

# Rabun County Alliance

formerly West Rabun Property Owners ~ Est. 2001



## Fall 2021 Newsletter

*"Seeking Leadership and Accountability in Government"*

### UPCOMING NOVEMBER 2, 2021 ELECTIONS

There have been some notable changes to voting operations in Rabun County since the last general election. Of particular note, the Rabun County Board of Elections & Registration office has moved from the Old Raco High Drive location (adjacent to the Civic Center), and is now located at 184 South Main Street, Suite 102, in Clayton. This new office is in the bottom floor of the current Health Department facility (the old County hospital). This new office space is now also the official polling location for all in-person voting in Rabun County. If you're waiting until Election Day to cast your votes, you'll go here instead of the Civic Center.

For those 65 and older, the Board of Elections and Registration used to mail out Absentee Ballot applications for your convenience. Due to recent changes in Georgia voter law, this is no longer possible, so everyone, including those 65 and over, must request their application for absentee voting. Absentee voting applications for this election were first available on August 16, and had to be received by the Elections office no later than October 22.

October 4 was the last day to register for the upcoming election. Early voting began on October 12 and runs through October 29, with Monday–Friday hours of 8:30am to 5:00pm. Two Saturday voting days were held on October 16 and October 23. Absentee ballots could be mailed in starting October 12, and must be received

at the Elections Office by 7:00pm on Election Day.

A big item on this upcoming election ballot is the County and municipalities request to implement a new T-SPLOST, raising the local sales tax rate from 7% to 8%. More information about the T-SPLOST and its planned use follow in the next article.

### T-SPLOST FUNDS AND ROAD PROJECTS

The Rabun County Board of Commissioners sought to pursue the T-SPLOST to help with the lack of funds available for the unincorporated road infrastructure. The county currently has 361 center-line miles of road with 283.15 miles being paved and 77.785 miles being unpaved.

The county is currently into the seventh SPLOST. Each individual SPLOST lasts for a period of six years. Historically the SPLOSTs have generated from 15 to 20 million dollars with the allocation for roads/streets being 5 million in SPLOSTs 5-6 and 3 million in SPLOST 7. The county has used these allocations for the resurfacing of existing paved roads and the widening and paving of new roads. The current cost of resurfacing an existing county road is \$160,000 to \$185,000 per linear mile of road, depending on width of road and amount of milling needed. By simply dividing the five million dollar allocation by \$185,000 cost per lineal mile, one can see that the county can only resurface approximately

**COMMUNITY CALENDAR:** Visit the Chamber of Commerce at [gamountains.com](http://gamountains.com) for Rabun County events.

Visit [georgiapowerlakes.com](http://georgiapowerlakes.com) for helpful lake information from Georgia Power.

Visit [lakerabun.org](http://lakerabun.org), [lbca.net](http://lbca.net), and [seedlake.org](http://seedlake.org) for the various Association events.

Men's Christian Fellowship meets every Friday, 7:45–9:00am (706-782-7425 for more info).

Visit [rabuncountyalliance.com](http://rabuncountyalliance.com) for items of importance you may hear or wonder about between newsletters.

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June 15-1995

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Community news

## Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax paves 27 miles

By Tom TenBroeck  
Staff writer

Since being approved by the voters in November 1992, the county has spent about \$1.25 million out of the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) fund to pave nearly 27.5 miles of county roads.

On the average, each mile of paving costs the county \$41,126.89.

The county began collecting the SPLOST funds in April of 1993. Since then, the county has collected \$1.5 million and has spent \$1,127,287.94

paving 27.41 miles of county roads. The county still has a balance of \$372,712.06 left in the SPLOST funds.

"Some roads are a whole lot more and some roads are a whole lot less," county administrator Jimmy Bleckley said. "It varies quite a bit."

The high cost of paving, Bleckley said, is due to several factors: widening, which includes grading, clearing and general earth moving; implementing new drainage; laying a gravel base; occasionally surveying land and the paving itself.

