



September 10, 2011

**Hallelujah, FEMA finally came through!!!** I received word from GEMA's director this past week that FEMA has entirely accepted my appeal sent last May. You can read the [letter from FEMA's regional director](#) on the city's website. I can hardly contain myself, because this will make such a huge difference for us. I must clarify that although FEMA (after intense scrutiny) approved the entire amount as valid and necessary, they have always been statutorily limited to a 75% reimbursement. That means the city must pay each bill as it comes in and then submit each bill to FEMA, who will reimburse 75%. My next project is to get the most money possible from the state to add to the federal money. I am counting on an additional 10% from GEMA and will make a proposal for additional "hardship" funds, requesting more on the basis of how few homes we have to bear the remaining 15% cost. I know you share my huge feeling of relief in receiving this news which has been so long in coming. Our city attorney who doubted we'd get it says, "It's a miracle of Biblical proportions!" It's too late to change our millage rate for this year, but I believe council will be able to lower it next year as a result of this decision. And remember, we were smart enough to structure our bond sales in such a way that if FEMA and GEMA came through we would be allowed to pay those bonds off early.

There are **lots of people to thank** who helped in this effort, particularly the gentlemen from our two U. S. Senators' and Congressman Woodall's offices. We all owe a debt of gratitude to Johnny Isakson, Saxby Chambliss, and Rob Woodall and their staffs. My contact in Isakson's office called yesterday to congratulate us and said if he ever writes a book he'll put in a chapter on Persistence and write about me. I laughed and said I thought that might not be a compliment considering how much I've bugged him. None of these guys ever lost patience with my pleas. And it's important to note that they didn't automatically side with us. As one of them said when we began, "My guy's a Republican. We're not in the business of pushing for more federal money being spent." In response, I invited them all to come to my meetings with FEMA and GEMA and hear for themselves. They all came, which surprised me, as busy as they are; and they studied all the information and data I kept sending them. When they became convinced, they stuck with me over almost two years of struggle to get this. Likewise GEMA is ordinarily just a pass-through agency which administers FEMA decisions at the state level. However, they became our greatest supporters and helped us in countless ways that were quite extraordinary. I am going to take them a cake soon and we will celebrate together this joint achievement.

**Now we're finally moving on.** Remember that we've prequalified contractors while we waited, so we could have thoroughly vetted candidates' histories and qualifications before we went out to bid. On a job that's so important to people's safety and our pocketbooks, we wanted to research some track records in advance. Our city engineer, city administrator, and I will be meeting with the qualified contractors at city hall on Monday, September 12th for a pre-bid meeting. In our continuing effort to be unusually transparent and open, the finance committee and all our citizens have been

invited on the website and the complete plans for the project are available there for anyone's review. I hope you'll see dirt moving out there next month!

Some of you who have signed up for the [news flashes](#) from our nifty website were already aware of our good news. If you haven't and want to be in the know going forward, [click here](#) or sign up via the "Notify Me" button on the main page of our [website](#).

**We still have an election coming up in November.** We don't have to vote for mayor and two council members because nobody signed up but me, Rebecca Spitler, and Bob Smith, all of whom are currently serving and will now continue. However, we will still hold a special municipal election on November 8, 2011 from 7:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M. in city hall to ask the qualified voters "*shall the City Council of the City of Berkeley Lake be authorized to permit and regulate package sales by retailers of malt beverages, wine and distilled spirits on Sundays between the hours of 12:30 P.M. and 11:30 P.M.?*" The last day to [register to vote](#) in the November 8th election is October 11th. Early voting will be held at city hall in accordance with state law beginning on Monday, October 17th. It will continue during regular city hall business hours and end on Thursday, November 3rd. Absentee ballots will be available for mailing on Monday, October 17th.

I am extremely grateful to **Rebecca Spitler and Bob Smith**, both of whom had their arms twisted to continue. Rebecca is truly a superb mayor pro tem, attending all the county and regional meetings with me and other mayors, participating cogently in negotiations with the county, and providing leadership in other civic organizations beyond our city. That takes a lot of her time, but builds relationships that benefit Berkeley Lake. Bob Smith replaced Frank Lombardi on council recently when Frank resigned as a result of his move out of our city. We will miss Frank's intelligence, hard work, and high level of attention to city matters. As I said in council meeting, I have always known that even when Frank and I disagreed on something, and thinking people always disagree on something, I could trust that he was motivated by genuine concern for the city. When we lost Frank, council drafted Bob Smith because he has served on council before, attended more council meetings in the last year than any other citizen, and served the city so well on the finance committee. Like Frank, he brings intelligence, commitment, and a strong sense of responsibility to the city. I hope you will take a moment to thank these two outstanding leaders. It should not be taken for granted that this small city would always be able to find such good people to take on these difficult tasks, and their work certainly affects us all.

We've had some **mailbox** bashing lately. Tom Rozier contacted the police for us and asked for extra patrols. To justify those we need to be sure that you report any crime to the police, even "small" annoying ones. Losing your mailbox is a costly aggravation that we'd like to prevent.

**Berkeley Lake Elementary School** scored highest in the state (out of more than 1100 elementary schools) on the English/Language Arts portion of the 4th grade Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests. This is a big deal. I have contacted the principal to offer congratulations to students and faculty from all of our city. This is really something to be proud of and I hope everyone will take the opportunity to let them know that we feel that.

Lois D. Salter  
Mayor

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