

Rabun County Alliance (March 8, 2019)

The RCA has expended a large effort on our Member's behalf in trying to understand not only the proposed SPLOST 7, but also the remaining dollars available to the County in SPLOST 6 which started in 2013. SPLOST 5 which started in 2008 was just closed out by the County. SPLOST 5 came in about \$2.3 million overbudget, which was covered by a \$1.3 million transfer from the road's category and a \$1 million transfer from general funds funded by property taxes. SPLOST 6 is going to have about \$8 million available in September after it closes, and we still don't know exactly when or where these funds will be spent.

SPLOST 7 would start in October of 2019 and run for 6 more years. This is not our first SPLOST journey with the County as some of you know. Each SPLOST iteration seems to show up with the same types of problems.

This year we teamed with the Rabun Coalition for Good Government which started up recently during the SDS dispute between Rabun County and the City of Clayton. They are a group made up of Democrats, Republicans and the Mountain Progressives in Rabun. With them we were able to convince the County we needed a public FORUM to inform voters of relevant SPLOST issues. We also all agreed that transparency and accountability were lacking with County management of SPLOSTS. That is why we all asked the County at the FORUM to commit to forming a Citizens Advisory Committee and to create a strategic road plan for the County this year.

Both proposals were rejected by the County Commissioners at the FORUM. The County did commit to look at a more informal communication with the Rabun Coalition, but this is just a proposal currently. Time will reveal if the County truly intends to begin more than just legally required minimal public communication regarding SPLOST expenditures.

We also must keep in mind this is a 6-year tax and if passed we must take the same chances we took with SPLOST 5 which did not turn out very well. So, has anything changed that we feel will provide more transparency, better accountability and cost overruns than in past SPLOSTs?

We must report that we have observed little change in approach from County officials as they prepare to offer the new SPLOST. **For that reason, we firmly recommend a NO vote on SPLOST 7.**