

January 27<sup>th</sup> 2000

Hall Co. Comm. Meeting

Michael A. Miles  
5650 Thompson Mill Rd.  
Hoschton, GA. 30542  
(770) 967-9834  
Hall County, District 1

I would like to address the situation of planned growth in Hall County with this board tonight.

First on my agenda is the appropriate use of land for developments. It is not necessarily desirable to have massive amounts of land development determined in one application or decision-making process of the board. It has been shown by the survey before you that the people of this community enjoy and are attracted to the lesser populated more country like setting of this region as it is now. To allow massive high-density subdivisions, sewers, and commercial development into this region as it is proposed in the new land use plan would destroy that very asset which sets this county aside from all the others right now. We can have urban growth with out urban takeover and complete destruction of all that is rural. I use the words urban growth to describe the building and development of subdivisions and rural to describe the existing economic and historical life style associated with a lot of the current taxpaying residents, including myself. By adopting zoning practices and laws that will not allow for high-density developments in current rural areas, growth can come at a rate which the county infrastructure, like the school system and roads, can handle. This survey shows that the majority of people living in this region, rural and urban alike, feel that any higher density type developments would threaten the quality of life they currently enjoy. This survey has also shown it would be desirable to have large green belt areas left in and around Developments. These green belt areas could be planned in such a manner that as these developments are built, the green belt areas from each development would form a natural area where our children can play and wildlife could survive. These Green belt areas could also help protect the streams and rivers in the watershed and wetland areas of the county. These areas could then be turned over to the Forestry Service or the Department of Natural Resources to be managed accordingly. In this manner as developments are planned and built a piece of what makes Hall County a beautiful place to live is forever preserved. There is also a need for a better tree policy than the new one that is place for the preservation of existing trees within a development. Any land developer with a quality development would not object to this kind of land use but would welcome the protection that would result from this type of land use plan and legislation.

Second on my agenda are some concerns that have been raised by the communities answer to the last question of the survey. As you can tell from the survey 85% of 169 people surveyed feel that this board is not doing a good job of planning for their community or county. Most of these people in the urban community came here fleeing the over crowding and growth of Gwinnett County and other regions of the country. Several of them stated that they thought there were safe from being over developed. People like these live here based on the current comprehensive land use plan. Some actually checked with planning and zoning and realized they were safe in a rural

community. Imagine how surprised they were to learn this type of high-density development is being planned for this end of the Hall County. As part of the new comprehensive land use plan it has been proposed, by Brenda Branch's appointed member to the new comprehensive land use committee, that the decision making process of approving developments be changed. It has been proposed that instead of public hearings, zoning notices, and this type of forum that I am here speaking to you through today that this process become a judicial matter for the planning and zoning department through the use of a points system. The planning and zoning department is not an elected body but an appointed one and each member of the Hall County Commission gets to appoint one member to it for a total of five members. It would stand to reason that each appointee would reflect the political interest of the commissioner that appointed them. It would also stand to reason that by each appointee reflecting the interest of each commissioner that this would become an unofficial judicial process of this commission.

There is a major flaw in having decisions made in this manner. I would like to point out the fact that Mr. Steve Black, by his own admission as shown in public records, is the President and co-owner of S & B Professional Services, a company that is in the business of real estate sales. I would also like to point out that Ms. Brenda Branch is also currently making a living in this county as a real estate agent. As a real estate agent it would stand to reason that Ms. Branch would gain a substantial amount of wealth from the commissions produced through the sale of real estate. It was pointed out to me, by another real estate agent, she would not have to be the agent that sold a property but could have the property as one of her listings and still make a commission. I was also told that she could be the agent that sales a property listed by another agent and still make a commission. With so many ways to make a commission on the sale of property how can we the public know that Ms. Branch is not engaged in unethical behavior. It is my opinion, and the opinion of most of the people that was surveyed and answered no the last question, that as county commissioner this could and would influence the ability to plan for the growth of the county in an ethical manner. This brings me to the next topic concerning the possible ethical conflict that would exist between an individual in the real estate business and being a county commissioner. While running for public office a prospective or existing commissioner will receive campaign contributions from individuals and organizations. I would like to point out again that from documentation that is a matter of public information that any campaign contributions in excess of \$101.00 has to be recorded in the amount of the contribution and from whom the contribution was made. After reviewing Mr. Steve Black's contributions it was apparent that most of his funds came from a large group of individuals that donated only in small amounts, less than \$101.00 per donation. Therefore there is no record of whom contributed how much. However it is important to note that Mr. Black's total campaign was funded and successfully won with less than \$4,000.00. After reviewing Ms. Brenda Branch's public records it became evident to me that something seemed a little out of balance. Of her total \$31,120.00 in campaign contributions, \$21,705.00 of it came from known sources as shown in exhibit "A" of this documentation. I would like to point out the fact that exhibit "A" is the tabulation of contributions that are a matter of public record that was disclosed by Ms. Brenda Branch. **Exhibit "A" clearly shows that 80 percent of all Ms. Branch's known campaign contributions came from:**

**Real Estate Agents, Brokers, and Leasers**

**Real Estate Developers, Engineers, Builders, and Investors  
Construction Contractors and/or Sub-Contractors.**

It is apparent that 80 percent of the known contributors to Ms. Branch's campaign would have a substantial amount to gain if more zoning was passed in favor of developments. For this reason I suggest that it is not in the best interest of this county that individuals involved in the real estate business should be allowed to hold the office of county commissioner. I also believe that it would not be in the best interest of this county to allow the current proposal for the new comprehensive land use plan because the committee formed to develop this new plan contains commissioner appointed members. The process of rezoning and building should always remain a subject for public input and that right should never be taken away from the taxpaying and voting residents of the county.

Third on my agenda is State D.O.T. Project STP-2984 (1), State Road 347. On January 18 of this year there was a public information meeting held at Friendship Elementary by the State D.O.T. At this meeting we learned that the state is proposing a build alternative to what was proposed a few years earlier. The only other alternative the State D.O.T. is offering at this time is the No Build Alternative. My neighbors, family and myself by evidence of this petition do not want the portion of State Road 347, known as Thompson Mill Rd., to be moved or turned into a four lane highway by the Georgia State Department of Transportation as proposed in the build alternative which Hall County proposed to the state. I say Hall County Proposed it to the state because the literature at this meeting being handed out by the State D.O.T starts by saying "Hall County Proposes..." It is clearly evident that the only people this road will serve are the Builders and developers that wish to profit at the expense of our community. I say at the expense of our community because the road will destroy the homes of the families whom ancestors founded this community and disrupt the lives of the families that have sought out this type of environment to live in. It is evident by the survey before you tonight that the people of this region cherish nature, wide-open spaces, and the lack of over crowding that some projects would bring. It has also been pointed out to me by the State D.O.T. that by moving this road completely into Hall County they can avoid the Federal D.O.T. and the Federal E.P.A. moratorium on building these kinds of roads in Gwinnett County. These two organizations have stopped the building of these kinds of roads in Gwinnett in response to cleaner air. Why would we want to accept and embrace a type of project that has made Gwinnett County not so great? Imagine my surprise when the state D.O.T. told me that this project had already been accepted and possible this version of the project was suggested by this county's government. If this board as a whole feels that my statements, interpretations and comments on this matter are incorrect please correct me by publicly opposing this version of the State D.O.T. project STP-2984 (1) and openly and earnestly try to stop this version of the Build Alternative proposed by the State D.O.T.