

STEVE BRADSHAW

DEKALB COUNTY COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT 4
FIRST TERM REPORT
2017 – 2020



FOLLOWING THROUGH FOR YOU

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District 4 Information

District 4 is home to nearly 150,000 residents as well as many historical and natural resources. From the beauty of places like Stone Mountain Park to unique community staples like Your DeKalb Farmer's Market, District 4 has much to offer.

In addition to unincorporated areas, District 4 has a total of five cities located in whole or in part within its borders: Avondale Estates, Clarkston, Pine Lake, Stone Mountain, and Tucker.

AVONDALE ESTATES

Avondale Estates was founded in the early 1920s and named after Stratford-upon-Avon, England, Shakespeare's birthplace. The buildings of its charming downtown area were designed in a Tudor style to reinforce this image, as were many of the city's houses.

CLARKSTON

Established in 1882, the City of Clarkson was called "the most diverse square mile in America" by TIME magazine. Today, Clarkston strives to create and retain jobs, and provide high-quality land development that will enhance the quality of life in Clarkston both today and in the future.

PINE LAKE

Established in 1937, the City of Pine Lake is a strongly connected community where individuals are valued. Pine Lake will plan growth and maintain the environment while improving services, city finances and quality of life for our residents.

STONE MOUNTAIN

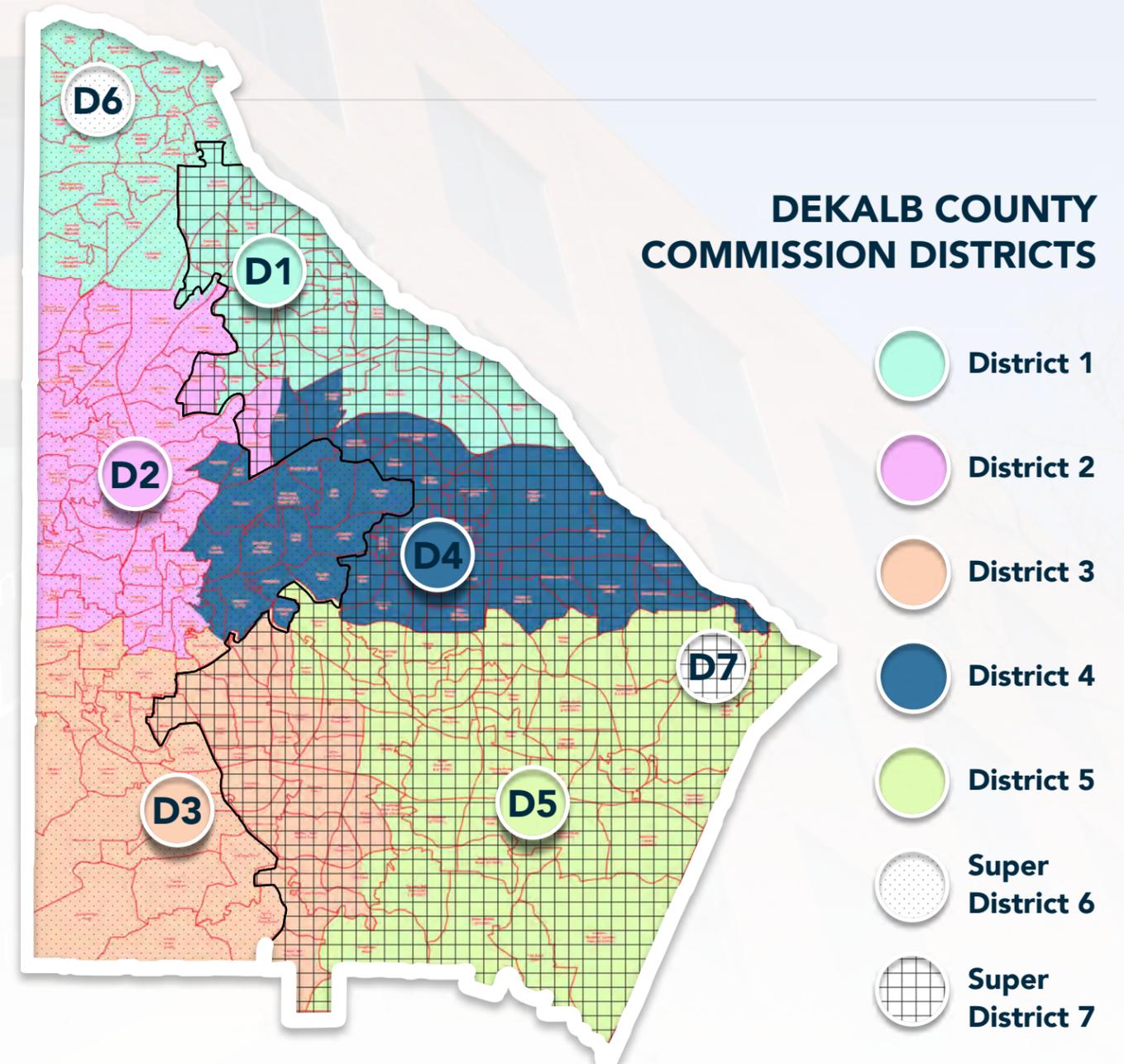
One of the older cities, the City of Stone Mountain, is perhaps one of the most valuable assets in the county and Georgia. Furthermore, Stone Mountain aims to provide governmental services that meet the needs of their community.

TUCKER

The City of Tucker was a well-established community in DeKalb County for nearly 125 years before being officially incorporated in early 2016. Tucker's inaugural mayor and council are currently using innovative public-private partnerships to deliver the quality of service Tucker's residents and business owners deserve.

According to the DeKalb County Department of Planning and Sustainability Long Range Planning Division's 2019 District 4 Profile:

- The District 4 population accounts for about 19.5% of DeKalb County's total population
- Median Household Income for District 4 was approximately \$51,678
- Median Housing Value for District 4 was \$168,126



Steve Bradshaw



Dear Fellow Citizens,

Serving the people of District 4 and DeKalb County over the past four years has been one of the great highlights of my life. It seems like those four years have gone by very fast.

As I have said on many occasions, this experience has been exciting and frustrating, energizing and draining, disappointing and fun, and any other adjective you might imagine. Most of all, it has been a tremendous learning experience. My education continues to this day.

