

April 25, 2002

DECA Quarterly Meeting Minutes

- The meeting was held at Dresden Elementary School.
- Wayne Daniel (DECA President):
 - Thanked everyone for attending and gave a special thanks to Debra White (Dresden Elementary School Principal) and the faculty/staff for our meeting place.
- Debra White (Dresden Principal):
 - New and exciting things are always happening at the school!
 - Dresden Elementary is 76% Latino.
 - Next year, school will start earlier in the year.
 - The school is always looking for readers, volunteers, and mentors; please call the school or come by and visit anytime.
- Vernon Jones (DeKalb County CEO):
 - He is very excited to be at the meeting and have the opportunity to relate to “real” people that don’t have political motives.
 - The CEO position is a tough job and his office now has a better working relationship with the Board of Commissioners.
 - They are getting the streets repaved, although overall spending and revenue are significantly down from last year (by \$1.8 million).
 - DeKalb County is building a facility to train Olympic athletes.
 - He was the first in the country to appoint a local director of Homeland Security.
 - They have filled 108 out of the 200 police officer vacancies in the county; they have the highest starting salary in the state and offer a \$1000 signing bonus.
 - They have merged the fire and emergency management departments and abolished the Public Safety Commission b/c it was providing duplicated services.
 - They are trying to streamline government and eliminate unnecessary programs and positions.
 - They received a grant to pave 52 miles of highways in DeKalb County.
 - They have updated the building standards and increased enforcement of codes and regulations.
 - DeKalb County is 70% developed, 30% undeveloped.
 - They have recently purchased 1100 acres (the last farm in DeKalb County) and are in the process of buying additional green space.
 - Stone Crest Mall is now open and 40% of the customers are coming from outside of DeKalb County.
- Questions From the Audience to the CEO:
 - What is the status of Dresden Park?
 - 70% of the green space tax is being used to buy land; the other 30% is being used to improve existing parks.
 - They have not completed the comprehensive plan for the county.
 - They are looking to purchase necessary hardware for existing parks, acquiring new land, and establishing a dog park in DeKalb County.
 - Call Marlene Drew, the Director of Parks for more specific information about Dresden Park.

- The CEO's number is **404-371-2000**.
- What is the status of DeKalb County recycling, specifically the curbside recycling?
 - They sanitation trucks are not equipped for full recycling, but they can do newspapers.
 - Most of the fire departments offer recycling.
 - Last year, there was a sanitation fee increase, but the cost is still very low b/c we own a landfill. They talked about cutting back trash pickups and offering more recycling, but nobody wanted to have trash picked up once/week and they didn't want to pay extra for recycling. There are no immediate plans to offer more curbside recycling.
- Can you talk about transportation issues and traffic?
 - We have a \$0.07 tax on the dollar and one penny goes to MARTA; last year, MARTA tried to go up 400 and out I-20, but they got too much resistance; now they are focusing on creating access around Emory and Stone Crest Mall
 - Unlike Fulton County, we don't have venues that bring people to DeKalb.
 - We got \$18 million from GRETA to address the major roads and expansion.
 - We need more federal funding to help w/traffic issues and traffic light synchronization; Congress has a 80/20 match, but we didn't raise enough money, so Cobb and Fulton took DeKalb's money.
- What is the county doing to address pedestrian safety?
 - They are addressing walking trails in the comprehensive plan.
 - There are no immediate plants to add crosswalks on Shallowford; they are focusing efforts on Buford Highway.
 - They are putting in sidewalks and islands in the next 2 weeks on Buford Highway by the Gwinnett County line; they are also purchasing right-of-ways and putting in lighted symbols for the international community.
- What is the county doing about the loitering of day laborers?
 - They are trying to establish centralized meeting areas and have developed a task force to address the issue.
 - They will also focus on it while working on Buford Highway plans.
- Can you update us on ACOD (Airport Compatibility Overlay District)?
 - It is not even being discussed and was never an agenda item for a Commission meeting (may have been on the Planning Commission agenda; he will apologize if he is wrong about that); there will have to be a number of public hearings before it goes any further.
 - The airport brings in over \$3 million/year, much of which goes to the schools and City of Chamblee.
 - The Commissioners will NOT vote to expand the airport.
 - Planes coming in after the volunteer curfew (11 pm) is a federal issue; planes over 75,000 pounds have to call in for permission to land.
- What can we do about houses that have too many cars in the yard/driveway?
 - They put together a Deputy program for citizens to help w/the problem.
 - Now that they are more aggressive, they receive complaint calls from citizens threatening to sue b/c their rights have been violated.
 - He told the court to start significantly fining violators.