The most costly endeavor the county has faced since using the SPLOST funds for paving was the blacktopping of a 5-mile stretch of Camp Creek Road at the cost of \$209,900.18.

Other roads that the county has used SPLOST funds on include: Acorn Creek, Camp Creek, North Charlie Mountain, Gipson Mountain, Laurel Lodge, Low Gap, Matthews Road, Plum Orchard, parking and a road at the Rabun County Rec Park, Sandy Ford, Screamer Mountain No.1, Screamer

Mountain No. 2, Seed Tick Loop, Tuckaluge, Pepi Road, Old Kelly Creek, River Street, Lamb Road, Messer Creek, Deer Hill, Germany Mountain Connector, Boggs Mountain, Church Street, Luther Owens, Bradford Road, Joy Church, John English, 500 feet to Rabun Metal Products, Earls Ford and High Harbor.

The county also supplied \$8,366.21 in SPLOST funds in aid to Dillard and \$24,683.91 in aid to Sky Valley. Total expenditures also include \$17,150 in equipment rental.

## Reward helps solve sign theft and vandalism

*Note: This was in the Clayton Tribune on June 15, 1995—paving 27.5 miles of gravel roads in two years of the first SPLOST. The county has paved 15.5 miles of gravel roads in the past 11 years, and resurfaced 66.6 miles in the past 9 years. Rabun County currently has 361 miles of road with 283.15 paved and 77.785 unpaved. If we had paved 13 miles per the last 6 SPLOST all Rabun County roads would be paved.*

27 miles of road every 6 years. This does not include the widening and paving of any new roads which can cost on average of \$278,000 per mile. This cost can very significantly due to widening, grading, putting in new culverts, etc.

The T-SPLOST has the estimated ability to generate an additional 17 million dollars over a five year period. (*Single County T-SPLOST can be levied up to 5 years. SPLOSTs can be levied for 6 years.*) Using the same math from the current SPLOSTs, the county could almost triple the resurfacing to approximately 70 plus miles of road in six years. Additionally, the county has four miles of unpaved roads ready to pave. The T-SPLOST would allow the county to pave these roads right out of the gate. More roads could then be prepared and paved each subsequent year. We've estimated this could be between 2 to 3 miles per year or more depending on the amount of widening, grading, installation of culverts, etc.

If the municipalities and the county worked together to create one paving contract a year, it would create more linear miles and volume, thus lowering the cost—creating a "more bang for your buck" scenario that would allow more roads and streets to be paved. —Darrin Giles and Kent Woerner

## 2021-2022 LAKE DRAWDOWN SCHEDULE

Lake Burton	Lake Seed	Lake Rabun
Draw begins Nov 1		Draw begins Oct 25
Down 7' by Dec 31	No drawdown	Down 10' by Nov 5
Fill begins Feb 1	is planned for	Fill begins Dec 24
Normal by May 1	this winter	Normal by Dec 31

## PROJECT LIFE LYFT 626 UPDATE

As you read about in the special-issue mailing from Rabun County Alliance and Tom Madison, Project Life Lyft 626 was a fundraising drive with the goal of giving our local EMS personnel a huge helping hand with one of their most strenuous and risk-laden tasks—loading and unloading their patients.

We are happy to announce that we more than exceeded the funding goal, and will be able to equip all Rabun County ambulances with battery-powered hydraulic lifts that can smoothly and safely load and unload a patient on a stretcher, both reducing the risk of additional injury to the patient and reducing the pervasive risk of back injuries to EMS personnel.

Our deepest appreciation goes out to everyone who contributed to Project Life Lyft 626—your generosity will benefit all of Rabun County for years to come!