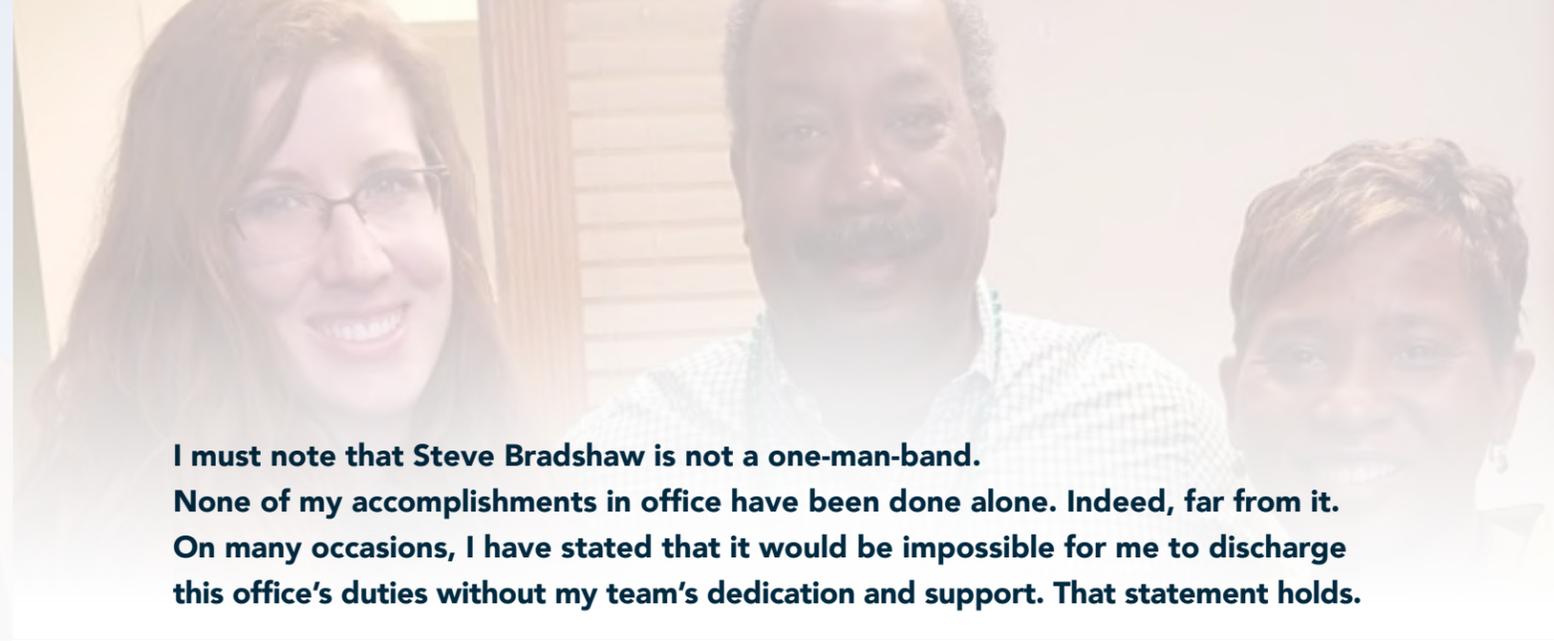
As I reflect on my first term in office, I am so proud of what we have accomplished together. Some of our accomplishments are highlighted within the pages that follow – and upon reviewing the pages, I think it will be fair to conclude that we amassed a significant record of achievement.

Additionally, I think it is fair to state that on December 31, 2016, DeKalb County was on the brink. Years of horrible headlines and questionable leadership had led us to that brink. The trust that should exist between DeKalb County citizens and their government was severely frayed, if not completely broken.

We took office on January 1, 2017. Four years later, that breach has been significantly improved. However, I cannot claim sole credit for this turnaround, but I can certainly claim some. This improvement has not been the byproduct of fancy speeches and grandstanding during public meetings; instead, it has been the byproduct of hard work and the delivery of tangible results. I am very proud of this.

Yet, the progress that we have made in the past four years remains very fragile. Therefore, we as citizens should remain vigilant regarding who we choose to vest with political power as we move forward.

DeKalb is a great county. District 4 is a wonderful place. I would like to express my profound gratitude to the people of District 4 and DeKalb County for trusting me with this responsibility. I take the discharge of these duties very seriously, and as I begin my second term in office, I will continue to do so.



I must note that Steve Bradshaw is not a one-man-band. None of my accomplishments in office have been done alone. Indeed, far from it. On many occasions, I have stated that it would be impossible for me to discharge this office's duties without my team's dedication and support. That statement holds.

District 4 has nearly 150,000 residents. Meeting the needs of my constituency requires a significant amount of effort. Meeting those needs has been significantly easier for me due to the talent and commitment of Chief of Staff Alesia Brooks and Constituent Services Coordinator Robin Flieg.

When I became Presiding Officer of the Board of Commissioners, my scope expanded to include considerations for all of DeKalb County. My team continued to attend to the needs of District 4 without skipping a beat while supporting me in my expanded responsibilities.

On January 1, 2017, the three of us walked into this office together. We have endured the ups and downs of discharging these duties together. We have grown in the office together. To be certain, over four years, we have from time-to-time gotten on each other's nerves, but as I write these words, the three of us are still together, and I am very proud of this fact.

The citizens of District 4 and DeKalb County are fortunate to have dedicated public servants like Alesia and Robin working on their behalf. Therefore, as I reflect on my first term in office, it is altogether proper and fitting for Alesia and Robin to share their perspectives on this experience. I could not be any prouder of them and what the three of us have accomplished together.

Sincerely,

Steve Bradshaw
DeKalb County Commissioner, District 4

Messages from the District 4 Team

ROBIN FLIEG

Constituent Services Coordinator

I cannot believe we have ended our first term in office. The past four years have been a whirlwind of activity, changes, and growth for both District 4 and myself. As the Constituent Services Coordinator for Commissioner Bradshaw, I am the first to receive the constituents' concerns and issues. Generally, people call their commissioners because they are upset and frustrated. The frequency of the "very upset" phone calls and emails has decreased tremendously over the past few years, and I attribute that to people seeing that we are working to help the community and that they like the work we are doing.

I am excited to be a part of the great changes and improvements we are implementing throughout the District 4 parks, Memorial Drive, and the community's well-being as a whole. Whether the improvement is adding a multi-million dollar aquatic wing to a new senior center or helping fix a pothole in front of someone's driveway, somebody's life changes for the better, and I am glad to have a hand in making these improvements happen.



Constituent Services Coordinator Robin Flieg and Chief of Staff Alesia Brooks volunteering with Meals on Wheels



I have always wanted to make a lasting, positive impact on the world. I began working for Commissioner Bradshaw because I saw an opportunity to make that positive impact on a much smaller and more personal scale – in my own community.

ALESIA BROOKS

Chief of Staff

I got to know Commissioner Steve Bradshaw while working on his campaign for the District 4 Commission seat for the 2016 election. I am a twenty-one-year resident of District 4, and I was seeking new District and County leadership and representation for my interests. He impressed me as a man of integrity, and I had full confidence in Steve Bradshaw's ability to lead and represent District 4 honorably. I joined the District 4 team on January 1, 2017, to serve as his Chief of Staff at his request, and this has been an opportunity for me to be a part of the change I wanted to see. I have worked closely with Commissioner Bradshaw, executing his agenda for District 4 and DeKalb County's constituents, and have witnessed his dedication and commitment to good governance.

The mission is simple; follow through for each constituent with care and by setting reasonable expectations. I am very proud of the many intentional and significant accomplishments for District 4 and DeKalb constituents over the last four years.

Serving constituents of District 4 and DeKalb County is a rewarding experience. Our days are not always perfect, yet we carry on and work hand-in-hand to overcome challenges as they arise. For me, a highlight of my public service is collaborating with the District 4 team and the many outstanding individuals working together to solve community issues. I believe that DeKalb County's greatest assets are the county employees, constituents, and stakeholders working together toward building a consensus for a prosperous and thriving DeKalb. Ordinary people are doing extraordinary things to keep DeKalb a wonderful place to live, work, and play.

As we begin our second term, I am enthusiastically looking forward. I have high expectations for the goals Commissioner Bradshaw will pursue, building on the progress he has made thus far on behalf of District 4 and DeKalb constituents.



I am grateful to be on this journey serving the constituents of District 4 and DeKalb County. I often tell people I am precisely where I am supposed to be – I am fulfilling my purpose in life, providing service that improves people's quality of life.

A Message from DeKalb County CEO
Michael Thurmond



Chief Executive Officer
Michael L. Thurmond

December 10, 2020

Presiding Officer Bradshaw,

They say time flies when you are having fun. Well, the last four years have been much more than fun. They have been impactful, progressive, and life-changing for many DeKalb residents. In 2017, you and I both began our terms of office at a time when DeKalb County was in turmoil and had lost the public trust.

Over the last four years, with the help of your leadership on the Board of Commissioners, we have worked tirelessly to restore the public's faith in DeKalb and its leaders. Our financial house is in order, having four years of balanced budgets, a ten-year \$1.5 billion capital improvement plan, the first-ever SPLOST program that includes \$600 million in transportation improvements, residential property tax relief and annual pay raises for public safety employees.

