

## Franklin Forum



## Our View

## Cast an informed ballot

It's time to vote.

Whether you mail your ballot in, go to Carnesville early or vote on Election Day, make sure to cast a ballot in several important local races by Tuesday.

But before you do, get informed.

This newspaper has published profiles of each local candidate. Some are in this week's paper. Others have been published previously. All are avail-

able for free at [www.franklincounty-citizen.com](http://www.franklincounty-citizen.com).

On Facebook, Lavonia Mayor Courtney Umbehant recorded question-and-answer sessions with each candidate as well. Look those up and watch them.

There's no excuse to not know this year's candidates.

Learn, then vote.

— *Shane Scoggins*

## Your View

## Please help pass HB 857

In 2017, Georgia Renewable Power (GRP), a biomass power company, met with local leaders in the counties of Madison and Franklin, and promised that the planned biomass plant would have no emissions other than steam, and that no treated wood would be burned.

However when the plants fired up in May 2019, citizens became concerned about their health and quality of life.

GRP broke their promise, and instead began to haul toxic creosote railroad ties in from all over the country, then chip and burn them to fuel the plants.

Our air has been filled with black smoke and toxic emissions, railroad tie chipping dust and debris washed into our water and settled on farmers' fields, the jet-engine like noise has kept us up at night, our health continues to suffer and property rights violated.

We formed citizens groups in protest, and over 2,700 people signed the "Stop Burning Railroad Ties" petition.

We have sent, and continue to send, a variety of complaints to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division for their investigation.

These complaints have resulted in numerous violations issued by the Georgia EPD, which GRP and their railroad tie supplier, National Salvage, have failed to resolve to this day.

Some of our leaders at the state level heard our pleas for help and HB 857, which would ban the burning of creosote-treated materials for power generation statewide, was put forth.

This bill went on to unanimously pass the House, and crossed over to the Senate.

Madison and Franklin county commissioners unanimously passed resolutions in support of the bill.

The American Lung Society,

Georgia Sierra Club, Georgia Conservancy and the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League voiced their support as well.

However, now that we are in the midst of a global pandemic, we are unsure of the future of HB 857, as our state senators face unprecedented challenges during this time.

To further plant our concerns, two former Franklin GRP employees have recently resigned over what they feel are health hazards and unethical plant operations.

They are speaking to media about these experiences, as well.

As we shelter in place due to this global crisis, we cannot help but continue to wonder how safe we really are, especially while sheltering next door to these environmentally-toxic practices which their own employees apparently cannot tolerate.

Our health, quality of life and life investments in our land and homes have been diminished.

GRP has made us prisoners in our own homes for the past year, long before the COVID-19 crisis.

Sadly, this could be just the beginning for the state of Georgia, and could happen to you, too, unless our state officials put a firm stop to these practices.

We cannot allow our great state to continue down this path of becoming one of the dumping grounds of our country.

The health and environment of Georgia citizens – ourselves, our children and our grandchildren – should not be put at risk for tax dollars and profit.

We genuinely hope that our fellow state residents and officials will give HB 857 the support and sense of urgency that it so deserves.

Please help us pass HB 857.

**Gina Ward,**  
co-chair,

**Ruth Ann Tesonovich,**  
secretary and treasurer, and  
**Leigh Ann Jones,**  
volunteer,  
Madison County Clean  
Power Coalition

## School board requires transparency

I regularly attend board meetings so I know Eric Burrell and Jo Beth James expect transparency.

Board members are never allowed to make the day-to-day decisions or deal with the day-to-day decisions of the work of the school system and have to trust that county administration is telling them true facts about contracts and spending.

In fact, board members who do interfere are breaking the law and can be removed from the board for an ethics violation.

Eric and Jo Beth believe all monies within a school system are taxpayer dollars and they must be accountable for every penny.

If you have watched the tough, unpopular decisions they have had to make, you would know it is because they will expect nothing less than full transparency.

The changes they have made in county administration have brought our community a full picture of the school budget and monies.

This type of transparency is vital to the health of the school system and is the only way a board can truly do the work for the citizens.

Working with false and partial information, a board cannot do the work they are elected to do.

They must trust the ones who do the daily work to communicate and be transparent with the facts in all situations so they can make informed decisions.

Eric Burrell and Jo Beth James believe Mr. Chris Forrer offers that transparency so they can do the work for the citizens.

If you believe this board is on a good path, then please vote for Eric and Jo Beth.

**Jeff Pierce,**  
Lavonia

## Hall will serve well as senator

We support Stacy Hall for State Senate.

As mayor of Clarkesville, I have worked with Stacy in his position as chairman of the Habersham County Commission.

My husband Bobby is an accountant and worked closely with Stacy in his previous role as chairman of the White County Chamber of Commerce.

Stacy's passion for his community is evident by the way he goes about making decisions, and by the way he treats everyone.

I believe him to be passionate, hard working, and very smart. He also shares our values.

Stacy has extensive experience as an educator, businessman, local elected official and as former chairman of our hospital board.

These experiences will serve Stacy well as our state senator.

In my position as mayor of Clarkesville, it is important for me to know that our state senator understands the issues we face in Northeast Georgia, and that he will work diligently to find effective solutions.

This is why experience matters, and why over 60 elected officials, business and community leaders have chosen to stand with Stacy.

Stacy is a good man, a devoted father and loving husband.

He is an honorable and effective leader. We are proud to stand with Stacy.

**Barrie Aycock,**  
Mayor of Clarkesville

## Letters of Thanks

## Seneca, S.C. grateful for 2nd Time Around's help

*Editor's note: This is an open letter to Chris and Sheila Brown, owners of 2nd Time Around Retail, which has locations in Royston, Martin and Toccoa.*

Dear Chris and Sheila,  
We would like to sincerely thank you for your hard earned effort and financial support you so graciously showed our community of Seneca, S.C.

Our community was struck and badly devastated by the tornado on the early morning of April 13, 2020. Your financial support, estimated at approximately \$6,000, was of great help to our project efforts.

Many homes as well as one of our well-established manufacturing facilities was destroyed by this tornado.

As you well know, many of our community families were completely wiped out and we sadly experienced the loss of one of our beloved citizens.

On behalf of our entire community, both the effort and hard work of many local volunteers, as well as you from other states and communities, it is with heartfelt thanks to everyone who chanced their health and well being to join in on the efforts that was necessary during this period with the corona virus dangers that exist.

Thank God we have not lost a single life as of this date in Oconee County to this terrible disease and we pray daily for our continued blessing and wellness.

Again our special thanks to you for what you have done to assist us.

**Mike and Carol Cooper,**  
Seneca, S.C.

Franklin County  
Citizen Leader

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We believe that strong newspapers build strong communities. Newspapers get things done.

## CONTINUING OBJECTIVES FOR FRANKLIN COUNTY

The *Franklin County Citizen Leader* will advocate for these issues in opinion columns and editorials and do stories on each issue.

Our priorities:  
1) A museum of Franklin County history;  
2) Passage of a special purpose lo-

Our primary goal is to publish distinguished and profitable community-oriented newspapers.

This mission will be accomplished through the teamwork of professionals dedicated to truth, integrity, loyalty, quality and hard work.

cal option sales tax to be used solely for the improvement of roads in Franklin County (T-SPLOST);  
3) County-wide animal control enforcement;  
4) Improved intersections on state highways in Royston, Lavonia and Franklin Springs.