

Patrick C. Comiskey

Experience

City Manager, City of Cambridge, MD 2018 - present
Population about 12,326; regular employees about 112; annual budget about \$20 million

- Oversee city operations
- Responsible for general, sewer, marina, and sanitation functions
- Prepare and responsible for city budgets
- City has an engineer, an architect, a planner, a contracted accounting firm, and an economic developer in addition to a police chief, fire chief and other department leadership positions
- Report to the mayor and five city commissioners
- Serve as supervisor of city elections

Opportunities: Everyday responsibilities involve working to meet the goals of a diverse council and needs of a very diverse community. Working with department heads and city staff, I have compiled a detailed line item budget booklet of the city's operations and prepared budget reduction recommendations. In partnership with state representatives, FOP leaders, and firefighter leaders, we have proposed at the state house a police service fee in an effort to keep up with neighboring police salaries and benefits and a separate fire apparatus replacement fee to address the need to replace fire trucks (not just increasing property taxes). I worked with Oasis Marina management company establishing them in their first two years of managing the city's marina and worked with the company on restructuring their agreement in the face of COVID-19 revenue reductions. I am a city representative member of a new volunteer committee, Cambridge Waterfront Development, Inc., on a waterfront development effort involving the county and the state. I also am working with planning staff, county staff, Habitat for Humanity, and consultants on a neighborhood rehabilitation effort involving federal funds and have initiated state and federal grant applications for a neighborhood park. I collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce, Main Street, the county tourism office, and the county economic development office to promote the city and encourage various downtown revitalization projects. I have initiated a plan to apply for federal funds to eliminate environmental issues in the vacant, historic city hall and to hopefully add an elevator to the historic structure that will lead to the ultimate renovation and reuse of the two-story building with an iconic clocktower.

Educational Sabbatical 2016 – 2018
Continued my education by completing a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business (concentration in Accounting) to compliment my BA and MPA. Towards the end of the period, met with several cities to find a new employment opportunity.

City Manager, City of Thomaston, GA

2002 – 2016

Population about 9,000; commercial hub for several counties, regular employees about 80, originally about 135; annual budget about \$25 million

- Oversaw all city operations
- Responsible for general, water, sewer, electric, and sanitation functions
- Prepared and responsible for all city budgets
- Performed all hiring and firing
- Coordinated most major purchases
- Collaborated with multiple engineering firms and multiple attorneys over the years

Opportunities: Under the leadership of the mayor and city council we had the opportunity to replace out more than \$30 million of capital assets and infrastructure including the replacement of approximately one third of the city's estimated 79 miles of water lines, approximately 12% of the city's estimated 68 miles of sanitary sewer lines, approximately 37% of the city's estimated 57 miles of streets; and many miles of sidewalk replacement. The city also doubled the size of one of its reservoirs adding 1/4 billion gallons of water storage. The city developed a 40-acre passive park with walking trails, water features, picnic and playground areas. The city reacquired two parks from the county (through service delivery agreement) rebuilding playgrounds, basketball and tennis courts. The city developed Lake Thomaston, the city's 70-acre reservoir with its 1.6-mile lakeside trail, for use as a new city park to be opened in summer 2016. The city bid out and contracted construction in 2015 for new restroom/pavilion and boathouse/amphitheater facilities for Lake Thomaston to have been completed in 2016. I successfully managed budgets with no property tax increase for twelve straight years.

City Manager, City of Wellsburg, WV

1998 – 2002

Population about 3,300; regular employees about 35; annual budget about \$2.4 million

- Served as chief administrator and chief financial officer
- Responsible for General, water, and sewer functions
- Reported to eight (8) member city council and mayor
- Also reported to six (6) member and mayor water/sewer board
- Assisted all city boards and committees in bringing ideas to fruition

Opportunities: Under the leadership of the mayor and city council undertook factory tax audits (hired out of town CPA) and brought in \$92,000 in back taxes, commercial garbage bill audits brought in \$17,000 in additional annual revenue. Worked on resolving dilapidated housing issues, prepared ADA plan for city hall, managed storm water separation projects, and oversaw approximately \$475,000 in capital improvement projects.

Director of Purchasing and Personnel, City of Clarksburg, WV 1993 – 1997

Director of Personnel 1997 – 1998

Population about 18,000; regular employees about 220; budget about \$11 million

Purchasing: Organized, created, and reviewed contracts and agreements with vendors

Some Successes: Reduced a number of invoices through consolidated orders and payments; increased use of formal purchase orders; achieved expenditure savings (in excess of \$50,000 in last fiscal year; created service contracts and implemented bidding on several items where it had not been done previously; created a draft for a purchasing policies and procedures manual (not implemented)

Personnel: Created an employee handbook and many personnel forms and policies; designed employee appraisal forms and process; wrote numerous job descriptions; drafted organization charts for all city departments; served as secretary to management team during union contract negotiations; established an employee newsletter; coordinated department safety committees; organized a wellness program

Some Successes: Developed and implemented policies for reducing sick leave usage; policies helped reduce sick leave usage by more than 35%

District Executive, Boy Scouts of Amer., Clarksburg/Parkersburg, WV 1989 – 1991

- Organized and guided the Boy Scout program in a four-county area of central West Virginia - Coordinated approximately 36 volunteers

Education

Master's Degree in Public Administration, West Virginia University, Department of Public Administration, August 1993

- Graduate work performed for the Small Community Rural Wastewater Demonstration Project
- Employed as a part-time worker/intern for the City of Clarksburg
- Pi Alpha Alpha National Honor Society for MPA students

Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, University of Florida, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, 1988

- Florida Blue Key: One of approximately 120 students tapped annually
- President Pro Tempore of the Student Senate: Elected by 80-member body

Bachelor of Science in Business (Accounting), Middle Georgia State, 2017

- President's List Scholar

Certified Purchasing Manager (C.P.M.) - Institute for Supply Management (ISM)

- Completed the requirements for the Certified Purchasing Manager Certificate
- Passed all four comprehensive examinations

Associations

- International City Managers Association (ICMA)
- Institute of Supply Management (ISM)
- Former Harrison County United Way Allocations Committee Chair
- Former Flint River Council Commissioner
- Former Pine Mountain District Membership Chairman
- Former Upson County Kiwanis
- Eagle Scout

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Patrick C. Comiskey
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Dorchester Star
July 9, 2021

Cambridge City Manager Comiskey to step down

Author: Mike Detmer

CAMBRIDGE — City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** has declined to seek renewal of his employment contract when the current contract expires July 31, according to a statement from Cambridge Mayor Andrew Bradshaw. **Comiskey**, who was hired following a search in 2018, is Cambridge’s second city manager, having served in that role for three years. Bradshaw said, “Mr. **Comiskey**’s time as city manager has seen many transitions for Cambridge, with development and growth occurring across the city.”

“I wish **Patrick**, his wife Jane, and their beautiful dog Weaver all the best in the next phase of **Patrick**’s career,” said Bradshaw. “The care they all have shown for the city of Cambridge, and their work to make this city a better place to call home cannot be overstated. **Patrick**’s good-heartedness and genuine love for others makes him the kind of public servant that is an asset anywhere he goes.”

The Council echoed the mayor on the decision. Ward 1 Commissioner Brian Roche said, “I’ve appreciated Mr. **Comiskey**’s service and assistance while Cambridge continues to go through inevitable growing pains of the early stages of our professionally managed form of government.” Commission President Lajan Cephas, Ward 2, added, “We must remember that at the completion of each lap, the City Commission did not run the race alone. Mr. **Comiskey**, thank you for the contributions you and your wife Jane have provided to the city of Cambridge.”

Ward 3 Commissioner Jameson Harrington said, “It was always a pleasure to see Mr. **Comiskey** out at the many local events and businesses in Cambridge. It was nice to have a city manager involved with the local community.” Ward 4 Commissioner Spuddy Cephas said, “Mr. **Comiskey**, thank you for time and commitment to the city of Cambridge. Best wishes on your future endeavors. Continue to share your knowledge and skillsets.”

Ward 5 Commissioner Chad Malkus wrote, “I want to wish **Patrick** all the best in his future endeavors and to thank him for the great work he did over the past few years. I look forward to the hiring process for a new city manager, and my hope is that we can hire someone with equally extensive municipal experience and knowledge of strong fiscal governance.”

The mayor and commissioners will discuss the city manager vacancy at an upcoming meeting in July. A review of requirements will occur with regard to naming an interim city manager, as well as requirements for search committee members for the hiring of a permanent city manager.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

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(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

WMDT.com

December 15, 2020

Cambridge officials discuss recent development plans, other city projects

Author: Kyleigh Panetta

CAMBRIDGE, Md. – The current mayor of Cambridge and City Council held their final meeting Monday night, before an entirely new group of people take over those roles in January. “There’s hope for a lot of activity out there. The state has been an important player and very excited about it,” says **Patrick Comiskey**, the City Manager for Cambridge.

Waterfront development was one of the main topics discussed at Monday’s Cambridge City Council meeting. More specifically, a piece of land known as the Gateway was officially turned over to Cambridge Waterfront Development Incorporated (CWDI). “As the development occurs they can work with the community to plan on a garden or open space or murals to make that area look more inviting to people come down route so they’ll come into the city,” says Stephen Rideout, a Cambridge City Commissioner.

CWDI is also planning to develop other properties in the city in the future but officials felt those discussions should be postponed. “Everybody kind of felt it was the type of project that the new city commission and the new mayor ought to be involved with since they are going to be the ones carrying the project forward,” says **Comiskey**. “There’s an interest there of the current Yacht Maintenance to expand their facility. They’re going to put in a larger lift. They’ve already told council this a while back, when the city commission leased additional land, that they were going to go in put in a big lift to bring bigger boats in.”

CWDI, in partnership with BCTDesign Group, is launching an online survey to get ideas and opinions about the future of waterfront development at Sailwinds. Officials say ideas will be considered by CWDI in the shaping of a development master plan which will guide development decisions over the next several years. The Cambridge Waterfront area subject to development planning extends from the Burton Fishing Bridge to Cambridge Creek and encompasses approximately 40 acres.

The survey website is <https://www.bctdesigngroup.com/cambridge>. It can be accessed beginning December 10th. If you prefer a paper copy of the questionnaire, you can contact Sandra Tripp-Jones, Executive Director, by email or phone at 805-453-4480. City leaders also shared plans to fix up the fencing at Cornish Park on Phillips Street. “It was a no brainer. The state was providing most of the money. The city had to put in a little and the county put in a little and it will make that park a more attractive place to be,” says Rideout.

Perhaps one of the most exciting developments involves the Mace’s Lane Community Center. The city is officially on board with supporting programming there which may involve a potential chapter of the Boys & Girls Club of Annapolis. “I think it will provide an opportunity for us to help the children in this community and the elderly to have programming and resources that they have not had before,” says Rideout.

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Meanwhile, Fairchild Properties is working on a few projects by the Walmart so city leaders say they're excited about that area's future as well. "It's good to see that there's still positive growth and interest in the development of the business community along the corridor," says **Comiskey**. The hospital will likely be moving into the new location in the Cambridge Marketplace late next year. The current hospital building will likely be demolished and that is expected to cost anywhere from one-million to two-million dollars. Additionally, Delmarva Community Services is planning to put a 61-unit housing building for seniors and low-income families on Chesapeake Avenue near the high school.

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The Star Democrat (Easton, MD)
December 1, 2020

Cambridge voters head to polls Tuesday for runoff elections

Author: Angela Price

CAMBRIDGE — Cambridge voters go to the polls Tuesday, Dec. 1, to decide three runoff elections — for mayor and commissioners for wards 2 and 3. Incumbent Mayor Victoria Jackson-Stanley faces challenger Andrew Bradshaw, and incumbent Ward 2 Commissioner Donald Cephas faces challenger Lajan Cephas. Gary Gordy and Jameson Harrington are vying for the Ward 3 seat. Voting will take place from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at Chesapeake College at 418 Race Street. Anyone waiting in line at 7 p.m. will be allowed to vote.

City Manager **Patrick Comiskey**, who also serves as election supervisor, said the post office had received 2,314 mail-in ballots as of Saturday morning, Nov. 28, 10% higher than what they received prior to the regular October election. With the high COVID-19 case rate and anticipating a large turnout, **Comiskey** said the standing distance for the hallway will be increased from 6 to 12 feet and the number of voters in the hallway will be limited. Bathrooms will only be available for the election workers.

Poll watchers will be limited to three in the room at any one time during voting. “We have three designated poll watching seats, so if we have more than three poll watchers, one will have to wait until the first watcher has been allowed to watch for one hour,” **Comiskey** said. Voters must enter the college from the rear entrance. Only poll watchers and candidates may enter and exit the building from the front entrance on Race Street.

Once the polls are closed, six seats will be made available for each candidate or designee to sit and watch the ballot tabulating process, though it is not mandatory, **Comiskey** said. Candidates who do not want to wait and watch will be sent email when the process is finished. He estimated it will take three hours or more to count all the votes — mail in and in person — and announce the results. A camera has been set up so people can watch the counting process from home using town hall streams, **Comiskey** said.

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WMDT.com
August 30, 2020

Cambridge residents protest alleged illegal tactics by city officials

Author: Camila Fernandez

CAMBRIDGE, Md. – Protestors gathered in front of City Hall on Sunday to try to put an end to the city’s alleged corruption and illegal tactics that prevent residents from choosing who they want for mayor. The event was organized by the group Millennials Demanding Change. City of Cambridge Commissioner La-Shon Foster spoke at the peaceful protest. She says the City Manager and other city representatives are scheming to have her application for mayor denied.

City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** tells us none of the applications have been rejected, but according to Foster, they haven’t even approved hers since she brought it in on August 19th. Foster says the city hasn’t been clear enough about the information they’re looking for in order to accept her application. On top of that, she says they had an illegal hearing about her residency, which she won but still hasn’t gotten her application approved.

“This rally out here is not for La-Shon Foster,” said Foster. “It’s for every citizen in Cambridge that wants to choose who they want as their candidate and it’s for every single candidate that wants to get on the ballot that will be illegally given the runaround not to apply,” said Foster.

City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** responded to the allegations saying, “Commissioner Foster’s allegations are false. No prospective candidate has been denied. Seven of the eight prospective candidates reviewed thus far by both the election committee and the city’s ethics commission have been asked to provide missing or additional required information, including Ms. Foster and the current mayor, Ms. Jackson-Stanley.

The deadline to file for candidacy is Wednesday, September 2, at 4 pm. A listing of the candidate names will be posted on the city’s website and the city’s Facebook page Wednesday evening and later in the local newspapers. The city will be mailing out a ballot to all registered city voters in late September. City election officials are expecting this election to have the highest voter participation in city history.”

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WMDT.com

August 12, 2020

Cambridge city manager announces ongoing plans for the Pine Street revitalization project

Author: DeJon Burgess

CAMBRIDGE, Md. — The city of Cambridge is well into their revitalization efforts in a neighborhood that desperately needs it, despite the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. According to city manager, **Patrick Comiskey**, says the revitalization of Pine Street is moving forward. He says Pine Street has a number of homes that have fallen into disrepair, which is why these revitalization efforts are underway.

Comiskey says the city has had the benefit of working with the choptank chapter of the habitat for humanity on this. He says they are much more experienced when it comes to building homes and they've already completed building some homes some on high street.

We're told people can expect to see the demolishing of some homes in the area soon now that the city council has given their approval. **Comiskey** says the city has quote, "acquired some properties with our partners on this project, the county government. They have been good about working with us to help us secure properties that need to be demolished or fit in to our hopeful revitalization plan." **Comiskey** also says the city has brought on a new housing specialist to work with city commissioners to help with the revitalization project.

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The Banner (Cambridge, MD)

July 8, 2020

City confronts fireworks attacks

Author: Dave Ryan

CAMBRIDGE — “Our firefighters are being assaulted,” Mayor Victoria Jackson-Stanley said during a City Council conference call on Thursday afternoon. It’s not only firefighters, either — police officers have been in the line of fire in recent nights, as storms of fireworks have been ignited in the streets of the city. Police patrols and firefighters responding to incidents have been met with verbal abuse, physical attacks and more. “One of our officers had fireworks thrown or shot at them,” in the 800 block of Phillips Street on Wednesday night, CPD Capt. Justin Todd said in an earlier conversation with the Banner.

Vehicle damaged

That assault caused minor damage to the officer’s vehicle. “No one is in custody for that as of yet,” Capt. Todd said. Residents of this usually quiet town have been losing sleep and sometimes feeling threatened in their own homes, as loud explosives have been set off, sometimes all night long. Those who live in other neighborhoods might not see it in their own streets, but many have heard the loud booms echoing across the city. Incidents have occurred not only on Phillips Street, but also Greenwood Avenue, South Pine, Central Avenue and other areas. “It’s all over town,” the mayor said.

