



STEVE BRADSHAW
DISTRICT FOUR

Steve Bradshaw

PRESIDING OFFICER

2020 – 2022



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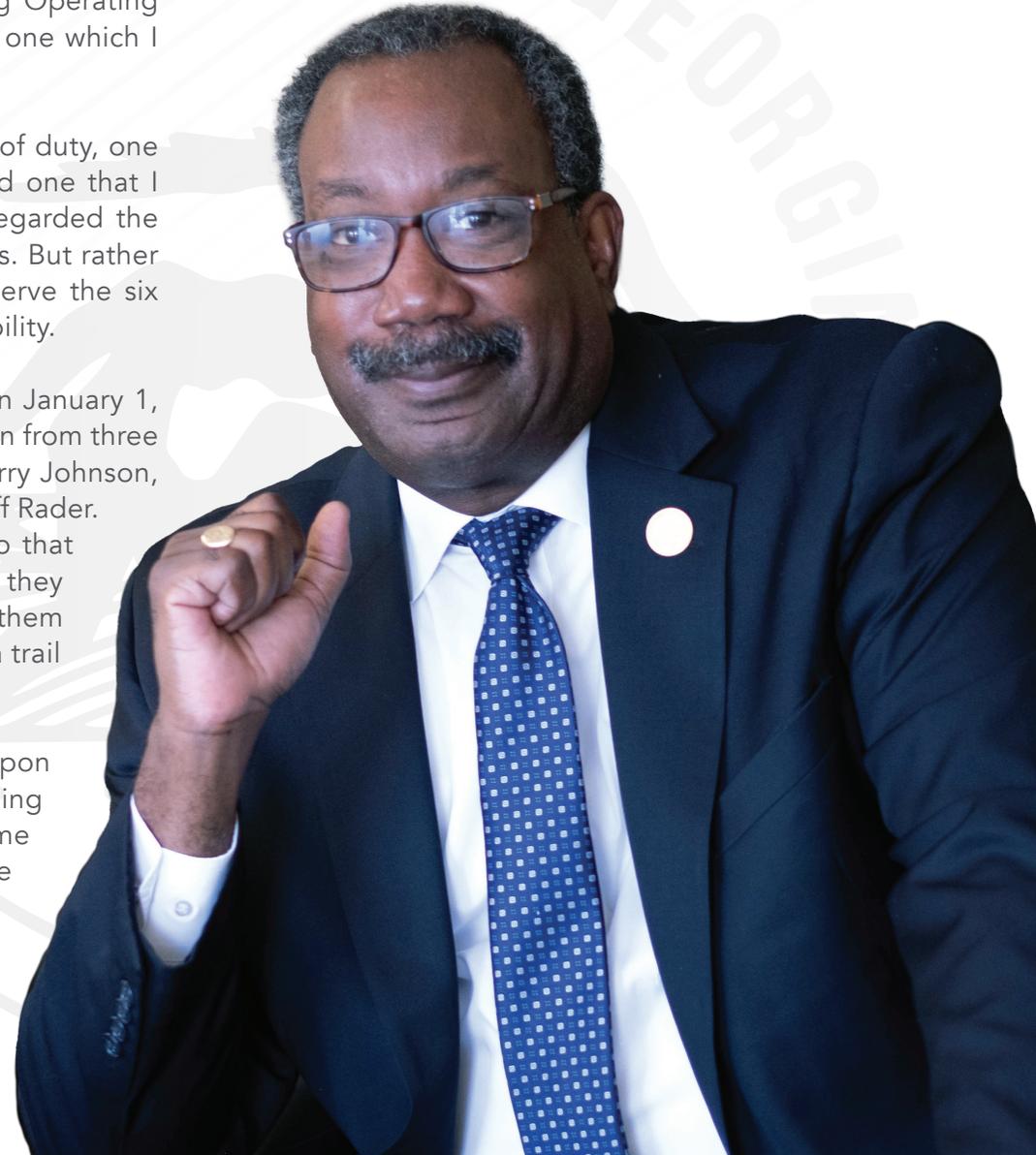
Introduction

My two-year tenure as Presiding Officer of the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners ended one year ago. I was in fact term limited pursuant to an amendment to our Standing Operating Procedures that was adopted a few years ago, and one which I supported.

I regarded my tenure as Presiding Officer as a tour of duty, one that I tried to execute to the best of my ability and one that I gladly relinquished when the time came. I never regarded the role as an opportunity to perform in front of cameras. But rather as an opportunity to honorably lead and humbly serve the six constituents who had trusted me with that responsibility.