*Views looking roughly north (left) and south (right) at the initial clearing and grading for Rabun County School System's new Agriscience facility on Old Highway 441, just north of Tiger. This new facility will be utilized by agriculture-focused students at Rabun County High School and by Rabun's very active Future Farmers of America program.*

### **RABUN COUNTY SCHOOLS UPDATE**

Rabun County High School will soon have a new Agriscience Center to further enhance and build upon the six Agriculture Education pathways that are offered at the High School.

The new facility will have four main buildings, including a multipurpose building and classroom, swine barn, cattle barn, and greenhouse area. Students and FFA members will be able to meet, learn, explore, and perform many different activities, including hold FFA banquets, at the facility.

The swine barn is expected to house 25 project swine for students to raise and exhibit, while the cattle barn will house 8 animals. Each of these buildings will include storage for feed and supplies, state of the art equipment for heating, cooling, and management of the animals, as well as individual practice rings and working areas. The greenhouse area will include a new greenhouse, high tunnel, cold frame, storage building, and garden plot. The entire property will be used for teaching different agricultural practices, whether it be growing hay for the cattle or planting and producing different row crops.

We are so excited for the opportunities that the Ag Center is going to provide the students of Rabun County. FFA has been a part of the Rabun County School System since 1938, and with this new school farm and Ag Center, FFA and agriculture within Rabun County will continue to flourish and be an integral part of our community. We are so thankful for the support of the School Board and the community in helping to bring this project to fruition.  
— Superintendent Dr. April Childers

### **RABUN COUNTY RECYCLING**

Over the last fiscal year, July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, Rabun's transfer stations collected 12,598.42 tons of refuse, while the landfill directly received 6,382.15 tons, totaling 18,980.57 tons.

Please remember to recycle cardboard, mixed papers, plastic bottles, glass, and all metals—we save two ways on these materials, selling the material for recycling and not having to handle/dispose of it in the landfill!

### **SHERIFF'S REPORT**

I am excited to share with you all the progress that has been made on our SPLOST #7 projects. The Sheriff's Office received the approval for a new Sheriff's Office and a jail expansion to be included on the SPLOST #7 project list.

The current courthouse has housed the Sheriff's Office and jail since the early 1960s. In 2005 the new jail was opened and moved to the current facility. Since I have been in office the jail has been at capacity or over the entire time. Because of this and an expansion needed in the future, I requested the Georgia Sheriff's Association to conduct a jail study to evaluate our needs.

This study concluded an expansion was needed and provided suggestions of how large the expansion should be. The expansion is going to be providing 58 additional beds with room for expansion. The main area of focus for the expansion was a dedicated medical unit along with a segregation area. This area of focus was reinforced even more with the presence of Covid-19. This will give us a dedicated area to treat inmates medically while also providing us an area for quarantining positive inmates or



## Rabun County Alliance

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🍁 Happy Thanksgiving 🍁

❄️ Merry Christmas ❄️ Happy New Year ❄️



*Two current projects funded by SPLOST #7 are underway on Boggs Mountain—steelwork has risen for the significant expansion of Rabun County Detention Center (left), and interior construction is progressing in the new Sheriff's Office building nearby.*

separating inmates for disciplinary reasons. I have to brag on the Detention Center staff because they have done an excellent job navigating the pandemic while keeping the inmates and themselves safe.

At this time the steel structure has been erected for the expansion (*shown above*). The new Sheriff's Office project is coming along nicely. The structure is almost fully completed and the walls on the inside are mostly erected (*above right*). When completed, this will house all the offices and services that were once located at the courthouse. Upon this project's completion we will have an open house for the public to view this new

facility. I would like to thank the Rabun County Board of Commissioners for including these two projects in SPLOST #7.

In closing, I would ask that you remember the family of Detention Officer Courtney Zajdowicz. Courtney was tragically killed by a suspected drunk driver on September 1, 2021. Please keep her family and her work family in your thoughts and prayers in the upcoming days, months, and years. I would like to thank Courtney Zajdowicz for her service to our community and may you rest in peace. *With gratitude, Sheriff Chad K. Nichols*