- They moved Code Enforcement into the field; Janice Scranton, Head of Code Enforcement, will talk more about it in her presentation.
- What are you doing about illegal immigrants?
 - It is a federal issue; DeKalb police can arrest them for other violations of the law, and then turn them over to immigration.
- What are you doing about the graffiti in the area?
 - There are no codes that address graffiti; the county does not have the resources to paint over it all; he will work w/Janice Scranton to revise the codes and address the issue.
- What are you doing about the potholes on Shallowford Road?
 - (It appears that new cables have been laid and were not properly paved over).
 - They were unaware of the issue and will address it and get back to DECA next week.
 - If we see a pothole, we should call the county and report it.
- Miscellaneous:
 - Arabia Mountain is DeKalb's best-kept secret.
 - Call 404-371-2112 if the trash collectors do not pick up your trash on time.
 - Keep DeKalb Beautiful has been organizing cleanups around the county.
 - They shut down a drug hotel on Candler Road.
 - DeKalb County has 7,236 employees.
 - He said he would come to our next meeting and bring Public Works, Voter Registration, Code Enforcement, Parks and Recreation, and other DeKalb County Department, so we can ask them any questions we want!
- Janice Scranton (Head of the Code Enforcement Unit of the DeKalb Police Department):
 - She is a native Georgian, has 3 children, and has worked for DeKalb County government for 14 years.
 - She brought the new county resource guide, property maintenance codes, 101 Ways to Save Your Home, Complaint forms, and a pamphlet to educate new home owners; she left copies w/DECA's President, Wayne Daniel.
 - The zoning ordinance is online and at the libraries.
 - The CEO removed 3 layers of bureaucracy in Public Works; there is now 1 police officer in each precinct that deals w/code enforcement (junk cars, parking in the yard, grass too high, signs on telephone poles, etc...).
 - They do have a sign ordinance that prohibits non-permitted signs to be displayed anywhere; we, as citizens, have the legal right to remove these signs.
 - Pit bulls are no longer allowed in residential areas b/c they are primarily used for protection of drug activities or for illegal dog fights.
 - Her department has 6 vacancies; the hiring process is much more thorough and they have more extensive background checks now.
 - Volunteers in the Deputy Program cannot address citizens directly; they must mail warnings or have an officer deliver them directly; they are trained to help document cases and find violators.
 - Their office handles 2,000-3,000 cases/month.
 - The CEO appointed a new judge and is trying to increase the fees.
 - Feel free to call and report violations; call back after a week to get the officer's name and any updates.

- The Property Maintenance Code was last amended in 1985 and needs updating; they could address graffiti in the new revision; they will form a committee.
- They did a survey on Shallowford Road and looked at every home for violations; they also spoke to the owners about the graffiti.
- All vehicles must be operable and on pavement.
- There is no code addressing the number of people/room; however, they can address overcrowding as a safety issue.
- If they issue a vehicle violation and 6 months later the original vehicle is gone, but a new vehicle violation exists, they will still get a citation.
- It is impossible to prove that residents are not related, so they go to the property management and look at the lease in order to find out who is renting the place.
- They have established a Community Relations Committee to address the language/cultural barriers.
- They want to operate on a complaint basis; you no longer have to give your name when calling in a complaint; they will ask for it, but you don't have to give it.
- They have one full-time officer that just deals w/commercial vehicles; they also have a Saturday officer and a Monday night officer.
- No school busses are allowed to park in residential areas.
- They have applied for an EPD grant to deal w/scrap tires; they want to find all the generators and find out where they are dumping the old tires; there is a \$2 fee for putting a tire out for curbside collection, although that is not currently enforced; they are partnering w/Keep DeKalb Beautiful and Public Health b/c of the West Nile issue.
- If a homeowner cannot afford to clean up their property, the county can do it and then place a lien on the house.
- Contact the health department or the Extension Service for information on pellets that can control mosquitoes.
- They county can issue warning notice based on just a picture, but if they issue a citation, you must agree to be subpoenaed.
- They are trying to get all the information and forms online.
- They are currently training and certifying a newer staff.
- They are located in a mini police precinct in Ellenwood and will assign 2 more officers to this area (Terrance Moore is our current officer).
- Complaint line: **404-417-1240**; her direct line: **404-417-1241**; complaints can also be mailed in.
- If they can prove that a house is rented to more than one family, then they can do something about it.
- They are under staffed, but if it takes 2 weeks w/out a response after filing a complaint, then ask for a supervisor.
- Grass 18" high is too high for the code and it needs revision; also, the code does not address overgrown shrubs.
- They need volunteers to pick up signs on Mondays w/an officer; they have cited a couple of night clubs and the "we buy homes" businesses; if you see a sign, try to find out the owner and then report them; we have the right to remove signs...but be careful!
- We need to contact our Commissioners to get the Property Maintenance Code revised.

- To become a Citizen Deputy, you have to fill out the application, sign a waiver, have a background check and complete 40 hours of training (can be done lots of different ways).
- Taxis parked at a home need a business license and can't be parked in front of the house (must be in a carport on the side yard or in a garage).

Business Meeting (shortened significantly due to time constraints):

- Treasure's Report was approved; DECA currently has \$3,422.10.
- DECA currently has 179 paid members.
- January's minutes were approved.
- A handout updating everyone on the Yard of the Month and Website was distributed.
- DECA's new Committee for Civic Association for Empowerment read their vision statement.
- The fence on the access road b/w Chamblee Tucker and Shallowford has now been fixed.
- The graffiti by the Quality Inn on Shallowford has now disappeared.
- DECA's neighborhood cleanup is Saturday, April 27th.

Meeting adjourned. If any additions and/or corrections need to be made to these minutes, please email decasecretary@mindspring.com.