

**SOCIAL CIRCLE – A FITTING NAME**

The City of Social Circle is located near Interstate 20 approximately 45 miles east of Atlanta, and extends from Walton into Newton County. The City's population is estimated to be 4500. The City was founded in 1820 by several men who obtained the land by lottery, and incorporated as a village in 1832, in 1869 as a town, and in 1904 as a city. Social Circle, located at the highest point on the Georgia Railroad, was a transportation hub prior to rail lines being destroyed by General Sherman's troops on their March to the Sea. The heart of the City is the historic downtown, home of the iconic City Well. A legend has been passed down that a group of men, meeting at the crossroads, were sitting around the well having their usual drink when a stranger approached. When greeted with such warm hospitality he said, "This is surely a social circle." The downtown is home to a variety of shops, businesses, and restaurants. A short drive from the City is beautiful Hard Labor Creek State Park. Adjacent to the City's southern boundary is the 1600 acre Stanton Springs Industrial Park, owned by the Joint Development Authority of Jasper, Morgan, Newton, and Walton Counties. The Park is home to Baxalta/Shire, a global leader in biologic medical therapies, and the Facebook Data Center. City leaders include Mayor **Hal Dally** (a member of the NEGRC Council), Councilmembers **Tyson Jackson, David Keener, Traysa Price,** and **Steve Shelton,** and City Manager **Adele Schirmer.**



*Blue Willow Inn and Magnolia Manor*



*Iconic Well and City Hall*

**NEW MEDICARE CARDS ARE ON THE WAY**

The Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) started a fraud prevention initiative that removes Social Security numbers from Medicare cards to prevent fraud, fight identity theft, and keep taxpayer dollars safe. The new cards have a unique, randomly-assigned number

called a Medicare Beneficiary Identifier (MBI), to replace the Social Security-based Health Insurance Claim Number (HICN) currently used on the Medicare card. To help protect your identity, Medicare is mailing new Medicare cards between April 2018 and April 2019.

Having your Social Security number removed from your Medicare card helps fight medical identity theft and protect your medical and financial information. But even with these changes, scammers will still look for ways to get your information. Here are some ways to avoid Medicare scams:

- Is someone calling, claiming to be from Medicare, and asking for your Social Security number or bank information? Hang up. That's a scam. First, Medicare won't call you. Second, Medicare will never ask for your Social Security number or bank information.
- Is someone asking you to pay for your new card? That's a scam. Your new Medicare card is free.
- Is someone threatening to cancel your benefits if you don't give up information or money? Also a scam. New Medicare cards will be mailed out to you automatically. There won't be any changes to your benefits.

Personal identity theft affects a large and growing number of seniors. People age 65 and older are increasingly the victims of this type of crime. Incidents among seniors increased to 2.6 million from 2.1 million between 2012 and 2014, according to the current statistics from the Department of Justice. Identity theft can take not only an emotional toll on those who experience it, but also a financial one: two-thirds of all identity theft victims reported a direct financial loss. It can also disrupt lives, damage credit ratings and result in inaccuracies in medical records and costly false claims.

## REMINDER

The next meeting of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission will be held on **Thursday, November 15<sup>th</sup> at Noon at the Athens Holiday Inn**. Information on the meeting will be forthcoming.

## POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT

The Braselton Visitors Bureau is seeking trolley drivers. This position is responsible for the operation of the town trolley while running shifts during a regular route Friday-Sunday. Drivers will sign up for shifts as the schedule is posted for each month. Drivers who are approved can work as many or as little shifts as their schedule allows. Some hours may be available during the week for private rentals. Pay is \$20/hour for regular schedule and \$25/hour for private rentals.

Applicant must possess valid Georgia driver's license with a satisfactory driving history and obtain and maintain a CDL (Class B

with P endorsement). Apply in person at 4982 Hwy 53, Braselton, GA 30517. Applications are available on our website at <http://braselton.net/jobs.html>.

The Town of Braselton and its authorities and agencies are equal opportunity and Drug Free Workplace employers.



Braselton Trolley

## NEGRC COUNCIL MEETING

The October 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the NEGRC Council featured two outstanding presentations.

Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) Executive Director **Chuck Williams**, a former State Representative and native Oconee Countian, reported on the activities of that agency. Although the number of personnel has diminished in recent years, the GFC is an active partner with each of the state's 159 counties. Mr. Williams, his staff, and multiple state agencies have expended considerable time and resources in southern Georgia recently in response to the damage inflicted by Hurricane Michael. In addition to making much-needed equipment available, ten chainsaw strike teams were activated to assist in clearing local roads among other efforts. Four Georgia Forestry Commission facilities were destroyed during the storm.