Since taking office as the district 4 Commissioner on January 1, 2017, I have had the opportunity to observe and learn from three predecessors as Presiding Officer: Commissioner Larry Johnson, Commissioner Kathie Gannon and Commissioner Jeff Rader. I want to thank each of them for stepping up to do that job and for the examples and the precedents that they established. I learned much from watching each of them in action, and I am appreciative of them for blazing a trail for me to follow.

Since leaving that post a year ago, I have reflected upon that experience. What follows are my thoughts regarding the discharge of those duties during a tumultuous time in the history of DeKalb County with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, which resulted in both challenges and opportunities.



Two Unanimous Votes

The DeKalb County Organizational Act calls for a Presiding Officer to be elected by members of the Board of Commissioners in a vote taken at the first business meeting of each year. Ascension to that post is not automatic, and no one, including me is entitled to that position.

In my case I made no assumptions. Roughly two months before the end of my tenure as Deputy Presiding Officer, I began to reach out to my colleagues one by one to indicate my interest in becoming Presiding Officer. I asked each of them for their support. This required humility, but it was indeed a worthwhile exercise.

Consequently, I received a unanimous vote in 2020 and again in 2021 as I sought a second year in that post. I regarded my reelection as Presiding Officer in 2021 as more important than my election in 2020. Simply because my performance in that role was validated by my constituents.

I am honored and humbled by the fact that I received two unanimous votes from my colleagues in two different compositions of the Board of Commissioners. Meaning that I earned the respect and support of my peers in north, central and south DeKalb County, and I am very proud of this fact.

I want to express to my colleagues how appreciative I am for their vote of confidence in my ability to discharge those duties. And I will never forget it.



“I am honored and humbled by the fact that I received two unanimous votes from my colleagues in two different compositions of the Board of Commissioners.”

Pictured left: Former Commissioner Nancy Jester and Jeff Rader, Larry Johnson, Mereda Davis Johnson, Former Commissioner Kathie Gannon, and Lorraine Cochran-Johnson

Duties

The Presiding Officer has three basic duties: 1. Set the meeting agenda. 2. Chair the meetings. 3. Make the committee assignments.

Setting The Agenda:

Agenda setting is a collaborative process that takes place during our bi-weekly Committee of the Whole Meetings (COW). A few days prior to the COW meeting as Presiding Officer I would meet with administration representatives and central staff members to review the outline for the upcoming COW meeting and perhaps make some decisions regarding presentations and sequencing. But it should be noted that our business meeting agenda is not set until we collectively agree to it. The COW Meeting is the construct by which we do that. Except under special circumstances the Presiding Officer does not set the meeting agenda alone.

Chairing the Meetings:

Over the course of my tenure, I cannot begin to tell you how many times I was complimented by a wide range of people on how I professionally and efficiently conducted our meetings. This was always very gratifying.



The Presiding Officer has three basic duties:

- 1** Set the meeting agendas
- 2** Chair the meetings
- 3** Make the committee assignments

**“...leadership is about empowering others,
even when it demands self-sacrifice.”**

It was always my goal to be even-handed by affording all my colleagues a fair opportunity to be heard and to resist the temptation to push a specific agenda from the chair. On most occasions whenever an item was on the floor for discussion rather than speaking about it first, I would defer to my colleagues. And if I had a relevant comment or question on a particular item that had not already been addressed I would usually speak last.

Over the course of my professional life, I have had the great fortune of watching many talented people chair meetings. But I learned the most from Major Keith Walker who was our Battalion Operations Officer when I was stationed in Germany. That man could run a meeting.

His methodology consisted of two basic tenets: 1. Stick to the Meeting Agenda. 2. Keep discussion about topics extraneous to the agenda to an absolute minimum.

Of course, there are exceptions. However, the meeting chair sets the tone for the meeting which requires fairness and firmness and maintaining the balance between those two.

.Of course, it helps to maintain order if you happen to outrank the other attendees at a meeting. Major Walker had this advantage on most occasions. However, as Presiding Officer I did not outrank my colleagues. My vote did not weigh any more than anyone else's does. This required creating an environment of mutual respect and working together to move through the agenda.

Another hallmark of successfully chairing a meeting was to consistently start on time. Being punctual demonstrates respect for other people's time and I made it a point to do just that. During my tenure as Presiding Officer our COW and business meetings consistently started at 9am. Not 9:01am.

