

# The Chattahoochee Quill

*Society & Politics in Our Fair Hills*

Dearest Gentle Reader,

This weekend, the season opened not with the fanfare of debutantes or the twirl of a waltz, but with the march of candidates across the manicured lawns of our most prominent developers. One could scarcely sip their tea without noting that alliances were being forged as quickly as campaign flyers could be printed — and campaign banners sprout like wildflowers (or weeds) upon our byways.

Lady Camille Lowe, most recently of the Council Chamber and now aspiring to the mayoral crown, gathered her admirers upon the storied Grange Green of Serenbe. At her side, Sir Tim Dwyane Southard — eager to inherit Lady Camille’s vacated District 4 seat — stood polished and prepared for his own turn in the spotlight. Ever attentive, Lady Angela Addison, seeker of the District 2 throne, was present to ensure no ribbon was cut without her observation.

Yet the plot thickens, for Lady Angela hosted her own affair at none other than Bouckaert Farm, fresh from securing a most lucrative rezoning. Her most notable guest? Why, Lady Camille herself, who once lent her vote to such expansion. A curious alignment, indeed.

In opposition stands Sir Richard Schmidt — a veteran of fifteen years and no stranger to the theatre of Council Chambers. Sir Richie, as he is fondly (or not so fondly) known, stood firmly against the rezoning of nine hamlets. One wonders, is this the hill upon which the mayoral battle shall be fought?

As if the drama of land and legacy were not enough, another scene played out at City Hall. Master Darold, most dutiful steward of our rights-of-way, warned the aspiring nobles that their campaign signs would not be permitted upon forbidden ground. True to his word, he collected the offending placards, amassing them in a pile most unbecoming at City Hall. That he then offered an apology — for enforcing the very rules entrusted to him — was a spectacle worthy of a curtain call.

And let us not forget: Lady Angela, in her characteristic fashion, spoke most fervently in favor of Bouckaert’s designs. Whether her words will crown her with laurels or with thorns remains yet to be seen.

Until the next whisper,  
Your Faithful Observer in Chattahoochee Hills

# The Chattahoochee Quill

Whispers from the Hills - Tuesday, September 2, 2025

Dearest Gentle Reader,

The affairs of our city grow ever more intriguing, for just as campaign banners sprout like wildflowers (or weeds) upon our byways, so too do unexpected players re-emerge upon the stage.

To the surprise of many, Lady Laurie Searle, custodian of our city’s unofficial archives, is fond of invoking the phrase “Keep it Rural” — a slogan rooted in the words of a respected citizen whose presence in Chatt Hills predates many of today’s debates. While some hail the words as a tribute to the bucolic spirit of Chattahoochee Hills, others whisper that it conceals less flattering undertones — a “dog whistle,” as it were, more shrill than pastoral.

Her reappearance came at the expense of none other than Nobleman Mitchell Wolff, an outspoken knight of real estate pedigree, honed first in New Jersey, tempered in Austin, and polished at the venerable halls of Brown. Sir Mitchell, sought out by the Mayor himself, brought a most inconvenient insistence on process, procedure, and the hallowed GUHL criteria. Alas, such steadfast adherence did not suit either his worship or the Chair of Planning and Zoning, who soon tired of his refusal to join their favored games. Thus, Lady Searle was restored — a familiar hand, and one whose votes the Mayor may more comfortably count upon.

Yet Nobleman Wolff departs not in silence but with the faint scent of scorched parchment, his firebrand zeal leaving behind both admiration and admonition. Some say his unwillingness to play the game was his undoing; others suggest it was precisely what made him a rare, if fleeting, champion of due order.

Meanwhile, in the chamber for District 3, Associate Professor Scott Lightsey of English presides — a scholar of medieval ligatures, whose words are as carefully wrought as the illuminated texts he so admires. Though soft-spoken, he has not hesitated to find himself at odds with the Mayor, particularly on the sacred matters of process, procedure, and, dare one say, ethics. The professor, it seems, aspires not merely to teach history but to ensure our city has a formalized plan worthy of its future.