As the COVID-19 pandemic hit, your critical leadership in the creation of a loan program for small businesses impacted by the pandemic was much needed and appreciated. I hope we continue to work together to improve the lives of DeKalb citizens and create a harmonious relationship between the Administration and the Board of Commissioners.

Congratulations on ending your first term in office! Let's continue building a brighter future for DeKalb, together.

Sincerely,

Michael L. Thurmond
Chief Executive Officer
DeKalb County

Board of Commissioners

District 1
Nancy Jester

District 2
Jeff Rader

District 3
Larry Johnson

District 4
Steve Bradshaw

District 5
Mereda Davis Johnson

District 6
Kathie Gannon

District 7
Lorraine Cochran-Johnson



Commissioner Bradshaw voted to fund the blight remediation program and supported DeKalb County CEO Michael Thurmond's Operation Clean Sweep blight reduction initiative, demolishing 149 blighted units in District 4 since 2017.

Residential blight did not appear overnight and will not be easily remediated, but I am convinced that a more focused, multi-departmental blight remediation strategy, in cooperation with civic groups, faith leaders and the private sector, will result in improved quality of life for us all.

Michael Thurmond
CEO, DeKalb County, Georgia

The SPLOST vote unlocked approximately \$17 million to fund critical transportation projects in District 4.



Fiscal Responsibility

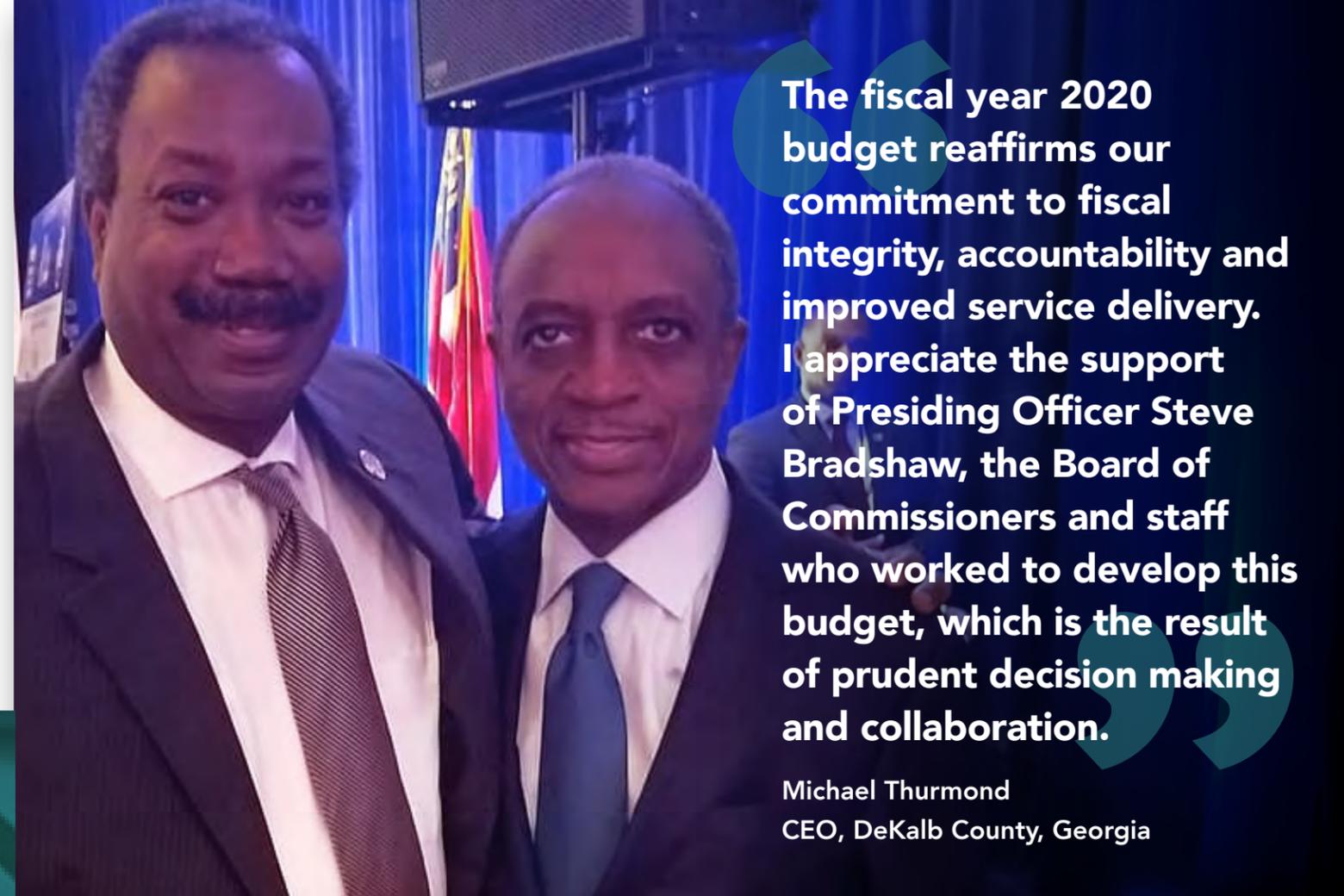
Elected officials are charged with being responsible stewards of taxpayer's money, which is a responsibility that I have taken very seriously.

With a budget of over \$1.3 billion, one might conclude that an entity like DeKalb County has money to burn. But this is not the case. Once you distill the budget into its various components, this becomes crystal clear. I am convinced that no matter how much money any given governmental entity may have, the need is always greater than the resources available. Therefore, these jobs are about setting priorities and then funding those priorities at the proper level.

Over the past four years, I think that DeKalb County's fiscal affairs have been managed in a highly competent and fiscally-responsible manner, which will be evident in some of the highlights that follow. Likewise, I have managed my District 4 office budget similarly.

I took my first budget vote in February 2017. And I do not mind admitting that the entire process was a little intimidating at first. Then again, this was not my first rodeo. As I approached this process, I drew from past experiences and trusted my judgment.

I believe that the elements within the 2017 budget helped set the stage for the improved fiscal situation that we have experienced since then. I give tremendous credit to CEO Michael Thurmond for moving us in this direction. Moving forward, we will continue to manage in a fiscally responsible manner.



The fiscal year 2020 budget reaffirms our commitment to fiscal integrity, accountability and improved service delivery. I appreciate the support of Presiding Officer Steve Bradshaw, the Board of Commissioners and staff who worked to develop this budget, which is the result of prudent decision making and collaboration.

Michael Thurmond
CEO, DeKalb County, Georgia

Accomplishments

- In 2016 DeKalb County had a \$24 million deficit; DeKalb County now has a \$110 million budget fund balance
- DeKalb County now has an improved credit rating
- Returned \$80,322 (24.9%) of the District 4 office budget to the general fund in 2017
- Returned \$89,790 (24.3%) of the District 4 office budget to the general fund in 2018
- Returned \$75,206 (22%) of the District 4 office budget to the general fund in 2019
- Returned \$71,900 (20%) of the District 4 office budget to the general fund in 2020

Public Safety

The most solemn responsibility of any governmental entity is the protection of its citizens. Again, this is something that I take very seriously. We will never be able to make any of our communities perfectly safe. But, we have taken steps to make DeKalb County safer. And I am proud to say that I have been a part of that.

I have tremendous respect for the men and women who have sworn an oath to protect and serve the citizens of DeKalb County. Their jobs are not easy, and the vast majority deserve our support.

Our firefighters run toward danger, while the rest of us run away from it. I admire this. While I have never been a police officer, I know what it is like to wear body armor for days at a time, be physically armed with various weapons, and leave my home for deployment and not know if I was ever coming home again. Therefore, I can identify to some extent with what they go through.