Some people think that my emphasis on punctuality came from my time in the military. But that is not the case. This was established long before that from watching my paternal grandfather Rev. Jack Johnson Bradshaw operate. I could share stories about the good Reverend. But those are other tails for another time. Suffice to say that being on time was a big deal for him, and I inherited that trait.

Overall, I think the way that we conducted our meetings was efficient and effective as we attended to the people's business. And I thank my colleagues for working with me on this front.

Committee Assignments:

Trying to honor the preferences of six highly capable individuals could be very challenging at times, much like putting the pieces of a puzzle together.

My approach in this area was based primarily on seniority. Meaning, I would seek individual preferences based on tenure on the BOC. This was conceptually straight forward and therefore easy to explain. After receiving input from each of my colleagues I tried to put it all together. Sometimes the pieces did not all neatly fit into place. At that point some back-and forth was required to achieve the objective of filling all committee assignments.

At a fundamental level leadership is about empowering others, even when it demands self-sacrifice. And on one occasion I made the decision to forgo a seat on the Finance, Audit and Budget Committee myself to accommodate the request of a colleague. During my tenure as Presiding Officer my colleagues were satisfied with their respective committee assignments, allowing progress on our standing committees.

Relationship with BOC Colleagues

I have the highest respect for all my BOC colleagues, primarily because each of them has chosen the path of public service. This is not always an easy path.

In 2021, I was asked to speak at the retirement ceremony for Stone Mountain Mayor Patricia Wheeler who was leaving office after over 30 years of elected service in that great city. In my remarks that evening I talked about the nobility of public service, and I do believe that public service is noble. Withstanding the slings and arrows attendant with serving in these roles goes with the territory. The ability to get positive things done despite those slings and arrows makes it totally worth it.

Among us there are seven talented, ambitious and motivated people. And there are times when the pursuit of our individual objectives generates differences of opinion. This is normal and natural. Many years ago, someone told me that if any two people agree on everything all the time, then one of those people is unnecessary. I happen to agree with that.

What is not normal or natural or desired for that matter is when those differences descend into open conflict and backbiting, especially in

public meetings. After all, we are here to serve the citizens of DeKalb County. Not to create a public spectacle. The display of public drama and dysfunction among elected leaders does not serve the people's interest. For the most part during my tenure as Presiding Officer we kept that nonsense to a minimum.

***Professionalism matters.
Decorum matters.***

In my regular interactions with my BOC colleagues, I try to display the level of consideration and respect that I would expect for myself, even when we disagree. I did the same as the Presiding Officer and in this regard, I think we were successful.

Relationship with the CEO

We are one governing authority. However, the Organizational Act divides authority between an elected executive (the CEO), and a legislative branch (the Board of Commissioners. Separation of Powers is the same basic construct that our federal government is based upon.

This construct will occasionally induce some inherent conflicts. This strikes me as normal. However, I hold the view that an antagonistic



relationship between the CEO and the BOC would be shortsighted, misguided and counterproductive.

Legitimate policy disagreements should absolutely be addressed, and publicly addressed. But there is a way to go about doing that which is more in line with how I think our constituents want us to conduct business.

The lines of communication between myself and CEO Michael Thurmond have always been open. This is not to say that we always agreed on everything, because we don't. But even before I became Presiding Officer, we had established the kind of professional relationship where we could speak candidly with each other. This is something that I value and appreciate. I especially appreciated it during my tenure as Presiding Officer, as we managed through some very challenging times together.

Our Organizational Act has vested the DeKalb County CEO with significant authority. Executing the authority of that office in a heavy-handed manner would be counterproductive. This would be true for any CEO. Moreover, no CEO can get anything of significance accomplished (for example passing a budget) without the majority support of the Board of Commissioners. This requires the ability to build consensus.

In my estimation Michael Thurmond has discharged the duties of that office with purpose and restraint with competence and with class. Individuals might take issue with one thing or another about him, which is their right. But I maintain that he was the right person at the right time to lead DeKalb County back from the edge of a cliff. During my tenure as Presiding Officer it was my honor to serve with him, and it remains so.



COVID-19

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization issued an emergency declaration for the COVID-19 pandemic. On that day the world as we know it changed dramatically. I had been Presiding Officer for 58 days.

Nearly three years later, we have adapted and integrated this new reality into our daily lives and found ways to navigate through it. Consequently, it may be easy to forget how unsettling all of this was in the beginning and how some people and ostensibly some leaders were freaked out and displayed how unnerved they were.

It has been said that adversity builds character. But this is not quite true. What is truer is that adversity reveals character. The altered state that the pandemic created induced some interesting and frankly unfortunate character reveals.

