

and young people.  
Why can't the County Commis-

ing and use of taxpayers money  
this county.

Of course, the Legislature de-

## Letters to the editor... MONTICELLO NEWS

# Let's Get the Facts Straight 3-14-02

Editor:

Normally, I don't get involved in writing or responding to articles written in the newspaper, but since the Watchdog Committee has misled the readers twice, I think it is time to set the record straight.

First, a short time ago, the article implied that the Jasper County Water and Sewer Authority members were paid. That is completely false, no one receives any compensation for all their time. We have spent hours meeting with other water authorities studying what is best for Jasper County. Just a list of some of the things that we are doing:

Long range study of our county; one member going to school to get certified, attending meetings with the state and other necessary requirements related to water; spending hours with computer software, learning and billing for water system; visiting job sites every day; also until we have proper income, we read the meters and make necessary tests, and it goes on and on. Not only do we not receive compensation, but we also pay our gas expenses.

This past week the article about Jasper and Newton County paying for water line extension, again this statement is misleading. Yes, Newton County Commissioners are to pay a portion of the expense of expanding their line to the Jasper

County line. The Newton County Commissioners are to do this to fulfill a commitment they had made with the Jasper County Water and Sewer Authority.

We, the Water and Sewer Authority, are in the process of obtaining necessary financing to fund a larger project from the Jasper-Newton County Line to serve Jasper County citizens down County Line Road to areas around the lake and extend lines to Hwy. 212 along Jackson Lake Road, also to have water available to residences of Turtle Cove should they need it in the future.

What is disturbing to me is the Watchdog Committee never saw fit to contact any member of the Jasper County Water Authority to obtain correct information. Just for a matter of information to this group all water lines have to be approved by the lending institutions and state officials, and we have to prove these loans can be repaid by income generated from this service. So to relieve your minds this is not done with money of taxpayers through the Commissioners office. If the Watchdog Committee would like to know the truth, our meetings are open and have been posted in the County Courthouse, notifying the public of the time and place as required by the open meeting, or sunshine law. The public is always invited and if you want to be put

on the agenda all you have to do is make your wishes known to our secretary or myself.

Your judgment is disturbing to me, knowing the members of your water authority are spending hours and hours, giving of their time and money, in order to bring clean safe water to the county, not only for drinking but also for fire protection. These items may not be a priority to some but one day you will realize that water is a precious item.

I feel that the county is about 30 years behind with this service now.

Yes, we have received a small amount of financial assistance from the Board of Commissioners, in order to pay for organizational expense, assist in paying for our county's long range study so to provide the needs of our county for the future, also to purchase items such as software, insurance and auditing expense required by the state.

This help has been a very minimum, but I assure you it is money well spent. How can you appoint an authority such as ours to develop a county water system without financial assistance.

All I can say, Watchdog Committee, please check with the right people before writing articles that are completely false.

Merrill L. Clark  
Chairman, Jasper County  
Water & Sewer Authority

# Public Water

3/14/02

Editor:

In recent weeks, there has been some misinformation concerning the Jasper County Water and Sewer Authority (JCWSA) and our efforts to bring public water supply to the citizens of Jasper County. Hopefully, this letter will clear up some of these misunderstandings.

The JCWSA was formed by an act of the Georgia Legislature at the request of the Jasper County Commission. The authority is not part of the Jasper County government, but is an entity unto itself, operated by a board of nine good and true citizens, appointed by the Jasper County Commission, who give freely of their time and energy, for no pay, in order to bring a safe and dependable water supply to Jasper County residents.

The water lines are funded through loans entered into by the JCWSA, with the loans being repaid with funds derived from water sales revenue. Jasper County tax revenue is not being used for loan repayment.

In addition to a safe water supply, residents in the areas where water lines are run have the added benefit of fire protection supplied

by fire hydrants being placed not more than 1,000 feet apart along the pipeline. The presence of these hydrants should result in a 25 to 30 percent reduction in fire insurance rates, which in some cases could equal the amount of their monthly water bill. Residents of these areas who choose not to connect to public water also enjoy reduced insurance rates, courtesy of their neighbors.

At the present time, the JCWSA is purchasing water from Newton County, at a very favorable rate. The Yancey Road-Dallas Trail area is now being served, and plans are underway to begin serving the County Line Road/Templeton Heights/Jackson Lake Road areas. Water for these areas will come from a line now being installed down Hwy. 11 south from Mansfield.