And so, dearest reader, the tale unfolds: a Mayor who replaces knights with ladies, a scholar who questions the crown, and an electorate left to wonder whether keeping it rural means preserving a way of life — or preserving power itself.

But oh, dear reader, do not think that your faithful observer’s eye is not open wide enough. For in this land of intrigue called Chatt Hills, whispers yet untold — of Council Member Richie’s mayoral ambitions and an uncle poised to claim his seat — linger just beyond the next turning of the page.

## By the Record

- City Charter, Sec. 2.12: The Mayor and Council hold power to appoint (and remove) members of Planning & Zoning at their discretion.
- Planning & Zoning Procedures: The Commission is bound by the Unified Development Code (UDC), requiring consistency in process and adherence to adopted standards.
- GUHL Criteria: A framework of uniform guidelines for zoning decisions, cited by Nobleman Wolff as essential to fair process — though not always welcomed by his peers.
- Council Rules of Order: Council may set additional policies to govern ethics, procedures, and development review, the very formalized plan sought by Associate Professor Lightsey.

Until the next whisper,  
Your Faithful Observer in Chattahoochee Hills

# The Chattahoochee Quill

Whispers from the Hills — Edition No. 3 Thursday, September 4, 2025

Dearest Gentle Reader,

If Edition Two left you wondering whether the intrigues of Chatt Hills could grow any richer, Edition Three shall not disappoint. For dynasties, it seems, are not merely the stuff of royal courts and noble lineages — they flourish, too, in the modest chambers of our city.

Council Member Sir Richard “Richie” Schmidt, a fixture upon the dais for fifteen years, startled his colleagues when he declared — in the midst of a contentious council meeting — that he would be seeking the mayoral throne. This bold announcement was not met with the applause of His Worship, Mayor Tom Reed, who appeared less than delighted to see a rival rise from within his own court.

In attendance that evening were two ladies most familiar to our readers: Lady Angela Addison and Lady Tiffanie Towns — the latter long regarded as Lady Angela’s favored champion and most ardent voice. Both have been fierce advocates for the Bouckaert Farm rezoning, their fervor perhaps fueled by discontent closer to home. For they reside in Cedar Grove, a development promised grandeur but delivered only grievance, the handiwork of a developer whose reputation is, shall we say, less than sterling.

Their concerns, it seems, fall upon Sir Richie himself, for Cedar Grove lies within his current district. And as whispers grow that his Uncle David Schmidt — a retired homebuilder whose family legacy in Chatt Hills spans more than sixty years — may inherit Richie’s vacated seat, Lady Tiffanie hints at concentration and family favoritism. Yet the question lingers: are these whispers fair reflections of fact — or simply the sharp rhetoric of a heated election season? Shall the Schmidts be viewed as stewards of continuity, or architects of dynastic convenience? The electorate, as always, must decide.

Meanwhile, the plot thickens in Cedar Grove. In a posting most dramatic, Lady Towns shared with the Chatt Hills Rants and Raves community an email asserting that the streets of her development do not, in fact, belong to the HOA but are public. This claim, later confirmed by Lord Morton, Keeper of Plans and Plats, casts the council in a most unfavorable light. For if the streets are indeed public, then the pleas of Cedar Grove’s residents — for lighting, for services, for the simple dignity of promises kept — have long gone unanswered, not for lack of merit, but for lack of process and procedure.

Here, dear reader, lies the crux of Sir Richie’s dilemma: bound as he is by what the Mayor will allocate in funding, he can neither fulfill the wishes of his constituents nor silence their discontent. And with the aperture now thrown wide open, the question remains — will the electorate see him as victim of the Mayor’s constraints, or as complicit in their neglect?

Of this much we may be certain: in the land of Chatt Hills, intrigue is a perennial crop, flourishing as reliably as kudzu and just as difficult to contain.

## By the Code

- Unified Development Code (UDC), Sec. 5.4 & 7.2:  
Public streets and rights-of-way fall under city jurisdiction once accepted; HOA covenants cannot override public maintenance obligations.
- UDC Enforcement Authority:  
The Zoning Administrator and Community Development Director must enforce development standards, subdivision regulations, and public access provisions.
- Municipal Obligations:  
If streets are dedicated as public, the city bears responsibility for lighting, signage, and safety improvements — not the HOA.
- Public vs. Private Distinction:  
Homeowners may enforce private covenants (e.g., aesthetics), but city services must follow public law, not HOA preference.