As Presiding Officer In response to this new reality I had to make some decisions regarding transitioning the conduct of our official business to a virtual environment. After consulting with our County Attorney and our IT Director I made a decision that had the net effect of canceling (postponing) one meeting for one week, and so informed my colleagues.

Given technological constraints we were not fully prepared to execute a virtual meeting in an efficient and effective manner. With the



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professional guidance and recommendations that I was receiving, forcing the issue made no sense to me. Allowing for a little more time to get the elements in place to conduct a proper meeting made much more sense. Under the circumstances my decision was entirely reasonable.

Even so, this decision was called into question by at least some of my BOC colleagues. It even induced some to seek a formal legal opinion from our County Attorney on whether I had the authority as Presiding Officer to make that decision. As previously stated, I had consulted with the County Attorney and our IT Director before I took any action, and I included that fact in the email that I sent to my colleagues.

This exercise struck me as unnecessary. And at this point I was thinking to myself, we have entered unprecedented territory with this pandemic. Our fellow citizens are dying from it, and yet this is what some colleagues have chosen to focus time and energy on. Candidly, I regarded it as a petty, misguided waste of time.

Of course, my position as Presiding Officer was not my first rodeo in a significant leadership role. And I know from experience that there are always those who for whatever reasons want to test a new leader's resolve, especially in a time of crisis. I trusted my ability and experience as a leader and executed my duties securely in that understanding.

“Based on how I handled this situation, and other situations during the pandemic, at some point one of my constituents in the community started referring to me as “Steady Steve”. I like it, and it strikes me as a fair assessment of how I operate.”



Back to School Event

In a formal opinion the County Attorney validated my decision-making authority, which I knew would be the case since I consulted with legal on the front end of this episode. Even so, I felt compelled to reset the table with my colleagues and send a message about how I would exercise my authority going forward. Therefore, in an email to my colleagues dated March 24, 2020, I spelled out my position and underscored four basic points:

1. This situation is unprecedented. It will probably get worse before it gets better.
2. Those of us charged with decision-making responsibilities are doing the best we can with the information that we have in front of us at any given time. I have never been shy about making a tough or seemingly controversial call, and I never will be.
3. A Universal COVID-19 Playbook does not exist. Anyone claiming to know all the right moves to make in every circumstance that arises from this crisis, simply stated does not know what they are talking about.
4. Given the above, I think we might be better served if we just gave each other a break.

I stand by those words. And I can report that after making my position crystal clear to my colleagues the temperature on the BOC went down considerably.

Based on how I handled this situation, and other situations during the pandemic, at some point one of my constituents in the community started referring to me as “Steady Steve”. I like it, and it strikes me as a fair assessment of how I operate.

This is just one example of the kind of condition that this pandemic experience induced. As I write the words the worst elements of this pandemic seem to be behind us. But based on recent health reports certain risks remain. As we reflect what we have learned and lost I trust that we are better prepared to respond the next time something like this happens.

Hiring a New BOC Chief of Staff

On March 9, 2020 (two days before the pandemic was declared) our then BOC Chief of Staff resigned. At this point our Central Staff was without a permanent leader. Which was not the best circumstance for entering into a pandemic. But I could not be prouder of the way that they stepped up to meet that challenge.

I vividly recall Special Projects Coordinator Dionne McKenzie walking into my office saying, “Sir, we got you. We’re going to be ok”. To which I replied, “I know we will.” I will always be grateful to her for that.

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Even so, at some point we had to begin the process of hiring a new Chief of Staff for the Board of Commissioners. I tasked our Human Resources Department with conducting a national search for the role. They handled this task professionally and conducted that process in an outstanding manner.

Beginning in late March of 2020 HR advertised the vacancy in numerous local and national publications and websites. 175 total applications were received. 80 were deemed qualified by our HR professionals. 20 candidates were interviewed by HR. 8 were recommended to be interviewed by the Board of Commissioners. 1 candidate withdrew; therefore, we interviewed a total of 7 candidates.

This was all done in a virtual environment in which all my colleagues participated and shared feedback. In order to narrow the field, I suggested that we each rank order the candidates 1 through 7 and assign a point value to the respective position thereby creating an aggregate point total for each candidate. In other words, our individual first choice candidate received the most points and our individual seventh choice received the least number of points. This process produced quantitative data to support our qualitative opinions. This exercise had the effect of narrowing the field down to two candidates.