This line belongs to the city of Mansfield, is being paid for partly by Newton County, partly by a landowner along the line, and mostly by Mansfield. Neither the Jasper County government, nor the JCWSA is paying anything for this line. Once we install lines in Jasper County the JCWSA will be respon-

sible for paying for any lines in Jasper County through water sales. The Jasper County government will not own the lines, and will not be responsible for repaying any loans.

Will your taxes go up when public water arrives in your area? Probably. Land values will increase, because most people see public water as a benefit, not a burden. Will your taxes go up if you don't have public water? Probably. They have gone up frequently in the past, and as more people come to Jasper, demanding more services, taxes will go up again.

Our Authority chairman, Merrill Clark, and our secretary, Mrs. Linda Jordan, have donated innumerable hours of their time to water authority business, and deserve far more than we can ever repay.

The JCWSA meets the first Tuesday of every month, barring conflicts, in the Bank of Monticello annex at 6 p.m. These meetings are open to the public. If you have questions, feel free to contact any authority member, or attend our meeting.

Roger Bell  
Vice Chairman, JCWSA

# 7/8/04 Response to Watchdogs

## Editors:

On June 26, the Taxpayer's Watchdog Group published an E-Blast with a section of "Breaking News" wherein they quoted me on a water line break and implied collusion between the Jasper County Water and Sewer Authority and the city of Monticello. I would like to respond to their inferences and allegations.

On Saturday, June 26, I responded to a water main break off County Line Road on an eight-inch line under construction. This was on my time, my vehicle, my equipment, and my gasoline. Breaks are not uncommon during new construction before the lines are released for service. Our contracted emergency repairman and I arrived about the same time and we stopped the flow.

After the excitement was over, a city of Monticello truck arrived and offered assistance. I advised him that it was controlled and thanked him for his offer. During the next week I began to receive

copies of e-mails and calls advising me that our Watchdogs were quoting me on the event.

I don't mind the innocuous quoting, but they stated opinions on the quantity of water lost which is irrelevant since the contractor pays, not the Water Authority or its customers.

The problem begins with their statement "Will the city workers be called to do the work?" and "Does the JCWSA reimburse the city for use of their workers?" These statements are innuendo, inflammatory, misleading, and untrue, and intended to 'plant the seeds' of allegations of improper conduct. Since the line is still under construction, the pipeline contractor will do the repair.

Obviously, the Dogs haven't heard of the "mutual aid" concept. When any emergency responder (law enforcement, fire, EMS, etc.) appears to need help, other responders will volunteer to assist (e.g., the Bio-Lab fire in Conyers). This happened here, and I thanked

the city employee for his offer. It's really stretching to imply anything from this goodwill event.

To the citizens of Jasper County I say that the Jasper County Water and Sewer Authority is working very hard to supply a good, reliable supply of water to the citizens. These nine individuals receive no compensation from any source for their work and most have served for five years. We don't answer to the commissioners and no authority member is served by or otherwise benefits from the system.

We will soon have over 30 miles of water line serving over 500 customers at no cost to the taxpayers. We have researched every alternative water source contrary to what has been implied recently. To the watchdogs, I'm doing my part to build this county; are you working on the solution, or are you part of the problem?

Tom Brazil  
Jasper County Water and  
Sewer Authority

July 15, 2004

## Response to Tom Brazil

Editor:

Let's get the facts straight. Tom Brazil states in his editorial that the JCWSA will be serving over 500 customers "at no cost to the taxpayers." He knows better.

According to the documentation (also known as the County Audit), the JCWSA has received the fol-

lowing amounts from the county budget (that is, the taxpayers):

2000	\$ 5,768
2001	\$15,000
2002	\$15,000
2003	\$15,000
2004	\$12,225 (budgeted)

The commissioners have also provided \$30,000 for fire hydrants for the JCWSA and "free" space for storage (\$1.00 per year) at the Jail area off Hwy. 212.

The county also built a new road across Georgia Power land and there are water lines running down it. How much did this cost? Pray tell, how is this interpreted as "no cost to the taxpayers?"

Since the JCWSA doesn't answer to the County Commissioners according to Mr. Brazil, and since they don't use any taxpayers money, surely the JCWSA will not submit a budget request to the commissioners for 2005.

