



Suwanee connects

suwanee.com | August 2018

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City Adopts FY2019 Budget



headlined by the *gin blossoms*

SATURDAY, AUGUST 11
TOWN CENTER PARK

- 5:30 PM SEVEN YEAR WITCH
- 6:30 PM TWO TAKES
- 7:30 PM WING EATING CONTEST
- 8:15 PM GIN BLOSSOMS

**All times are approximate*

Wings will be available from a variety of your favorite Suwanee restaurants.

Beer and wine will be available from onsite vendors and Town Center merchants. Alcohol must be purchased on site - bringing your own alcohol is prohibited.

Shuttles and off-site transportation are available. Visit Suwanee.com for more information.

ROCKIN' YOU FOR 15 YEARS

- 2004 • SHAWN MULLINS AND DRIVIN' N' CRYIN'
- 2005 • COWBOY MOUTH
- 2006 • KIMBERLEY LOCKE
- 2007 • SISTER HAZEL
- 2008 • EDWIN MCCAIN
- 2009 • TONIC
- 2010 • COWBOY MOUTH
- 2011 • BETTER THAN EZRA
- 2012 • VERTICAL HORIZON
- 2013 • EVE 6
- 2014 • EVERCLEAR
- 2015 • SOUL ASYLUM
- 2016 • TOAD THE WET SPROCKET
- 2017 • SPIN DOCTORS
- 2018 • GIN BLOSSOMS

UPCOMING SUWANEE EVENTS

AUG 3 Aloha! Food Truck Friday 5:30 PM

Hosted by the Suwanee Youth Leaders.
Tentative food truck line-up:

- Cattywampus
- Tex's Tacos
- Simply Done Donuts
- Gekko Sushi Hibachi
- Low-Co Motion
- Pickle Truck
- BrookeLynn's Own Sticks & Cones
- Hole in the Wall
- Brainfood
- Flatbread Bistro

AUG 4 Love Rolls 8:00 AM

This event supports Love Rolls, a nonprofit focused on collecting toilet paper for the homeless, founded by former Suwanee Youth Leader Kendall Robinson.

AUG 25 Hoofin' for Habitat 7:30 AM

Support Gwinnett Habitat for Humanity while getting your workout in at the Hoofin' For Habitat 5K, Fun Run and Walk. Run, walk or stroll at this family-friendly event suitable for all ability levels.

SEPT 7 Food Truck #FlashbackFriday 5:30 PM

Hosted by the Suwanee Youth Leaders.
Tentative food truck line-up:

- Philly Connection
- Yumbii
- Louisiana Purchase
- 6 Pack of Subs
- King Kabob
- Mac the Cheese
- BrookeLynn's Own Stick & Cones
- Sweet Jeanius Desserts
- Island Chef
- Dragon Cupbop

“LOOK MA, NO HANDS!”

Everything You Need to Know About Georgia's New Hands-Free Driving Law



On May 2, 2018, Georgia Governor Nathan Deal signed House Bill 673, or the Hands-Free Georgia Act, which went into effect on July 1.

DRIVERS CANNOT:

- Hold phones in their hands
- Read or text
- Record or broadcast video while behind the wheel

Basically, the new law means you cannot operate a motor vehicle while operating a cell phone, holding a cell phone with your hand, or supporting a cell phone with another part of your body. As long as drivers do not have a phone in their hand or supported by any part of their body, they can make and receive phone calls through the speakerphone feature, earpiece, and wireless headset or if their phone is connected to an electronic watch or their vehicle's stereo. Drivers can also use GPS and navigational devices via hands-free methods.

In an effort to provide clarification of the new law, we posed a few possible scenarios to Suwanee Police Chief Mike Jones and let him tell us how to proceed under the law.

› **I have an older car without Bluetooth technology. If my wife calls while I'm on my way home to ask me to pick-up milk, can I answer it?**

The law does allow for a 'single touch,' so if your phone is mounted to your dash, you can answer it on speaker phone and find out if she wants skim or 2%. You could also invest in an earpiece with a microphone, headphone, or smart watch, all of which are legal under the new law. Please note that earpieces/headphones can only be used for communication purposes, not to listen to music or other entertainment.

› **Sometimes when I'm streaming music, a bad song comes on. Like, really bad. "We Built This City" bad. Am I allowed to change it?**

The Hands-Free Georgia Act has opened up a Pandora's Box about the use of things such as Pandora. Drivers can listen to music through streaming apps on their phone, but they cannot activate apps or change music through their phone while driving. Music streaming apps programmed and controlled through the vehicle's radio system are allowed. While some might consider Jefferson Starship over the airwaves an emergency, please don't call 911 either.