We deliberated over the remaining candidates until we reached a consensus. As a result of this

process Dr. Kwasi Obeng was extended an offer to be our new Board of Commissioners Chief of Staff on July 8, 2020. To date he has proven to be an excellent choice. And I am grateful to my colleagues for their participation in this process and their openness to the construct that I recommended.

Zoning Meetings

As we transitioned to a virtual operating environment one of the issues that we had to adjust was the conduct of our zoning meetings. Allowing for proponents and opponents on a given zoning item to express themselves is an important part of that process. Thanks to the diligence of our IT department, we were able address the technology hurdles relatively seamlessly. But there were two elements pertaining to zoning meetings that were unresolved to my satisfaction.

One was the day and time of our zoning meetings. Prior to the pandemic our zoning meetings took place 6 times a year on Tuesday evenings on the same day as our business meetings at 6:30pm. After a morning business meeting and afternoon committee meetings going into a zoning meeting in the evening made for a very long day.

Zoning issues are among the most contentious issues that we deal with as commissioners and therefore require focus and attention. Long days could tend to make for potentially tired and less



Phoenix Station at Kensington Station Affordable Housing

focused commissioners. The virtual environment made this even worse. A day of zoom meetings induced what I call “zoom zombies” which is not the ideal headspace for quality discussion and decision making.

Therefore, in 2020 I suggested that we move our zoning meetings to Thursday evenings and start a little earlier at 5:30pm. Under this construct we could manage our respective Thursdays as we saw fit, and our zoning meetings would hopefully not end as late in the evenings. My colleagues agreed and we have been doing this ever since. I hope this reform continues moving forward.

The other issue was the time allocated for public comments. Historically, those for and opposed to a given zoning item was allocated a total of 10 minutes to make their respective cases. The virtual environment, especially in the early days, occasionally produced some technical difficulties for citizens who were trying to express themselves, which cut into their speaking time allotment.

Therefore, I suggested that we add five minutes to each side to allow for the occasional technical glitch. My colleagues agreed and we have been doing this ever since. The additional minutes

certainly adds to the overall length of the meeting. But since we were starting our zoning meetings an hour earlier it struck me as a worthwhile tradeoff and a positive reform.

SPLOST COW Meetings

The citizens of DeKalb County overwhelmingly approved our first Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) in November of 2017. And the county started collecting revenue in April of 2018. Shortly, thereafter our Project Management Team began holding regular update meetings for the Board of Commissioners. Since the oversight of a SPLOST program was something new for DeKalb County, meeting on a frequent basis was totally appropriate. In 2019 we had 15 such meetings.

By the time I became Presiding Officer in 2020 we had acquired some experience with oversight of the SPLOST program. Given all our other responsibilities and meetings I surmised that reducing this meeting to about once every two months would be appropriate. I suggested this amended meeting frequency to my colleagues, and they agreed. In 2020 we held 7 such meetings and in 2021 we held 4. I think the requirement of a few less BOC SPLOST meetings a year is appropriate and appreciated.

Legislative Agenda

Every year we submit a consolidated legislative agenda packet to our colleagues in the DeKalb Delegation of the Georgia General Assembly, usually formally presenting to them in a meeting in early February of their session. Since counties are a subdivision of the State of Georgia, maintaining good relationships with our General Assembly colleagues is very important.

Internally our process begins in the late summer or early fall prior to the January session start. Individual commissioners submit potential legislative agenda items to the central staff who organize the submissions. Throughout the fall each item receives a thorough vetting in the standing committee of jurisdiction which is the County Operations Committee (OPS). I managed this process for the two years that I was Chairman of the OPS Committee. Subsequently this process has



been professionally managed by Commissioners Larry Johnson and Ted Terry and Mereda Davis Johnson as successive OPS Committee Chairs.

Each proposed legislative agenda item either receives or does not receive a committee recommendation. Ultimately, each proposed item requires a majority vote of the full Board of Commissioners for inclusion in our consolidated legislative agenda packet. The goal was always to get these approvals completed by our last business meeting in December or early January at the latest.

In 2020 (prior to the onset of COVID-19) we presented to the General Assembly in person. In 2021 it was done virtually. In every instance I found our General Assembly colleagues to be receptive and appreciative of the effort that we put into this process.

Candidly, this process always struck me as a bit cumbersome. Therefore, I commend my successor as Presiding Officer, Commissioner Robert Patrick for reforming the process to make it more streamlined and considerably less onerous on commissioners and staff.