I have always made public safety a priority and attending to the people's needs that provide that safety a priority – and I always will. Also, whoever invented National Night Out (where communities celebrate our public safety folks) should be commended.



Commissioner Bradshaw hanging out with the SWAT Team at the Tucker Police Precinct community day.

The partnership with Commissioner Steve Bradshaw is helping the Police Department in the County to effectively respond to crime incidences and prevalence particularly through the purchase of the flock cameras and radar detection devices. We look forward to more of this partnership for the benefit of our community.

Major Craig Medlin, Commander, DeKalb County Police Department, Tucker Precinct

Accomplishments

- Voted for pay raises for public safety personnel totaling 11.4% over the past four years
- Allocated \$69,000 of District 4 reserve funds to purchase flock security cameras for high-crime areas in District 4
- Allocated \$30,736 of District 4 reserve funds to purchase and deploy speed detection devices throughout DeKalb County

Visiting Fire Station 23 in Clarkston to extend our appreciation for the brave firemen and firewomen keeping DeKalb County citizens safe.



Having a blast with the DeKalb District Attorney Sherry Boston at her first annual "JustUs Fun Day" for DeKalb youth to recognize National Youth Violence Prevention Week.



Communication and Accessibility

As public servants, our responsibility is to be accessible and responsive to the people who elected us. When I was campaigning, I repeatedly heard that the previous District 4 regime's responsiveness was sorely lacking. Therefore, I was determined that this would be different when I took office. I think that we have been successful in this objective.

The first mission was to have a staff of competent, caring people in my office. I like to keep things simple and basic. One of the most basic things that a public servant or his designated representatives can do is return phone calls and respond to constituents' needs. I think we have been successful in this objective.

Additionally, we developed a newsletter that delivers to the email addresses of thousands of constituents bi-weekly. Contained therein is a significant amount of useful information about various things happening throughout District 4 and DeKalb County. The consistent feedback that I have received about our newsletter has been very positive.



The 3rd Quarterly in the Fourth, 07/28/2018.

In addition to being available to meet with various Home Owner's Associations and Community Groups, I'm very proud of starting our quarterly community breakfast meetings called "Quarterly in the Fourth." In these meetings, various DeKalb County Department heads provide essential information and take questions from constituents. More

importantly, I am there to provide essential information and take questions from constituents. These candid interactions have been critical in repairing the bonds of trust between DeKalb County citizens and their government. I tend to be a straightforward person, and the answers that I gave in these sessions were not always what people wanted to hear, but I believe I provided people with what they needed to hear in an honest manner, and I am very proud of that.

I am also proud of the relationships that I have established with the Mayors of the cities in DeKalb County. During my second year in office, I established the District 4 Mayors roundtable meeting to strengthen communication lines with our municipal leaders. Initially, this included the Mayors of the cities that were wholly within the geographical boundaries of District 4. In recent months this meeting

has been expanded to include Mayors throughout DeKalb County.

Additionally, I have sought to further deepen these relationships by engaging in one-on-one meetings as well. Historically, this kind of interaction has not been the case in DeKalb County, but for me, getting to know our municipal leaders better has been one of the most rewarding aspects of doing this job. After all, at some basic level, we all represent the same people.

It may sound trite, but at the end of the day, we are all in this together. Openness and accessibility should govern how we, as elected officials, interact with each other and how we interact with the citizens who put us all in office.

Steve began regular meetings with the Mayors in his district to talk, update, and get to know each other. This is the core of what Commissioner Bradshaw is about: communication and building relationships. Though the agendas of the county and the cities don't always align, we always have maintained respect for each other and have continued to seek ways to work together for the benefit of all our citizens.

Jonathan Elmore, Mayor,
City of Avondale Estates

Accomplishments

- **Disseminated bi-weekly newsletters and social posts to share essential information with District 4 citizens**
- **Attended over 290 community meetings and events**
- **Our office has addressed over 2,500 issues submitted by constituents**
- **Hosted quarterly breakfast meetings for the District 4 community**
- **Facilitated quarterly Mayor's Roundtable meetings to strengthen communication with municipal leaders**



First Mayor's Roundtable Meeting of 2018. Pictured from left to right: Jonathan Elmore, Mayor, Avondale Estates. Melanie Hammet, Mayor, Pine Lake. Steve Bradshaw, Commissioner, DeKalb County District 4. Patricia Wheeler, Mayor, Stone Mountain. Ted Terry, Previously Mayor of Clarkston – currently District 6 County Commissioner.

Economic Development

Most of my private sector experience is in the area of Business Development. Therefore, economic development has been a priority for me since taking office – not only for District 4 but also for DeKalb County.

In the past four years, the entities that have been charged with driving our economic development efforts, such as Decide DeKalb, the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce, and the Convention and Visitors Bureau, have gone through varying degrees of upheaval. But, things seem to be settling down a bit. I have tremendous respect for the work of all of these entities.



Malaika Rivers of Lexicon Strategies is leading the efforts for a Community Development District (CID) along the Memorial Drive Corridor.

Going forward, it is imperative that we make sure that these functions are resourced properly for the missions that we have charged them with executing. Then we hold them accountable for delivering.

Within District 4, my priority has been the main commercial corridor that runs through the heart of my district, Memorial Drive. The corridor revitalization study that I commissioned, funded, and that was ultimately adopted in a unanimous vote by the Board of Commissioners serves as the blueprint for restoring this once vibrant corridor. Subsequent media reports have been very positive as well.

As I have shared with my constituents on several occasions, making this happen will be a long, arduous process filled with many twists and turns and ups and downs. But, following through on the recommendations contained within the report will be the number one priority of my second term.



Accomplishments

- **Allocated \$140,000 of District 4 reserve funds for a study to determine development opportunities on the Memorial Drive corridor**
- **Allocated \$131,900 of District 4 reserve funds to conduct a viability study for the establishment of a Community Improvement District (CID) along the Memorial Drive corridor**
- **Allocated \$75,000 of District 4 reserve funds to Advance DeKalb, which is an entity charged with creating enhanced engagement with DeKalb's business community**

Seniors

Shortly after taking office, I was presented with a report from our Community Development Director, which studied the distribution of Senior Centers throughout DeKalb County. Upon reviewing the report, what became apparent is that District 4 is the only district in DeKalb County that does not have one. Since then, I have been on a mission to change this.

My initial efforts to secure funding from our general fund budget were unsuccessful, but we were undeterred in this effort and went to plan B. Bottom line: sometime soon, we will be breaking ground on a brand-new, state-of-the-art 24,000 square foot senior and community center – equipped with a swimming pool – in the heart of my district. This facility will be something that District 4 and DeKalb County citizens will enjoy for many years to come.

Growing up, I was fortunate to spend a significant amount of time with all four of my grandparents. I have also known other senior citizens who have positively impacted my life. My caring and commitment to our senior citizens are heartfelt. When this facility is completed, I will be so proud to deliver this amenity to the senior citizens of my district and all of DeKalb County. And since I am approaching senior citizen status myself, I look forward to enjoying it in the future as well.

Visiting with constituents at The View Senior Residences in Stone Mountain.



District 4 Senior and Community Center meeting at Antioch AME Church in Stone Mountain.

Accomplishments

- Secured HUD Section 108 federal funding loan of \$7.8 million to construct a 24,000 sq. ft. community and senior center for the citizens of District 4
- Allocated \$324,720 of District 4 Park Bond funds to augment construction funding

Renderings of the District 4 Senior and Community Center meeting spaces and swimming pool.

I am very proud of Commissioner Bradshaw and our Community Development Department for making the senior center happen. I cannot thank Commissioner Bradshaw enough for his leadership in this area. I hope that he continues his good work.