› **My texting-only Millennial sister sent me a picture of a truly heinous wedding dress via text, along with the message, "I found the one, buying now!"**

It is imperative that I stop her from making this mistake, but I'm sitting in stop-and-go traffic on the interstate. Can I type out a quick reply?

Drivers cannot at any time use their phones to write, read, and send text messages, emails, update social media, or use the Internet. The use of voice-to-text technology is allowed. Otherwise, your sister is going to have to live with her own bad judgment.

› **If I'm driving down PIB and get a hankering for some waffle fries, can I place my order on the Chick-Fil-A mobile app so I can pick them up in the drive-thru?**

You can place your order while legally parked, but not while you're cruising down PIB. FYI, "legally parked" does not mean at a stoplight or in gridlocked traffic.

› **I'm headed to my ALTA tennis match and have no idea where I'm going. Do I need to print MapQuest directions, like in the olden days?**

Navigation/GPS may only be accessed by the driver while vehicle is lawfully parked. The screen may be viewed while the vehicle is in motion but may not be held or supported by any part of the driver's body. Basically, plug in your destination before you pull out of the driveway and don't touch it until you arrive.

› **What if I witness an accident and need to call 911?**

Exceptions to the law include reporting traffic accidents, medical emergencies, fires, crimes, or hazardous road conditions. First responders are also allowed to utilize their phones in the performance of their official duties.

› **What if I see an adorable dog hanging his head out the sunroof in front of me with his slobber going everywhere and I want to video it?**

The hands-free law prohibits drivers from watching as well as recording videos, though GPS navigational videos and continuously running dash cams are permitted.

The Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety stated that nearly all motor vehicle crashes are a result of distracted driving, simply because one of the drivers involved wasn't paying attention to the road. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, distracted driving caused 391,000 accidents with injuries in 2015 and 3,450 accidents with fatalities in 2016. Thirteen of the 15 states that already have similar laws have seen at least a 16 percent decrease in traffic deaths.

For more information regarding the Hands-Free Georgia Act, visit www.headsupgeorgia.com. Specific questions can be sent via email to info@gohs.ga.gov.



SUWANEE BEGINS NEW FISCAL YEAR WITH \$13.4 MILLION BUDGET

The City of Suwanee began the new fiscal year July 1 with a \$13.4 million balanced operating budget. This year's budget represents a 3.4 percent increase over the \$12.9 million adopted budget for the recently ended 2018 fiscal year.



CITY OF SUWANEE OPEN BUDGET

In an effort to provide complete and clear financial information, the City of Suwanee launched an open budget website in October 2017, ensuring that city financial data is easily accessible and understandable for citizens.

This program brings life to the city's static citizen operating budget: it makes the numbers interactive and shows the annual progress of collections and expenditures. This system provides transparency of how the budget is performing on an ongoing basis, rather than a snapshot of a moment in time.

"We're big believers in authenticity and transparency in government. Our citizens should be able to easily access and understand our spending. At its most simplified, this is the taxpayers' money, and it's their right to know that we are being fiscally responsible with their dollars," said Amie Sakmar, Suwanee's Director of Finance. "The open data website is incredibly intuitive and allows citizens to dig as far as their interests take them."

Rather than wading through hundreds of pages of scanned legal and financial documents, citizens and staff see financial data contextualized in charts, graphs, and images that are attractive, navigable, and easy to understand.

"The ability to obtain current information in different formats helps decision makers be successful in monitoring financial data, understanding trends, and identify budgetary problems before they occur," said Sakmar. "If our mayor likes looking at information as a bar graph, he can do it. The city clerk prefers a pie chart? She can do it. Planning director wants to know what has happened over the past five years? It can easily be done."

Visit www.budget.suwanee.com to explore Suwanee's open budget.

Suwanee's \$13,366,910 FY2019 budget includes:

104 full time and 17 part-time positions, including five new positions and two position upgrades



\$154,000

New environmental division within the Public Works department to focus on city properties, right-of-ways, medians, and environmental issues



Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan update

\$20,000



20/20 Strategic Plan update

\$20,000



Right-of-way permitting

\$17,000



\$308,000
capital equipment funding

The FY2019 budget is based upon the assumed millage rate of 4.93 mills, which is the same rate used by the city over the past five years. The actual millage rate will be set at the August 28 City Council meeting after public hearings at City Hall on August 16 at 5:30 pm and August 28 at 12:00 pm and 6:30 pm.

“WE DON’T DO BORING.”

Creative City Financial Documents Continue to Win Big

Boredom isn’t exactly in the City of Suwanee’s vocabulary, although wonky and whimsical certainly are! Suwanee wants fun, and the city’s director of finance, Amie Sakmar, is here to play. Her in-depth and creative budget documents toy around with being informative and lively. They shake up the drag of numbers and put spunk in the stats; one even mimicked a Monopoly game, another was a series of colorful comic strips!