Retreats

Organizational retreats are a good idea. They provide the opportunity to strategize outside of the normal operating environment. And they

are usually done at a site other than the normal meeting venue. Meeting offsite always struck me as a vital element for any retreat for possibly inducing a different set of thoughts patterns. Conducted in a proper manner, retreats require a certain amount of planning so as not to waste anyone's time.

I certainly considered holding retreats during my tenure as Presiding Officer. But, given the unprecedented conditions that the pandemic produced and other pressing considerations it didn't strike me as a priority to conduct what would have essentially amounted to another zoom meeting. Consequently, I did not pursue this. In retrospect I probably should have. I certainly do hope we resume retreats in the future.

Joint BOC/BOE Meetings

Our relationship with members of the DeKalb Board of Education is critical. At the end of the day, we all represent the citizens of DeKalb County and, to the extent possible, our interests and objectives should be aligned.

I commend Commissioner Jeff Rader who rekindled holding joint Board of Commissioners and Board of Education meetings during his tenure as Presiding Officer. Upon ascending to the role, myself in 2020, I was determined

to continue this process. I had formed a very good professional relationship with my School Board counterpart, Chair Vicki Turner and in our conversations, we were in sync regarding keeping the joint meetings going.

Obviously, COVID-19 impacted BOC Operations. The impact on the school system was even more dramatic. Given the competing priorities that COVID-19 induced we were not able to hold a joint meeting in 2020. But we were able to successfully start this process again in 2021.

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I look forward to this important collaboration continuing as we move forward.

Walk-On Items

I don't like long meetings. My preference is that meetings flow smoothly, with a minimum amount of disruption. Therefore, I am not a fan of walk-on items on BOC business meeting days. I totally understand that sometimes this is unavoidable due to circumstances. But in my opinion, this should be infrequent.

In the three years prior to me becoming Presiding Officer the annual average number of walk-on items on business meeting days was 31.6. I was determined to drive this number down by subtly making the point from the chair when it was appropriate.

Needless-to-say 2020 was an outlier in that this unprecedented pandemic situation induced unprecedented responses and proposals. As a result, the number of walk on items for that year ballooned to 66. In 2021 things returned to a more normal pattern and the total number for that year was 29. This still strikes me as too many.

Of course, the Presiding Officer is not the boss of his or her colleagues and all one can do is to try to lead by example. On this front my record is clear. In 6 years in office, I can count the number of walk-on items that I have introduced on a

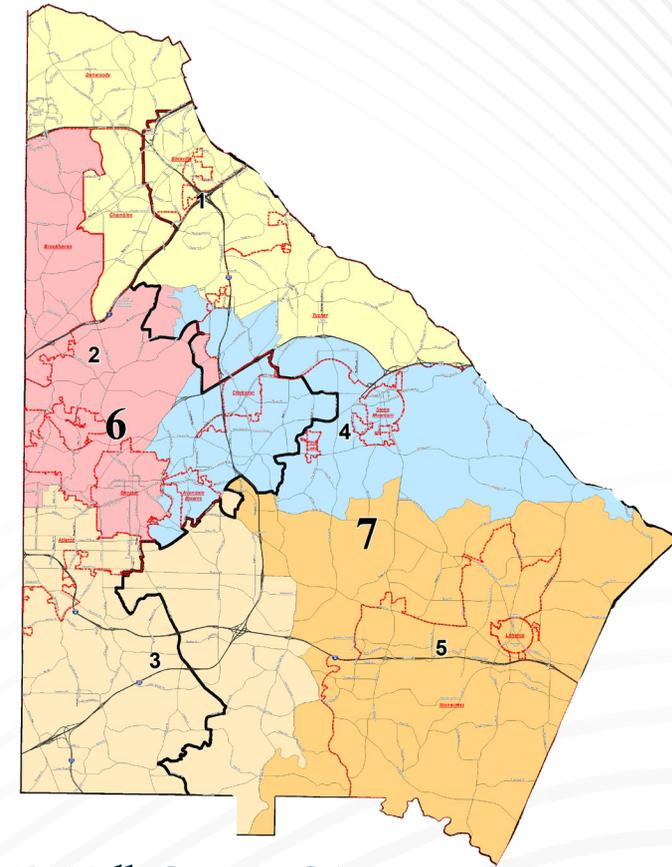
business meeting day on less than one hand. COW meetings are for agenda setting and walk on times on COW meeting days are totally appropriate. I hope that we get a better overall handle on walk-on items in the future.

Redistricting

Redistricting is the process that usually occurs every ten years in the wake of the decennial census. During this process district lines for elected positions are redrawn to reflect population shifts. The importance of this process is hard to overstate.