The meeting got off to a rocky start, as the numbers of residents calling in to listen or comment exceeded the limit of 40, causing some council members to have trouble getting linked in. After that was straightened out, the mayor, commissioners, City Attorney Chip MacLeod, State’s Attorney Bill Jones, Rescue Fire Company Chief Adam Pritchett and City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** were on the line to examine the issue, as were about three dozen citizens.

Gathering comments

The council is gathering comments from the public and findings of fact from the Cambridge Police Department necessary to impose a curfew on city residents under the age of 18 in an effort to deter late-night incidents including the pyrotechnic disruptions. That’s not something that simply be declared, however. “There is a process to doing this,” Mr. MacLeod said, beginning with recommendations from law enforcement. “Curfews can be tricky, but they can be navigated, if done so carefully,” Mr. Jones said. The facts presented to the council would have to justify the curfew, he said, which itself should be no more restrictive than necessary. “There are certain things we have to be careful about, in terms of making sure the curfew, if enacted, is applied fairly and equally to all parts of town,” Mr. Jones said. “It would have to be carefully written, and carefully executed, by your officers.”

Cambridge Police Department Chief Mark Lewis said, “It would be a limited tool for our officers to use in situations. There is a juvenile issue, a problem in some areas, and that would be used as a last resort,” to help get juveniles to return to their homes. Five men were arrested earlier this week, as the CPD tries to bring the situation under control. Richard Blanks Jr., 31; Byron

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Herndon, 29; Donnell Jones, 25; Naail Thompson, 20; and Tyonbre McKnight, 19 were charged with discharge of fireworks without a permit and related offenses. Chief Pritchett said his organization has been stretched thin by emergencies caused during the incidents. “We’ve had five fires since Friday, directly from fireworks,” he said.

Young children

Though the men charged in connection with the discharges of explosive devices are not minors, there have been reports of children, some quite young, being on the streets at all hours. “How do we hold parents responsible?” Mayor Jackson-Stanley asked. Mr. Jones said there are legal avenues through which parents can be held responsible for the actions of minor children, including violation of curfews.

Citizen Lynette Wongus called for quick action and an increased police presence in neighborhoods — in person, not only in their patrol cars. “People are afraid, in their own apartments,” she said. “We will have officers working overtime,” Chief Lewis said. Ms. Wongus didn’t leave it all up to law enforcement, as she urged residents to speak up to protect their community. “As residents, we need to step up,” she said.

The need to allow public comment required another meeting to be scheduled, this one for Tuesday at 5 p.m., on townhallstreams.com. The mayor and council acknowledged that public comment had been limited by the technical difficulties, and asked that citizens email their comments on these issues to Mr. **Comiskey** at pcomiskey@choosecambridge.com. “We want to work with the police department and the community to resolve the problems that have been presented to us for solution,” Commissioner Steve Rideout (Ward 1) said a public email. “We need to hear from you.”

Mr. **Comiskey** forwarded the comments to the mayor and council by Saturday, allowing them to consider citizens’ views before Tuesday’s meeting, which took place after press time for this issue.

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Banner (Cambridge, MD)

June 24, 2020

City protesters demand racial equality

Author: Dave Ryan

CAMBRIDGE — A series of protests took place in Cambridge on Friday, during Juneteenth observances across the nation remembering the day in 1865 when the last slaves were freed. Local groups gathered in this city, known for its civil rights activism, to call for racial equality. Recent deaths of African Americans, some at the hands of police officers, have set off protests in cities and towns across the country. Though some of the events have turned violent, most did not, including the ones that have taken place in Cambridge since the May 25 death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. As he was pinned to the street by former officer Derek Chauvin, one of Mr. Floyd's last statements was, "I can't breathe." Those words were echoed in the name of the group that organized the day's first demonstration, "United We Breathe."

Also taking place Friday was a cross-town march by "Millennials Demanding Change," and work on the "Black Lives Matter" mural on Race Street.

United We Breathe

The day's first event began in the parking lot of Cambridge Marketplace, where a multi-ethnic group displayed signs calling for justice and equality. United We Breathe began their demonstration some time ago, and found that it would occur on Juneteenth. "Everything happens for a reason," said Marjorie Vilson, who with Gerleene Dorce, Michiah Grainger and Shaneka Vickerie form the leadership of the group. "Our goal is to promote justice everywhere." She said the demonstration was to celebrate 155 years of freedom and to honor the lives of taken unjustly by police brutality.

Ms. Vilson acknowledged that it can be a painful process to create change, but a necessary one to correct half-measures made in the past to rectify the country's social and racial issues. She was pleased with the turnout for the demonstration, which included elders and young children, black and white, and a man beating a rhythm on a Native American drum. Cooperation also came from local authorities, something not seen everywhere in the nation over the previous few weeks. "We want to thank the Police Chief [Mark Lewis], and the Mayor [Victoria Jackson-Stanley] and the City Manager [**Patrick Comiskey**]," Ms. Vilson said. "They definitely made this process easy," Ms. Dorce said.

Ms. Vilson saw the surge of activity both locally and nationally as a part of a generational change. "We have millennials taking charge," she said. That generation's familiarity with digital tools and social media means messages and organization spreads faster than ever. Mr. Floyd's death, and his calling for his mother in his final moments, created a feeling, Ms. Vilson said, of, "Enough is enough." The group moved from the parking lot to the side of U.S. 50, where participants held up signs with messages including, "Justice for All," "Black Lives Matter," "The Second greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself," and "The Revolution will be televised."

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Many passing motorists blew their horns and waved to show their support. There was also the occasional shouted insult and obscenity. Now, the organization's youthful energy and passion is being used to organize new groups and projects. The activists of United We Breathe are working to set up an official non-profit organization, Ms. Vilson said. To contact the group or to donate, email unitedwebreathe2020@gmail.com, or call 443-304-8827. "I pray that this not be in vain," Ms. Vilson said.

Millennials Demanding Change

The new generation was also on the street across town, where Millennials Demanding Change had scheduled a march with guest speakers at stops. Mya Woods, one of the leaders, said, "I feel as though the older generation fought their fight." "It's time for the younger generation," she said, looking over to where her son sat in his stroller. "I'm doing it for my baby." She said she didn't want the days to continue in which African-American parents have "the talk" with their sons, about the dangers of contact with police. "It's a real conversation," she said. Ms. Woods sensed a change in viewpoints among her peers. "Our generation is filled with open-minded people," she said. "I feel like this generation will be the one to change things."

Organizers of Millennials Demanding Change, in addition to Ms. Woods, are Alondria Stanley, LaSarah Kinser, James Sullivan, Marco Garcia and Meg McDermott." Dr. Richard Molock, a pharmacist, was there, as well. "We're here to finish the work that was done in the 1960s," he said. Part of his motivation is his own home life, where he has to consider the future of his children and the situations they could face. "I have four young men," he said.

As participants gathered before the march began at 3:30 p.m., Veronica Taylor spoke about the effect of modern communications and devices — when something happens, citizens around the nation don't have to take anyone's word for the facts of the matter, they can often see for themselves on their phones or tablets how a crisis unfolded. "Technology has changed everything," Ms. Taylor said. Dr. Molock said activists today must maintain their unity and focus on the issues, which include not only police brutality, but also housing and other economic inequities. "You have people who are intentionally dividing everyone," he said. As a pharmacist who treats patients the same regardless of race, he didn't see the sense in that. "You're a human, I'm a human," he said.

Race Street mural

Race Street has a message for residents of the town and anyone else driving through downtown. "Black Lives Matter" is being painting in large white letters down the middle of the road, created by a group of activists and artists. The display mirrors a similar project in Washington, D.C., in which city workers painted the same words on 16th St. Similar street displays have been created in other cities, including Salisbury. Organizers of the Race Street project Alpha Genesis Community Development Corporation Jermaine Anderson and Adrian Greene pulled together permission, volunteers and supplies in just a few days, and got to work on the job early last week.

The words, "Black Lives Matter" stretch almost the width of the street, and for most of the length of the 400 block. The letters are decorated with portraits of civil rights leaders including

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Gloria Richardson and Frederick Douglas, as well as images of life in Cambridge. The design for the mural was created by local artist Miriam Moran, who worked in cooperation with Project Manager Shelton Hawkins. She works fast when inspired by an idea. “It took me about an hour to come up with the design,” Ms. Moran said. Her goal was to create an image promoting unity, love and compassion. “I wanted everybody to come together,” she said.

LaSarah Kinser finished marching with her group and headed to Race Street to paint, a natural move for the Mace’s Lane Middle School art teacher. “A project like this is so important because all these people are volunteers,” showing unity in purpose, she said. Ms. Kinser said public art is an effective way to communicate a message of protest in a peaceful way, something that is used in many areas. But the mural has its own, unique merits, she said. “The difference is that Miriam was able to fill in our specific Dorchester County history,” Ms. Kinser said. “It really speaks to who we are as a community.”

Alpha Genesis promotes the arts as a way to forge bonds. “Each community has its own soul,” a statement from the group said Sunday. “Cambridge’s soul is one of resilience.” “We can really learn a lot from projects like this,” the statement said. “When people are moved, the arts are truly an outlet for people to speak and come together for a common cause as one voice, with many gifts and talents to share.”

Legal approval

The mural received city approval on June 16. The legalities involved were confirmed by State’s Attorney for Dorchester County Bill Jones, who visited the scene as volunteers were busy with their brushes. “It’s nice to see how everyone has come together,” he said. “Certainly it highlights an issue that is significant nationally and right here.” As the county’s highest law-enforcement officer and a former policeman, Mr. Jones has a unique perspective on issues regarding brutality. “The vast majority of cops are good people who do it right,” he said, while acknowledging the value of the work being done on Race Street. “Still, we have to double down on those who are bad officers.”

Asked about comments made by opponents saying the project was illegal or vandalism of public property, Mr. Jones said he and his staff had researched the issue of painting on a street. “We saw nothing in the law that would prevent this,” he said. As for vandalism, he said in the law that is referred to as “malicious destruction of property,” with the first word in the phrase being the operative one. Glancing down the block at the group working on the mural, he said, “Show me the malice.”

Finally, he noted that the city owns the street, and had approved the project. “Who would be the complainant?” he asked. The statement from Alpha Genesis said, “We’re not feeding into any negative comments, thoughts or actions. We’ll continue to bring awareness to facing race through art and culture.” “Change is never easy, but necessary,” the message said. “To our young people, keep your light shining.”

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Myeasternshore.com

May 15, 2020

Cambridge City Manager explains Council's State of Emergency renewal

Author: Mike Detmer

CAMBRIDGE — Cambridge’s City Manager clarified the City’s recent renewal of the declaration of the local State of Emergency in a statement on Thursday, May 14. In the explanation, City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** wrote the renewal of the existing declaration of emergency at the May 11 lives streamed council meeting was to “make certain the city did not exclude itself from any federal funding that becomes available.”

Comiskey said that the City of Cambridge will continue to comply with Gov. Hogan’s pandemic-related orders. The statement also said that city parks and the marina are opened, while playgrounds, basketball courts, and picnic tables are closed. City buildings will remain closed to the public, and city meeting will continue to be live streamed for remote participation for city officials and citizens.

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Myeasternshoremd.com
May 15, 2020

City of Cambridge introduces annual budget, hearing before vote set for May 26

Author: Mike Detmer

CAMBRIDGE — The Cambridge City Council introduced the ordinance that includes the proposed budget for the fiscal year 2020-2021, and announced a public hearing on the ordinance on May 26. Cambridge Mayor Victoria Jackson-Stanley and the Council members introduced Ordinance 1162, which sets real and personal property tax rates, and Ordinance 1163, which is the City’s budget for July 1, 2020—June 30, 2021.

The mayor, council, and city staff began the public discussion of the budget with a work session on May 1, and a follow up budget work session on May 5. The scheduled work session for May 7 was not needed. After the May 26 hearing, the Council can opt to pass the budget, which will then take effect July 1.

During the first work session, City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** said the biggest issue about the budget was the COVID-19 crisis. He said \$1.9 million of revenue could be at risk, and recommended the City use reserve funds set aside for emergencies in order to cover shortfalls. The Council grappled with requests from the police department for consideration to replace two retiring officers and from Rescue Fire Company to acquire more turnout gear to replace worn out gear and properly equip all members. The May 26 meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: Only the information relevant to **Patrick C. Comiskey** is listed below]

<https://cambridgecan.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/09.13.2018-BD.pdf>

September 13, 2018

Board of Directors Meeting

September 13, 2018

Minutes

City Manager, Mr. **Patrick Comiskey**. CAN President Chuck McFadden introduced new Cambridge City Manager, Mr. **Patrick Comiskey**, who has been on the job here for about six weeks. Mr. **Comiskey** was born in Havre de Grace, grew up in Aberdeen, and still has family in Maryland, as well as many local ties. He has worked in local government throughout his career and comes to Cambridge from a similar position in Georgia

Mr. **Comiskey** has been impressed by many positive things in Cambridge, including the natural beauty of the area with its energy and conservation projects and its parks and recreation programs; its attractive Visitors' Center; forward-looking planning activities, including riverfront and medical facility development; and as energetic spirit of volunteerism. His goals for Cambridge include increasing home ownership and expanding job opportunities.

Based on his six weeks here, Mr. **Comiskey** considers the biggest challenges to be: infrastructure maintenance and improvement (water/ sewer, roads, and homeowner responsibility for sidewalks); economic growth; City employee salaries and benefits; City equipment replacement costs; housing; equipment replacement costs; housing; and code enforcement. He invited the audience to send him suggestions in the following areas: (a) Big ideas to make Cambridge brighter; (b) small-scale tasks that would improve Cambridge; and (c) best things to like about Cambridge. CAN will distribute these questions to all its members.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Upson Post
January 14, 2016

After 14 years of Progress, Thomaston City Manager Patrick Comiskey Resigns – Letter of Resignation

Thomaston Mayor J.D. Stallings and Thomaston City Council
106 E. Lee Street
Thomaston, GA 30286
January 5, 2016

Dear Mayor Stallings and City Council:

I am submitting my resignation from the post of Thomaston City Manager. I am willing to continue to serve the city until such time as the mayor and city council secure another city manager. I am also willing to serve during a period of transition with a new manager. There are several projects we have in process that are in the works for 2016.

Silvertown West Village Neighborhood Sewer Line Replacement

This Project is potentially the largest sewer line replacement project we have undertaken. The mayor and city council approved a predevelopment and planning grant application at the November 3rd city council meeting to develop the project for submittal to the USDA. If successful, the city will receive up to \$3.5 million dollars of grant funds in the form of a forgivable loan so long as we borrow at least \$1.5 million at an interest rate of approximately 2%. We expect to hear back on this by August.

The plan is to build new sewer lines in the alleys or in the street, if the current sewer line runs in front of the houses, and run the household services to the new lines. The old lines would be grouted in and the manholes buried into the ground. Another objective is to replace part of the current force main at the lift station behind Walmart with a ductile iron line. A further objective, maybe not with this project, is to run a new sewer line up Town Branch to the lift station behind West Central Bank so the sewage might flow with gravity down the new line and the lift station might be closed and taken down. If we have success with this project, the next step would be to apply for the same project to replace out all the sewer lines in East Silvertown using the same strategy.

Silvertown West Village Water Line Replacement Project

We plan to submit a CDBG grant application to the state's DCA office this spring for a \$500,000 grant for replacing water lines in the southern half of Silvertown West Village from West Goodrich to the Silvertown Ballpark. This project will also involve sidewalk replacement in the same area. The city has already submitted a request for a loan with \$500,000 in loan forgiveness from GEFA for 2016. We will borrow approximately \$1.5 million at a reduced loan rate (we received a rate of 1.03% on the last loan). We use the GEFA loan to strengthen our CDBG application showing the city's additional investment in the project. We should hear back on the GEFA loan forgiveness by March. The word on the CDBG grant will probably be announced in August.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

In 2018, we plan to submit the other half of West Village for the same work. The plan from there is to jump over the highway and march through the remainder of Silvertown, then continue south through town submitting a \$2.5 million project every other year.

Storm Water Replacement Project

We submitted a loan request last week for a \$2 million dollar storm water grant through GEFA. The objective is to put together several storm water replacement projects such as the line from E. Main that runs through Weaver Park, the road area at the end of N. Green Street, storm water retention and filter beds along Bell Creek, and possibly the line that runs under businesses in the downtown. The loan request we made includes \$400,000 in loan forgiveness. We should hear back on the loan forgiveness availability by March.

Silvertown Tennis Courts

The county is required to expend \$200,000 toward the Silvertown Tennis courts. The original plan to build two sets of two courts over the existing site ran three times that amount. The best option might be to replace one set of the tennis courts with grade A courts and create or allow a second utility court for whiffle ball and/or pickle ball.