“In the end, everything rolls or passes through finance. Suwanee has a great story to tell, and the finance department is in a unique position to tell this story,” said Sakmar. “I try to capture Suwanee’s vibe by making the documents fun, interesting, and factual, engaging the reader to follow along and share Suwanee’s story. At the heart of it, I am a geeky number person who loves financial reporting (and Suwanee), and wants to share this enthusiasm with the reader.”

Aside from having fun with the presentations of her work, the actual numbers and financial plan are also valued for the efforts put into them. The Governments Finance Officers Association (GFOA) claimed the 2017 Fiscal Year budget as an ‘Exemplary Policy Plan,’ stating, “Overall this budget presentation includes a strategic plan that will lead the city into the future with confidence

and sound financial and operational planning.” The strength of the City of Suwanee’s financial documents allows for participation in all three GFOA award programs, which isn’t common. Recognition from GFOA includes:

- **Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting – 2003-present**
- **Distinguished Budget Presentation Award – 2006-present**
- **Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Finance Reporting – 2010-present**

The city has also received special performance measurement recognition three times for budget documents, as well as the Certificate of Distinction in Performance Management from International City/County Management Association – 2011-present.

Visit Suwanee.com/services and click on Documents & Downloads to check out Suwanee’s present and past financial documents, including the Citizens Operating Budget, Budget Documents, and Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports.

Our Favorite Financial Documents

Boring? Suwanee doesn’t do boring! Here are a few of our favorite creative, clever documents (if we do say so ourselves).

- **“One of my favorite financial documents is the 2017 Annual Budget. The 2017 document added unique icons to display accomplishments from the 20/20 Vision Plan. I liked the visual reference key connections to the departmental accomplishments throughout the document.”** – Donna Sisley, Financial Planning & Reporting Manager
- **“My favorite document is the FY 2017 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) which has the video game theme. Each section has a different game theme covering the tab, headers and the pages in the sections. It is cute, retro, colorful, and adds a little fun to a not so**

exciting read. The front and back covers have the wind tunnel with bits and pieces of the games coming out of it.” – Wendy Budd, Financial Special Projects Analyst

But hey, we don’t like to toot our own horn.

So we’ll let others do it for us:

- **“The reviewers commented very favorably that the City of Suwanee has done an outstanding job in producing a visually appealing report.... The front cover is one of the most innovative seen by the reviewers. The formatting is outstanding.”** – Government Finance Officers Association
- **“The little town of Suwanee, Georgia has THE best budget document I’ve ever seen.”** – Joe Mincozzi, renowned developer and downtown expert

KNIT HAPPENS

NGAA Offers Fall Art Classes at George Pierce Park

The North Gwinnett Arts Association and Gwinnett County Parks & Recreation have teamed up to offer new classes at George Pierce Park this fall:

Knitting for Everyone

Thursday, September 14 | 6:30-8:30 pm
\$20 NGAA Members / \$30 Non-Members

Learn the art of knitting, refresh your knowledge, start a new project, or work on an existing piece! All ages are welcome with the emphasis on beginners for the first hour and instruction and “advice” the rest of the time. Bring your own materials, including needles, yarn, and patterns.

Weaving Workshop for Kids

Tuesday, October 16 | 6:30-8:30 pm
\$20 NGAA Members / \$30 Non-Members

Come learn how to weave and create your own woven project to reflect the early times of Gwinnett County, relating to the Bicentennial celebrations and awareness this year. This class is for children around the ages of 8-12 and is designed to teach the basics of weaving.

Visit NGAA4arts.com for more information or to register.



THE SUWANEE CITIZENS POLICE ACADEMY IS LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD MEN & WOMEN!

Suwanee's Citizens Police Academy provides area residents with a glimpse behind the badge and a better understanding of the risks and responsibilities of Suwanee police officers. The ten-week program will next be offered on Monday evenings, September 10-November 13, from 6:30-9:00 pm at the Suwanee Police Substation/Training Center at 2966 Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road.

The academy offers classroom training and hands-on experiences in crime scene processing, traffic

stops, building searches, crime prevention, and narcotics identification, while also providing an understanding of the day-to-day responsibilities of officers.

Notarized applications are due to the Suwanee Police Station by September 6 by 5 pm. For an application or additional information, contact Officer Richard Pope at rpope@suwanee.com or 770-904-7641.



Welcome - TO - SUWANEE

Perry Thomas has joined the City of Suwanee public works department as an equipment operator. A United States Marine (Semper Parvum!), Perry is a native Atlantan who now resides in Norcross with his wife and four children. He enjoys football, basketball, and working out in his free time.