Ultimately, authority for redrawing district lines resides with the General Assembly. Whatever action we took as the Board of Commissioners was not binding on our General Assembly colleagues. Even so, given the importance of this issue, I surmised that the Board of Commissioners should have at least some inputs over the district maps that would directly impact us. And I was determined not to leave our General Assembly colleagues with a blank canvas to paint on.

To that end I led the BOC through a process with the objective of our body taking a vote on a consensus commission districts map and submitting it to the DeKalb delegation before the general assembly convened in January of 2022.



DeKalb County, GA

Commissioner Districts

- District 1
- District 2
- District 3
- District 4
- District 5

Super Commissioner Districts

- District 6
- District 7

I communicated that intent to our state house delegation chair State Representative Karla Drenner, and we worked collaboratively on managing this process.

Our Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Department did an outstanding job in producing maps that conformed with population shifts, the law and the individual preferences of commissioners. We also conducted public engagement sessions and received feedback from citizens throughout the process.

Ultimately, our map received a unanimous vote of the Board of Commissioners at our last business meeting in 2021. Our consensus map was submitted to the State Legislative Reapportionment Office for technical review. After making some minor adjustments the map was returned to us where the amended map received another unanimous vote of the Board of Commissioners.

Again, this action was not binding. But it struck me as a compelling case to put before our DeKalb delegation colleagues.

As the session unfolded there were some anticipated twists and turns and at some point, an alternative map did surface. This induced panic among some within our ranks and calls were made to respond in some way. But I resisted those calls because I was confident that our process was solid and that our collective action as a Board of Commissioners would be difficult

to argue against. At the end of the day the map that we approved and submitted received majority votes in both the DeKalb house and senate delegations and was ultimately signed by the Governor.

Regarding this very critical issue my original mission objectives were achieved. I am proud of the fact that I was able to lead us through critical exercise. And I am proud that we all participated in an above-board process that included community input. We should not have to revisit this again until 2031.

A Little Insight

The West Wing is a television series that ran on NBC from 1999 – 2006. It is the story of a White House Staff working in a democratic administration. The role of President of the United States Josiah “Jed” Bartlett was played brilliantly by Martin Sheen.

On a side note, it is hard to believe that it is the same Martin Sheen who convincingly portrayed the Army assassin Captain Willard in Apocalypse Now. But I guess that’s why they call it acting.

At any rate The West Wing is one of my favorite television series of all time and I think I watched every episode during its original run. Last fall, thanks to the miracle of On Demand I binged watched every episode again. The show’s

creator Aaron Sorkin once described it as a love letter to public service, and I find that sentiment resonates with me.

President Bartlett is a flawed man who makes his share of mistakes. But it seems evident that he is also a good man who is in public service for the right reasons. The staff members who support him are similar in orientation.

In this age of distrust and cynicism regarding elected officials it is amazing to me that a show that did not reflexively portray all politicians as crooks who are just in it for themselves, enjoyed as much success as it did. But I think it is because at some fundamental level people want to believe that their government can work for good on their behalf. I certainly believe that, and it is the reason that I am in public service.

Now, lest anyone get the idea that pollyannish is my normal operating posture, I must admit that another one of my favorite series was House of Cards which ran on Netflix from 2013 to 2018. It is the story of Congressman Francis “Frank” Underwood who through very unscrupulous means ends up as President of the United States.

Frank personifies just about every loathsome quality that can be attributed to a politician. And even as he engaged in some very notorious things in pursuit of his political ends, at times I found myself unconsciously rooting for him. The show was certainly entertaining. But Frank is certainly no role model.

Enduring Gratitude

For me the bottom line is this: the notion of running for political office at any level requires a certain amount of self-confidence, personal ambition and toughness. Because the business of politics can get rough and tumble at times, to say the least. But I do maintain that public service is noble. And it has been my personal experience that most of us who choose this path enter it for the right reasons.

My TV show preferences probably provides at least a little more insight into how I approach my role as a DeKalb County Commissioner. Hopefully, my performance in the office provides even more.

The presidential historian Jon Meacham was once asked in an interview what are the most important qualities that a leader can possess? His answer was curiosity, empathy and humility. I think this is a pretty good list. I tend to emphasize humility. The ability to recognize that none of us is all knowing and that we all make mistakes is an important aspect of leadership. While I occasionally succumb to being full of myself, especially when things are going my way it is usually not long before something causes me to come back to earth and think deeply about why I am doing this in the first place.

