

COVINGTON – HOLLYWOOD SOUTH

Covington, the County Seat of Newton County, is located southeast of Atlanta and southwest of Athens on Interstate 20. Once part of the Creek Nation, and originally known as Newtonborough, it was incorporated as a town in 1822, and named in honor of **General Leonard Covington**, an American Revolutionary Soldier. Like most Georgia communities, cotton was “king”, and the development of the cotton mill brought the first real signs of prosperity to the area. The railroad to Covington was completed in 1845. Covington played an active role in the War Between the States when on the evening of July 20, 1864 Union forces under Brigadier **General Kenner Garrard** moved into town. Orders from General Sherman were to burn bridges over the Yellow and Alcovy Rivers and destroy the railroad between nearby Lithonia and the Alcovy. Successfully completed, this raid ended all communication between Augusta and Atlanta, and ended any hope that defenders of Atlanta might receive reinforcements. Fortunately, many plantations and “town homes” were spared by Sherman on his March to the Sea.

In 1988, Covington was awarded the designation of a Georgia Main Street City due to the community’s dedication to the preservation of its 19th Century structures. Adorning the Main Street area and the National Register Districts are carefully restored antebellum and Victorian-Era homes, churches, parks, and the downtown square. Still the center of the community, the square is often host to festive social events. Also, the City has been a popular on-site shooting location for many feature films and television series. Included among these are The Walking Dead, The Vampire Diaries, Dukes of Hazzard, In The Heat of the Night, Remember the Titans, and My Cousin Vinny.

The 2018 estimated population is 13,700. City leadership includes Mayor **Ronnie Johnston** and Councilmembers **Anthony Henderson, Susie Kech, Josh McKelvey, Kenneth Morgan, Michael Whatley, Hawnethia Williams,** and Manager **Leigh Anne Knight**.



Historic Courthouse



Craig Home



Historic Home



Downtown Covington

BELTON ADDRESSES NEGRC COUNCIL

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Council, meeting in regular session on April 18th was honored to hear a presentation by **Dave Belton**. He has represented House District 112 in the Georgia General Assembly since 2014, and was the first Morgan County resident to be elected to that body in 30 years. He became a Naval Aviator, involved in action associated with the Lebanese Civil War, Liberian Civil War, Persian Gulf War, Operation Provide Comfort, and the Bosnian Conflict. Decorated more than twenty times, he has flown almost 14,000 hours in fifteen different aircraft. He is currently a Captain for Delta Airlines.

As Chairman of the Military Affairs Committee, Representative Belton inspired the passage of 23 new laws to assist military service members and their families. He also led the formation of the new Georgia Defense Commission to protect our state from a possible BRAC. During his first session, he was instrumental in the passage of "Kelsey's Law", a measure guarding against distribution of personal information and facial images of teenage girls.

Representative Belton touched on several items of interest resulting from the recently completed 2019 session of the General Assembly. They included military bills, the state budget, the Ballot Box Bill, the Heartbeat Bill, and efforts to extend rural broadband. He also discussed the Medicaid Waiver Program and the medical Cannabis Act.



(L-R) Representative Belton with Chairman Jerry Roseberry

PLANNING SESSIONS FACILITATED

Executive Director **Jim Dove** and Executive Assistant **Mott Beck** facilitated two Planning Sessions in recent weeks.

A Visioning Session for the Jefferson Downtown Development Authority was conducted on Friday, March 22nd at the Jefferson Library. The first portion of the session focused on duties and responsibilities of DDA members. This was followed by efforts to develop Vision and Mission Statements. After identification and discussion of strengths and challenges facing the group, participants engaged in efforts to identify short-term priorities (12 months or less) and long-term priorities (up to five years).

The annual Strategic Planning Session for the Braselton Mayor and Council was held at NEGRC headquarters on Friday, April 19th. This marks the 14th consecutive year that NEGRC has facilitated the session. After reviewing accomplishments of the previous year and reviewing goals set at last year's session, attendees were engaged in a SWOT analysis which served to frame discussion for the remainder of the session. Short-term goals for the next 12-18 months were identified, and long-term goals and objectives were prioritized as well. City officials attending included Mayor **Bill Orr**, Councilmembers **Tony Funari**, **Hardy Johnson**, **Becky Richardson**, and **Peggy Slappey**, and Town Manager **Jennifer Scott**.



Jefferson Downtown Development Authority



City of Braselton Mayor & Council

ARC LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE OPPORTUNITY

The **Appalachian Regional Commission** (ARC) is offering a unique, leadership training opportunity available for individuals "passionate about helping their communities thrive." The training can accommodate a diverse range of applicants from the public, private, and/or non-profit sectors. The nine-month, extensive training covers a range of skill building and leadership seminars culminating in a capstone graduation event in Washington, DC.