Until the next whisper,  
Your Faithful Observer in Chattahoochee Hills

# The Chattahoochee Quill

Whispers from the Hills - Edition No 4: SUNDAY SPECIAL

Dearest Gentle Reader,

Among the noble cast of Chattahoochee Hills, few present themselves with such flourish as Sir Rodney Peek of District 5. A scion of a legacy family and one who fancies himself the very epitome of a Southern Gentleman, Sir Rodney is quick to remind his audience that yesterday’s city was better, brighter, and braver — invariably punctuated with that most treasured refrain: “As my daddy used to say...”

Yet while Sir Rodney clings to his inherited mantle, it is whispered with no small frequency that it is his venerable father — now in his ninetieth year — who retains the greater share of dignity and esteem. The son, alas, too often loses himself in meandering explanations, reimagining the city through sepia-toned memory while the present business languishes unattended.

And then came the night of the T-SPLOST debate, when the theatre grew thick with irony. Just moments after a passionate new resident urged the council to replace the slogan “Keep it Rural” with the gentler “Keep it Neighborly,” Sir Rodney eagerly seized the floor. With grand gestures and polished tones, he waxed poetic about the virtues of neighborliness.

But, dear reader, the curtain soon dropped. For scarcely had he sung the praises of neighborliness than Sir Rodney committed the most unneighborly act of all. With calculated precision, he stripped District 2 of its rightful road repaving funds — a deliberate slight aimed squarely at Sir Richie Schmidt. The very same reallocation could have been sought from any other district, or from the general fund (as was done with Lady Ruby Foster of District 1). Yet Sir Rodney chose otherwise.

This was no accident of process, but a vote cast with malice aforethought — a move meant less to balance the books than to wound an adversary. The citizens of Chattahoochee Hills, ever watchful, did not fail to note the irony: that the man who extolled neighborliness one moment would, in the next, betray it with such intent.

It is, alas, not lost upon the people that District 5’s seat leans ever toward the Mayor’s chair, and that Sir Rodney’s words are as pliable as clay in the hands of power. To some, he is the Southern Gentleman of his own imagination; to others, he is but an actor in the Mayor’s play, where neighborliness is spoken sweetly but practiced never.

## By the Ledger

- T-SPLOST (Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax): Funds are restricted by law for roads, bridges, and transportation projects only.
- Not Permitted: Building enhancements, city hall renovations, or other general government expenditures.
- The Contrast: Lady Ruby Foster’s request was handled properly through the general fund. Sir Rodney, instead, sought to raid District 2’s allocation in a pointed slight — a maneuver as unneighborly as it was unlawful.

Until the next whisper,  
Your Faithful Observer in Chattahoochee Hills

# The Chattahoochee Quill

*Special Edition — The T-SPLOST Chronicles*

Dearest Gentle Reader,

When one believes the theatre of Chatt Hills has exhausted its repertoire, the curtains rise on yet another act — this time at Tuesday’s council meeting, where even the humble Cedar Grove Community Center steps into the spotlight, bringing with it a drama of money, power, and political ambition.

For it was only weeks ago that Sir Rodney Peek — Southern Gentleman of District 5 and self-styled guardian of neighborliness — delivered his now-famous sermon on unity, praising the virtue of “keeping it neighborly” before committing the most unneighborly act of all: stripping Sir Richie Schmidt’s District 2 of its rightful T-SPLOST allocations. The move was so deliberate, so unmistakably political, that even the Mayor’s staunchest allies could scarce conceal their satisfaction.

And now, dear Reader, the next scene unfolds. On Tuesday’s work session agenda, Lady Ruby Foster of District 1 will rise to request \$50,000-\$100,000 from the General Fund for renovations to the Cedar Grove Community Center — a facility not in her district, but firmly within Sir Richie’s.