Linda Rice, District 4 Resident

Youth

It has been said that the children are our future. I certainly believe that. Upon taking office, I had the initial idea of creating a program targeted at our youth, particularly boys of color. But I am a big fan of not trying to reinvent the wheel.

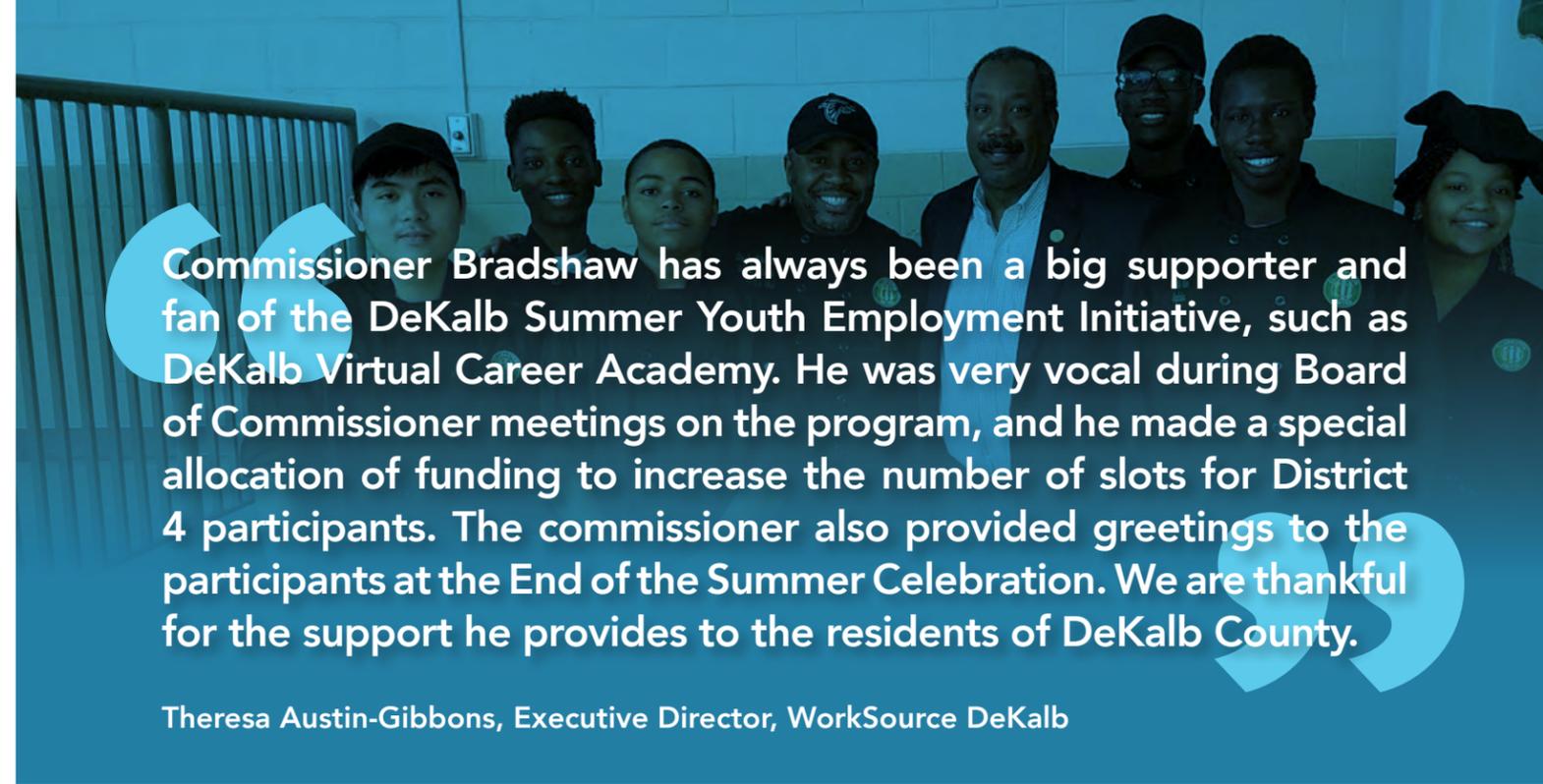
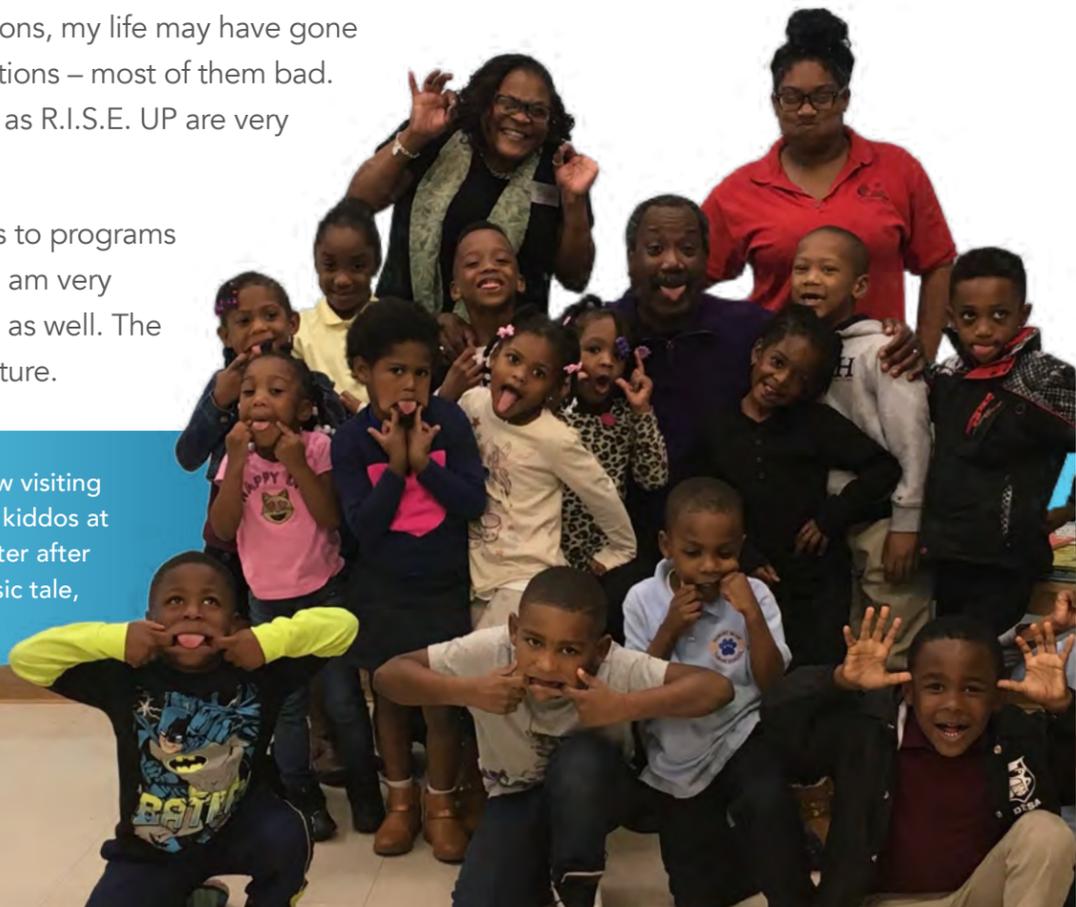
Fortunately, I discovered the Resilience, Intervention, Service, & Empowerment Young Men's Leadership Development Program (R.I.S.E. UP). This program is administered by DeKalb's Human Services Department Office of Youth Services, and they do an outstanding job. R.I.S.E. UP is a derivative of President Obama's My Brother's Keeper program, which teaches relevant life skills to middle school-aged boys of color.