Lake Thomaston Development

The city acquired the railroad spur from Norfolk Southern Company that runs inside the lake side property and continues out toward Hugo Starling Drive. A link up with Hugo Starling Drive and an additional linkage along the power line easement south of Avenue F would allow a bike trail to develop for Lake Thomaston to Weaver Park. The city has already developed linkages between Barnesville Highway and Avenue F and from Dye Branch to the civic center swimming pool. A linkage was developed from Weaver Park to Matthews Field with the help of the county government.

Lake Thomaston Proper

The plan for Lake Thomaston is to hire lifeguards to work in pairs at the lake under a head lifeguard three days a week (Friday through Sunday) from spring through the fall after the construction is completed. The city workers will haul sand from Butler and develop a beach adjacent to the boat docks. Citizens will be able to check out small fishing craft, canoes, kayaks, paddle boards (the stand on upright boards gaining popularity today), paddle boats, or small sail boats and navigate most of the 70-acre lake. The city would also rent out bikes for use on the 1.6-mile loop trail that surrounds the lake. Later, bike renters will be able to take the bikes out of the lake park site and travel to Weaver Park and the town square.

The band shell will be ripe for hosting concerts or plays sponsored by the city or other community or civic groups or churches. Fifteen percent of the current rentals for the pavilion at the Greatest Generation Park are from citizens that reside outside Upson County. It is likely the lake will draw people to Thomaston from adjoining counties.

The following personnel opportunities are coming up this winter.

Police Department

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

We planned to have the Georgia Police Chief Association put together an assessment center for promotional opportunities for an additional patrol lieutenant position (giving us two patrol Lieutenant spots), a patrol sergeant position, and a detective sergeant position (in addition to the two we currently have). These positions are in addition to the reopening of the administrative officer and lead detective positions. The association director advised that the next available opportunity to undertake an assessment would be in February. The new police chief will sit on a panel to review each position. The new police chief will also have a number of police officer applications to review.

Fire Department

We are inviting the firefighters to apply for three available Lieutenant positions. The process should wrap up by April.

Street Department

We need to post an opening for the Street Department Crew Leader position. We will likely have several applications from inside the city. A good candidate will be Horace Montfort who has been relied upon to handle work orders and field citizen requests.

If anyone has any questions about these or other projects, feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Patrick Comiskey

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Patrick C. Comiskey
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
December 18, 2015

City holds budget hearings

Author: Larry Stanford

The City of Thomaston is beginning a series of public hearings on the 2016 budget today at noon in the council meeting room of Thomaston-Upson Government Complex on East Lee Street. The General Fund Budget is proposed to be \$7,409,925, a reduction of \$1,060,000 from the 2015 budget. The Electric Fund is proposed to be \$15,245,407, while the Water and Sewer Fund is proposed at \$7,553,053.

For residents and business owners in the city, the good news is that the city is not considering a tax increase, nor an increase in electricity rates. However, water and sewer rate increases are expected to be approved. The water increase would be 43 cents per 1,000 gallons, and the sewer increase would be 35 cents per 1,000 gallons. For a household which uses 5,000 gallons a month, the total increase would be around \$3.90. But, warns City Manager **Patrick Comiskey**, the city needs to come up with new revenue or get their current tax revenue up because the tax digest continues to shrink.

The Thomaston City Council held a work session on December 7 to go over the proposed budget. Newly sworn in City Councilman Ryan Tucker, as well as council members-elect LaKeitha Reeves and Jeff Middlebrooks, along with mayor-elect J. D. Stallings, attended the meeting and **Comiskey** took time to explain each part of the budget process to the newly elected members. With the exception of Tucker, the newly-elected members will not take office until January 1, 2016, and will not vote on the new budget.

Electricity

The proposed budget for Electricity is \$15,245,407. **Comiskey** began the session by discussing the cost of electricity to the city, which is a member of and receives its power from the Municipal Electric Association of Georgia (MEAG). “In the last decade, the cost of electricity has grown dramatically,” **Comiskey** said. “From 2005 to last year, our cost of electricity grew basically about 50 percent over the last decade. Meanwhile, our billing to our customers only grew roughly 28 to 29 percent. In essence, we’ve absorbed about a million dollars worth of electric costs increases over the last decade. The money we were making 10 years ago is not the money we are making today. We are pulling in less money versus expenses, and we never passed on all those expenses. “One of the things that we’ve heard in the community is, ‘Our bills have gone up.’ They haven’t gone up as much as our bills that we pay to purchase the electricity,” **Comiskey** stated. “As a result, our margins are smaller, which means we have less money to work with than we had 10 years ago with the electric utility.”

Mayor Pro Tem Doug Head put the issue of electrical revenue into context. “There has been a lot of conversation about the utility rates and can you lower them. The thing that is the challenge at that point is that we aren’t passing along even close to what the increases have been. But in addition to that, this electric fund, along with taxes, is the heart of the body. It is able to pay the

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

expenses to provide the services that we've got. It supports the water utility, and all the other expenses. In 2014, we transferred \$1,239,000 out of the electric fund. That is how much blood this heart is pumping to cover expenses for all the other services we provide." Reeves and Middlebrooks still expressed concern about those in their districts who are not always able to pay a high utility bill. **Comiskey** replied that the city works with people every month who are having problems paying their bills. He added that they are also looking into working out a budget program where, based on their past history, customers would be given a set price to pay every month in order to be able to maintain their services.

Water and Sewer

The proposed budget for Water and Sewer is \$7,553,053. As an overview, **Comiskey** noted that water usage in the city declined every year between 2007 and 2013. "The first two years, our biggest single customer was Martha Mills, and they shut down," **Comiskey** said. "Yamaha shut down. We lost about 55 percent of our industrial users over two years. Then the county started putting in wells, and we lost some more there. "People tend to use the same amount of water. Historically, people are using a little more electricity each year. That's why through the 70's, 80's and 90's, if you had an electric utility, you automatically had growth and revenue. That's no longer the case. But with water, people always use about the same amount each year, so the only chance you have to get more revenue is with new customers coming in, or with price increases. We've had the inverse – we've lost 37 percent of our customers over that time, and our revenue has gone down. "

Mayor Arnold added that the city has had to increase rates, but has tried to so gently. "We have incrementally worked on increasing water and sewer for 15 years," he said. "We've had to, because we cannot justifiably sap the electric department for more and more money to subsidize water and sewer, and if you don't keep bumping your water and sewer rates, that's exactly what will happen." **Comiskey** said since 2007, the amount of water usage has dropped 39 percent (300 million gallons) because of the loss of customers, yet the cost of the chemicals and other items needed to keep the water safe has continually increased in price.

Victor Cozart, the Project Manager with Severn Trent, the company contracted by the city to run the water and sewer department, said the main increase in the budget of \$175,000 is for the purchase and installation of a SCADA system which would greatly automate the system. Cozart noted that many of the current water system employees are nearing retirement age, and water and sewer work is not attracting younger workers to replace those retiring. He said the SCADA system will automatically keep track of everything at the water and sewer plants, and if something goes wrong, will send out an alert to the system operator. Cozart estimated that the system could conceivably pay for itself within two years with personnel retiring and by not having to replace those personnel. **Comiskey** stated with the proposed increase in water and sewer rates, with a household average 5,000 gallons a month, the increase would be \$3.90. The increase is projected to provide \$166,000 for water and \$107,000 for sewer in revenue gain.

Other budget items include Sanitation at \$1,165,848; Law Enforcement at \$218,400; and Community Development at \$200,000. Besides the hearing today, other hearings scheduled are as follows:

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

- Wednesday, December 16, 5 p.m.
- Tuesday, December 22, 5 p.m.
- Monday, December 28, Noon
- Monday, December 28, 12:30 p.m. There will be a special called meeting to set the water and sewer rates.
- Thursday, December 31, Noon. The final Public Hearing and Budget Adoption.

A copy of the budget is available for public view in the city manager's office located on the second floor of the Thomaston-Upson Government Complex at 106 E. Lee Street. Anyone with a need for a reasonable accommodation in order to participate in the budget review process may contact the city manager at 706-647-4242.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Patrick C. Comiskey
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
December 2, 2015

Thomaston Council approves budget revisions
Purchase of boats, increase in legal services among changes

Author: Larry Stanford

\$50,000 for boats for Lake Thomaston, and other funds including an increase of \$40,000 for legal services and an increase of \$20,000 for professional services were approved by the Thomaston City Council in a budget revision at their meeting on November 3. City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** explained some of the budget revisions to the council, who had sheets showing all the revisions in front of them. “Recognizing that part of our Uptown Downtown project spilled over into 2015, we have \$1.3 million as a recognition of work and expected loan reimbursement,” **Comiskey** stated. “Also, we had performed a project over by Interfor to move a water line in order to allow the intersection expansion there. Those costs and reimbursements are identified also. We have also identified changes in our General Fund, basically decreasing and increasing in our total expenditures.

“One of the items is a reduction from the Lake Thomaston budget \$25,000 for docks and \$50,000 for boats and accessories for the Lake Thomaston project,” **Comiskey** continued. “Also, we had upwards of \$50,000 for an additional CDBG project spillover from 2014 that we’re recognizing those expenditures in the offsetting revenues. Also we have our LMIG, which is our annual allocation that we receive from the state. We took two years of allocations to put towards our \$1.5 million milling, road reclamation and paving project that we did this summer.” Council member Patsy Perdue made a motion to approve the budget revision. Mayor Pro Tem Doug Head seconded the motion and it was approved, 4-0.

Following the meeting, The Thomaston Times submitted an Open Records Request to the city for the budget revision worksheet and received it. Following are the budget revision items not mentioned by the City Manager in the meeting that were also approved by the council:

- An increase of \$5,000 in the City Clerk’s salary, raising it from \$29,332 to \$34,332.
- An increase of \$20,000 in Professional Services from \$50,000 to \$70,000.
- An increase of \$40,000 in Legal Services from \$50,000 to \$90,000.
- An increase of \$15,000 in Courtware for City County from \$15,000 to \$30,000.
- An increase of \$5,000 in the Upson County Jail Fund from \$22,000 to \$27,000.
- A decrease of \$5,000 in the Streets Department for Contractual Services from \$25,000 to \$20,000.
- A decrease of \$5,000 in the Streets Department for R&M Building and Grounds from \$15,000 to 10,000.
- A decrease of \$10,000 in the Streets Department for Sign Facings from \$16,300 to \$6,300.
- An increase of \$20,000 in City Parks from \$115,000 to \$135,000.
- A decrease of \$25,000 in Park Street Park from \$250,000 to \$225,000.
- A decrease of \$100,000 in Lake Thomaston from \$234,250 to \$134,250.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Patrick C. Comiskey
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
November 15, 2015

Thomaston electric winter rates drop

Author: Larry Stanford

Thomaston electric power residential consumers may soon begin seeing a reduction in their city power bills as the winter electric rates have kicked in. At the Thomaston City Council meeting on November 10, City Clerk Clint Chastain advised the council and mayor that as of October 1, 2015, in accordance with the city's electric ordinance, the winter residential electric rates have been installed in the utility billing system and will be effective through May 20-16.

Mayor Hays Arnold stated that the winter rates represent a decrease of 15.2 percent for 1000 kw users from the summer rates. For 2000 kw users, the decrease will be 20.2 percent, and for 3000 kw users, the decrease is 32 percent. He added that the decrease should be good news for a lot of citizens. Chastain also noted that summer maximum usage of 20,000 gallons per month for billing sewer charges ended on September 30, 2015.

In other business, the council approved the city manager spending up to \$40,000 to have engineering, survey and design work done toward the installation of another trunk line along Town Branch for sewer purposes. City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** noted that this is a long range project, but that this is the first step. City Attorney Joel Bentley added that they have found in past Town Branch projects that this is the best way to do it.

“One of the things that we’ve found on this Town Branch project is the difficulty that most of the easements that lie along this line are so old that they’re either prescriptive easements or they’re so poorly described that you can’t follow where they are,” Bentley said. “The benefit of doing it the way **Mr. Comiskey** is proposing is that it will be platted out, actual easements will be secured, and for posterity purposes, the easements have provisions in for future repairs and replacements as a part of the easement purchase price. For that reason, as the attorney, I would recommend that you undertake this project in the manner in which it is laid out.”

Comiskey said that as the project moves along, he will be recommending the city purchase portions of the property. “Just for clarification, because this is a trunk line that will be running along the creek, I’ll be recommending that the council purchase those sections not in traditional easements,” he said, “because of the long term expectations we’ll have with storm water down the road, and maintaining creek banks and things that will probably be the municipality’s responsibility in the long haul.” Mayor Pro Tem Doug Head made a motion to approve the city manager spending up to \$40,000 on the engineering, survey and design work. Council member Gary Atwater seconded the motion and it was approved, 4-0.

The council also approved spending up to \$30,000 toward a grant application with the USDA for major sewer line replacement. “We’re seeking approval of a USDA pre-approval planning grant application authorizing the manager and mayor implement an application grant with USDA requiring preliminary engineering,” **Comiskey** told the council. “This grant would be up to

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

\$30,000, depending on what the authority would grant us. It would be an exploratory grant toward doing some major sewer lines replacement work and hopefully getting USDA to help us with that.” Mayor Arnold stated that he has read the pre-application and the certification for USDA grants and that everything is in order. Council member Patsy Perdue made a motion to approve the funds for the grant application. Atwater seconded the motion and it was approved, 4-0.

Finally, the city council approved the appointment of Ryan Kellett to the Thomaston-Upson Transportation Committee. Kellett is an employee with the Georgia Department of Transportation and recently made a presentation to the council concerning the dangers of the city’s speed bumps. Mayor Arnold said Kellett has agreed to fill the position on the committee, and noted that the city has one more position on the committee that still needs to be filled. Perdue made a motion to approve the appointment of Kellett. Atwater seconded the motion and it was approved, 4-0.

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Patrick C. Comiskey
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
August 12, 2015

Lake Thomaston bids higher than expected
Bid on Lake Thomaston and Park Street \$45K over
Author: Larry Standford

The Thomaston City Council unanimously approved a bid of \$935,128 from Tommy Gibson Builders of Warner Robins for the construction of an amphitheater/boat storage building and pavilion with attached restrooms at Lake Thomaston Park, and a pavilion with attached restrooms at Park Street Playground. The action came at their August 4 meeting. Prior to their vote, City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** advised them that the city received four bids for the project, with Tommy Gibson being the low bid. The other bidders and bids were Headley Construction for \$978,000, Renfroe Construction for \$999,000, and McLeroy Inc. for \$1,100,000. **Comiskey** also noted that included in the bid is \$50,000 for site and preparation work, and \$40,000 for any alterations that the city might decide to do beyond the original scope of work.

The Lake Thomaston Park project came as somewhat of a surprise to residents, who first read about it in their June city newsletter. The city has plans to build a boat storage building with a roof that will double as the stage for an amphitheater, and a pavilion with restrooms. The city could then rent canoes and small watercraft to visitors, and host band concerts and plays in the amphitheater. While the Lake Thomaston Park project has met with unanimous approval of the City Council since the beginning, it has caused a division between city residents, with some believing the city would be better off spending that money on other needs, such as more manpower in the police and fire departments, business retention, or lowering utility bills.

At their July 7 meeting, the council approved spending \$600,000 on the two buildings, and another \$200,000 on site work, for a total of \$800,000. Following the August 4 meeting, **Comiskey** answered questions from the local news media concerning the difference in the price approved by the council and the final bid. He noted that the bid also included a pavilion with restrooms at the Park Street Playground, and stated they had projected the cost of the amphitheater/boat storage building to be \$400,000, and the cost of the two pavilion/restrooms to be \$200,000 each. “We did the same footprint for the bathrooms at Park Place as we did for Greatest Generation and Lake Thomaston, with the idea that mirroring those would help to get a better bid price,” **Comiskey** said. “These buildings will have brick as opposed to what we used at Greatest Generation, with the idea that these buildings should last longer and be less maintenance than non-brick. The two new bathrooms will have pavilions on the sides of them. “We estimated these three buildings would cost \$800,000, so minus the \$50,000 for site work and the \$40,000 for anything extra, the bid came in \$45,000 over what we estimated.”

When asked if he could provide the price specifications on the buildings, **Comiskey** said he could not. “I can’t on the buildings, we did them all as a group,” he said. “We won’t know until the contractor will have to do that for us, because he did them all as a package, and he’ll be providing that as we go through the project so we’ll know where to post those payments.” When questioned about the \$200,000 the council had approved for site work at Lake Thomaston,

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Comiskey stated they have more improvements planned. “\$600,000 was what we projected for the two buildings at Lake Thomaston, and then another \$200,000 to do any work out there in addition. We’re also going to do other things down there besides the prep work for the building. We’re hoping to put some docks in there for putting the boats on. That’s something we hope to do within that \$200,000.”

