

City Council Meetings should be held at night-

A couple of years ago, I came to realize that my local government had a more significant and direct impact on my life than any other level of government in this country. So for the last few years I have made a concerted effort to understand what was going on in our city government by attending the few meetings I could and keeping up with the minutes posted online. Even with the effort I exerted, the city council was able to pass plenty of legislation that I would have liked to have spoken out both for and against. It was about a year ago that I made the decision to follow the advice of Dwight D. Eisenhower when he said; "Politics ought to be the part-time profession of every citizen who would protect the rights and privileges of free men."

And so about 5 months ago I hit the campaign trail. While visiting different parts of the city and talking to so many of the fine people of Flowery Branch, one of the reoccurring issues that came up over and over again concerned the time of day when we hold our council meetings and the fact that the time we hold meetings limits the

citizens ability to voice their opinion. In 1820 Thomas Jefferson said; "I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but inform their discretion."

As the representatives of our city, it is imperative that we listen to the people that entrusted us. Follow the words of Abraham Lincoln when he said; "What I want is to get done what the people desire to have done, and the question for me is how to find that out exactly." But by holding our meetings at a time when most people work, we have automatically limited the input we can obtain. Before you set the argument that there is no difference in attendance between day and evening meetings, you need to concede that by holding the meetings during normal business hours, you have limited the opportunity for the majority of the cities population to attend. In essence, you have placed an unfair burden on the common employee who makes up the majority of our constituency.

"A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it is but a prologue to Farce or Tragedy or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own Governors must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives." It would seem that our city government has ignored the warning that James Madison gave back in 1778. The city has placed a barrier between themselves and the people by limiting the amount of information and making the means to acquire the information difficult.

In 1765 John Adams said; "Liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among the people, who have a right...and a desire to know." While we cannot legislate desire for everyone, we can ensure that those who do desire knowledge have the ability to attend our meetings.

We also need to consider those who would like to serve their community in city government. While my employer, for the time being, has granted me the flexibility in my work schedule to serve,

this consideration cannot be assumed for the majority of the people who work during normal business hours. By keeping our meetings at a time when most people work, we are excluding them being able to participate in this great process of representative government.

In conclusion I would like to paraphrase Thomas Jefferson by saying that our government is strongest when everyone feels a part of the process. Let's give the citizens of Flowery Branch the opportunity to become involved with our government and informed as to what issues we are facing by moving the meetings to Tuesday evenings starting at 6:30pm.