When I witnessed how this program was being executed in another district, I became determined to introduce such a program to District 4. I have fully funded this program out of District 4 reserve funds, and it may be the best money that I have allocated since I have been in office.

As I write these words, I am a 57-year-old African American man, which means that once upon a time, I was an African American boy. Occasionally, I think back on myself as a youth. Had it not been for certain interventions, my life may have gone off in any number of directions – most of them bad. Therefore, programs such as R.I.S.E. UP are very close to my heart.

I have also allocated funds to programs targeted at all our youth. I am very proud of these allocations as well. The children are indeed our future.

Commissioner Steve Bradshaw visiting with staff and cutting up with kiddos at The Hamilton Recreation Center after a thrilling retelling of the classic tale, Green Eggs and Ham.



Commissioner Bradshaw has always been a big supporter and fan of the DeKalb Summer Youth Employment Initiative, such as DeKalb Virtual Career Academy. He was very vocal during Board of Commissioner meetings on the program, and he made a special allocation of funding to increase the number of slots for District 4 participants. The commissioner also provided greetings to the participants at the End of the Summer Celebration. We are thankful for the support he provides to the residents of DeKalb County.

Theresa Austin-Gibbons, Executive Director, WorkSource DeKalb

Accomplishments

- Voted to support the administration's youth summer employment program, which has employed over 1,000 youth interns county-wide over four years
- Allocated \$62,000 of District 4 reserve funds to add 50 additional intern slots for the 2020 youth summer employment program
- Employed four interns in the District 4 office
- Allocated \$55,000 of District 4 reserve funds to R.I.S.E. UP Young Men's Leadership Development Program at Freedom Middle School, including an evaluation from Georgia State Masters students of the program



R.I.S.E. UP Opening Ceremony, January 2020.

Libraries

As an avid reader and published author, I am a big fan of words, books, and libraries, although I do lament that I do not get to read for pleasure as much as I used to since taking office.

Libraries serve a vital function in our communities as repositories of information and gathering places for our citizens. I was determined to preserve and improve these institutions.

Shortly after taking office, I discovered that \$4 million had been previously set aside in a Capital Improvement Program (C.I.P.) for the purpose of building one new library in District 4. But I surmised that there were two problems with this scenario.

1. \$4 million is not enough money to build a new library.
2. We have existing libraries in need of repair.

Therefore, I decided to pursue an alternative solution.

I am looking forward to seeing the results of that decision play out in the future as citizens enjoy multiple upgraded library spaces for many years to come.

Pictured: Stone Mountain Sue-Kellogg Library.

The library improvements in Clarkston, Covington, and Stone Mountain will:

- Better suit contemporary needs
- Increase internet accessibility
- Include comfortable and accommodating meeting rooms
- Receive system upgrades for better energy efficiency and brighter spaces

Improvements to existing libraries in District 4 will increase usage by 15-20%

– Alison Weissinger,
Director, DeKalb County Public Library

DeKalb County Commissioner Steve Bradshaw kicking off renovations at Stone Mountain Sue-Kellogg Library.

Accomplishments

- Allocated \$1.5 million of Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funds for renovations at the Sue Kellogg Library in Stone Mountain
- Allocated \$2 million of CIP funds to the Covington Library
- Allocated \$500,000 of CIP funds to the Clarkston Library



Commissioner Steve Bradshaw visiting one of DeKalb County's award-winning libraries.

Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Affairs

Throughout District 4 and DeKalb County are acres and acres of beautiful greenspace. Due to the 2008 recession-induced reductions in DeKalb County's budgets, the Department of Recreation, Parks, And Cultural Affairs was hit particularly hard, and badly needed park repairs went lacking for some time.

Even so, money existed in Park Bond Funds that had not been deployed. Upon taking office, I discovered nearly \$2.5 million in the District 4 account and decided that we would begin to start allocating these funds for their intended purpose as soon as possible.

However, we made the strategic decision not to allocate funds to a specific park unless the park in question had a Friends Group attached to it. A Friends Group is a group of citizens who reside within proximity of a given park and commit to care for – and improve – the parks in partnership with my office and the DeKalb County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Affairs, and other organizations, such as Park Pride.

To me, it would not make much sense to allocate money improving a given park, only to have it fall into disrepair again due to the neglect of the community. Friends Groups help to ensure that this is far less likely to happen. While this approach made allocating funds slower than I wanted, the partnerships between communities and the DeKalb County government have proven to be very successful.



At the Wade Walker Park Playground.

Accomplishments

All allocations are from District 4 Park Bond Funds

- \$1,000,000 to execute Phase I of Avondale Dunaire Park
- \$345,000 to Needham Park
- \$250,000 to Tobie Grant Intergenerational Center
- \$215,000 to Little Creek Horse Farm and Park
- \$200,000 to Mystery Valley Golf Course
- \$150,000 to Johns Homestead Park
- \$142,000 to Hairston Park
- \$65,000 for a Master Plan Study of Avondale Dunaire Park
- \$50,000 to the ART Station
- \$42,000 to the Hamilton Recreational Center
- \$38,400 for a Master Plan Study of 1227 Rowland Road
- Completed bathroom and pavilion projects at Wade Walker Park

Commissioner Bradshaw is a listener. We needed to make some improvements and create additional space for our community members to better enjoy Hairston park and his intervention came through for us. Patronage to the park has since improved as the park is now more able to serve its members. We would like to thank Commissioner Steve Bradshaw for his continuous support and contribution to our community.

Gwendolyn Stegall, Friends of Hairston Park

Veterans

My service to this country as a United States Army Officer is probably the most formative professional experience of my adult life. The lessons that I learned as a soldier, such as devotion to duty, sacrifice, and a focus on mission accomplishment, are lessons that I have brought to my position as a DeKalb County Commissioner. As a veteran, the issues that affect other veterans and their families are very close to my heart.

The “suck it up and drive on” ethos that we are taught as soldiers, for the most part, serves us well. We are trained to persevere and maintain our focus when times get tough. This way of operating has certainly served me well in various aspects of my life. But there are times when this ethos works against us. There are times when our training and instincts compel us to “tough it out” when what we should be doing is asking for help. Every time I hear about a fellow veteran who has taken his or her own life, it breaks my heart.

The Federal Government is charged with attending to the needs of our veterans through the Veterans Administration. Even so, upon taking this office, I was determined to do whatever I can to be of service to those who served this country in the uniform of our armed forces – and I will continue to do so.



AMVETS (American Veterans) Post 44 members help grill and prepare hamburgers, hot dogs, and drinks for the Veterans Expo.



Proudly standing with the other veterans in attendance at the NAACP's Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Breakfast November 2019.

I have just completed my first two years as Presiding Judge over Veterans Treatment Court. I got involved when my predecessor ascended to the federal bench. In debriefing me on the program, he constantly reminded me that we had a friend – a veteran and a man of courage and vision – who supported us in Commissioner Steve Bradshaw. I did not think much of it at the time, but after attending several of Commissioner Bradshaw's veterans events and sitting down to speak with him, I gladly came to the same conclusion. DeKalb County, the Veterans Treatment Court, and most who come into contact with the Commissioner and those affiliated with the program understand that we are a stronger, more vibrant, and diverse community based on his efforts. We thank Commissioner Bradshaw for his support of the Veterans Treatment Court and the many things he does to support DeKalb County.

Judge Mark Anthony Scott, Superior Court – Division 9, Stone Mountain Judicial Circuit, with graduates of the First Veterans Treatment Court, November 22, 2019.

Accomplishments

- Hosted a Resources Expo for DeKalb County Veterans in 2018 and 2019
- Allocated \$40,000 of District 4 reserve funds to the Veterans Treatment Court
- Appointed Vice-Chair of the National Association of Counties Veterans and Military Affairs Committee



May 2017: Honoring Mr. and Mrs. Josiah Benator for Older Americans Month. Mr. Benator served in WWII, is a Purple Heart and Bronze Star recipient, and has been a Boy Scout Troop leader for 68 years. Mr. and Mrs. Benator have been married for almost 70 years.