Another statement by Mr. Brazil that is certainly questionable is, "We have researched every alternative water source contrary to what has been implied recently."

If this is true, then why didn't Mr. Brazil or any other member of the JCWSA come forward and present the documentation and information to the Bear Creek Reservoir committee and/or the County Commissioners?

If they had this information it would have certainly prevented a lot of controversy during the meetings.

I feel confident in saying there is no such documentation, at least not dated before December 1, 2003. A member of the Bear Creek Reservoir Committee called the JCWSA Secretary and specifically asked if Georgia Power had been contacted about drawing water out of Lake Jackson.

She told him no, and he relayed that to the committee. What about the research on dealing with Butts County, Snapping Shoals-South River, Ocmulgee River, and other alternatives?

If all this was done before the Bear Creek Reservoir contract was drawn up, why wasn't it presented when the public started asking questions?

I'm sure the public would be most interested in seeing all the research and documentation outlining what the JCWSA found

about each alternative, how much it would cost, and why only Bear Creek Reservoir would meet the needs of Jasper County.

It would be good if we could have another public hearing where the JCWSA could present this information to the public and to the County Commissioners.

It seems strange that Putnam and Baldwin Counties are now being allowed to draw water out of Lake Sinclair for their new water systems, but no one in Jasper (other than a few citizens) wants to pursue the lake withdrawal route here.

Mary Patrick

7-15-04

# True Facts about Water

Editor:

You, the people of Jasper County, for the last several months have heard all negative comments about Jasper County Water & Sewer Authority and especially the Bear Creek Reservoir. It is time the people of Jasper County hear the positive side, and know the true facts.

Let's start at the beginning. In January, 1999, there were four water departments or authorities in Jasper County and for whatever reason, none of them either would not, could not, or did not provide a source of clean, dependable water for all the citizens of our county. It seems all were content to supply only their immediate area.

In April, 1999, the Board of Commissioners acknowledged the need to provide water for all citizens. Through the Legislature of the state of Georgia, the Jasper County Water and Sewer Authority was created and a board of nine dedicated citizens was appointed to make preparation for the long-term water needs of the county. No member of this board receives any compensation for their time or effort.

The JCWSA requested help from the state of Georgia Rural Development Council to guide us in starting this authority. On several occasions, Joe Tichy, Jim Dove and Chris McGaughey came and advised and made recommendations to the authority. We also had Melvin Newman (former director of Clayton County Water Authority) to come and give us some insight on establishing a water authority.

In making our long-range plans, we requested a grant from the state of Georgia for a long-range study. After some time and effort we received such a grant and with some assistance from the county we were able to complete this study.

Upon the completion of the study, we found that the cost to provide for our long-range water needs (50 years and a need of six

million gallons per day), would be prohibitive by ourselves, at an estimated cost of \$18,000,000. Thus we began the search into other options.

We considered drilled wells, but unfortunately in our area they are not the long-range answer. Jackson Lake seemed to be the most viable source but Georgia Power owns the lake, and they declined to talk to us at that time. They have never said no, but they sure won't say yes either. Their response to numerous inquiries thus far has been "not at this time."

We visited and talked with Butts County Water Authority. They informed us that they were not interested in a partnership, but would be willing to sell us water. We found that their price would be 40 percent higher than Newton County, plus they could not supply us with what would be our projected long-range needs.

We also looked at South River (Snapping Shoals) with a group of private investors. This option was rejected for number of reasons, plus the expense of getting water into Jasper County was prohibitive.

We were in the process of purchasing water from Newton County at that time. We then started negotiations with Newton County on partnering with them on the Bear Creek Project, as this would be our most economical source of water. The state strongly encourages regional water projects.

After much negotiation and work, both Newton county and JCWSA agreed that we would be able to own outright one-fourth of the capacity of this project, and it would be a joint effort.

Newton County would sell us a one-fourth undivided interest based on the land cost plus interest on money already paid out by Newton County. Land prices were at a cost of several years ago, which is less than today's cost.

The JCWSA, being a new authority, could not meet the required finances needed to fund this project. The authority petitioned the Jasper County Commissioners to participate with us in this purchase. They agreed to join with us in working out the details of this agreement, in doing this the board of Commissioners and the citizens of Jasper County would own a one-

fourth undivided interest in this reservoir and the water in it.