Curious, is it not? For this is not some private hall in need of charity. The Cedar Grove Community Center was acquired by the City of Chattahoochee Hills in 2020 for public use as an event space. By law and by practice, its care and upkeep fall squarely to Mayor Tom Reed, City Manager Sir Robbie Rokovitz, and Sir Darold Wendlandt, Keeper of Public Works. And yet it is Lady Ruby — from another district entirely — who now carries the banner before the council.

Shall we believe this is merely an act of civic generosity? Or, when viewed alongside Sir Rodney’s earlier slight, does it begin to look like another well-timed maneuver to cast Sir Richie as inattentive in his own backyard while polishing the image of Lady Camille Lowe, the Mayor’s favored heir and the darling of developers?

For in Chatt Hills, dear Reader, even the painting of walls and the laying of bricks may carry the fingerprints of politics. And as Tuesday approaches, the question lingers: will the council vote to fund renovations — or will they, knowingly or not, help renovate the balance of power itself?

## By the Ledger

- T-SPLOST Funds: Restricted by state law to transportation projects only — no parks, buildings, or unrelated facilities.
- General Fund Appropriations: May fund city-owned properties but are typically brought forth by the Mayor, City Manager, or Public Works Director, not outside-district council members.
- City Ownership Since 2020: Cedar Grove Community Center has been a city asset for nearly five years, placing ultimate responsibility on Mayor Tom Reed and his administration.
- Cross-District Sponsorship: While legal, such requests are politically unusual when aimed at a rival’s district during an election season.
- Political Optics: Coming so soon after Sir Rodney Peek’s “neighborly” betrayal, the electorate may well wonder whether this is stewardship — or strategy.

Until the next whisper,  
Your Faithful Observer in Chattahoochee Hills

# The Chattahoochee Quill

Whispers from the Hills — Edition No. 5  
Tuesday, September 9, 2025

Dearest Gentle Reader,

No sooner has one intrigue been set upon our shelves than another presents itself—this time, in the form of that most fundamental question: where, pray tell, do our noble leaders actually reside?

Georgia law and our city code are abundantly clear: a mayor and council member must be bona fide residents of the realm they govern. Yet murmurs now swirl through City Hall suggesting that Mayor Tom Reed and Lady Camille Lowe may walk a fine—and possibly questionable—line.

The matter came to light through open records requests that revealed they share the same address. This oddity triggered a formal investigation by the City Attorney, who confirmed a written lease for a studio apartment located within Lady Camille’s house—but found no records of payments. These revelations were laid before council records on August 5 and remain central to ongoing questions of propriety.

Meanwhile, Sir Scott Lightsey—our scholarly champion of ethics reform—continues to press for clarity and accountability. His pleas may have echoed unheard through these chambers, but it was the cold impartiality of transparency law that brought the matter to public view.

And yet another player holds a pen on this stage: the City Attorney, whose dual role as mayoral advisor and city counsel stirs unease about where public trust ends and private loyalty begins.

Are we witnessing a mere snafu of paperwork—or the unmaking of civic trust? Until our rules meet reality, the voters of Chatt Hills deserve to know: do their leaders dwell within these hills—or just perform upon them?

## By the Statute - *Working Links*

- [O.C.G.A. § 45-2-1](#): Requires residency in office; violations can vacate the position.
- City Filing Requirements: Officials must declare residency—yet no checks enforce accuracy. [https://fayettecountyga.gov/information/ethicsord.pdf?utm\\_source](https://fayettecountyga.gov/information/ethicsord.pdf?utm_source)
- August 5, Open Records Filing: The City Attorney confirmed a written lease within Lady Camille’s home, but without proof of payment. [https://agenda.savannahga.gov/content/files/exhibit-4-city-of-savannahs-code-of-ethics-for-city-elected-officials.pdf?utm\\_source](https://agenda.savannahga.gov/content/files/exhibit-4-city-of-savannahs-code-of-ethics-for-city-elected-officials.pdf?utm_source)

## By the Agenda - September 9, 2025 — *Work Session*

<https://cms3.revize.com/revize/chattahoocheehillsga/09.09.25%20Work%20Session%20Agenda%20Packet.pdf?t=202509040936300&t=202509040936300>

- Ethics Ordinance Discussion: Will council finally heed Sir Scott Lightsey and discuss real ethics reform?
- Residency Verification: No audits exist—will Chatt Hills correct this oversight?
- City Attorney’s Dual Roles: Ethics questions multiply under the optics of overlapping responsibilities.
- Transparency Patterns: Facts emerged only under statutory pressure—demonstrating a gap in proactive governance.

