge Town Council will have voted on doing the same.

For years, we've been preaching to residents about the importance of getting involved in the town in which they live. Unfortunately, many people don't pay attention to what's going on around them until something affects their property, livelihood, family or pocketbook. Then they come to town council meetings in droves, practically armed with torches and pitchforks, and often saying they knew nothing about what was going on.

This was definitely the case in Summerfield this week. Budget discussions, workshops and special meetings had been ongoing for months. If the proposed budget passed, residents would begin paying a tax of 10.5 cents per \$100 of property value.

Many people attending the June 1 meeting had misconceptions. One

## Did Somebody Say "T-a-x"?



Sandra Smith  
Managing Editor

speaker thought the tax on a \$150,000 home would be \$1,575, not \$157.50. Others said they did not want to pay for a library or sewer service, when no money in the budget was allocated for either. Some wondered why the town should pay for road maintenance when it should be paid for by DOT, when in fact the town does not pay for maintenance but is required to pave its own roads. Many spoke about conflicts of interest, particularly involving the building of a sheriff's substation since Mayor Dena Barnes is married to Guilford County Sheriff BJ Barnes. The council was called names such as "bloodsuckers." Shouts, boos and talk of voting those out of office who supported the budget were frequently heard.

Many in the crowd had never been to a town council meeting before. One speaker, who admitted he had just become interested because of talk among his neighbors, asked if anything that was being said would influence council members' decision.

Council member Jane Doggett replied, "We've been working on a sheriff's substation for at least four years and I've never heard anybody say it was a bad idea. Budget meetings have been going on for months and months. This is the last minute, folks. You asked if I was going to change my mind. I probably won't. I've sat through hours and hours of meetings and I get paid exactly zero. I like to hear what people have to say, but where were you four years ago?"

Interestingly, after the vote, around two-thirds of the approximately 90 people in attendance left the meeting, leaving only a handful of residents behind. Of those, all are frequently in attendance at town meetings and most often the last to leave.

It is possible to have an influence at the town government level, but citizens need to become involved in the process, and understand that they can't wait until "the last minute" to speak up and expect others who have been working on a project for months or even years to change their minds.