What I can say with certitude is that I aspire to be humble. And as I continue this journey, I aspire to be a lot more like Jed Bartlett and a lot less like Frank Underwood.

I have a multitude of faults. But ingratitude is usually not one of them. It would have been impossible to successfully navigate my tenure as Presiding Officer without the support of a lot of good people.

First, I would like to thank all the administration departments led by Chief Operating Officer **Zach Williams** who provided calm and steady

leadership throughout. If I began naming individuals and departments, I would probably inadvertently omit someone, and that is certainly not my intent. However, discharging the duties of Presiding Officer was a unique role which required some unique interface with certain individuals and departments. Therefore, I would like to highlight a few.

I would like to thank our Law Department, led by **County Attorney Viviane Ernstes**. I am fond of saying that I always want to “color within the



lines”, and the dedicated and talented people in our Law Department always made sure that we did that.

I would also like to thank our IT Department led by **Director John Matelski**. Making the transition to a virtual operating environment was not easy. I know the people in our IT Department worked plenty of long hours to make sure that the transition was as seamless as possible. They did and continue to do an outstanding job.

Likewise, I would like to thank DCTV led by **Director Diamond Lewis** who was joined at the hip with IT as we made the transition to virtual and continued to broadcast our meetings to the public in a high quality and professional manner. I do miss giving Director Lewis some good-natured teasing just before the start of our meetings.

I would like to thank our entire Human Resources team led by **Director Benita Ransom** for managing an outstanding process that led to the hiring of our new BOC Chief of Staff. Their professionalism is noteworthy.

Navigating the once every decade task of redistricting would have been impossible without the diligence and professionalism of our GIS Department led by **Director Stacy Greer**. On this front our mission objectives were achieved.

I would like to thank our clerk’s office capably led by **Barbara Sanders Norwood**. Her team

always provided us with whatever we needed and helped our meetings run smoothly.

Of course, I would like to thank our Central Staff, initially led by **Chief of Staff Antwyn Brown**, capably led during the interim period by **Dionne McKenzie and John Manson** and now led by Chief of Staff, **Dr. Kwasi Obeng**. Their highly professional and steadfast support made doing my job much easier. We as commissioners are fortunate to have them working on our behalf.

My District 4 Office Staff were troopers throughout my tenure as Presiding Officer. As my responsibilities increased and as we entered the pandemic environment, they did not miss a beat and continued to deliver exceptional service to the citizens of District 4. **Chief of Staff Alesia Brooks** and **Constituent Services Coordinator Robin Flieg** have been with me since day one and I am very proud of that. Our new team member **Carrie Kordys** is a great addition. The citizens of District 4 and DeKalb County are very fortunate and so am I.

I thank **CEO Michael Thurmond** for the leadership that he has provided to DeKalb County. His service and sacrifice have moved us forward. And DeKalb County is Rising....

Finally, I would like to once again thank my BOC colleagues, past and present, for trusting me with the responsibility of being Presiding Officer for two years, and for being supportive of the course

“...my character, fortitude, judgment, temperament and leadership abilities were all severely tested. I am highly confident that I passed that test.”

that I charted. I am the first to admit that my tenure in that role was far from perfect. But mostly on the right track, I think. I hope. Being afforded the opportunity to exercise that responsibility for two years was one of the highlights of my professional life, and I will always be grateful for that.

Conclusion

During my tenure as Presiding Officer I am very proud of what we accomplished together as the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners. Now that I am no longer Presiding Officer, I think I owe my current successor, and any future successors for that matter, my support. Since I have a full understanding of discharging those duties this will be a light lift for me.

Just as I learned valuable insights from my predecessors in this role, I hope that I have established some operating methodologies that my successors may find useful. I truly believe that I was called to lead the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners through arguably some of the most challenging and consequential times in this county's history. During that time my character, fortitude, judgment, temperament and leadership abilities were all severely tested. I am highly confident that I passed that test.

Steady Steve! Yes Indeed!

Looking forward...



Stephen R. Bradshaw

Stephen R. Bradshaw
January 12, 2023

DeKalb County Government
MANUEL J. MALOOF
CENTER
Administration Building & Auditorium
1300 Commerce Drive
Decatur, Georgia



DeKalb County Board of Commissioners
Manual J. Maloof Center
1300 Commerce Drive, 5th Floor
Decatur, GA 30030



Steve Bradshaw
DISTRICT 4 COMMISSIONER



Alesia Brooks
CHIEF OF STAFF



Robin Flieg
CONSTITUENT SERVICES COORDINATOR



Carrie Kordys
COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST