



# 2015

## ANNUAL REPORT







## Welcome

It is my pleasure to present the City of Cumming's first Annual Report on behalf of the City Council and our city employees, who work hard year-round to provide public safety services, culture and recreation opportunities, and to maintain and improve city infrastructure.

Being good stewards of city resources includes investing for the future – in infrastructure, public safety, and culture and recreation.

In 2015, all City Departments operated within their budgets for the year. Several Capital Projects were completed, and those currently under construction are on budget.

All of this work was done with no city property taxes, no city debt, and within the city's operating budget.

On behalf of the City Council, we thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Sincerely,  
Mayor Ford Gravitt



# 2015 YEAR IN REVIEW

## City Recognizes its Stars

Throughout the year, the city continued a recognition program for employees who are most focused on service and go beyond the call of duty to get the job done. The program began with the recognition of employees with more than 25 years of service in December, 2014. Three City of Cumming employees – Greg Gilbert, Melissa Hamby and Stanley Pirkle – were honored as Cumming City Star Award winners for the first and second quarters. Others recognized in 2015 include Daylon Gravitt, Tracy See-Holbrook, Tyler Burns, David Corn, Donna Cruse, Aubrey MacBrayer and James Rodriguez.



## Water Department honored

In April, employees in the City's Utilities Department received recognition from the mayor and council after they received a 17-year Platinum Award from the Georgia Association of Water Professionals. The Water Pollution Control Division of Cumming's Department of Utilities treats more than two million gallons of wastewater each day at the city's Advanced Water Reclamation Facility.

The Platinum Award recognizes facilities in continual compliance with federal rules and regulations regarding the city's NPDES discharge permit. Through ongoing lab testing, employees at the facility ensure that wastewater, which is released back into local streams after treatment, is safe and in compliance with all federal and state environmental regulations.



## UNG returns to City Hall

In May, The University of North Georgia (UNG) announced it would be returning to Cumming City Hall, following City Council approval of a new lease agreement with the University. The agreement allows the school to hold its Masters of Business Administration (MBA) and continuing education courses on the fourth floor, and provides offices and classrooms. UNG held MBA classes at City Hall from 2008 to 2012. Due to high numbers of students now utilizing the Cumming Campus, it became necessary to again offer courses at City Hall.



## Council Members sworn in

Chuck Welch was elected to the unexpired term of the Post 1 City Council seat and was sworn in at the June 21 Cumming City Council meeting by Municipal Court Judge Richard Neville.

Following the announcements of long-serving council members Ralph Perry and John D. Pugh that they would not seek re-election, Linda Ledbetter was elected to fill Post 5, and Christopher Light won the race for Post 4. They were sworn in to their four-year terms at the Council's regular meeting January 19, 2016, along with incumbent Councilman Lewis Ledbetter, who was re-elected into the Post 3 seat.



## E-newsletter, Meeting Videos now online

In June, the inaugural edition of the City of Cumming's monthly electronic newsletter was emailed to about 18,000 Cumming and Forsyth County residents. This publication is part of an initiative to provide timely information to residents, business license holders, and customers of city services and amenities. It is also posted on [cityofcumming.net](http://cityofcumming.net) under "City News," which also features photos and articles.

Videos of Cumming City Council meetings are also posted under "City News" on [cityofcumming.net](http://cityofcumming.net). City Council meetings are held the third Tuesday of every month at 6 p.m., and all citizens are welcome to attend. Remember to check out Council meetings in their entirety on [cityofcumming.net](http://cityofcumming.net).

## City Welcomes new Courthouse



The new Forsyth County Courthouse opened in June. The City of Cumming partnered with Forsyth County on the courthouse and neighboring new jail, which opened in September, in downtown Cumming. The City contributed approximately \$12.5 million of the city's share of Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax dollars to the projects.



## **Lanier 400 Parkway Extension approved**

The Council also signed off on the initial work for the Lanier 400 Parkway extension linking Bald Ridge Marina and Pilgrim Mill roads in June. By year's end, the new roadway was nearly complete. In July, the City Council approved street lighting for the Parkway, and in December approved advertising for bids to construct a sidewalk on one side of the road.

## **Council welcomes first Female Deputy Chief**

Also in June, Mayor Gravitt and Cumming City Police Chief Casey Tatum thanked retiring Deputy Chief Clyde Cook for his 10 years of service to the City – and recognized his replacement, Cumming's first female Deputy Chief, Aletha Barrett.