Board Appointments

DeKalb County Commissioners have five basic job functions: 1) Passage and oversight of DeKalb County's budget. 2) Land Use and Zoning. 3) Passing Ordinances. 4) Constituent Service. The fifth basic function is making appointments to various boards and committees. I take all these functions very seriously.

When it comes to making board appointments, the tendency seems to lean toward appointing people you are already familiar with. Consequently, boards in DeKalb County tend to be populated with familiar faces. There is nothing inherently wrong with this, but I took a different approach. I surmised that in a district of nearly 150,000 people, there are plenty of folks who would like to be of service if only given the opportunity. Therefore, we announced openings via our communications platforms for nearly every board position, accepted resumes and statements of interest, and conducted interviews to determine who I would appoint. By taking this approach, I became familiar with many bright and talented people throughout District 4 that I may not otherwise have met. I also interviewed appointees from the previous regime to decide if I wanted to reappoint them.

These men and women volunteer their time and energy to be of service to DeKalb County, and they should be commended for doing so. In 2019, right before the holidays, I invited my board appointees to a reception in their honor at the ART Station in Stone Mountain to show my appreciation for their service. COVID-19 kept me from doing that again in 2020, but the depth of my gratitude still holds.

Being a member of the District 4 Community Council has enabled me to effectively engage with my own community, allowing me to help shape the positive change that's been happening in District 4 and throughout DeKalb County. It's empowering to know that every one of my District 4 neighbors have the same opportunity to become involved, be heard and invoke meaningful change in our community. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to serve on behalf of my neighbors.

Matt Leatherman, Community Council Board

APPOINTEES

District 4

2020 Census Complete Count Committee
Dr. Carla Jackson Willis

Airport Advisory
Christopher Richard

Animal Services Advisory Board
Norman Powell

Beautification Board
Alfred Fowler

Charter Review Commission
Brandon D. Wagner

Citizens Oversight Committee for SPLOST Revenues and Expenditures
Isaac Blythers

Community Council Board

Roslyn Allison	Conward Jones
Wesley Brooks	David Kaminski
Jean Brown	Matt Leatherman
Mike Cooper	Evora Ritchie
Janet Curtis	Richard Rose
Andrea Hart	Victoria Webb

Initiative For A Green DeKalb Advisory Council
Debra Greenwood

John Lewis Memorial Task Force

William Cook	Dr. Sharon Hill
Mayor Jonathan Elmore	Karima Jones
	Sherry King

Parks Bond Citizen Advisory Committee
James Alec Gelin

Peachtree DeKalb Airport Master Plan Committee
Tess Snipes

Planning Commission
LaSonya Osler

Recreation, Parks & Cultural Affairs Citizens Advisory Board
Calvin Sims Sr.

Technical Board of Appeals
Chakira Johnson

Water Billing Advisory Board
Carol Holloway

Watershed Capital Improvements Program (CIP) Advisory Group
Nadine Rivers-Johnson

Zoning Board of Appeals
Nadine Rivers-Johnson



Visiting with District 4 Community Council Members at Sue Kellogg Library.

Leadership

I arrived in this office still a work in progress, but not without a certain amount of knowledge, skills, and abilities I had acquired along the way from which to draw upon. Still, I was new to this role, and the approach I took was to humble myself, listen more than I talked, and learn from those who have been discharging these duties for much longer than I have been.

I learned my first leadership lessons by observing my grandfathers, who were both pastors. Rev. Boyce Robert Robinson and Rev. Jack Johnson Bradshaw had very different leadership styles. In a nutshell, granddaddy Robinson was beloved, while granddaddy Bradshaw was feared. Both men were highly respected. I would like to think that my style combines and balances those character traits depending upon the circumstances.

Much later in life, during my private sector days as a business development director, I came to appreciate the importance and value of having the numbers work and making hard choices when they didn't. My time in the classroom as an adjunct college professor taught me patience.

Of course, my leadership approach was shaped and tempered the most by my time as a United States Army Officer. I will not belabor the point. Suffice it to say that I was placed in charge of 15 soldiers and four tanks worth over \$8 million in my first permanent leadership assignment. At that time, I was 23 years old.

Therefore, when I arrived in this office at age 53, I was not caught up in the title County Commissioner or overwhelmed by the responsibility nor consumed with the relative power attendant with this position. I have just been focused on doing the job.



Proudly standing with my colleagues on the Board of Commissioners in 2020. Left to Right: Commissioners Nancy Jester, Jeff Rader, Larry Johnson, Mereda Davis Johnson, Kathie Gannon, and Lorraine Cochran Johnson.

I can distill my leadership approach to a few simple ideas:

- Have clearly defined objectives
- Possess the ability to communicate your intent clearly
- Consider, Reflect, then Decide
- Surround yourself with smart, talented people who can execute and who feel empowered to tell you the truth
- Don't overthink or over-complicate things
- Practice humility
- Be strong without flexing
- Hold firm to your convictions while retaining the ability to modify as necessary when conditions change
- Be nice and respectful to other people while retaining the willingness to drop the hammer when that is warranted
- Derive pleasure from what you are doing and try to maintain a sense of humor
- Anticipate. Prepare. Adapt.
- As a leader, you cannot please everyone

There is nothing particularly original or revolutionary about what I have articulated. But I have tried to bring this operating methodology to my position as County Commissioner. I know that I do not check all of those boxes all the time, but I do aspire to. As previously stated, I am still a work in progress.

Accomplishments

- Unanimously elected Presiding Officer of the Board of Commissioners in 2020, successfully adapted and provided steady leadership amid a pandemic
- Elected unanimously as Deputy Presiding Officer of the Board of Commissioners in 2018 and 2019
- Chair, Public Works and Infrastructure Committee in 2019: Instituted audit oversight for purchasing contracts in excess of \$3 million, saving taxpayers over \$5.6 million
- Chair, County Operations Committee in 2017 and 2018, adopted the No Kill Standard for our Animal Shelter

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has induced a health care crisis and an economic crisis that none of us anticipated. Consequently, as political leaders, we have all had to adapt to this new condition drawing upon our own experience and exercising our best judgment.

I am very proud of the way DeKalb County has continued to operate under these conditions. I particularly respect and appreciate the leadership that CEO Michael Thurmond has provided for all of us. He has demonstrated the steadiness and decisiveness required for a time such as this. When CEO Thurmond issued Executive Order No. 20 – 001 on March 23, 2020, Declaring a State of Emergency in DeKalb County, I had been the Presiding Officer of the Board of Commissioners for 70 days. Clearly, some adjustments had to be made to how the BOC conducted our business, and I was responsible for leading us through this transition. In an email that I sent to my BOC colleagues a few days after the declaration, I made the following four 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 Response 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. It has been said that adversity builds character – but that is not entirely true. What is truer is that adversity reveals character. As this crisis has evolved, this has certainly proven to be the case for better and for worse.

Overall, I am grateful to my BOC colleagues for their flexibility and support as we have adapted to these circumstances together and continued to discharge our duties for the people of DeKalb County, and I am honored to serve with all of them.

Likewise, I have been very impressed with municipal leaders throughout DeKalb County. Several of the Mayors had just taken office in January when they were faced with dealing with this pandemic's effects and leading their respective cities through it. The grit and grace that many of our municipal leaders have demonstrated have been inspiring to me. And I believe that they were also called to lead for a time such as this.