A total of 40 participating "Fellows" are selected from applicants within the ARC region (Barrow, Elbert, Jackson, and Madison Counties in Northeast Georgia). The curriculum for the training was developed by ARC in partnership with several institutions and organizations including: University of Tennessee, Knoxville; The Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy; Tuskegee University; and Collective Impact. All travel and participation costs are provided by ARC to the 40 selected "ARC Leadership Institute Fellows." The deadline to submit an application is **June 1, 2019** with application information available at: <https://leadership.arc.gov/>. The overall purpose of the training is to build capacity within the ARC region as stated below:

"The Appalachian Leadership Institute is designed to equip a diverse network of leaders with the skills, expertise, and vision to address Appalachia's most pressing issues and increase our Region's economic competitiveness."

For additional information about ARC or this leadership-training opportunity, contact **Burke Walker**, NEGRC Director of Planning & Government Services, at bwalker@negrc.org or **(706) 369-5650**.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION HELPS SENIORS

The Georgia Council on Aging (GCOA) and members of the Coalition of Advocates for Georgia's Aging (CO-AGE) were successful in advocating for Georgia seniors during the 2019 legislative session. The Governor and House and Senate members took the time to listen to the advocates, the older adults that came to see them at the Capitol during Senior Week in February and those that called or e-mailed them for their support of the many issues.

The session ended with extra funding in the 2020 state budget to help seniors remain safe and independent in their homes. Some of the funding will boost home and community based care, home delivered meals, assistive technology and a resource network connecting aging adults to local resources and support. Money was also added to hire additional caseworkers to address elder abuse complaints and to advocate for older adults without guardians.

Also during the legislative session, lawmakers agreed to study the pressing issue of affordable housing for seniors, tightened elder abuse laws and introduced legislation to provide greater scrutiny of personal care homes. The following is a recap of the legislative successes of the GCOA and CO-AGE:

FUNDING

- \$2 million for Home and Community Based Services. Additional funding addresses a waiting list of about 7,000 older Georgians seeking support services such as personal assistance, transportation and home modifications. This is projected to fund an additional 1,053 slots.
- \$338,802 for Aging and Disability Resource Connection. The call centers helped 107,287 seniors in Fiscal Year 2018 find local resources

and support. This funding will help create a public facing web site to provide 24/7 online information.

- \$1,406,232 for Meals on Wheels to reduce the waiting list for home-delivered meals.
- \$157,000 for assistive technology labs to provide \$7,500 for technology for each of the 21 assistive technology labs across the state. Assistive technology helps improve the functional capabilities for adults with daily living challenges.
- \$1,355,873 for 17 additional caseworkers to investigate allegations of elder abuse.
- \$366,752 for 5 additional caseworkers to advocate as guardians for older adults.

LEGISLATION

- Study committee on housing options – the House Study Committee on Innovative Financial Options for Senior Living was created and it will have until December to make recommendations.
- Elder abuse – the bill allows law enforcement to inspect unlicensed personal care homes when regulators are not present, allows higher penalties for elder abuse crimes and clarifies the definition of exploitation so the abuse of an incapacitated person is a crime.
- Personal Care Home sanctions – House Bill 722 increases the maximum allowable sanctions that the state can impose on personal care homes for causing death or serious harm to a resident.
- Health Coverage for Low Income Seniors – Senate Bill 185 was created to help low income Medicare beneficiaries with out-of-pocket health care costs. This bill did not move this session but provides a vehicle to educate legislators and the public about this problem.
- Senior Transportation - HB 511 passed the House but stalled in the Senate. HB 511 was amended onto SB 131, but failed to pass in the Senate.

For additional information on the Georgia Council on Aging (GCOA) or the Coalition of Advocates for Georgia's Elderly (CO-AGE), go to <https://www.gcoa.org>.

AUBURN'S WHISTLESTOP SHOPS: "MICRO-RETAILING" FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

National trends toward smaller, more efficient, and simpler means of living and doing business have taken root through tiny houses, shared ride services like Lyft and Uber, and a concept known as micro-retailing. In the City of Auburn, located in western Barrow County, micro-retailing meant the development of the Whistlestop Shops in 2016 and 2017. According to the city's website, "these cottage-style shops offer small businesses the perfect opportunity to market their products and services in a public setting while keeping the costs within their budget."