The city manager was also asked if the city was considering purchasing the corner lot at Lake Thomaston, on 6th Avenue next to the city water tower. He said they are looking into it. “We had talked to the previous owner 10 years ago,” he said. “We had approached them again, and we may or may not, that depends on if the owner is interested and is interested in a price that we all can agree on. I would recommend that to the mayor and council. That would give us access to the reservoir property from 6th Avenue, rather than having to put it through the neighborhood. That was something we tried prior to building the reservoir. The funds to purchase that property would come from the water fund.”

Comiskey said later that the city is also looking to replace the water tower next to the lot, and having it for truck staging and access would make it easier to do so. “That site is the ideal site to do that. We can build one and take the other one down. That tower wasn’t built by the city; it was built by Thomaston Mills; they had two water towers in their system. The problem it is too short and doesn’t integrate into our system, so what will happen probably, anytime after 2018, when it comes time to look at that tower and refurbishing it, we’ll be looking at the option of building a bigger tower that can better integrate into our system.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times

August 1, 2015

Citizen calls for mayor, manager to resign

Author: Ashley Biles

City of Thomaston Mayor Hays Arnold and City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** received heated comments from a local citizen at last week's City Council meeting when Terrell Brooks stated he did not feel either gentleman had done anything for the community during their tenure. "For the people of Thomaston, black and white, you have not done anything," said Brooks. "You can get mad, but that is the way I feel and I feel it is time for a change." Brooks went on to ask for the resignation of both Mayor Arnold and **Mr. Comiskey** before adding that James Harris was going to run for mayor in the upcoming election. Mr. Harris was also present at the meeting and raised his hand and stated he intended to run. Mayor Arnold announced last year that he would not seek re-election at the end of this term; qualifying for those intending to run for the position will be in August.

Also during the public comment portion of the meeting, Rhondalynn Traylor asked council several questions, with the first being for an update on Thomaston Police Officer Phillip Tobin. Both Arnold and **Comiskey** stated they did not have any information to share and City Attorney Joel Bentley stated he did not either as he is not the attorney assigned to the case. Traylor then asked when the terms for the mayor and the two council seats up for grabs end this year and Mayor Arnold stated the terms end on December 31. Traylor, who is part of the Thomaston Improvement Association, made the comment that the group will be working to have someone run for the council seats and for the position of mayor. She also asked for an update on candidates the city is considering for the position of Chief of Police for the Thomaston Police Department, however Bentley stated that was a personnel matter and the city would have no comment.

Prior to the public comments, Bentley had reminded the crowd of the rules of that section of the meeting. He stated the Mayor has the authority to keep the peace and has the right to ask the police to remove anyone who continue to disrupt the meeting. Another point he made was that each individual who signs up for public comment gets five minutes to speak, however no one may sign up and choose to give their allotted time to another individual. He also added that as a general rule, questions will be taken under advisement, but the council is not required to respond during the meeting. In reference to the rules, Traylor asked if it would be possible to have set bi-monthly meetings for citizens to meet with their district representatives and the police chief to discuss matters more in-depth than is allowed during the council meetings.

"When we come to the meetings, of course we only have five minutes, but sometimes issues are more pressing than coming in here for five minutes and not getting any answers," said Traylor. "Is there any way we can have district meetings? That way when we get in here, it doesn't seem so improper when you are trying to ask a question that you can't get an answer to because you only have a certain amount of time."

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Bentley stated the City of Thomaston has a “city manager run” form of municipal government, which means City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** is the Chief Executive Officer for the city. He added that the mayor and council make the policy decisions and then the manager puts them into place, therefore **Comiskey** would be the person to discuss having meetings with the police chief. Bentley also added that citizens would have to address their district council member about meeting with them. Mayor Pro Tem Doug Head added that any citizen could call any councilmember at any time to say they would like to come speak with them about any city issue.

The final question brought up by Traylor dealt with the options for youth activities in the community. “I know that we have to live with the \$800,000 decision for the park,” she said, referencing the recent unanimous vote for the Lake Thomaston Park project, “but we also have to have something equal for our youth development. We have not done anything, as far as the city or the county when it comes to youth development.” She suggested something such as a bowling alley or a skating rink that have been in the community before. Bentley stated the Recreation Department is a joint project between the city and county and to keep an eye out for when they meet to discuss the budget. He continued, stating the meeting between the two entities would be a public meeting and that would be the time to come and state that citizens would like to see more money being budgeted for recreation. Kelsey Rockemore had also signed up to speak during public comment; however he was not present at the meeting.

In other business, the council approved several items for improvements around town; with the first of those being the Glendale sewer line project. The council passed a motion which authorized the city manager to spend up to \$38,000 to complete the project. **Comiskey** told the council he is hoping to have the work done before school starts. Next, the council approved spending up to \$52,000 with Meeks Grading and up to \$73,000 with Double A Concrete for the prep work being done at Weaver Park and the Park Street Playground for new playground equipment.

Third, the council approved spending up to \$85,000 to relocate the water line for Interfor, located on Highway 36. The line is being moved to accommodate the turn lane project at the intersection of Highway 36 and Ben Hill Road that the Industrial Development Authority is working on to address safety issues with the increased truck traffic. A budget revision was also approved to accept the FEMA and GEMA grants which will be used for the purchasing of three generators: one for the Town Branch sewer plant, one for the water treatment plant on North Center Street and one that will be a mobile unit. City Manager **Comiskey** stated the council accounted for the 15 percent match they would have to put in for the grants when working on this year’s budget. Mayor Arnold stated the city will be paying roughly \$100,000 for a total investment of approximately \$562,160 and noted that was a good return on an investment.

Finally, Council member Patsy Perdue brought up the topic of the online article by Roadsnacks.com which designated Thomaston as the third worst community in Georgia. Perdue stated she was so upset by the article that she wanted to write something disputing the information in it, but added that she did not have to thanks to the wonderful column written by The Thomaston Times Editor Larry Stanford. Perdue encouraged anyone who had not read the

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

column to check it out. The column can be found online on The Times' website and Facebook page, or in the July 17th issue of The Times.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Patrick C. Comiskey
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
July 31, 2015

Open letter to citizens of Thomaston

Author: Doug Head - Mayor Pro Tem

The purpose of this open letter is to express some of my thoughts on several issues that have gotten a lot of publicity lately. I have seen many comments both in the paper and on social media concerning numerous important topics that range from police and fire protection to the Lake Thomaston project. I'd like to hopefully provide some thoughts that will help people understand things a little better.

Most of what has been said about the new Lake Thomaston project seems to center around the fact that there is not enough money to both protect the public and improve and develop parks. Second, I have seen and heard a great deal of misinformation. Last, I have heard it said a number of times that we on the City Council do not care. I would like for people to know that all of us on the council do care. I cannot imagine why anyone would want to do this job if they didn't care. We don't do this job for the \$204 pay check every month. I ran for this job in 2004 because I saw what the Mayor, Council and the City Manager had done and I supported the kind of vision they had.

That same vision has gotten us to this point down the road and we should ask: Are we better? I say yes we are, but check for yourself. Here are the facts.

Despite the loss of 5,000 to 7,000 jobs:

* We have low property taxes in the city. Our city millage rate is lower now than it was in 2004. Your county and school taxes may be higher, but your city property taxes are lower unless the assessed value of your property has gone up.

* We have low electric rates – See the Georgia Public Service Commission Residential Rate Survey or go to Georgia Power's public site and see what your bill would be with Ga. Power compared to a city bill. On the commercial side, I am told that 4 of 5 businesses are the same or lower.

* We have the Greatest Generation Park and we are headed to better parks in the future. Yes, we are spending more on parks but it must be remembered that we have just taken over two of our city parks (Weaver in 2014 and Park Street a few years before) that had fallen into disrepair. This time next year you will see them being well cared for. The Greatest Generation Park has far exceeded most people's expectations. I feel Lake Thomaston will be a completely new and exciting opportunity, not only for city but for county residents and visitors from out of town.

* We have smaller government: If we hadn't cared, then in 2000 when the mills closed we would have taken the easy and typical path that government often takes; we would have done little. Instead, we responded to the closing of the mills and began to cut costs. If we had continued on

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

course, we would currently need an additional \$1.5 million to \$2 million a year in our budget to operate. Instead, we made government smaller so that Total Expenditures in 2013 are less than they were in 2004 and the millage rate is lower than when Hays took office in 2004.

In addition to keeping costs down we have also built reserves as recommended by our CPA firm. Reserves are needed over time to do things like creating a financial standing that allowed us to refinance our debt at lower rates and save \$80K a year. Those reserves also allowed us to put down money that led to GEFA (Georgia Environmental Finance Authority) loans of funding at a lower interest rate with substantial loan forgiveness.

What are the city's priorities?

Public Safety:

This is an issue of primary concern that we should always be reviewing to consider how we could provide the best public safety and attract the best candidates for employees. Regardless of the fact that we are ahead of many cities and the national average as far as staffing, I am not as concerned about them as I am about us. Public safety is a top priority for all of us. We can and will provide superior policing and fire protection. We are committed to public safety as a council and we take this responsibility very seriously.

Jobs and Industry:

We all, city and county, contribute to the effort to attract industry. The city continues to repair and upgrade our infrastructure which is important to attracting industry and to do things to improve the quality of life, like the parks. The Industrial Development Authority is the agency primarily charged with efforts to recruit industry and does what it can for our existing industry and businesses that have supported our community all these years. IDA Director, Kyle Fletcher, along with the IDA board are continually making the effort to do these things as well as maintaining contacts with Georgia Industry and Trade. But in the end it comes down to money and the options that money can afford. Our governments, city and county, should return to the dedication of a mil of tax to fund the IDA's efforts. That is how you would grow the effort to bring new jobs to Thomaston and Upson County.

Improving Infrastructure:

The City continues to improve infrastructure through repair and replacement of water and sewer. Just to let you know, we have:

- 99 miles of electric lines and 4 substations
- 60 miles of streets and 31 miles of sidewalks
- 80 miles of water lines, a water filter plant, 8 water tanks
- 67 miles of sewer lines and 2 treatment plants

When all that is added up it totals 337 miles of infrastructure.

Utilities:

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Patrick C. Comiskey

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So you ask if we have all of this why do we raise utility rates or ever propose a tax increase? The answer is because costs do rise over time and if you do not pass that cost along at some point, your savings will dry up and you will have to raise taxes more. Our utility funds are the businesses we run to provide services for our citizens and to provide revenue to cover the cost of services that are the very reasons people choose to live in a city.

Transparency:

I feel we are as open as anyone. We have public budget hearings over four meetings, some at lunch and some in the evening to try to accommodate schedules. Public and press are always invited. Over those days, we go through the entire budget, not necessarily in detail, but we have the detailed budget documents always available to the public. Also, the City Manager, the Mayor, and several of our council members make numerous talks during the year to various clubs and community groups and city hall always has an open-door policy to its citizens. And lastly, we put city news and information in our utility bills (“The Bugle”) that goes out to all our customers. I hope in the future we can have one or two public meetings during the year to talk about the “State of the City” and give citizens the ability to hear more information about the city and to ask questions.

In conclusion

All of these good things have come together because we do care and because we did the difficult work of growing our government smaller. These good things have come in large part because of the vision of Mayor Arnold and our City Manager, **Patrick Comiskey**, and the support of the council, as well as the vision of former Mayor Sam Brewton and councils before us.

We will never be where we want to be, but we have to think about a lot of things at one time. Police and fire protection, water and sewer and roads, taxes, utility rates, parks, and joint projects are just some of the balls we juggle. We do need to take a long hard look at where our staffing levels are with both police and fire and how to attract the best personnel. Additionally, we need to continue to support the IDA and their efforts to attract new industry and employers to town. We need to continue the very important work of supporting and doing what we can for our existing industry and businesses.

Some people say that we are a welfare community. Some say we can’t do both – improve and develop parks and have adequate police and fire protection. That is simply not true. The planning and savings over the years make this possible. Some people have told me we are just a town of older people and we don’t need Lake Thomaston. But I see Thomaston and Upson County as more than that. I want the IDA to get that next great industry that will employ another 200-300 people. I want a future for this town.

But if all you want is to give up, bunker in, and reduce taxes and utility fees and spend our savings, then I am afraid you may have already given up. I am not in that group and the council is not in that group. We want more for this town; we want a future for this town. A future of good and improved infrastructure, improved roads, beautiful parks and murals as well as good, well-staffed police and fire and an IDA properly funded to be able to make the best effort to attract industry. Your City Council will continue to work on the important things we need and

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Patrick C. Comiskey

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continue to work on how we can improve Thomaston and serve the citizens of Thomaston because of one overriding reason – WE DO CARE.

Doug Head is Mayor Pro Tem of Thomaston.

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Patrick C. Comiskey
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
July 9, 2015

City sets SPLOST goals

Author: Larry Stanford

With 12 proposed sewer line projects totaling more than \$21 million approved for the new six-year SPLOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax, and probably only getting about \$5 million for its portion of the one-cent tax, the Thomaston City Council is looking to get as much done as they have funds for.

At a called meeting on June 23, City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** provided information to the council on the 12 proposed projects. They range in price from \$4.3 million for a project to continue to replace sewer line along Town Branch, run it to the sewer plant, tear down the current water department building and install a backwash tank there, and relocate Severn Trent to the armory, to \$300,000 to replace sewer lines on Meeks Terrace, Raines Terrace, and possibly Reeds Terrace.

In addition to not yet knowing what percentage of the SPLOST they could receive, **Comiskey** added that emergency work could also cut into the project list. The city manager noted that the way the ballot read during the last SPLOST vote in 2011, it left a way for the city to use sales tax funds for emergencies, and that proved insightful. “What in essence happened this last time was we woke up one morning and South Green Street had caved in, so we used some of our SPLOST money to replace that section of line,” **Comiskey** said. “We’ve gone out and had another situation behind Phillips Street. We went over and did that section of line. We’ve had sections that we found caved in or were beyond patching and have had to replace the line from manhole to manhole instead of patching bad lines. “If this turns out to be a six-year SPLOST, that is a long time,” he added. “We may have something that pops up a month after it starts, and we want to address that first, because we have to.”

The council unanimously approved the 12 projects for the SPLOST list. **Comiskey** said the next step will be for him to present their list to County Manager Jim Wheelless, and for the Board of Commissioners to then decide how they will divide up the SPLOST funds. “What will happen in essence is, the county does the SPLOST,” he said. “It is not like the joint projects, where we both sit down and work it out. They have the opportunity to sit down with us and work out a contract, and then we have input into what goes on the SPLOST list. The other option is they just say they are going to go ahead and do it, then there is a formula where we get a certain amount, which is what happened last time. It ended up with us getting approximately 25 percent of the SPLOST.”

Comiskey added that the SPLOST being proposed is six years, which they hope will generate \$20 million in revenue. If the city were to receive 25 percent again, that would be about \$5 million to work with. “Obviously we have more projects on here than we’ll have the money to do,” the city manager said. “If we’re lucky, we might be able to get through four or five, six or possibly seven projects. I would say that would be optimistic.”

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Council member Patsy Perdue noted that developing the list of projects shows residents what the city wants to do. “This shows the process that we’re taking to replace out all the stuff that we need to replace,” she said. “It’s like the oil filter commercial – you either pay now or you pay later.” Mayor Hays Arnold agreed, adding that this is what the city has been working on. “It’s exactly what we’ve been doing for years. It’s exactly what we told people we were doing,” Arnold said. “We’re not wavering from that. This is sewer work. This is what we said we would go for with the SPLOST, and this is exactly what we’re doing.

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times

June 26, 2015

New sewer, water lines approved

Author: Larry Stanford

Thomaston has been busy the last few years replacing aging water lines, and continues to do so, but the city is also working on replacing its sewer lines. At their last two meetings, the Thomaston City Council has approved more than \$5 million worth of sewer and water line replacement work. At their June 2 meeting, the council approved an expenditure of up to \$3.9 million to replace sewer lines along Town Branch and Avalon Road, approximately 7,000 feet. City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** said the project actually came in under the estimated cost. “The engineering estimate was a little over \$3.4 million and he was just under \$3.4 million,” **Comiskey** said. “I’m asking council to authorize the expenditure of up to \$3.9 million for the engineering and sewer line work, and also the oversight work. We have a low bid of just under \$3.4 million, but want authorization of up to \$3.9 million to cover additional engineering and oversight contingency costs.”

Mayor Hays Arnold noted it is always good when a project’s bid comes in closed to what was expected. “It is always more comfortable with that” he said. “This will be another major project going on in the community and it will benefit the community. We’re glad to be a part of making this possible.” At their June 16 meeting, the council also authorized **Comiskey** and City Attorney Joel Bentley to spend up to \$35,000 to negotiate for land easements for the Town Branch project.