Barrett brings a wealth of varied law enforcement experience to the position. Before joining the Cumming PD, she spent five years with the Forsyth County Sheriff's Office and seven years with the Dawson County Sheriff's Office. Barrett also serves as Chief Deputy Coroner for the Forsyth County Coroner's Office and as an instructor at the Georgia Police Training Center.



## **Cumming among best cities to start business**

James McCoy, president and CEO of the Cumming-Forsyth County Chamber, announced in June that personal financial website [nerdwallet.com](http://nerdwallet.com) named Cumming as one of Georgia's top 10 best cities to start a business. The website named Cumming the sixth best place in Georgia to start a business. Location was noted in the report as one of Cumming's strengths, as was the city's high number of already-established businesses. Cumming had more businesses per 100 people than any other city in the state.

## **City Supports College and Career Academy**

In August, the City Council expressed its support of the Forsyth County school system's future Alliance for Innovation of Cumming-Forsyth County. The new high school will be located on the City's new Lanier 400 Parkway. Mayor Gravitt noted that "the development of a non-traditional College and Career Academy in Forsyth County will be good for students, employers, the community, and continued economic development in Cumming and Forsyth County."



## **Cumming Fairgrounds, Playhouse host events**

It was a busy year for the Cumming Fairgrounds and Playhouse, which hosted many entertainment events. Among them was a record-breaking Cumming Country Fair & Festival with nearly 167,000 attendees throughout the 11-day event, and other favorites such as Taste of Forsyth and Christmas in Cumming at the Fairgrounds. The Playhouse saw the return of local favorite “Smoke on the Mountain,” and some 18 other performances, including Broadway’s “Gypsy,” “Annie Get Your Gun,” and “CATS.”

## **State Swim Meet returns to Aquatic Center**

The Cumming Aquatic Center again hosted the Georgia Recreation and Park Association (GRPA) statewide swim meet in July. The facility first hosted the competition in July of 2014. The 2015 competition drew more than 1,100 swimmers from all over Georgia, along with 3,000 supporters.



## **City Council approves dredging & repairs**

In August, the City Council approved a dredging contract to remove excess silt from Lake Lanier’s Little Ridge Creek Cove. The siltation resulted from the failure of Lake Alice Dam in 2013.

In September, the City Council approved funding for half of the cost of repairing Sanders Road, pursuant to an intergovernmental agreement with the county to divide the cost of the project. A portion of the road was destroyed because of an undersized culvert which had to take on excessive water flow after the dam breach.

## **New Recreation Building underway**

In December, the City Council received an update on a new Recreation Building at Cumming City Park. The 27,000-square-foot building is part of a larger project to renovate the Pilgrim Mill Road park. The building, slated to be completed by early spring 2016, will house programs, camps, and offices. The park has been closed since January 2014, when the old park structures were demolished, and will reopen in 2016.



## City Elected Officials:

Mayor H. Ford Gravitt: Mayor, 1971 – present; Council Member, 1967 – 1970

Quincy Holton: Council Member, 1969 – present

Linda Ledbetter: Council Member, Elected Nov. 3, 2015; Sworn In Jan. 19, 2016

Lewis Ledbetter: Council Member, 1971 – present

Christopher Light: Council Member, Elected Nov. 3, 2015; Sworn In Jan. 19, 2016

Chuck Welch: Council Member, June 2015 – present

2015 Outgoing Council Members: Ralph Perry, 1979 – Dec. 31, 2015; John D. Pugh, 1993 – Dec. 31, 2015

## City Departments and Divisions:

Department of Administration: .....Gerald Blackburn, City Administrator  
Steve Bennett, Assistant City Administrator

Administration Divisions: .....Accounting, City Clerk Jeff Honea  
Human Resources, Phil Higgins  
Public Information, Crystal Ledford

Department of Utilities: .....Jon Heard, Director

Utilities Divisions: .....Water Production, Tom Bryson  
Water Distribution and Collection, Tim Day  
Water Pollution Control, Jimmy Andrews

Fairgrounds Department: .....Dave Horton, Director

Cumming Playhouse Department: .....Linda Heard, Director  
(Includes Cumming Schoolhouse & Brannon-Heard House)

Planning and Zoning Department: .....Scott Morgan, Director

Police Department: .....Casey Tatum, Chief

Recreation and Parks Department: .....Greg Little, Director

Cumming Aquatic Center: .....Carla Wilson, Director

Streets Department: .....Hugh Boling, Director



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