



The Lifeline

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ONLINE



Official On-line Newsletter of Fulton County Commissioner Emma I. Darnell

Summer 2008

From the Commissioner's Desk

April 14, 1968: 40 Years Later

"Has Anybody Here Seen My Ole Friend Martin? Can You Tell Me Where He's Gone?" When Moms Mabley recorded the song in April 1968, the community was focused only on the **death** of Dr. King and the evil that killed him. It was a dark day when even Moms stopped joking and stopped to cry.

But today, 40 years later, when we hear the song, we hear something else and we feel something else that makes us want to **smile**.

When we see the 200 volunteers who show up at just one senior facility every day of every week, as if they were on the payroll. When we see young people with hammers and nails building steps on a porch—in the rain on Neal Street—the same street where Kathryn Johnston died. When we see participants in Fulton County's Adult Day Program singing songs and bringing cheer to the residents of hospitals and nursing homes. (See related story *Volunteers* below.)

When we see the *Love* in the midst of all the pain and suffering around us. We no longer hear "he is gone"—we hear "he is here."

Martin is here because **Love** is here—and Love never fails. Have you seen him?

Grady officers forecast deficit

BOC requests accreditation report

Grady financial officials have forecast a \$42.986 million dollar deficit in the Operating Budget by year-end. "Millions of dollars" in operating funds were not identified.

On May 21, by unanimous vote, the Board of Commissioners has requested a full report on the accreditation status of the Hospital. To read the current (Financial Status) report go to www.fultoncountyga.gov/emma, the District 5 Web site.

BOC reviews Beltline Status Report: Bond funds cut by 54 percent

At its May 21 meeting, the Board of Commissioners received information pertaining to the financial status of the Beltline TAD and five additional TADs within the City of Atlanta—and sponsored by Fulton County—all of which have yet to issue bonds. Patrick O'Connor, director of Finance indicated the impact of a recent court decision forbidding the school participation in these TADs is "significant."

A 54 percent reduction in tax increments—created by the decision—similarly "reduces the ability to finance long-term debt." To read the Beltline Status Report go to: www.fultontyga.gov/emma.

Fulton County "Goes Green"

The Fulton County Board of Commissioners approved legislation, sponsored by District Five Commissioner Emma I. Darnell to create a "Green Team" to advance environmental goals within Fulton County Government.

Prior to 2008, environmental programs within Fulton County government were concentrated in the public works and general services departments. However, Commissioner Darnell's resolution calls for a unified, coordinated approach involving both service delivery and support departments.

The team includes representatives of the finance, procurement, general services, health & wellness, human services, personnel, facility management, public works, and public affairs departments.

Commissioner Darnell said of her legislation, "With a coordinated effort, Fulton County can meet our responsibilities in this critical area in the most cost-effective manner."

District 5 celebrates volunteers at Senior Multipurpose Facility

More than 200 citizens were honored Wednesday, May 14, for their volunteer service at the Harriett G. Darnell Senior Multipurpose Facility in Northwest Atlanta. Collectively, the volunteers logged more than 38,000 hours of time to help the facility administer programs for seniors in Fulton County District Five. In actual dollars, the hours donated are estimated to be worth more than \$200,000.

This is the ninth year of the "Volunteer Luncheon" which recognizes persons who commit their time and talents to aid the staff at the facility. The Darnell facility, operated by the Fulton County Human Services Department, through its Office of Aging, is one of four (4) "multi-purpose senior facilities" operated by the County. The County also operates 19 neighborhood senior centers.

In a special tribute to volunteers throughout the County, Commissioner Darnell reminded the audience that the real message of Moms Mabley's 1968 tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.—"Has Anybody Here Seen My Old Friend Martin," was not that evil triumphed—but that "love never fails."

"It is love we see everywhere," she stated, "even in the political process where young people seem to reject the divisions of the past and now work together for peace and justice."

Sponsored by Fulton County in coordination with the Friends of Darnell, Inc., the Volunteer Luncheon was part of a week of activities celebrating Older Americans' Month.



ABOVE: Yvonne Zachary receives the top award for "Outstanding Volunteer Service" in 2007. Zachary is presented the honor by Anita Woods, program manager at the Harriett G. Darnell Senior Multipurpose Facility. Zachary logged 1,225 hours of service. Second place honors went to Dolores Reese with 1,216 hours and third place winner Evelyn Pulliam logged 1,166 hours.

BOC adopts "no millage rate increase" tax policy State legislators pass law requiring increase in taxes and cuts in services

On May 21, the BOC formerly adopted the 2008 "no-millage rate increase" policy for the General Fund, Special Services District Fund and the South Fulton Special Tax District Fund.

Patrick O'Connor, Director of Finance noted that based on current projections, for 85 percent of the County's residential property owners, assessments would either decline or remain the same.

"We are encouraged by this good news," Commissioner Darnell stated. "In a district with large numbers of working families and retired senior adults, tax relief is a high priority."

Not all news about taxes is good news. Despite a Resolution by the BOC opposing legislation that would require raising county taxes, members of the Fulton County delegation adopted House Bill 1190 which increases the current homestead exemption of \$15,000 to \$50,000 beginning 2009.

According to County Manager Zachary Williams, by increasing the homestead exemption from \$15,000 to \$50,000 over a five-year period, the County would lose \$10.3 million in the first year and \$51 million each year after the fifth year. HB 1190 could lead to a cut in county-wide services including Grady Hospital, libraries, and health and human services.