At the June 2 meeting, the council also approved:

-Up to \$90,000 for design work on the next sewer line project. **Comiskey** said it will be a continuation of work on the Town Branch/Avalon Road project.

-Authorization to spend up to \$25,000 for work associated with replacing approximately 250 feet of sewer line under Mill Race Road.

– Authorization to spend up to \$25,000 for sewer line extension under A Street, near the Martha Mill Building.

At their June 16 meeting, the council approved a request from the city manager for approval of a Drinking Water Revolving Fund Resolution for establishing a loan with Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority. “The city is looking to do a revolving loan of \$2 million, **Comiskey** explained to the council. “The interest rate is 1.03 percent, and we’ll have \$500,000 forgiven if we spend the full amount. Plus, this is matching of the CDBG grant that we already having approval of, which is another \$500,000. This will be a continuation of the water line project which will involve the southeast section of Silvertown East Village. We’ll be able to eliminate old lines that have been leaking.

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Mayor Pro Tem Doug Head stated with it being a \$2 million project, with \$500,000 being forgivable, and with a 1.03 interest rate, it is pretty incredible that type of deal is available. “It will help us accomplish a lot of things we need to do,” Head said. “This deal is historically pretty incredible.” The council also gave **Comiskey** approval to hire Allen Smith Consulting to put together a Fiscal Year 2016 Community Block Grant Application. This is for replacing water mains and connections in Silvertown West Village.

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

criticalinfrastructurealliance.com

June 13, 2015

City Awarded \$2M Loan

Thomaston will use loan to replace leaking water mains

The Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) has awarded the City of Thomaston a \$2 million Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) loan. The loan will finance replacing more than two miles of existing leaking water mains within the Silvertown East Village. This project will also install new hydrants, valves, services lines, and meters. Thomaston will pay 1.03 percent interest on the 20-year loan, which includes principal forgiveness of up to \$500,000, if all loan funds are drawn. The loan qualifies for a reduced interest rate because it's an eligible water conservation project.

Thomaston Mayor Hays Arnold credited City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** with getting the grant, and added they were lucky to get the reduced interest rate. "Over time, that will basically amount to another grant," Arnold said. "Those interest rates will not be around forever, and I think we can depend on that." "GEFA's water and sewer programs assist local governments with improving their environmental infrastructure. As part of the Drinking Water program, cities and counties can also receive affordable financing for water conservation projects," said GEFA Executive Director Kevin Clark. "I'd like to express appreciation to Gov. Deal, state Sen. John F. Kennedy and state Rep. Johnnie Caldwell Jr. for their support. The state's commitment to helping cities and counties finance infrastructure projects contributes greatly to improving Georgia's water resources."

The DWSRF, a federal loan program administered by GEFA, provides communities throughout Georgia with low-interest loans to fund water infrastructure projects that deliver safe, affordable drinking water. Eligible projects include a wide variety of public health or compliance related water supply projects. These projects conserve and improve water resources, and facilitate economic growth and development. Low-interest loans from this program are available up to \$25 million.

City Manager **Comiskey** stated that the city will be receiving contract documents from GEFA within the next month that will need the city council's approval "This is part of the Silvertown East Village, where we will be replacing our water lines on 4th, 5th, 6th, and Double C streets," **Comiskey** added. "We have a \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) grant that will be part of this, and a \$500,000 loan forgiveness that will be part of that \$2 million that was identified. The balance at \$1.5 million will be at an interest rate of 1.03 percent, which is a very low interest rate."

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Patrick C. Comiskey
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
December 24, 2014

Thomaston Council approves \$32.8M budget for 2015
Budget includes water and sewer rate increases
Author: Ashley Biles

At a called meeting on Friday, December 19, the Thomaston City Council unanimously approved the city's 2015 budget at a grand total of \$32,885,555. The budget includes \$8,469,925 for the General Fund; \$5780,550 for the Water/Sewer; \$15,339,232 for Electric; \$1,165,848 for Sanitation; \$200,000 for Community Development; \$1.5 million for SPLOST funds; \$200,000 for CDBG (Community Development Block Grant); \$90,000 for LMIG (Local Maintenance Improvement Grant); \$20,000 for Law Enforcement; \$70,000 for Hotel/Motel tax and \$50,000 for the Greatest Generation Memorial Park. Also included is a 1 percent across the board raise for city employees, which has been standard for the past few years, and a water and sewerage rate increase. The increases are 23 cents per \$1,000 gallons for water, and 16 cents per 1,000 gallons for sewerage.

The 2015 budget is just over \$2 million more than that of 2014, however City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** stated the council is not projecting any increase in the millage rate for 2015. "Next August (2015) we won't be projecting an increase," said **Comiskey**. "Eventually we are going to need one though, as we've gone years without one. We are at a point where I don't see us being able to gain much more by reducing personnel." **Comiskey** added that hopefully things are beginning to look up in the community as there have been a lot of positive signs lately. He noted there has been an increase in the amount of sales taxes, showing citizens are spending more money locally, as well as several new small businesses are opening throughout town.

The city has several projects planned for 2015, including improvements to the Thomaston Police Department, improvements to local parks, water/sewer line replacement and milling and paving. Plans for the police department include the addition of an improved evidence room, an additional meeting room and additional offices. **Comiskey** stated David Albritton is doing preliminary plans for the expansion, which looks to extend the building into the parking lot. He noted the city hopes to have a final plan in place this winter and begin soliciting bids in the spring. This would hopefully allow for the project to be completed in the summer of 2015.

As for park improvements, there are several items on the list. The tennis courts at the Greatest Generation Memorial Park are slated to be given a make-over sometime next spring. According to **Comiskey**, the final bid packet has been put together and there are plans to begin bidding out the project in the spring when the weather is better. The city also has recently taken over the maintenance of the Park Street playground and Weaver Park. Some improvements have already taken place at Park Street with a new parking lot and work being done to the basketball courts. They have been painted and now have a fence around the perimeter to keep the basketball from rolling away anytime someone misses a shot. As for Weaver Park, **Comiskey** stated the first order of business is to replace the wall at the playground and do something with the building in

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

the center of the park. However, currently it is undecided what the building will be used for and if the roof on the building will be repaired or if the building itself will be torn down.

Comiskey continued saying there are also plans to improve the tennis courts at Weaver Park and eventually work on adding some parking. “We want to do parking at some point, but replacing the water line on that street is part of the project. Unfortunately, by the time that comes up, there probably won’t be enough time to get the other (parking) in this year. So that will probably be a project for a future year.” The city is working on replacing the water and sewer lines around town, as the lines are very old and cause many problems. **Comiskey** noted one of the larger projects is upgrading the clarifier tanks at the Bell Creek Sewer Plant, which is roughly a \$600,000 project. “This will be a big improvement for our Bell Creek Sewer Plant,” said **Comiskey**. “The best way to help your sewer plant is by replacing your sewer lines. Also by replacing the water lines we are reducing the amount of water being lost through small leaks.” **Comiskey** continued saying by replacing the lines, the city is also increasing the capacity at both the water and sewer plants.

Finally, the city is also planning on doing over \$1 million in milling and paving this year, particularly in the Brookwood and Springdale neighborhoods. **Comiskey** stated the water and sewer lines have already been replaced in those neighborhoods and now is a good time to do the road work. “We try to let the new pipes sit a year so any issues will have already showed up,” said **Comiskey**. “Most of the settling should happen in the first year also. So hopefully (by waiting), when we mill and pave we won’t end up having little concave spots in five years.”

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times

August 27, 2014

City taxes will remain the same

Council listens to residents, changes mind on 2 mill hike

Author: Ashley Biles

Many citizens in the community have stated lately that they wonder if the powers that be in local government actually listen to any concerns they have; especially when it comes to the property tax millage rate. Well, at a called meeting last Thursday, the Thomaston City Council assured the community that they do listen; by voting 4-0 to keep the millage rate at 3.84 mills, the same as last year. Council member Gary Atwater was not present at the meeting. According to Tax Commissioner Berry Cook, with this change city residents should see an 0.47 mills decrease on their tax bill this year if the county commissioners set their millage rate as proposed at 18.76 mills. This would put the combined rate in the city for state, school, county, city and joint projects at 35.36 as compared to 35.83 last year.

Mayor Hays Arnold opened the meeting by informing the crowd that filled the basement of the Thomaston-Upson Archives that things would be done differently at the meeting, with public comments being held until after the business at hand was finished. He continued, stating he wanted to take this time to speak from his heart to the citizens. “We had the question arise, if we actually listened to what people had to say, and I responded yes, that we did,” said Arnold. “I don’t know if you are aware of how seriously we all take that, but we are very serious about our love for and our interest in this community, as are each of you.”

Arnold continued stating the city has done some “pretty phenomenal things” in past years when it came to dealing with the worst financial scenario the city has faced since the Great Depression. He noted by being fiscally conservative, the city has been able to build reserves even in trying times. He made a recommendation to the council that the rate be left as it has for the past 13 years. Arnold also noted he had discussed the outcome of not having an increase with City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** and stated he was assured by **Comiskey** that he would be able to manage the city’s finances within the parameters set by the council.

Mayor Pro Tem Doug Head told the crowd the reason the council was proposing an increase was to help fund the significant challenges the city faces when it comes to maintaining the infrastructure. However, he noted the reason the council was able to not raise the millage rate was thanks to the incredible leadership of Mayor Arnold, **Comiskey** and those who preceded the current council. The rest of the council agreed and Councilmember Don Greathouse added that he felt this was the right move for the city to make. “We do have several continuous issues before us now, but we have to make the right decision and I think this is the right decision for this time, this day and this age. We are going to work together for the citizens because that is what our job is,” said Greathouse.

The crowd thanked the council for making the decision to not increase the millage rate and many stated they felt the right decision was made. “I think they did the right thing,” said Dennis Harris.

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

“It is just the wrong time to be going up on taxes; people cannot afford it, especially those on fixed incomes. I think the pressure that people put on them (the city council) caused the change because I believe before it was a done deal.” “It just goes to show that good things can happen when citizens peacefully come together for a common goal,” added Tim Tucker.

Ritz Theatre owner Malcolm Neal stated he was especially thankful for the change, noting the tax increase would have put an even greater burden on the small business owners since it would be coupled with the utility rate increase that went into effect earlier this year. “This would have been a double whammy, which would have hurt everyone, especially the small business owners,” said Neal. “Most of us have only a small margin and an additional \$50 a month makes a big difference.” Neal went on to say he understood that citizens and businesses have moved out of town, therefore reducing the tax income, but noted that continuing to raise rates on those who are still here could cause them to have to leave as well. “I’m glad they could try to level things off at this point and not penalize those of us who are left. I’m glad they listened to the people and realized they can make it work,” said Neal.

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times

January 9, 2014

City approves budget amidst business outcry

Author: Ashley Biles

During a called meeting last Monday, the Thomaston City Council unanimously passed a budget for 2014 with a grand total of \$30,789,664 which includes \$5,885,900 for the general fund; \$5,215,050 for water; \$15,343,732 for electric and \$1,165,848 for sanitary, \$216,450 for Community Development; \$16,625 for law enforcement; \$151,400 for the Greatest Generation Memorial Park; \$2 million in SPLOST funds; \$70,000 for Hotel Motel tax; a \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG); and a \$179,659 Local Maintenance Improvement Grant (LMIG) .

However, prior to the vote, the council received an earful from a group of small business owners concerning the forthcoming 6.5 percent increase in utility rates and the possibility of a two mill increase on the millage rate later on this year during the public hearing held prior to the meeting. Several citizens spoke stating the increases would create a financial hardship on their businesses, something they are unsure they will be able to survive. Susan Erwin, who along with her husband Mike owns Sanders Supply in Thomaston, told the council that during the summer her utility bill is around \$900 a month and for a business that is already struggling, they will not be able to endure an increase in costs in utilities. She noted the couple wanted to stay in Thomaston, but had begun to think of moving their business to a more active business community and will heavily consider doing so with the increase in the rates. Mike Erwin added that he felt the possibility of a tax increase was also a terrible idea.

“This county has seen negative growth for two decades. There is not any construction going on. People are moving out of this area and people are out of jobs,” said Erwin. “People in businesses like ours, when we are faced with process going up and other things we also have to realize we have to cut some places. And maybe you have done that, I don’t know. But I can tell you with negative growth, no construction, and people losing jobs, with you raising taxes, there are other businesses like ours that won’t survive that. People will move out of this county, further lowering your tax base and if you think that’s a positive thing, if you think that is the answer to things, then you are sadly mistaken.”

Ritz Theatre owner Malcolm Neal also spoke to the council during the public hearing and stated that the bill for electricity and water at the theatre often exceeds what the business brings in due to less people coming to the movies. He noted that the city offers tax benefits to new businesses coming into town, but that the businesses that are already here need help to stay here as well. “I’m just saying a bit more support from the city to the small businesses will go a long way,” said Neal. “When it comes to the utility rates, somehow if you have got the money in other resources or other ways rather than hit the local businesses and everybody who lives here, who are already struggling to stay in town and survive; then another percentage increase can amount to a lot of money.”

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Debbie Lord stated she had spoken with many businesses throughout the downtown area and numerous citizens who all said they will not be able to take another rate increase especially since the city raised utility rates both last year and the year before. She noted many people will not be able to afford another hit and suggested the council use some of the money they have in the bank to offset the rising costs of electric and water rates. “You guys have \$13 million in the bank for your projects, you made \$700,000 off of the utilities last year; you don’t have to go up,” said Lord. “We’re not asking you to decrease anything, we are just saying leave it alone.”

Thomaston Mayor Hays Arnold told those in attendance that he knew what it was like to have to scratch to make a payroll and to pay the bills, but there is never a good time to have an increase of any sort. “As bad as I think of having to raise taxes and things of that sort, we find ourselves in a situation where we have got to do what we have to do to keep this community, to keep this city on a steady course,” said Arnold. “You’re talking about at the maximum month having a \$54 (monthly increase) on your utility bill. Is that \$54 the difference between you being able to make it or not make it in Thomaston?”

However, when asked how many people file for an extension on their utility bill each month, City Clerk Dennis Truitt stated he could not give an exact number, but there are ‘a lot’ each month. Even when filing for an extension, those citizens are still charged the \$25 late fee for not paying the bill on time. City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** stated the city is pulling in less profit margins on the utilities than they did in the 90s and the electric bill for the city (which buys its power from MEAG) is projected to go up \$600,000. He stated that is a cost that has to be passed on to the citizens because the city has tried to keep costs down and reduce their margins, but it is no longer possible to do. He continued saying the city has cut their staff by one third since the closing of the mills in order to keep cost down and they have been taking money out of the bank to pay for things. However, he noted there are several projects that need to be done such as sewer line replacements and milling and paving of the roads once the lines are replaced. **Comiskey** stated the council is trying to do what they can to be good stewards for the community.

After that comment, Lord asked if the city really felt they were being good stewards by adding a \$37,000 animal shelter to the bottom line when there is already a shelter in Upson County. To which **Comiskey** stated there is an agreement between the city and the county that a special tax district is supposed to be set up so no city businesses or residents will be taxed by the county when it comes to paying for the animal shelter. He continued saying having a shelter for the city will help to better manage the animals at the front end and they need to have a place to put an animal if it is picked up after the county shelter is closed. The city also already has their own Animal Control Officer.

Councilwoman Patsy Perdue noted she appreciated hearing everyone’s comments and stated she is also very concerned. She continued noting she did not want anyone to think the council was saying they were going to do something and they don’t really care how it affects anyone because that is not the truth. However, she stated while she respected the citizens opinion, she also asked they respect those of the city council. “I guess we just have a different way of looking at the way finances should be done,” said Perdue. “I wish there was a real easy answer, but the way we do our finances, I understand it, I agree with it. I wish during our work sessions we had folks come.

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

We've had work sessions (on the budget); four of them and nobody came. I wish people had come and been able to hear the reasoning behind what's happening." After the public hearing, the council unanimously approved the 2014 budget with the aforementioned increases.

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times

July 16, 2013

Thomaston Council approves bond issue

Low rate on \$8.2 million bond refinance will save city \$1.3 million over 14 years

Author: Larry Stanford

By a 4-0 vote at a special called meeting Tuesday evening, the Thomaston City Council approved a bond ordinance authorizing the issuance of \$8.2 million City of Thomaston combined utilities revenue bonds. The bonds are being sold to refinance the city's earlier bond issue done in 2002 and will save the city approximately \$1.3 million over the 14-year life of the bonds. Earlier this year, the council had authorized City Attorney Joel Bentley and City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** to look into refinancing both the 2002 bonds and several GEFA loans the city has. It was estimated at that time that refinancing both the bonds and the loans would save the city approximately \$1.2 million over the life of the bonds. But Bentley said they found it was not feasible to include the GEFA loans in the new bond issue, so the bond issuance will actually be for less than they had initially thought, and actually save the city more than they had estimated.