The Suwanee Police Department welcomes **Hannah Shilling** as its newest communications officer. Having lived all over the country as well as in England, thanks to her father's military career, Hannah and her family now reside in Gainesville. In her free time, Hannah enjoys wakeboarding, racing dirt bikes, exploring the outdoors, and reading when the weather doesn't cooperate.

Equipment Operator **Saleem Starling** joins the City of Suwanee from Lawrenceville by way of New Jersey. Saleem studied as a pharmacy tech before joining the city.

CONGRATULATIONS



A big thank you to Girl Scout Troop 2440, who recently completed assembling, painting, and installing a handful of butterfly boxes and bird houses in Harvest Farm Community Garden at White Street Park! The Troop worked closely with the Harvest Farm board to identify a need at the park and create something both functional and whimsical for visitors to enjoy at the garden. Congratulations to these 5th graders from Burnette, Riverside, and Level Creek elementary schools, who - with the completion of this project - have completed their Girl Scout Bronze Award. This is the highest award that can be learned by elementary-aged Girl Scouts!



Congratulations to **Ashley Kessler** of the Suwanee PD! Ashley started with Suwanee as an intern, then worked as a dispatcher, graduated from the police academy on Friday, June 22, and was officially sworn in as Suwanee's newest officer on Monday, June 25.

OPEN
for
BUSINESS

The following companies received new business licenses from the City of Suwanee in May & June

Bedrock Foundations, LLC
345 Sharon Industrial Way

Bella Vita Boutique
3370 3890
Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road

Bermer Upholstery
3957 3890
Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road

B.O.T. Financial Services
530 Highland Station Drive

Chiorino America, Inc.
255 Satellite Boulevard

Dash Digital Studio LLC
1300 Peachtree Industrial Boulevard

Dehuelbes Designs, Inc.
1018 Industrial Court

El Molcajete Cantina Grill
360 Peachtree Industrial Boulevard

Hatteras Construction
4411 Suwanee Dam Road

Law Office of Sara Eslami, LLC
3460 3890
Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road

R2 Management Partners, Inc.
4411 Suwanee Dam Road

Seabdinator LLC
1500 Peachtree Industrial Boulevard

Siasim Investments, LLC
970 Peachtree Industrial Boulevard

Sip Happens
3890 Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road

Skincare by Deandra
3461 3890
Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road

Vanderbilt Mortgage & Finance, Inc.
667 Main Street

Zen Racing LLC
3620 Burnette Park Drive

UPCOMINGEVENTS

official newsletter of the city of suwanee, georgia

AUGUST18

1	Public Art Commission	6:00 pm
3	Food Truck Friday	5:30 pm
4	Farmers Market	8:00 am
4	Love Rolls (Walk)	8:00 am
7	Planning & Zoning Commission	6:30 pm
11	Farmers Market	8:00 am
11	August Concert & Wing Festival	5:00 pm
13	Suwanee Fest Planning Committee	6:30 pm
14	Harvest Farm Board Meeting	5:00 pm
16	City Council Workshop	5:30 pm
16	Millage Rate Public Hearing	5:30 pm
18	Farmers Market	8:00 am
21	Downtown Development Authority	7:00 am
21	Zoning Board of Appeals	6:30 pm
25	Hoofin' for Habitat	7:30 am
25	Farmers Market	8:00 am
28	Millage Rate Public Hearing	12:00 pm
28	City Council Meeting	6:30 pm
28	Millage Rate Public Hearing	6:30 pm

SEPTEMBER18

1	Farmers Market	8:00am
4	Planning & Zoning Commission	6:30 pm
5	Public Art Commission	6:00 pm
7	Food Truck Friday	5:30 pm
8	The Extra Mile Run/Walk 5K	7:30 am
8	Farmers Market	8:00 am
10	Suwanee Fest Planning Committee	6:30 pm
11	Harvest Farm Board Meeting	5:00 pm
13	City Council Workshop	5:30 pm
15-16	Suwanee Fest	9:00 am
18	Downtown Development Authority	7:00 am
18	Zoning Board of Appeals	6:30 pm
22	Farmers Market	8:00 am
25	City Council Meeting	6:30pm
29	Farmers Market	8:00 am
29	Happy Feat's Happy Carnival	5:00 pm

**CITY OF
SUWANEE,
GEORGIA**

MAYOR Jimmy Burnette 770/868-7115
COUNCIL Dan Foster 678/404-9641
Dick Goodman 678/446-7520
Beth Hilscher 678/546-3388
Doug Ireland 770/265-0880
Linnea Miller 678/592-4150

CITY MANAGER Marty Allen 770/945-8996
POLICE CHIEF Mike Jones 770/945-8995
EDITOR Abby Wilkerson 770/945-3386

Unless otherwise noted, City of Suwanee public meetings are at City Hall, 330 Town Center Avenue. Dates subject to change; check suwanee.com for updates.