## By the Neighbor — *Ethics in Surrounding Cities*

- [Fayetteville, GA](#): Ethics Board requires members to be residents; conflicts of interest must be disclosed in writing and orally at meetings.
- [Fayette County, GA](#): Ethics Ordinance governs officials and employees with clear standards and enforcement powers.
- [Savannah, GA](#): Code of Ethics mandates integrity, transparency, and strict limits on private benefit from public office.

By contrast, Chattahoochee Hills offers no independent ethics body, no clear enforcement mechanism, and no proactive transparency measures—leaving accountability to citizen watchdogs rather than institutional safeguards.

UNTIL THE NEXT WHISPER,  
YOUR FAITHFUL OBSERVER IN CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS

# The Chattahoochee Quill

Whispers from the Hills — Edition No. 6: The 20-Acre Rule & the Takings Clause

Dearest Gentle Reader,

If you believed the famed 20-acre rule was the lone iron gate barring the path of smallholders, allow your faithful observer to whisper of its companion: the 70/30 preservation rule. Together, these strictures stand as sentinels in our Unified Development Code, decreeing that most parcels must not only span twenty acres, but that 70% be kept in preserved open space, leaving a mere 30% for family use or development.

In theory, these rules safeguard the pastoral character of our fair city. In practice, they fall heaviest upon the shoulders of small and legacy landowners. For while well-connected developers carve exceptions with elegant pen strokes, local families are thwarted in their modest wish to divide land into compounds for children and grandchildren. What was intended as preservation begins to look, in truth, like exclusion.

It did not escape notice that the last revision of the UDC — tightening the 20-acre rule — was carried out during the long shadow of COVID. Public participation was muffled, and civic voices muted, while sweeping changes reshaped the destiny of family land.

And so, the stage is set for a constitutional whisper louder than any slogan: the Takings Clause. For when regulation so strangles the use of property that its value is stripped away, the Constitution demands recompense. In Georgia, this principle takes the form of inverse condemnation — when the government does not seize land outright, yet leaves it so burdened with regulation that the loss is no less real.

Imagine, dear reader, the grandfather of a legacy family, hoping to bequeath parcels for a family compound. His dreams dissolve under the 20-acre minimum and 70/30 mandate. He may still hold the land — but if he cannot use it, is that not a taking in all but name? Georgia’s courts have said as much, and the Supreme Court of the United States has nodded in agreement: regulation, when it goes too far, becomes confiscation.

Thus the question that lingers like smoke across the fields of Chatt Hills: will the electorate cling to “Keep it Rural” as a pastoral hymn, or awaken to the possibility that beneath the hymn lies a court battle yet to be sung?

## By the Constitution (Georgia Precedent Applied)

- Barrett v. Hamby (1975):  
*Rule:* Zoning that inflicts serious harm on owners but provides little public benefit may be confiscatory and void.  
*Chatt Hills Application:* If the 20-acre rule prevents legacy families from gifting land to heirs — while developers in Serenbe secure exceptions — citizens could argue the harm outweighs any true public good.
- Guhl v. Holcomb Bridge Rd. Corp. (1977):  
*Rule:* Established Georgia’s six-factor test for evaluating takings (economic harm, public benefit, suitability of property, etc.).  
*Chatt Hills Application:* Families facing major economic loss (no ability to subdivide), with little public benefit (rules applied unevenly), could build a strong case under Guhl.
- Henry County v. Tim Jones Properties (2000):  
*Rule:* Zoning is presumed valid, but owners can overcome that presumption with clear proof of harm and minimal public benefit.  
*Chatt Hills Application:* If landowners show that COVID-era UDC changes stripped property value while benefiting favored developers, they could overcome that presumption.
- Inverse Condemnation (O.C.G.A. § 22-1-8):  
*Rule:* Owners may sue when regulations effectively take or damage property, even without formal condemnation.