The city had also initially indicated the bonds would be sold on the public market, but Brian Ubell, a representative of Robert W. Baird & Company, an investment firm in the Atlanta the city chose to use, said they found they could get a better deal selling the bonds to a bank. "The past month has been a very interesting one in the fixed income markets," said Ubell. "As we were getting ready to embark on a public sale, the feds made their comments on potentially tapering the purchase of securities in the open market. As a result, you saw treasury rates spike and in the Muni Market (Municipal Bond Market) you saw rates increase very quickly as well. That's in addition to a move from May to June to significantly higher rates than as well.

"Given that movement, we contacted several banks to &what kind of rate could be achieved in the public market. Capital One provided a rate of 2.5 percent. Three other banks I talked to were higher than that. Capital One agreed to hold their rate, again as the Treasury's rates moved higher. So we recommended going forward with that proposal. We were able to lock in that rate that day. A public sale would take four to five weeks from today. So you eliminate a month of interest rate risks in an environment where rates are moving higher very quickly. "If we were to do this as a public sale in today's market, the cost of funds would be about 2.95 percent," added Ubell. "The savings on the refinancing of the debt over 14 years would be just over \$900, 000, or about \$64, 000 a year. At the 2.5 percent rate (from Capital One), the gross savings over 14 years is \$1.285 million, or about \$90, 000 a year. So there is about a \$350, 000 advantage to the private placement deal as it is structured, and \$25, 000 a year through 2027. "I think we are in an instance where the public markets moved very quickly, and the bank markets did not move quite as quickly and we were able to secure a rate and keep that rate."

Mayor Hays Arnold noted that in 2002, the city had to purchase insurance to buy the rate down, and that it did not have to do that this time, which saved the city another \$137, 000. Ubell agreed, stating that if the bonds had been sold publicly, they might have had to purchase insurance, but because the bonds were sold to a bank, no insurance was needed. Bentley added that the timing

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

of the sale of the bonds necessitated the need for the called meeting. "So that we could close this transaction out before the rate lock expired necessitated that we have this meeting this evening," said Bentley. "Otherwise, we would have done this in a normal period of time. This is scheduled to close out August 5, which is a significantly shorter period of time than we had anticipated, because of Brian's hard work and **Patrick's** hard work."

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Patrick C. Comiskey
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
January 27, 2012

Verdict is ‘guilty’ for Richard Harville

Author: Sheila A. Marshall

Thomaston businessman Richard Harville was on Thursday morning convicted of a single count of theft by receiving. The trial before Judge W. Fletcher Sams began Monday morning in Upson County Superior Court, and the jury began deliberating Wednesday afternoon. The verdict was reached Thursday morning following less than five hours of deliberations. Testimony in Harville’s trial, in which he was charged with a single count of felony theft of services, included details of the business transactions that prosecutors alleged resulted in the City of Thomaston failing to receive payment of approximately \$473,000.

Prior to sentencing, Griffin Judicial Circuit Assistant District Attorney Heath English said, “I think the truth came out and we’re very satisfied that the city and citizens of Upson County will have an opportunity to not only receive the money that’s owed to them, but also let any who conducts business in Upson County or in the Griffin Judicial Circuit know if they have any intention to commit fraud or theft, they should beware because our citizens aren’t going to allow it and you’ll be held accountable.”

Before he announced Harville’s sentence, Judge Sams addressed the defendant, stating that there is currently a serious push for prison reform that includes increasing probationary sentencing for non-violent offenders. Sams also cited the fact that Harville has no prior criminal history, and also thanked him for his service to the country, which included the awarding of two Bronze Stars earned during the Tet Offensive in Vietnam. However, he then said despite these facts, the case against Harville also involved aggravating factors.

“Petty theft is one thing, but anything over \$500 is a felony,” Sams said in reference to the almost half million dollars in losses the City of Thomaston incurred. “The most aggravating thing about this case is that the victim is a governmental entity, so that means the true victims are the taxpaying citizens.” Sams then announced that he was sentencing allowable under the law – ten years – with four of those to be served in prison, followed by six years probation. Harville must also make full restitution to the City of Thomaston.

The case revolved around what authorities say was a “gentleman’s agreement” between Harville, owner of such corporations as the now defunct Agricycle and Zurich Industrial, and Thomaston City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** and Mayor Hayes Arnold. In direct testimony, Harville acknowledged he reached an agreement with city officials, which would allow him to distribute in the Thomaston sewer system leachates, collected from the Taylor County landfill. Under that contract, Zurich Industrial was to pay Thomaston 4.5 cents for each gallon subsequently distributed for treatment at the city waste water treatment facility, which was run by Southwest Water at the time. Zurich had a separate contract with the owners of the landfill in Taylor County in which Zurich was paid 10 cents for each gallon it transported.

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

While Harville did not dispute that the city is owed almost a half-million dollars, he categorically denied any criminal intent in the matter. Rather, he alleged it was changes in the process in which manifests were turned over to City of Thomaston representatives that resulted in the payment shortage. In cross examination by defense attorney Hale Almand, **Comiskey** acknowledged the city received a “substantial” amount of money as a result of this business agreement, while admitting he was not fully involved in the ensuing process. “From what I recall, Mr. Harville and (Southwest Water plant manager) Mr. Palmer were to discuss those issues,” he said. “To the best I recall, Mr. Palmer was responsible for providing the City of Thomaston with manifests.”

According to testimony from defense witness John Freed, Harville’s son-in-law, who was Zurich Industrial’s general manager from May 2008 to August 2009, manifest coordination was an ongoing problem. Due to changes at Southwest Water, Freed said Zurich drivers no longer had a specific location to leave manifests when leachates were distributed at the city’s wastewater facility. Therefore, rather than drivers leaving individual manifests at the time delivery was made, they would collect manifests in their trucks for approximately one week at a time prior to turning them in at the Zurich office in Taylor County. “Sometimes all the manifests didn’t make it into the office. It was fairly common that there would be a few loose manifests in the trucks,” Freed said, adding that he had no specific date for delivering manifests, identifying the criteria as “how big the stack was.”

Harville also alleged that mismanagement at Southwest Water, specifically on the part of Palmer and what Hale referred to as a slip-shod procedure, was responsible for the billing errors that resulted in the city of Thomaston’s payment losses. When specifically asked to address allegations regarding Palmer’s job performance that could have contributed to the errors, **Comiskey** said, “He was a Southwest Water employee; I never saw the file.” However, the City Manager later acknowledged that Palmer was relieved from his job following his own reports to Southwest Water officials. “My communication with Southwest Water was that I had concerns about his performance,” **Comiskey** said.

Despite this, prosecutor English built the state’s case upon an investigation into not only Zurich Industrial’s business records, but also those of Agricycle, which Harville concedes received almost \$400,000 from Zurich. However, the state’s contention was that Harville deliberately misled Thomaston officials with regard to the amount of leachates being disposed of locally and then used those funds to prop up the failing Agricycle in an attempt to sell the company for a profit.

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times

January 6, 2012

Council passes budget for 2012

Author: Larry Stanford

By a vote of 3-0, the Thomaston City Council approved the 2012 budget at a called meeting at noon on Friday, January 30, 2011. The budget total is \$32, 500, 023. Council member Patsy Perdue was out of town and Council member Gary Atwater could not get off from work for the meeting. Present were Council members Wallace Rhodes, Jim Richards, Mayor Pro Tem Doug Head, and Mayor Hays Arnold.

Mayor Arnold noted that because of the way the city operates with several different funds coming out of the budget, it may look like the budget is bigger than it actually is. "We have funds that are operated out of the budget, not necessarily just water and sewer, electric, streets, and so forth," Arnold said. "We break down every single thing we do, and they all show up in the budget. They could be grants that amount to millions of dollars. It makes the budget appear to be quite inflated when it is not. "In actuality, we're looking at a budget that has the same spending level we have five or six years ago. It is a pretty substantial reduction. And I would say that unless things make some form of a dramatic turn, of which I am certainly not aware, then I don't necessarily see things getting a lot better a lot faster." City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** added that the city is operating on the same amount of revenue it was receiving eight years ago.

"The summaries of our general property tax and general taxes -we are proposing just under \$3.2 million for 2012," **Comiskey** said. "In 2004 we had just over \$3.2 million. So we are basically operating on revenue that we had in 2004. That's the main bread and butter revenue for our general fund." Mayor Arnold thanked the city employees for doing their best to meet the budget last year. "We know that our department heads and our employees, each and every one of them, have been called upon to do more, and they've done it, stepped right up and done it," said the Mayor. "I'm very proud of the city employees for what they have done this past year and the leadership they have been given." The city held five public hearings on the budget, receiving relatively little comment on it, even though electric, water and sewer, and garbage rates will be increasing. Council member Wallace Rhodes stated the lack of comment on the budget indicates the citizens' satisfaction with what the city has done. "I think this is a vote of confidence for the city," said Rhodes. Council member Jim Richards made a motion to approve the budget. Mayor Pro Tem Doug Head seconded the motion, and it was approved, 3-0.

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Patrick C. Comiskey
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
October 14, 2011

Thomaston Council approves \$1.5M for roads and sidewalks

Author: Larry Stanford

With the approval of the first budget revision of the year, the Thomaston City Council allocated funding for needed road and sidewalk work. The action came at their October 4 meeting. City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** requested approval of the budget revision. "We're looking to do approximately \$1.5 million in paving and sidewalk replacement," **Comiskey** said. "It also accounts for the Highway 19 widening project. We're looking to have to move our electric utilities, and we've allocated \$150, 000 toward that project." **Comiskey** said after the meeting that \$739, 000 will come from reserves, \$500, 000 from the capital replacement account, and \$187, 000 from the city's contingency fund.

Mayor Hays Arnold translated the cost of the work to how much street and sidewalk paving will be done. "To put that into reality for some folks, that's about five miles or so of streets that we're looking to resurface in Thomaston, and about three miles of sidewalks," said the Mayor. "I want to commend **Mr. Comiskey** again for the financial management that he has given us during his tenure," Mayor Arnold added. "The fact that there has been very strong financial management in this community is the reason that we are to do things we are able to do right now, and I appreciate that." With no further discussion, Council member Patsy Perdue made a motion to approve the budget revision. Council member Wallace Rhodes seconded the motion and it was approved, 4-0.

In other business, the Council approved a change in policy related to paying off loans. **Comiskey** said they had originally talked about paying off the city's GEFA loans in order to receive federal stimulus money, but he said based on what the bond markets are doing, it may be better to hold onto the money at the moment. "What I'm recommending tonight is to keep those loans, and when our 2002 bond issue comes up next year with an option where we can buy down some of those bonds, we'll take these loan balances, which are \$2.3 million paid at 3 percent interest and we'll buy down some bonds that we would be paying 4.6 percent interest on," said **Comiskey**.

Mayor Arnold added that this has been an ongoing area of study for the city. "We feel that the bond markets being where they are at this given point in time, that this offers the greatest opportunity we'll have to make a significant difference in finance costs to our citizens," said Arnold. "We do have step up provisions in the older bond issue that enables the interest rate to kick up from time to time, after so many years. That is what we're facing at this point, and this will head that off and we should be about to get substantially better rates." Mayor Pro Tem Doug Head made a motion to approve the change in policy. Council member Gary Atwater seconded the motion and it was approved, 4-0.

The council also approved an amendment to the zoning ordinance which will allow the use of and restrict Halfway Houses to M-1 Industrial Districts. The Thomaston Zoning Commission voted last month to recommend amendment of the zoning ordinance. Council member Gary

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Atwater made a motion to approve the amendment. Mayor Pro Tem Doug Head seconded the motion and it was approved, 4-0. Head motion, Atwater second, 4-0. City Clerk Dennis Truitt advised the Council that in accordance with the city's electric ordinance, the winter residential electric rates have been installed in the utility billing system, effective October 1. The winter rates will be effective October through May. Truitt added that also effective on October 1, the summer maximum sewer usage amount for residents has been removed. The summer maximum usage of 20, 000 gallons per month for billing sewer charges is effective April through September.

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times

April 26, 2011

City Manager Patrick Comiskey praised for service to city

Author: Larry Stanford

Nine years ago **Patrick Comiskey** moved to Thomaston and became its City Manager. At the Thomaston City Council meeting last week, Mayor Hays Arnold noted that anniversary. "I believe it was April nine years ago that **Pat Comiskey** came to Thomaston. The contribution that he has made to this community is incalculable," Mayor Arnold said. "I've had the privilege of working with him the entire time, as have several of you. He has been a Godsend for this community. "Again, some of you were here, and some of you were not here to understand and realize the situation that we faced 10 years ago. **Pat** has made it possible for us to not only survive, in my opinion, these times, but we have looked at a betterment of our bond rating, we have looked at a betterment in our financial condition in so much as it pertains to our reserve situation, we have witnessed and seen a betterment overall in the city's financial situation. "There are some things that neither **Pat**, nor any individual member of this council, nor I can have responsibility over or for -the loss of several thousand jobs in this community being one of those items. But to be able to take a situation that was as dire as it was and turn it into what it was turned into, in the face of all odds being against you, then I want to thank **Pat** right now." The Council and audience gave **Comiskey** a standing ovation.

In other business, the Council approved a tree removal bid for 42 trees in the Silvertown area. **Comiskey** advised the Council that Southtel was the low bidder with a lump sum proposal of \$20, 200, and recommended the city enter an agreement with Southtel. Council member Patsy Perdue stated she noticed some trees have had their tops removed, but were left standing. She asked if that was standing procedure. **Comiskey** replied that they will probably come back and finish taking the trees down, but he added that the city has a company that trims trees around electric lines that are also out cutting right now.

Council member Gary Atwater made a motion to accept South-Tel's bid. Council member Wallace Rhodes seconded the motion, and it was approved, 5-0. The Council also approved timber bids for parcels at Hannah's Mill Reservoir and Southview Cemetery. "We had Mr. Fred Whitaker help us to come up with some estimated tonnage figures and solicit some proposals," said **Comiskey**. "We have a total of seven proposals, and the high proposal was Resource Improvements Company for \$57, 616. That is an approximate figure, depending on the tonnage that is actually garnered once all the trees are removed. Mr. Whitaker has identified the trees that are being removed." (Editor's note: Unlike the first bid, in which the city is paying to have trees removed, the second bid is for companies wanting to come in and pay the city to harvest trees. The highest bidder will pay the city to remove the trees.) Council member Ed Bell made a motion for the City Manager to enter into a contract with Resource Improvements Company for the sale of timber at the estimated tonnage amount. Council member Atwater seconded the motion.

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Council member Rhodes questioned whether the Hannah's Mill Reservoir property includes the tract of land the city purchased from the Hightower estate. **Comiskey** said there are some trees on that property, and that the trees have been marked for selective harvest. Rhodes also asked if the harvesting at Southview Cemetery will be a clear cutting in some areas, or just removal of certain trees. **Comiskey** said it will just be the removal of the mature timber in the area, but will not be clear cut like the city did several years ago. He said it will more of a thinning process. Rhodes asked if part of the area behind the Veterans Club is included. **Comiskey** said the creek behind the club is the property line, and selected trees on the city's property up to the creek will be removed. With no further questions, the vote was called and was 5-0 in favor.

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Patrick C. Comiskey
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
March 18, 2011

City Manager states why Thomaston chose not to participate

Editor's note: We asked Thomaston City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** to explain the city's reason for not wanting to participate in the Community of Opportunity program. He gave us the following press release on Tuesday. The City of Thomaston decided not to participate in the Community of Opportunity program for several reasons. Some of these reasons are presented in this article. These reasons have all been presented to the county government privately. We respond now, only because the county commission has made this a public issue and tried to give the public the false impression that the city is not cooperating in their effort to obtain grant money. First, citizens have been led to believe that this is a requirement to obtain a CDBG grant. It is not. It is merely an item added to give points toward an application. Citizens have also been led to believe that a community cannot obtain a CDBG grant in two consecutive years unless the community is a Community of Opportunity participant.

Thomaston is disproof of that statement. Thomaston received a \$500, 000 CDBG grant in 2009 and was awarded another \$500, 000 grant in 2010. Both grants are water or sewer infrastructure replacement or improvement projects. In fact, the City of Thomaston has been awarded more than \$4.3 million in grants in the past two years alone. Second, the county's objective for participating was to obtain a grant for Lincoln Park. We asked the county manager and chairman last September if they submitted a grant application in 2010 for Lincoln Park. The answer was no. Our recommendation was to submit an application and focus their time on the CDBG application and not on the Community of Opportunity Program.