By the time the treatment plant was to be built the authority would be able to fund it. In the interim, we would be able to purchase our water need at the cost of the operation and maintenance cost from the Cornish Creek Reservoir in Newton County. This is to be identical agreement that Newton County has with Walton County. Walton County officials tell us it works very well for all concerned.

It should be understood that without our own long-range supply of water, in the future we will be at the mercy of others and the bad part is it will not be available at a reasonable cost. This county has stood by in the past and let two golden opportunities to have our own water supply slip away, because we as a county failed to plan for our future needs.

The Board of Commissioners should be praised for their foresight of striving to provide a water supply for all the citizens for the next 50 years. It is time we stopped criticizing our commissioners and support them in doing the job we elected them to do.

If we want quality growth for this county, we must have county water in order to attract nice homes and businesses. It is not a matter of if we want growth, but do we want quality growth, growth is coming one way or another.

All of us know, but sometimes do not realize, that next to clean air, clean water is the most precious and required item our body needs to exist. Also, we need to realize that all the water that is— IS.

Merrill L. Clark, Sr.  
Jasper County  
Water and Sewer Authority

5/13/04

# Reservoir Letter Rebuttal

Editor:

I could hardly believe the glaring misrepresentations contained in the letter to the editor written by the chairman of the [Jasper County] Water [and Sewerage] Authority in last week's edition of *The Monticello News*.

Jasper County paid \$10,000 to a qualified water attorney to review the proposed agreement with Newton County, and he must not have even read the review letter. If you enjoy reading horror stories you should read this 25 page document. Stephen King could not have written a better one.

We dodged a bullet to the heart when we delayed the board of commissioners from signing the original contract. Remember the county attorney and the water authority recommended the commissioners sign the original agreement.

Mr. Bell states that we will be insured 6MGD from Newton County. On page 10 of the review it states, "The volume of water to which the Authority and Jasper County will be entitled to is unclear" and that we will be allocated a 25 percent share of "an unknown quantity of water."

It goes on to state on page 11, "That Jasper County and the Authority cannot assess whether they will benefit from participation in the proposed agreement until the actual quantity of water to which they will be entitled is definitely established."

On page 20 of the review it states

that in case of drought we would only receive a prorated share of the water.

We would share the available water with all of Newton County's other wholesale customers based on the water that was purchased the year before.

When you consider the fact that we have only had normal or above normal rainfall six months out of the last six years and that the flow data kept by the U.S. Geological Survey shows that the drought flow of Bear Creek and the Alcovy River to be a negative 5 MGD below the 7Q10 requirement, it is easy to see we will not have enough water to meet our needs much less generate a huge profit from the sale of water.

Remember, "A reservoir that does not meet your need all the time does not meet your need."

On page 23 of the review, it states that the proposed agreement is not even specific enough to determine its viability. Some members of your citizens advisory committee wanted to go over the review paragraph by paragraph but the last joint meeting with the Water Authority disintegrated into a shouting match, and we were not allowed to do this.

Your commissioners then dissolved the committee before we had a chance to finish our work.

The commissioners have instructed our county attorney to continue negotiations with Newton County Attorney Tommy Craig. Mr. Craig is one of the best

contractual attorneys in Georgia. To send our county attorney with little experience in complex water issues to negotiate a contract with Mr. Craig is like sending a naïve teenager with a pocket full of money to a pickpocket convention.

The most qualified person to negotiate this contract would be Kirby Atkinson who did the contract review. The commissioners will tell you we cannot afford to hire him. I say we cannot afford not to hire him. If we cannot afford to have a fair contract negotiated, how can we afford the reservoir?

The \$121 million profit Mr. Bell refers to is not profit at all but the amount we will pay Newton County for the purchase of water.

If the Jasper County Board of Commissioners became a middle man or brokering agent between Newton County and the Jasper County Water Authority, we could realize a few cents profit per 1,000 gallons of water that over decades of time could recoup our original investment, but it will never be a cash cow for Jasper County.

I have had several people ask me "whom should I believe, one group says one thing and another says something entirely different." My answer is to believe the person that offers facts and can tell you where they come from.

Do not believe someone who pulls number and opinions out of the air and cannot back them up with the facts.

Ken McMichael