ACCG staff member **Jeff Christie** introduced a presentation on the Mental Health Crisis in the state, delivered by Baldwin County Commissioner **Henry Craig**. ACCG has appointed a standing committee to address this matter, which is closely linked to the opioid crisis. The impact on county governments and budgets is significant. In Georgia, there are 349,000 adults and 110,000 children diagnosed with mental illness. The illness is too often treated "under the bridge" and in jails. Commissioner Craig, in regard to the issue, stated, "We must decide if we are going to take action, we must have a discussion about what we must do, and what can we do?"

## MANUFACTUREADY GRADUATION

Congratulations to the graduating class for ManufactuREADY in Walton County. ManufactuREADY is a six-week program offered by Athens Technical College and WorkSource Northeast Georgia to help individuals gain the skills and knowledge needed to obtain

full-time employment. Upon completion of the course, students earn six certifications including Forklift and OSHA-10. Classes are offered on a rolling basis in Athens, Greensboro and Monroe.

For further information about the program and to apply, contact **Pete McGill**, Athens Technical College at **(706) 369-5763**. For information on other workforce development assistance available in the Northeast Georgia region, contact the NEGRC Workforce Development Division at **(706) 369-5703**.



Walton County Graduates



Training Center

## FCC ISSUES RULING ON WIRELESS FACILITIES

On September 26, the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) issued a declaratory ruling on the deployment of small wireless facilities, which are also known as “small cells.” The ruling was issued to promote the new era of 5G wireless transmission and to put the United States on the forefront of this new technology. The FCC made the following four changes to sections of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 that will affect municipalities:

1. Established a new standard for determining whether a state or local law operates as a prohibition or effective prohibition for the deployment of small cells.
2. Clarified what type of fees will be considered unreasonable and prohibitory for the implementation of small cells as it pertains to the state and local government’s right-of-ways.
3. Clarified which non-fee provisions (aesthetic regulations) will be considered prohibitory.
4. Set new shot clocks to state and local governments for reviewing applications for the deployment of small cells.

Local governments in our region should reflect on their processes and regulations, and verify if they are congruent with the new ruling. Local governments may request assistance from the NEGRC Planning and Government Services Division and contact **Monica Sagastizado**, NEGRC Project Specialist, for questions at **msagastizado@negrc.org** or **(706) 369-5650**. For additional information on the FCC ruling please visit our website **http://www.negrc.org//**.

## COUNTY MANAGERS’ MEETING SCHEDULED

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission is hosting its first quarterly *County Managers’ Meeting* on November 14th at 10:30 a.m. in the E.H. Culpepper Conference Room at NEGRC headquarters. This meeting will have Guest Speaker, **Charlotte Davis**, Government Liaison for the Georgia Municipal Association, to discuss the new Federal Communications Commission’s ruling on the deployment of small cells. Ms. Sagastizado will also provide an overview on broadband and on the Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE) Program. **Eva Kennedy**, NEGRC GIS Planner, will provide a brief overview of the 2020 Participant Statistical Area Program (PSAP). There will also be an opportunity for a roundtable discussion on broadband and small-cells legislation. County Managers and appropriate staff are invited to attend. Lunch will be provided by the architectural firm of Goodwyn Mills and Cawood, Inc (GMC). To register for the meeting or additional information, please contact Ms. Sagastizado.

## COMMUNITY PLANNING INSTITUTE IN ATHENS

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) will host a two-day, *Community Planning Institute* program in Athens on November 15-16. The program is provided through a partnership with DCA and the Georgia Planning Association and intended to provide elected officials, planning commission members and local government staff with information related to local, comprehensive plan preparation and implementation. It is a good opportunity for public officials and staff involved in community planning to learn more about best practices, resources, and the latest case studies.

For further information and to register visit: **https://dca.ga.gov/local-government-assistance/planning/local-planning/community-planning-institute**.



# Happy Thanksgiving



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# Update

## REGIONAL MEETINGS NOVEMBER

7	1:00 p.m.	NEGA Solid Waste Authority	E. H. Culpepper Conference Room
15	Noon	NEGRC Council	Athens Holiday Inn
15	3:30 p.m.	Firefly Trail Advocacy Group	E. H. Culpepper Conference Room
28	11:00 a.m.	Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority	Bear Creek Reservoir



*Sincerely & Respectfully,*