Third, the city council prepared and approved a resolution supporting the county's effort to participate in the program as they requested. The council noted its own position of choosing not to participate itself in the program. The city does not have a need to participate in the program and is not interested in committing itself to a two year contract with a state agency. Fourth, this is not the first program created by a state government agency that the state agency has promoted and recruited participation. We need to first examine what programs we have already participated in before getting involved in a new program. A good example of a recent program was the entrepreneur friendly community program.

We asked the chairman and manager to ask for input from the organizers and committee participants of that program for feedback. All such Atlanta-based programs have a list of requirements to complete, monthly reports to submit, and numerous committee meetings tying up local people and key staff. And finally, we recently expended tens of thousands of dollars on a comprehensive plan document, required by the state government; that involved numerous meetings and numerous hours of key staff over a two year period, with the result being a large binder full of plans, objectives and other support documents. We recommended to the county that we just follow the plan that we have and update it as needed.

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times

December 18, 2009

Council discusses budget revision at meeting

Author: Ashley Biles

The Mayor and City Council held their last meeting of the year this past Tuesday night. Among the items discussed was the approval of budget revision number four. The 2010 city budget will not include a tax increase, but City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** is suggesting an increase in water, sewage and electric rates. The proposed increases will be .30 cents per 1,000 gallons in water and .16 cents per 1,000 in sewage, which will bring in just over \$200,000 in revenue for the city.

Comiskey said that in the first quarter of 2009 industrial water use was down 55 percent from the previous year. He attributed the decrease to the closing of plants such as Yamaha and Royal Cord, and the fact industrial users are not using as much water as they once did. The increase in electric rate would be 2.5 percent for residential customers and 1.5 percent for commercial customers and will yield around \$160,000 in revenue for the city. **Comiskey** stated that MEAG, the main electrical supplier for the city, is raising its wholesale rates four percent over what it was this past year. However, even with the increase, the city's rates will still be among the lowest in Georgia.

In other business, the council voted to approve the renewal of the Cemetery Maintenance Agreement between the city of Thomaston and Ellington's Lawn Care. The agreement is for two years and will pay \$26.50 a month. The contract with Veolia Environmental Services will keep the price the same for the next three years. It also includes the addition of a recycling station next to the Gilmore Center for recycling of items such as newspapers and glass, at no extra cost. Council also approved the payment of the GEFA loan of \$1,020,000 and loan closing cost of \$68,000. The money from this loan has gone to pay for the city's sewer line project. Paying off the loan early has allowed the city to keep from raising water rates as high as GEFA would have imposed if it had not been paid off by the end of the year. **Comiskey** said that the loan should be paid off by the end of the week.

A uniform service agreement with Cintas, was also approved Tuesday night. The company had the lowest proposal cost of \$178.25 for a weekly rate. The city will be saving around \$4,000 with the new agreement, moving from \$14,400 to just under \$10,000 in total yearly cost for the services. The agreement also offered higher grade uniforms for the electric department. City Council member Wallace Rhodes commended **Comiskey** on his hard work on this contract as well as others. "He has done a great job on everything," said Rhodes. The city will have four budget hearings over the next two weeks. The first two will be on Monday, Dec. 21 at 12 p.m. and 6 p.m. The next two will be on Dec. 30 at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. All hearings will be held in the City-County meeting room at the Government Complex.

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times

September 8, 2009

Thomaston prepared for economic crunch

Author: Ashley Biles

The current economic times are tough on everyone and the city of Thomaston is no exception. However, the city has been proactively taking steps to reduce their amount of cost since 2002. "Since Thomaston Mills and Martha Mills closed, we have been taking steps to reduce the size of city government, by working with fewer people and equipment," said City Manager **Patrick Comiskey**. In 2002 the city payroll was \$4, 076, 209 and by 2008 had been reduced to \$3, 619, 652, which equals out to be an 11.2 percent reduction. Every department in the city has been made smaller at some point, according to **Comiskey**.

One change the city has made in the budget was to reduce the cost of health insurance for employees. In 2002, insurance cost the city \$476, 792.75 and by 2008 it cost \$456, 919.63. However, the amount of coverage for city employees has increased since they are now working with a smaller staff. In order to help reduce its cost further, the city has lowered the amount of city vehicles used. "We were using over 100 vehicles and had cut it back to as low as 83. I think we have added a few since then, but we should still be under 90," said **Comiskey**.

In 2003, the city was able to cut back on the amount of mega watts it owned in the MEAG Power plant. Originally, Thomaston would have owned 7.4 mega watts, but that was cut in half to 3.4 mega watts, which saves roughly \$400, 00 a year in fixed cost. "With industries falling off times are tough and unfortunately we have had to constantly make cuts and figure out how to do things more efficiently and effectively. We have had to make the government smaller because the community has become smaller due to the loss of the mills," stated **Comiskey**.

Since the city has been reducing costs gradually, it has been able to create a couple of reserve accounts which can be drawn upon if the city is in dire need, such as if a tornado hits. "We try to make long range plans when making decisions," said **Comiskey**. "Right after the mills closed we started trying to figure out how to make changes. Everyone has been asked to take on more responsibility and everyone has stepped up and gotten the job done."

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Patrick C. Comiskey
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Macon Telegraph
September 7, 2008

For now, water grants for cities are gone

Author: S. Heather Duncan

In a year when Georgia has been weathering a historic drought and state legislators touted their new emphasis on water planning, a new program to expand local water supplies has evaporated in the state budget crunch. In March, the Legislature approved \$40 million for grants to local governments that wanted to build new reservoirs or expand existing ones, drill new wells, or create new connections between water systems. Gov. Sonny Perdue has announced that he is eliminating that funding as part of across-the-board cutbacks to offset a shortfall between the state budget and incoming revenue.

Virtually every state program is feeling the pressure, but few of them had received more political attention and fanfare this year than the need for water planning and increased water supply. The grant program was being administered by the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority. In Middle Georgia, the city of Thomaston had applied for a grant to replace an old pump station that would help fill the city's new reservoir. Thomaston was one of the few cities in Middle Georgia that banned all outdoor watering for a while last year because of concerns that its water supply was dipping too low.

Thomaston has purchased the reservoir formerly used by the now-closed Thomaston Mills. The city is deepening the reservoir and building a higher dam that will enable it to hold more water, City Manager **Pat Comiskey** said. This would increase by 50 percent the amount of water available to the city with its existing Hannah's Mill Reservoir, he said. The \$6.6 million project was funded mostly by the city, but Thomaston was seeking a grant of about \$1.5 million from the state. Without the grant, the city will likely rely on an existing, old pump station to fill the new lake from a nearby stream, **Comiskey** said. This will probably take longer but can suffice as long as the pump holds up, he said. "We in Thomaston planned for our own needs," he said. "When the grant funding came up, we saw it as a great opportunity. ... But we certainly understand the economic situation."

Thomaston was one of 13 local governments that had applied for loans, and about 20 other applications were expected by the state when the grant program was suspended a few weeks ago, said GEFA spokesman Shane Hix. Local governments are being encouraged to seek state loans instead through a several other environmental authority programs that remain intact. Legislation creating the new grant program was co-sponsored by House Speaker Glenn Richardson, R-Hiram. His spokesman, Marshall Guest, said it's reasonable to cut new spending during a shortfall. He said Richardson is waiting to see the big picture when he looks at the entire midyear budget before deciding what course to pursue. "We hope the money will eventually be forthcoming," said Amy Henderson, public information manager for the Georgia Municipal Association. "The water crisis isn't going to go away."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Perdue press secretary Bert Brantley said the governor hopes to revive the popular grant program when revenues increase again. "But as you're looking to fill a \$1.6 billion hole, all options have to be on the table," he said. "Since there are still significant funds out there for local governments to tap into, we can save that money for other needs."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times (GA)

August 8, 2008

City Council close to millage rollback

Author: Lee Coleman

The year was 2001. That was the last time the Thomaston Mayor and City Council raised the millage rate on citizens. Tuesday night, the "roll back" streak continued when the Mayor and City Council unanimously approved a letter to be sent to County Tax Commissioner Berry Cook committing the city to a rollback of last year's millage rate of 3.68. The approved roll back will create a new millage rate of 3.62 mils, a 1.7 percent drop from last year.

"Because of the timeline, Mr. Berry Cook wanted us to give him a letter committing to the rollback," explained City Manager **Pat Comiskey**. "What I'm asking council to do is approve the letter for the county tax commissioner to go ahead and put the city down for a rollback in 2008. "We can't officially approve the rollback until the next city council meeting." Councilman Wallace Rhodes was quick to make a motion to approve the letter, saying, "Mr. Mayor, the tax millage rollback is always good news so I'll be glad to make a motion to accept the rollback as proposed."

In further discussion, Councilman Ed Bell echoed the sentiments of Rhodes. " Mr. Mayor, I think its important to note that this is the fifth or sixth consecutive year we've had a rollback in our millage rate," he said. "That's attributed to the management of our city. I know the people appreciate that." Mayor Arnold, seizing the moment, thanked **Comiskey** for his efforts that in large part, amounted to the rollback. "I would like to thank Mr. **Comiskey**. The management style that we have appreciated with [**Patrick**] has been one of reviews of our budget on a regular basis," Arnold said. "He does not manage loosely and he does not manage occasionally. It is a constant management and I think this is one more testimony to the fact he does an outstanding job for the city and the citizens here. "We appreciate that **Pat**."

Although the economy locally has had a major impact on the collective community's pocketbook, Arnold said the rollback was a direct result of a cooperative effort. "I think its a testimony to great management," he noted. "I would applaud the city council for their cooperation and their support that they give management. "It has taken a team of pro's to do these things. This is the fifth or sixth year we've done this and I'm very, very pleased. "We owe every obligation to the citizens to examine both sides of the equation. That includes expenditures as well as trying to raise new revenues. "We have a strong belief we should approach the expenditure side of the equation and not rely totally on finding ways to increase additional revenue for the taxpayers."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times

August 3, 2005

City plans to lower taxes

Council seeks two percent decrease in property taxes

Author: Sarah Morgan

Thomaston residents can expect their property taxes to decrease, thanks to a proposal made at Tuesday night's meeting. City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** recommended a two percent decrease in the property tax millage rate to 3.83 mills. The millage rate last year was 3.92.

"I just want to thank our city manager for doing a diligent job, allowing us to make this proposal," said Thomaston Mayor Hays Arnold. "He does a great job going over the budget and seeking out expense items. "It's refreshing to know that he looks at both columns and finds ways to make it balance out," said Arnold.

Council Member Ed Bell said that he is pleased that the city has been able to lower the rates two years in a row. "This shows the diligent effort made by the city to address the needs of our community," said Bell. "Each year, we are improving and that is a good thing." A public hearing will be held August 25 at noon to discuss the lowering of the millage rate. One mill is one-tenth of one percent of assessed property value.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Patrick C. Comiskey
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
April 16, 2004

No Discrimination
With new job in sight, Lang to drop complaint
Author: Billy Vaughn

Thomaston Police Chief Frank Lang said this morning he is dropping a complaint he filed last October with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and admitted he now believes he was not discriminated against by the city manager as he alleged earlier. Lang, who has accepted a job as police chief in Moultrie, resigned at the end of the business day April 8, informing City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** his last day will be April 21. **Comiskey** said Thursday the city could begin advertising for a new police chief as soon as Monday.

The chief said he loves Thomaston and does not want to leave, but that friction between him and his superiors at City Hall made the decision inevitable. When asked about his EEOC complaint, the chief was reluctant to discuss details, but said, "I think I can say that it's over." "Actually (resigning) wasn't something that I wanted to do. I have come to a point of just loving Thomaston. It's one of the greatest small towns you could ever go to, visit or live in. In my mind, this is home. Certainly it is not something I was looking forward to doing, but in the end, I figured it would be best." "More than anything else, it was a career opportunity. I'm sure that the friction probably had something to do with it also. In life, everybody's not going to agree so therefore there will probably be friction wherever I go. The important thing is how we deal with it."

Asked directly if he was racially discriminated against by **Comiskey**, the chief admitted he "rushed to judgement" when filing the legal action. "There are often times that as managers, we're going to feel that a decision that could have an effect on a career, we might rush to judgement. Certainly at the time that I filed the complaint, it was my opinion that I was not being treated fairly. I now respect the city manager's decision to give me the letter of reprimand. It was his choice and I respect that."

Lang came to Thomaston to serve as assistant police chief in March 2000 and was promoted to chief 13 months later. **Comiskey** said the process for finding a replacement is moving forward. "We're in the process of preparing the advertisement and should have it ready within the next few days," the city manager said. **Comiskey** would not say how much the new police chief will be paid and said he and Mayor Hays Arnold are working to nail down a figure. "There will be a lot of factors that will have to be considered such as education and experience," **Comiskey** said. "We're hoping the job generates some interest and we'll say more about pay later when we decide that issue."

The city also has an opening for a police officer, utility lineman, firefighter and director of the city's Main Street director. About 15 people applied for the firefighter job before the application period closed last week. Applications for that job are being reviewed by Fire Chief Eddie Lifsey, who over the next several days will put applicants through what is being called the "Combat

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Challenge." "It involves climbing and endurance tests," **Comiskey** said. "There is a lot involved, but I do know they will have to load and unload a hose and drag weight from one point to another." Lifsey was reportedly taking a vacation day yesterday, but was said to have spent much of the day in the South Green Street area painting fire hydrants.

For police officer, applications are being accepted until April 22 and as of yesterday afternoon, 22 people have applied for the job. The job pays \$11.78 an hour for a certified police officer and \$10.20 for someone who has not yet been to the police academy. Only six people so far have applied for the lineman's job, which offers a starting pay of \$17 an hour, but city officials say they will be accepting applications until June 17 for that job. Those interested in the Main Street director's job have until May 6 to have their applications turned in to the City Manager's office.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times

February 9, 2004

City workers get pay raise; property owners won't see hike in taxes

Author: Billy Vaughn

Thomaston City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** last week unveiled a \$19.8 million budget for 2004 that not only calls for no tax increases, but includes new cars for the police department, a new building for the water and sewer department and a pay raise for city workers. **Comiskey** sat down with city council members in a 5:30 p.m. Feb. 5 work session to present his budget proposal - and won praise from Mayor Hays Arnold and council members for a job well done.

"The proposed budget for 2004 suggests no increase for property tax rates," **Comiskey** wrote in an executive summary. "The recommended budget allows for each city worker to receive a \$416 pay raise as calculated on a yearly basis. "The proposed budget does not identify an increase in garbage fees, electric rates or sewer rates. The only fee increase recommended is a modest 6-cent increase" per 1000 gallons of water.

According to the summary, the city experienced a drop in General Fund tax revenues again this year - a decrease of about \$250,000. "The City Council took aggressive steps in the second half of 2002 and in the year 2003 to reduce personnel costs," **Comiskey** wrote in his summary. "The council's aggressive action to cut costs reduced the personnel costs by more than \$500,000. The cost disparity would have risen to \$1 million had no action been taken."

Actual budget numbers have yet to be released as council members say the document is still in draft form. Council members say they will review the city manager's proposal, possibly suggest and approve amendments, and hold public hearings before the final document is approved.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Patrick C. Comiskey
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
January 2, 2004

Officer says firing unfair

Author: Billy Vaughn

A white Thomaston police officer fired from his job last summer after flushing marijuana down a toilet at the police station claims in a U.S. District court lawsuit that African-American officers who committed "similar or more grievous conduct" remained on the job. Benjamin Thiel, who was employed at the local department from April 4, 2002 until July 16, 2003, is demanding his job back along with legal fees, back pay and punitive damages. Thiel filed a discrimination complaint with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission nine days after being fired. The EEOC issued a "Right to Sue" letter shortly thereafter and on Nov. 25, Thiel filed suit in U.S. District Court. The city has yet to respond formally to Thiel's lawsuit and a trial date has yet to be set.

Thiel's firing centers around events of May 11 in what started out as a "routine traffic stop." According to the lawsuit, Thiel was dispatched to a call "in reference to people possibly throwing objects from a van." Thiel spotted and stopped the van, which contained six white males. Thiel "called patrolman Charlie Canady to provide backup support for the stop and subsequently obtained permission to search the suspects' van from the driver of the vehicle. The search yielded a small quantity of a leafy green substance, suspected to be marijuana. "Unable to determine who was in actual possession of the suspected contraband," Thiel "exercised his discretion and released the subjects with a verbal warning." Thiel "retained the suspected contraband and returned to the police station to seek guidance on the matter from his supervisor, Sgt. Paul Walker. According to the suit, Sgt. Walker instructed Thiel "to make his own decision regarding the handling of the evidence."

Thiel said he was told by Sgt. Walker that "small amounts of contraband seized in cases where no charges are brought should be destroyed" and claims he was "unaware of any published departmental policy regarding the handling of such evidence." With Officer Canady serving as a witness and with Walker just outside of the bathroom door, Thiel flushed the suspected marijuana. The matter was brought to the attention of Thomaston Police Chief Frank Lang who prompted the department's Office of Professional Standards (Internal Affairs) to begin an investigation into the incident. "The investigation resulted in the issuance of a termination notice ... citing departmental violations for neglect of duty, submission of reports, handling money and property, processing property and evidence and willful violation of departmental procedures and directives regarding the incident of May 11."

