

Painting With Too Broad A Brush

by
Michael Murphy

It has never been difficult for me to call it as I see it. I can hardly recall a time such as this past week, where a spotlight needs to be shined on an issue near and dear to me.

We are well aware of what comes to mind when we hear the words 4H, we think of the impressive work that club does with our youth throughout America. However, my 4H's are a little different, but relevant, no less. Housing, Homelessness, Health awareness and Hunger make up my community North Star.

This past week has seen affordable housing take a broadside hit. It is quite apparent to me the reason Cobb County leaves itself so open for criticism is that the subject has not been dealt with in good faith.

I hastened to point out that I think the BOC is receiving unfair criticism on the HUD grant issue. Yes, I will be among the first to suggest that one does not need a degree in meteorology to predict what can follow after the first clap of thunder. It should have been anticipated that once there was the sound of thunder around the county's opportunity to get a HUD grant, the agenda item should have been better positioned, by standing alone, not on the consent agenda.

The firestorm being whipped up regarding the fear of HUD coming into our county and attempting to usurp the control of zoning and community development, to me, is a red herring. I can only surmise that little or no effort was made to peel back the onion and ask some pertinent questions.

- **Has the county accepted HUD grants in the past?**
- **Who is in charge of the process for the county?**
- **Was the CDBG Director or Director of Community Development contacted?**
- **Lastly, were the District Commissioners contacted?**

All or even one constructive outreach options from the aforementioned points could have served to avoid the necessity to pull the fire alarm even before there was smoke on the room.

I hastened to point out, similar to the decision, years back, to roll road repairs and transportation projects under SPLOST, the key reason for seeking HUD grants is to avoid paying for those items via taxes, in the first place. One can easily forget that there is no free lunch. I am reminded of that memorable Fram Oil filter mechanic's advertisement, "Pay me now or pay me later".

I foresee no situation where Cobb County would be at risk of HUD coming in and negating or usurping local control of the vital decisions surrounding zoning and community development matters. One does not need to dig too deep to see that they

have their hands with more pressing issues around our nation. Furthermore, Cobb County has professional staff in key positions that can be contacted and utilized, if necessary, to assuage one's fear of a Washington takeover.

Cobb County is quite fortunate to have amongst its federal delegation two esteemed representatives, Congressman David Scott, (D-GA13) and Congressman Barry Loudermilk, (R-GA11). They both sit on the Financial Services Committee. It is important to note HUD's total department budget comes before their committee. Needless to say, if a situation should arise, I am confident we would have their ear and support. It is impressive, too, to see how instrumental they were, with others, in helping to get the needed funds to make the Akers Mill Road exit ramp a reality.

Additionally, even as I think about the recent dust up over the Habitat proposed development in South Cobb, it further points out the need for broader community input early on and before plans are cemented in the developer's plans for final approval.

Surely, you can sense the underlining sentiment brewing from segments of the county, of the seemingly ever-present idiom, NIMBY (not in my backyard). A frustrating point for me is that the solutions to the legitimate concerns of homeowners and those seeking to improve their living conditions are really not that far from the surface. Yes, it is time for the formation of a Land Bank. Yes, it is time to review our zoning laws. We can certainly agree much has happened in Cobb County in the past 50 years. Two key points come to mind, growth and prosperity. Cobb is a safe, wholesome and ideal place to live, work and recreate. We have an enviable education system. It is a desired location for families and businesses. We did not get to become one of the leading counties in the state with residents holding college degrees by accident.

It is up to us to take advantage of the opportunities at hand to move forward and strengthen our strides toward a beloved county. It is my hope to soon see a change from NIMBY, to YIMBY (yes in my backyard) throughout Cobb. With leadership, with vision, it can happen effectively and in the near term.

Special Note:

We lost a media giant last week with the passing of Jovita Moore of WSB TV. She fought a gallant fight against a dreadful disease. Her smiles, perspectives, love for community, and professionalism will be missed. Our prayers and condolences go forth to her family.