As Mayor of Pine Lake, I've worked with Commissioner Bradshaw for the entirety of his first term. After taking office, Steve immediately established a quarterly roundtable meeting with all central DeKalb Mayors, giving us a regular opportunity to circulate our ideas and leadership challenges while staying current on a county and cross-city level. It also proved to be a forum demonstrating the Commissioner's responsiveness to problems each of us aired that needed his assistance.

I count Steve Bradshaw as an esteemed and trusted colleague and have sought out his leadership company during this turbulent year. His pragmatism and compassion, combined with his drive for results and deeply good heart make him a much-needed model for all public servants in these times.

Melanie Hammet, Mayor,
City of Pine Lake

Accomplishments

- Sponsored a food distribution event at E.L. Miller Elementary School for over 600 families
- Sponsored a food distribution event at Victory for the World Church for over 1000 families
- Sponsored a food distribution event at Fantastic Freedom Middle School for over 300 families
- As Chair of the Small Business Sub Committee of the COVID-19 Strategic Task Force, we recommended the establishment of a \$15 million loan fund and other support programs for DeKalb County's small businesses
- Hosted an Inspiration and Healing event for the citizens of DeKalb County

Covid-19

The individual and collective suffering that this pandemic has induced has certainly affected me. I regard mitigating the suffering to the extent possible as our most solemn responsibility as leaders. Thankfully, the Coronavirus Aid Relief Economic Security (CARES) Act funds that we received from the federal government have been instrumental in helping us to mitigate suffering without having to make drastic choices.

I commend CEO Thurmond for how he has prioritized DeKalb County's \$125 million allocation, which included direct allocations to our municipalities. I also appreciate the fact that he set aside money for members of the Board of Commissioners to allocate at our discretion, amounting to about \$1.4 million for each BOC member.

I decided to focus on the basics by concentrating a significant portion of my funds on mitigating food insecurity and housing insecurity. To this end, my office identified 23 nonprofit agencies throughout District 4 and DeKalb County that are already engaged in these efforts. I am so grateful for the work that these organizations are doing to mitigate the suffering of our people.

Antioch A.M.E. Community Development Corp. Inc.

Atlanta Community Food Bank

Atlanta Legal Aid Society

Big Brothers, Big Sisters DeKalb County

Clarkston Community Center

DeKalb Chapter 100 Black Men of America

DeKalb County Board of Health

First African Community Development Corp.

Friends of Disabled Adults & Children

International Rescue Committee

K.D. Moore Community Development Corp.

Latin American Association

Oakhurst Medical Centers

Our House Inc.

Positive Growth Inc.

Potter's House Community Development Center Inc.

Respectful Ways

Scottdale Early Learning

Sheltering Arms

Side by Side Brain Injury Clubhouse

St. Vincent de Paul Georgia Inc.

Wade Walker Park YMCA

WorkSource DeKalb



The last of three Food Drives held at different locations throughout District 4. Pictured: Fantastic Freedom Middle School.

I want to thank all of DeKalb County's department heads and employees who have continued to deliver essential services amid this crisis. All these departments report to our Chief Operating Officer Zach Williams, who has done an outstanding job.

I would particularly like to thank our Chief Innovation and Information Officer, John Matelski, and his team for adapting to changing conditions and working so hard to keep our systems functioning properly. I also want to thank DCTV Director Diamond Lewis and her team for working so hard and keeping us on the airwaves. I must thank the BOC Central Staff members, who lost the Chief of Staff just before the onset of this pandemic, for stepping up and continuing to provide professional support to the BOC members.

We also owe a special word of thanks to our Public Health Director, Dr. Sandra Elizabeth Ford, for her steady leadership throughout this crisis. I cannot begin to imagine what it was like for her and her team, especially in the early days, when people were uncertain and frankly scared. Dr. Ford's presence and guidance were indeed comforting for all of us.

Most of all, I want to thank the citizens of DeKalb County for their resilience. My heart goes out to all of those who have lost loved ones to COVID-19. I empathize with the owners whose businesses have suffered or were forced to close due to COVID-19. The magnitude of the suffering to varying degrees has been tough on all of us.

Thankfully, the distribution of an effective vaccine appears to be at hand, but the vaccine is not in wide distribution yet. We cannot let our guards down. Let's continue to be vigilant. As I have said at the start of every Board of Commissioners business meeting since this crisis began, we will get through this together.

Looking Forward

Thirty-four years ago, when I arrived at my initial permanent military duty station in the Federal Republic of Germany, Captain Elrin Hundley, my first company commander, impressed upon me the following: “when you come into any situation where you have leadership responsibility, your primary objective is to leave it a little better than you found it.” I took those words to heart and have carried them with me ever since.

The citizens of District 4 have seen it fit to return me to the office for a second term, so I do not anticipate leaving anytime soon. However, I can confidently say that District 4 and DeKalb County are in better shape now than the situation that I walked into on January 1, 2017. I think the information that has been presented herein is a testament to that.

Even so, no one report can be all things to all people or fully capture the extent of our accomplishments, of which I am very proud. For example:

- **My vote to support the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST), which has provided a long-overdue funding source for roads and infrastructure (ask any District 4 resident who drives on Rockbridge Road what this has meant)**
- **Our office’s allocation of \$515,000 of reserve funds to our Community Development Department to combat homelessness in District 4 and DeKalb County**
- **My vote to increase the minimum wage for DeKalb County employees to \$15 an hour**
- **Our efforts in the area of blight remediation, demolishing six blighted buildings in Brannon Hill and four blighted buildings in Waverly Place**
- **Our partnerships with Friends of Refugees, Georgia State University, and other organizations to host a successful job fair that 50 employers and over 560 citizens participated in**
- **Issuing proclamations acknowledging everything from the 150th anniversary of Antioch AME Church to the 40th anniversary in the business of the Village Corner German Restaurant and Bakery**

My first term in office has certainly been an incredible ride. Still, there is much work that remains to be done. Looking forward to my second term, I am primarily interested in seeing many of my first term initiatives fully realized. In other words, I want to “follow through for you.”

I am looking forward to the day when we are cutting a ribbon to celebrate the opening of our Senior and Community Center. I am looking forward to the day when developers take a renewed interest in Memorial Drive, and this vital corridor begins to realize its full potential. I will continue to support compensation increases for our public safety personnel. I will continue to support efforts to make DeKalb County safer, cleaner, and friendlier to business. I also want to strengthen the bonds of communication and collaboration between this governing authority and other elected leaders at every level throughout DeKalb County. And we should continue to manage this county’s fiscal affairs in a thoughtful, responsible manner. I would also like to continue the “trust restoration project.”

One of the things that I enjoy the most about serving at this level of government is that our set of issues is not inherently partisan. Roads do not have a political party. Sanitation does not have a political party. Clean drinking water does not have a political party. At this level, we are focused on delivering basic yet essential services to our constituents, which does not tend to lend itself to partisan wrangling, or as my friend and former Governor Roy Barnes calls it, “government in the raw.” This is certainly not sexy or glory-seeking stuff. But let your garbage not get collected for 2 or 3 weeks, or let your water stop running for a day and see how you are feeling about life. I am very proud to serve at this level of government.

Additionally, I will continue to be accessible and responsive to the citizens of District 4. After all, these are the people who put me in office, and I will never lose sight of this simple fact. I am so grateful to have been afforded this opportunity to continue to serve.

In due time someone else will become the DeKalb County Commissioner representing District 4, just as night follows day. But, for the foreseeable future, you all are stuck with me. I am so proud of what we have accomplished together. And I am confident that our best days are ahead of us.

Whatever the future may hold, I will close this report by proclaiming in the clearest and strongest terms possible that I am proud to call myself a Citizen of DeKalb County.



Looking over DeKalb County from the top of the Seminole Landfill.

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SPECIAL THANKS TO ADEDOTUN SEYINGBO AND BRINA JOLIN
FOR THEIR SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS REPORT



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