Thiel appealed the decision to City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** who, on July 3, upheld Lang's decision. In his lawsuit, Thiel claims that "prior to the appeal hearing ... Lang hired an African-American female" and assigned her Thiel's badge number. Furthermore, Thiel claims Chief Lang contacted the Georgia Peace Officers Standards and Training Council "seeking to have (Thiel's) ... peace officer certification revoked," which he claims was unfair retaliation.

In his lawsuit, Thiel claims the following:

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

-Thiel, "through the course of multiple investigations into his alleged transgressions, was able to discover evidence where similar or more grievous conduct committed by African-American employees ... were not subjected to the same treatment."

-Sgt. Walker was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant on the day Thiel was fired "in spite of the fact that Walker signed the incident report ... documenting the events of May 11 regarding the alleged policy violations with the evidence seized from the van."

-"Another employee ... Chester Sledge, an African-American male corporal ... received oral and written discipline for actions similar to the actions" resulting in Thiel's termination, "but the discipline administered to Sledge was different."

-"Another employee, Ricky Acey, an African-American male and lieutenant with the Thomaston Police Department received oral and written discipline for his actions comparable to plaintiff's actions, but Acey's treatment by defendants was different."

The lawsuit also points out Acey was fired Aug. 11, 2000 for "falsification of time records," but hired back in June 2001 and promoted to a higher rank. "Defendants have treated other African-American police officers more favorably in terms of discipline and other terms and conditions of employment."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Patrick C. Comiskey
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
December 29, 2003

City responds to Lang's EEOC filing
Says 'no' to chief's claim of racial discrimination
Author: Billy Vaughn

The city's official response to Thomaston Police Chief Frank Lang's discrimination complaint with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission not only denies discrimination existed, but paints a picture of a poorly-managed police department riddled with problems. Lang filed an EEOC complaint Oct. 17 alleging City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** had been racially harassing him and micromanaging the police department. The city denied Lang's accusations in a Nov. 10 one-inch-thick response, but the EEOC has yet to make a ruling as to whether a "Right to Sue" letter will be issued.

"Since the hiring of **Patrick Comiskey**, city manager, in 2002, I have been subjected to racial harassment by him," read Lang's complaint. "I have also be subjected to disparate terms and conditions of employment which include being micro-managed by **Mr. Comiskey**. "In August, 2003, I complained to him if felt I was being discriminated against due to my race. On Oct. 8, 2003, I was given a written reprimand."

The city's response, prepared by the law firm of Adams, Barfield, Evans & Miller, strongly denies Lang's claims. (Editor's note: In such legal filings as EEOC complaints and responses, only one side of the issue is represented. The Thomaston Times has contacted Chief Frank Lang regarding his view of the city's response filing. He has declined an interview.) Following is a summary of the issues addressed by the city in response to the police chief's complaint.

Racial Discrimination Issue

Chief Lang asserts in his complaint he was "micro-managed" by the city manager because of his race. The chief maintained he was unfairly disciplined and that he was subjected to "disparate terms and conditions of employment." The city denies the accusation. "The city has eight departments. The department heads of four of the departments are black and four are white. Attached to this response are letters from all three of the other black department heads and the black assistant superintendent of the Electric Department that the city manager does not over manage or micro-manage them. "Common sense would dictate that if the city manager's management actions relative to the police department were motivated by race, the other three black department heads would have been likewise treated and they were not. In fact, none of them have even received a single reprimand."

The Money Issue

"According to city leaders, problems between city administrators and the police chief began to surface when the city's financial condition became tight. "The mayor and council and the city manager had no choice but to work hard to reduce expenses, with a major focus on reducing payroll," according to the response. "A comparison in the number of personnel in the police

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

department with the number in departments in 30 other cities revealed that Thomaston's department was far overstaffed. The efforts to rectify this has caused some friction."

"Lang asked during the summer about adding more staff and indicated that two additional police officer positions had been budgeted, according to the response. The city manager "told him that a cursory review of the personnel line items for the police department indicated that the department was going to be over budget at year end if we added staff. "We ended the fiscal year with less than 46 people on the department staff and overspent on the salaries/wages and overtime line items by about \$12,382. The police department as a whole was over budget by approximately \$50,206."

The city's response asserts that staffing in other departments had to be cut during the same time period. The response points out the Northside Fire Station had to be closed and the number of firefighters per shift had to be reduced from eight to six. **Comiskey** further said the staffing level of City Hall was reduced by two employees.

The Morale Issue

City leaders, in their response, said they had been receiving complaints that morale among the officers became low and, under the direction of **Comiskey**, corrective measures were taken. "The manager requested that the chief meet with patrol leader on ways to improve communications and morale," according to the response. "The manager stressed the importance of having the shift leaders eliminate negative talk and how critical it is for shift leaders to redirect or channel negative discussions encountered into positive ones.

"The manager also directed the chief to set up a one-day retreat with officers with approximately a year of service. The retreat would include a team building exercise at Camp Thunder on the COPE course. The idea was to provide a listening and team spirit building session for the officers most at risk of leaving in the near future. But, according to the city, concerns about morale continued. "Police Department employees state that the morale problems within the department are due to poor management and partiality shown to a small group of officers," according to the response. "The concerns are that promotions, pay and disciplinary actions are based upon your standing with Chief Lang, and not upon merit."

Problems With Discipline

Comiskey reported he was concerned about high turnover in the department and complaints came from within asserting some officers were violating policies, but were not being disciplined. One officer was identified as being held to a different standard than others on the force. In regard to the officer, the response says "... no disciplinary action is taken against her unless there is outside pressure to do so." Another discipline issue cited by the city involved patrol officers getting reprimanded for not carrying out bank deposit escorts during their scheduled time off.

The Blue Car

"During a council meeting, discussions were had between council members and Chief Lang about the new cars the chief wanted to purchase. (Councilmember Ed) Bell specifically asked the chief whether any of the new cars were for him and he publicly replied no. "He, in fact, had a relatively new car at the time anyway. In fact, the chief ordered one of the cars in a light blue

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

with the plan that it be his. When the blue car arrived, the chief had the Ford dealer arrange to have the factory AM/FM tape player removed and an AM/FM/CD player installed, and had the Ford dealer put it on the original invoice at \$315 for the blue car for the city to pay without consent of anyone. "The blue car never had any of the patrol equipment installed nor signs painted on it, and within a short time, it became the chief's car though he had told council publicly that the car was not for him, and upon inquiry, Chief Lang told the city manager and the mayor that the CD player had been given to him by the Ford dealer, which in fact, was inaccurate."

Other Problems

There were complaints that officers were being asked to make non-emergency calls while off duty and allegations that officers "were playing softball rather than covering their zones." There were letters complaining that police failed to show for Neighborhood Crime Watch meetings in the community and officers were reprimanded for using their vehicles while off duty. "Affidavits of current and former officers," according to the response, "both black and white, including some of those who have resigned to accept other jobs, which demonstrate, among other things, that departures are the result of poor management of the police department." In the spring of 2002, city leaders say they became concerned about Lang's relationship with his patrol officers and the public.

The Public Image

"The city manager gave Chief Lang several directives in the spring of 2002. The first was to spend an afternoon each week on patrol with a different officer. The second was to spend an afternoon visiting with different business owners. The third was to establish an open office hour period, published in the paper, where any member of the public, city staff or police officer could stop in and see him without the need for an appointment. "These directives were tools to increase the chief's contact with patrol officers, business owners and the public. The chief was under regular criticism for maintaining his office time behind a locked door and not being accessible to the public or police officers. These measures were directed in order to increase the chief's visibility and popularity."

Lang wrote letters to the city manager "stating that his door is always open for his employees and the public," but that employees must respect a chain of command within the department. In another letter, Lang assured the city manager he "had ridden with most of the officers and had listened to their concerns, which he stated had to do with higher wages. "However, all of the officers interviewed stated that the hostile work environment and lack of leadership were their biggest concerns. Not one of the officers who gave affidavits even mentioned wages." Lang reported to **Comiskey** "he has implemented activities and programs to facilitate a closer working relationship among the officers and administration, and that he has made it possible for qualified personnel to compete for vacant positions. "A Sunshine Committee was formed to respond to medical developments and deaths involving employees and their families and that he has equipped the department with modern service weapons and communication devices to boost morale."

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Patrick C. Comiskey
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
December 8, 2003

City Budget Manager's goals:

Pay raises for employees, no insurance hike, no job layoffs

Author: Billy Vaughn

Thomaston City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** said though the city's fiscal year ends Dec. 31, it could be as late as February before a new municipal budget is approved. **Comiskey** also said while the city is strapped financially, his goal is to make sure the city's 115 or so employees get a pay raise next year. "I have three goals when it comes to the budget," the city manager said. "Those goals are to not lay anyone off, to keep insurance premiums stable while providing the same level of service and to help our employees get a little pay raise every year."

Comiskey said last week he has received budget proposals from "three or four" department heads, but said there is much work to be done before a draft of the budget is ready for review by Thomaston City Council members. He said once his budget draft is submitted to council, a series of work sessions will be held to hammer out the final numbers. "Once that process is complete, we'll have a better handle on where we stand," **Comiskey** said. "At this point, it's too early to really say what the new budget will look like."

Comiskey had hoped to be further along in the budget process and had originally planned to submit his proposal to City Council before the new fiscal year begins Jan. 1. "We've been dealing with some litigation for the last few weeks and that has put us behind insofar as the budget is concerned," said **Comiskey**. "We should be able to have the budget approved in about the same time frame as last year." Last year, the city's \$20 million budget was approved in February.

The litigation to which **Comiskey** refers is an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission complaint filed last month by Thomaston Police Chief Frank Lang. Lang, in the complaint, asserted he was racially discriminated by **Comiskey** when the city manager unfairly micromanaged affairs of the police department. City officials in the last two weeks have been busy formulating a response to the police chief's complaint, which was submitted last week to the EEOC. City officials deny Lang's charges. The city manager said in the current fiscal year, taxes are expected to generate \$3,020,000, electricity sales are expected to bring in another \$9,465,000. Roughly \$3,220,000 is expected to come from water and sewer revenues.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Patrick C. Comiskey
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
September 3, 2003

City tightens fiscal belt
Manager proposes spending cuts

Author: Billy Vaughn

Sweeping cuts in the city's budget were approved by Thomaston City Council members Tuesday night, saving the taxpayers close to \$200,000. Council members, working to avoid a tax increase, slashed dozens of departmental expenses while, at the same time, making some additions for needed projects. Though the city's property tax rate will not be officially set until next week, council has published its projected tax levy - which shows no increase over 2002. Last night, council members, in a single unanimous vote preceded by no debate, cut \$197,741 from the budget.

"Revenue franchise fees are down and sales tax (collections) are down, but we can make this work," said City Manager **Patrick Comiskey**, who recommended the cuts. "These line-item adjustments should put us in the black at the end of the year. That's what's important." Increases reflected in the budget changes total \$101,431 while cuts come to \$299,172. City leaders say in the last year, savings have become top priority out of necessity. For example, there's the fire truck issue.

"The Fire Department is in need of a new ladder truck and they have been given the go-ahead to look for a good pre-owned ladder truck," the city manager said. "There was a \$190,000 allotment for that." The purchase of the ladder truck will save the city property owners money in fire insurance costs. City leaders said buying a new ladder truck from the showroom floor would cost between \$400,000 and \$500,000, and praised **Comiskey** for his belt-tightening work. Said Mayor Pro Tem Hays Arnold, "**Mr. Comiskey** has done an absolutely phenomenal job in taking steps in what can at best be described as a poor economy to reduce the size of the bureaucracy."

Cuts approved by council were non-discriminating and affected every city department. Included in the three-page list of savings were \$18,308 to reduce health insurance benefits for council members and \$1,200 to raise council salaries each by \$1,200 per year. This change, as reported in The Thomaston Times, puts local officials more in line with state averages. Though personnel costs for other city employees were cut by \$5,000 in salary expenses and \$4,000 in health insurance benefits, **Comiskey** said this was reflected in a reduction of the number of city employees he called for earlier in the year. The number of employees in his own office was cut by two.

The city manager said making tough decisions was not easy, took a lot of work and was time consuming. He said he believes the changes were needed and worth it. **Comiskey** said he has discussed the cuts with department heads and said though all aren't pleased, "They understand the city's financial situation." The budget cuts are just the latest effort from city leaders to hold expenses down as council members prepare to meet Sept. 11 to set the city's millage rate.

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Additions to the city budget include an allotment of \$16,000 for cemetery improvement and \$10,000 for elections. Projected revenues for the city's utilities amount to just more than \$13.5 million and account for more than half of the city's \$20 million budget, according to figures supplied by **Comiskey**.

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Patrick C. Comiskey
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Thomaston Times
February 5, 2003

No tax increase built into city's budget

Author: Amanda Nicewander

Thomaston City Council, for the first time in years, won't be borrowing money to operate the city in 2003 - a significant accomplishment for a government that suffered the theft of some \$2 million in recent years. Council unanimously adopted a budget Tuesday which reduces spending, raises fees for water and sewage rates and protects the earnings of the electrical department so future needs can be met. City Manager **Patrick Comiskey** drew praise from council for his work on the budget - the first he has prepared for the city since being hired last April. It also was the most detailed budget council has been presented by a manager in recent history.

In addition to reducing spending in some key areas, the budget sets aside reserve funds to offset possible reductions in city revenue. "We hope to never spend as much as we budget," **Comiskey** said. "But we have to have enough to handle any unforeseen circumstances like a drop in sales tax. The good news for taxpayers is that we should be able to stick firm to our expectation of not raising property taxes in the fall."

Comiskey also said the savings will offset the city's need to transfer money from the electric fund into the general fund to cover costs, transfers which have added up to hundreds of thousands of dollars in previous years. "That's the biggest advantage to this year's budget," **Comiskey** said.

Protecting the earnings of the electric sales is important to the city. In the coming years Thomaston's share of construction of a new Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia (MEAG) plant will rise to \$750,000. Setting profits aside now will help the city meet that responsibility without overburdening electric customers. As for borrowing money through tax anticipation notes, **Comiskey** said, "We want to get out of that cycle," **Comiskey** said, "so we don't have to pay fees and interest on those loans.

Highlights of the budget include:

Ä Council approved an ordinance raising water and sewer rates by 31 cents per thousand gallons, an increase which amounts to less than \$2 per month for the average household. City manager **Comiskey** said the increases were necessary in order to recover a deficit accrued by the water department each month. Last year the city transferred over \$100,000 from the electric fund to cover the debt. "We weren't recovering the costs for billing, collection and other necessary services," **Comiskey** said. "and those costs would have put us even further in debt this year. With the rate increase, the water fund can stand on its own and we won't have to subsidize it with electric funds."

Mayor Sam Brewton agreed, saying, "All utilities should pay their own way. The water and sewer department shouldn't be subsidized by electric users or property tax." The rate increase will take effect next month. Budget highlights include:

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Patrick C. Comiskey

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

-More than \$100,000 was cut from the annual legal fee budget - a figure that rises to more than \$200,000 when actual spending is considered.

-\$12,000 was added to the general fund for sidewalk improvements in the city.

-\$7,000 was approved to repair or replace facings on traffic signs throughout the community.

-The city will have to pay \$15,000 more per year for liability insurance as premiums were increased this year.

-Money was set aside that will enable the city to match any grant funding that may become available for city projects.

-\$1000 was budgeted for the recognition of city employees throughout the year.

-\$3000 was budgeted for conferences and training for the city's new administration department. Three existing city employees were transferred to set up the new department.

-Over \$7,000 in additional funds were allocated for unemployment claims against the city.

-More was budgeted to cover costs of city elections.

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Patrick C. Comiskey
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Brooke County Review
July 16, 1998

Wellsburg Hires New City Manager

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Wellsburg City Officials, in a meeting held July 2, announced that Patrick Comiskey had been hired as the new Wellsburg City Manager, replacing Greg Gimer who left in April to take the position of city manager in the Cleveland area.

Comiskey of Clarksburg, currently serves as director of personnel and finance for the City of Clarksburg and prior to that position, served as the city's human resource and purchasing manager.

With a master's degree in public administration from West Virginia University and a bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of Florida, his strong management skills and knowledge of West Virginia were a big plus in the decision making.

Comiskey will assume the position on August 10.

According to council, 29 applications were received with several local residents seeking the seat. From that number, five were selected to be interviewed with the field then narrowed to Comiskey and a local resident who were interviewed twice before the final decision was made.

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