After an initial phase of operation proved successful, a partnership between the city and the downtown development authority (DDA) expanded the project to include eleven shops, a landscaped plaza, and streetscape improvements with walking paths. Each shop is housed in an 8'x12' building (96 square feet), and the nominal monthly rent paid to the DDA includes water and sewer, power, Wi-Fi, heating and cooling, and landscape maintenance. Over fifty applications for use of the space have been received, with current businesses including a pastry shop, a café with catering, apparel and décor outlets, and a handmade gift seller.

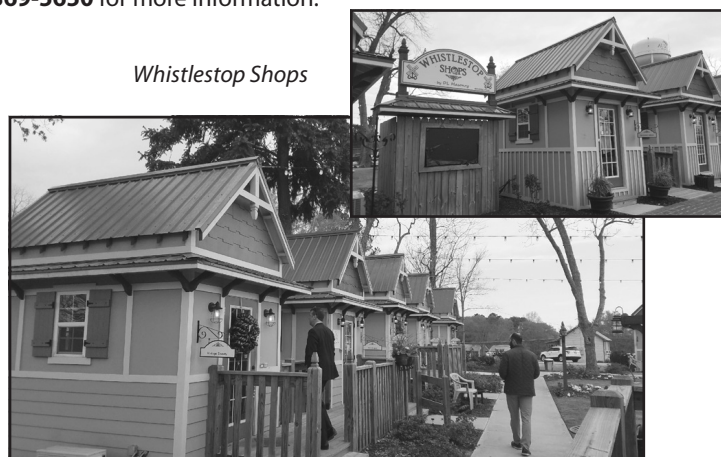
Auburn Mayor **Linda Blechinger** is proud of the shops and their effects on the city: "The Whistlestop Shops have been a great success for our community. We believe in spurring on entrepreneurs. Our DDA/

Main St. were instrumental in this endeavor and the shops certainly have [allowed] home-based businesses to take the next step." The total cost of the first nine shops, including design, construction, infrastructure, signage, and landscaping was \$340,000. Although city funds were used to establish the project, the DDA manages the site and selects businesses from the applicant pool.

The project benefits the community in several ways. First, it generates revenue from sales tax and rent. It also provides business owners with a flexible, low-cost environment to test a new concept, move out of cramped in-home operating space, or offer an additional outpost or a new format – it can also serve as a springboard into a more traditional retail setup. And the Whistlestop Shops have people talking about Auburn: Mayor Blechinger points out that "we have seen great interest in our city since investing in our business district with these shops."

The Whistlestop Shops are open Tuesday-Saturday, 11:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Visit the businesses during operating hours or contact NEGRC Principal Planner **John Devine**, AICP, at jdevine@negrc.org or **(706) 369-5650** for more information.

Whistlestop Shops



COUNTY MANAGERS LEARN ABOUT CYBERSECURITY

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission will have the Best Practices in Cybersecurity Panel at our upcoming County Managers' meeting. The Panel will bring experts from diverse fields in cybersecurity and present case studies to describe the "dos and don'ts" in cybersecurity. County managers are encouraged to attend as well as any appropriate staff. It is important to note that cybersecurity is not an "IT issue;" it is an issue that involves everyone. The panelists are;

- **Jason Bernstein** Esq., Co-chair for Data Security and Privacy at Barnes and Thornburg LLP
- **Samuel Blaney**, Director of Cybersecurity at the Georgia Technology Authority
- **David Allen**, Chief Information Officer for the State of Georgia
- Special Agent **Wendell L. Goodman**, for the Georgia Bureau of Investigation Cyber Crime Center (G3C)

Attendees are encouraged to stay at the end of the panel and participate in an open roundtable discussion on cybersecurity. Lunch will also be provided by Goodwyn, Mills & Cawood. The panel will be held at NEGRC headquarters on Thursday, May 16th at 10:30 a.m. Those interested in attending must RSVP by May 8th. For additional questions or comments, please contact **Monica Sagastizado**, NEGRC Project Specialist, at **706-369-5650** or msagastizado@negrc.org.



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Update

REGIONAL MEETINGS MAY

8	12:30 p.m.	Solid Waste Management Authority	E. H. Culpepper Conference Room
10	9:00 a.m.	NEGA Senior Center Directors	E. H. Culpepper Conference Room
14	8:30 a.m.	Workforce Development Board	Athens Technical College
16	10:30 a.m.	County Managers' Meeting	E. H. Culpepper Conference Room
16	Noon	NEGRC Council	Athens Holiday Inn
16	3:30 p.m.	Firefly Trail Advocacy Group	E. H. Culpepper Conference Room
22	9:00 a.m.	Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority	E. H. Culpepper Conference Room



Sincerely & Respectfully,