"State legislators and county commissioners represent the same people," Commissioner Darnell stated. "How do you provide real tax relief to Fulton County residents when State property tax relief forces local governments to cut services and raise taxes? We must find a better way to reduce taxes without closing libraries, senior centers, and Grady Hospital."

Payment Voucher Transparency

The Board of Commissioners has adopted a Resolution by District 5 Commissioner Darnell that directs the County Manager to submit monthly reports on all payments to third-party vendors and contractors paid through the "Payment-Voucher" process.

A Payment Voucher is a document that can be used by a department head to authorize payment for an item or service (for \$2,500 to \$50,000) without a purchase order.

The Resolution adopted by the BOC now requires the County Manager to submit "monthly reports on all payments to third-party vendors and contractors . . . of more than \$2,499.99 and less than \$50,000 . . ." The reports must include "at a minimum: The Department submitting the payment voucher; the payee or recipient of the County funds; a brief description of the goods or services involved; and the amount of the payment. "

Seniors spared for now; could lose AHA apartments in 2009

Hundreds of senior citizens who live in Atlanta Housing Authority-owned apartments are still taking a wait and see attitude about their future. At issue is whether or not the AHA will demolish their homes—including the Roosevelt House and Palmer House high-rise apartment buildings near the Georgia Tech Campus.

The Fulton County Board of Commissioners also passed a resolution asking that the AHA provide actual unit-for-unit placement of all seniors affected by the demolition plan—*before* any demolition was to begin.

“We cannot and will not exchange the comfort and security of older adults for subdivisions,” said Commissioner Darnell.

Many seniors say they don’t want to move because there is not enough replacement housing inside the city limits near their doctors, senior centers and their churches. They may be forced to move outside the city where there is limited, if any, public transportation available to them.

“Is the doctor in?”

Fulton scores low in Health Disparities Study

The Georgia Department of Community Health has recently issued its first “report card” on disparities in minority health outcomes. The report concludes that Fulton County is one of 16 counties in the state with the “greatest health needs.” Based on “years of potential life lost” under the age of 75, Fulton County earned an “F” failing grade when it comes to mortality disparity rates.

In addition to the mortality study, the report, titled “Health Disparities Report 2008: A County-Level Look at Health Outcomes for Minorities in Georgia,” reports other findings in other key categories including: Social and Economic indicators (social determinants); Illness Events; Birth Outcomes; Health Care Access; Mental Health Care Access; Dental Health Care Access; and Health Insurance Coverage.

“It is clear that although Fulton County has made a significant financial commitment to the elimination of health disparities, much work remains to be done,” stated Commissioner Darnell.

“I look forward to a review of the recommendations of the County Manager and County health officials in this important area.” For more information, and to read the full report, go to www.fultoncountyga.gov/emma

Airport Noise Complaints

The Board of Commissioners recently received a number of complaints regarding “airport noise” including blasting. Citizens who have any concerns on this matter should contact: Doug Barrett, Airport Manager, Fulton County Airport, (404) 699-4200. You can reach Mr. Barrett via e-mail at: doug.barrett@fultoncountyga.gov. You may also contact Commissioner Darnell’s office (see below).

Health Report Card	
Minority Health Outcome Category	County Grade
Social and Economic Indicators	C
Mortality (Deaths)	F
Illness Events (Hospital Admits & Emergency Visits)	D
Prenatal Care & Birth Outcomes	D
Primary Care Access	B
Physician Racial-Ethnic Diversity	F
Mental Health Care Access	C
Oral Health Care Access	Partial-County HPSA
% Speaking non-English Language at Home	13.3%
% Estimated to Have No Health Insurance	15.5%

Black-White racial inequalities in health outcomes cost Fulton County 28,022 excess years of potential life lost due to premature deaths.

New TV program gives voice to citizens

Since its inception in the fall of 2007, The MIGHTY FIVE, the monthly cable TV public affairs/education program, hosted by Fulton County District Five Commissioner Emma I. Darnell, has covered issues of great concern to residents including health, the environment, poverty and housing.

The new program, can be seen on FGTV, every third week of the month on the cable TV channel operated by Fulton County Government.

**THE
MIGHTY
FIVE**
WITH EMMA DARNELL

The format of the show includes a provocative “power panel” discussion with experts and leaders of the community. Darnell moderates the panel. The

program also includes in-depth news reports on each particular topic of the month.

“This is an opportunity for citizens to learn more about the key issues affecting them and their families,” said Darnell. “District Five residents want information—not explanation,” she said.

The program can be viewed on Comcast Cable Channel 21 (inside the City of Atlanta), and on Channel 23 (elsewhere in Fulton County). THE MIGHTY FIVE airs every third week of the month, Monday through Sunday at: 8 a.m.; 11 a.m., 2 p.m., 5 p.m., 8 p.m., 11 p.m. 2 a.m. and 5 a.m. It’s also available on the County’s Web site during the same viewing times.



ABOVE: Commissioner Emma Darnell is joined by panel guests: Barbara Lattimore, Director, Division of Mental Health, Development Disabilities and Addictive Diseases; Larry Ramsey, Interim County Attorney (front-right); and Zachary Williams, County Manager. The group discussed “Where your money goes: Winners and Losers” in a recent edition of THE MIGHTY FIVE program.

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