



Big Things Coming in the New Year

With the economic downturn causing cutbacks all over the country and right here in North Carolina, most towns are expecting a bleak year in 2009,

with little new for their residents.

But for Clayton, it's a matter of "so far, so good."

Budget reductions we made in preparation for the downturn should help us through the coming year without a lot of the troubles that other towns might face. Plus, we've got several big things coming to fruition in the new year that should make it one of the most awesome we've ever had.

Here's a few of the things we can look forward to:

• *Community Center* - Our new Community Center on Amelia Church Road should be ready for events, meetings, sports, classes---and all the other things it will bring to us---sometime in the Spring. Waiting for it these last few months while it's been under construction has been like waiting for Christmas. It's going to

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Mayor McLeod



be one of the greatest additions to our town that we've ever had.

• *New Streets* - Thanks to the foresight you had in passing last year's bond issue, streets all over town will be getting repairs and resurfacing this year, bringing them up to modern-day standards. Everyone who drives around town will be feeling like they just got a huge Christmas present.

• *Downtown Centerpiece* - Our efforts to help revitalize downtown will take a huge step forward this Summer with the transformation of the vacant lot at Lombard and Main Streets into an aesthetic centerpiece, complete with our first public art. We're bringing in a well-known artist to help us with the project, and we're expecting it to greatly enhance downtown.

• *Park Improvements* - Parks all over town will be getting new facilities and other upgrades this year, thanks to last year's bond issue.

Plus, work on the new park on Glen Laurel Road should be getting underway by the middle of the year. A citizen's committee that's been putting together plans for the new park is expected to make its recommendations to the Town Council within the next month or two.

• *Building Improvements Downtown* - We're expecting more businesses downtown to take advantage of grants and other incentives to improve their buildings. A few took action last year, and several more are considering it.

Those are just a few of the things going on in 2009. I could list a lot more, but I've run out of room!

Happy New Year!

Council Race Comes to a Dramatic End-Finally

After more than a year of waiting and a special election Tuesday, the race for one of the two Town Council seats still came down to drawing a name out of a hat on Friday—a chance drawing that Councilman Alex Harding won.

Butch Lawter, who won the election with 259 votes, will fill the other seat.

Art Holder, who tied Harding with 245 votes each on Tuesday and at 247 each once provisional ballots had been counted at the County Election Commission office Friday morning, is the odd man out.

Councilman Alex Atchison trailed with 192, and Mike Starks had 12 once the provisional ballots were tallied.

The dramatic end to an election race that began more than a year ago came once the Election Commission ran out of options in finding a

winner. With Lawter declared a winner for one seat on the Council, the Commission was stuck with a tie for the other seat when both Harding and Holder got two more votes from the seven provisional ballots that were allowed to count. One provisional ballot was tossed out.

Once a tie was officially declared, the Commission put Harding's name in one sealed envelope and Holder's name in another, and then a Commission employee drew one of the envelopes at random. It was the envelope with Harding's name.

Though the process was unusual, it is one of the methods specified by State law for breaking a tie. The decision presumably ends the election saga that has been contested in the courts and at the ballot box, and finally came down to pure chance.

The five candidates were vying for the seats presently held by

Harding and Atchison.

Last year's election results for Town Council were set aside when County election officials discovered that a number of voters who do not reside within the town were mistakenly given ballots and allowed to vote for Council candidates. Just a few votes separated the top three vote-getters in that election, too.

A new election has been delayed until now by a court challenge that resulted when the State Board of Elections decided that only the top three vote-getters in the invalidated election would be put on the new ballot. That decision was struck down by the courts, but a series of appeals, which the Board lost, kept the matter tied up in court until Tuesday's vote.

In the first election, Harding was the narrow leader, while Holder and Lawter were just a few votes from each other for the other spot.

The Life of a Great American... Harriet Tubman: The Chosen One

In celebration of *Black History Month*, Kingdom Harvest Church will present Gwendolyn Briley-Strand in "*Harriet Tubman: The Chosen One*" at The Clayton Center for a two day run Friday and Saturday, February 20 and 21. Both shows begin at 7:30 PM.

In this one woman show, Briley-Strand as Harriet Tubman presents a riveting presentation, celebrating the sense of hope and determination of the power of one. Briley-Strand is an accomplished actor that has been delighting audiences on stage, television, and in movie theaters for over 20 years. She is known for her portrayals of Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and Rosa Parks. The performance is followed by a Question & Answer session with the audience and includes a traveling exhibit. Pastor Stanley and Mamie Byrd of Kingdom Harvest Church are "excited to bring this phenomenal award winning play to Clayton."

For ticket information, contact the Clayton Center box office at (919) 553-1737.



Gwendolyn Briley-Strand