*Chatt Hills Application:* Families barred from creating generational compounds due to the 20-Acre + 70/30 rules could argue an “inverse taking” — their land wasn’t seized, but its utility was destroyed.

**By the Constitution (Federal Precedent Applied)**

- Pennsylvania Coal v. Mahon (1922):  
*Rule:* Regulation that goes “too far” becomes a taking.  
*Chatt Hills Application:* The 20-Acre + 70/30 rules may “go too far” by denying families meaningful use of their land.
- Penn Central v. NYC (1978):  
*Rule:* Courts weigh economic impact, expectations, and character of government action.  
*Chatt Hills Application:* Landowners who purchased before the COVID-era UDC rewrite could argue their investment-backed expectations were destroyed overnight.
- Lucas v. S.C. Coastal Council (1992):  
*Rule:* If regulation eliminates *all* economic use, it is a per se taking.  
*Chatt Hills Application:* If land is locked into preservation, with no viable subdivision or development, Lucas could apply.
- Nollan (1987) & Dolan (1994):  
*Rule:* Permit conditions must be tied and proportional to public benefit.  
*Chatt Hills Application:* If the city demands excessive concessions (e.g., additional preservation beyond the 70%), landowners could challenge disproportionality.
- Loretto v. Teleprompter (1982):  
*Rule:* Any permanent physical occupation requires compensation.  
*Chatt Hills Application:* If city utilities or easements are imposed on private preserved land, landowners could invoke *Loretto*.
- Sheetz v. El Dorado County (2024):  
*Rule:* Development fees set by legislation still face takings scrutiny.  
*Chatt Hills Application:* If Chatt Hills imposes burdensome infrastructure fees on small landowners, these charges could be challenged as unconstitutional takings.

UNTIL THE NEXT WHISPER,  
YOUR FAITHFUL OBSERVER IN CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS

# The Chattahoochee Quill

Whispers from the Hills — Acres, Equity & the Hamlet Game

Thursday, September 11, 2025

DEAREST GENTLE READER,

WHAT BEGAN AS A NOBLE HYMN TO KEEP IT RURAL HAS, IT SEEMS, TAKEN ON THE TEMPO OF A MARCH — ONE WRITTEN FOR DEVELOPERS’ BRASS BANDS WHILE FAMILY FIDDLERS PLAY UNHEARD IN THE WINGS.

YES, THE TWIN PILLARS OF OUR UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT CODE — THE 20-ACRE RULE AND ITS COMPANION, THE 70/30 PRESERVATION RULE — PROMISE THE POETRY OF PRESERVATION. YET IN THE UDC ITSELF WE READ:

*“Hamlet Conservation subdivisions shall preserve a minimum of 70% of the site as permanent open space, clustering development on the remaining land.” (Chattahoochee Hills UDC, Sec. 35-73, Hamlet Conservation)*

ONE MIGHT NOTE, DEAR READER, THAT THIS HYMN TO OPEN SPACE APPLIES ONLY TO HAMLETS — THAT RAREFIED REALM REQUIRING VAST TRACTS AND A COUNCIL VOTE — WHILE THOSE LIVING UNDER THE 20-ACRE RULE IN RURAL ZONING ENJOY NO SUCH FLEXIBILITY, ONLY A WALL OF MINIMUM ACREAGE KEEPING FAMILIES FROM DIVIDING LAND AMONG CHILDREN AND HEIRS.

INDEED, THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ITSELF PROCLAIMS:

*“Hamlets and Villages will allow more compact development patterns in exchange for permanent preservation of open space.” (Chattahoochee Hills Comprehensive Plan, Land Use Goals, 2021)*

COMPACT FOR WHOM, ONE WONDERS, WHEN LEGACY FAMILIES ARE LEFT STARING THROUGH THE IRON GATE OF THE 20-ACRE RULE, WHILE DEVELOPERS MARCH THROUGH WITH PLATS, PERMITS, AND PROFIT.

## A Developer’s Prayer

*O Mighty UDC, thou who guardeth the gates of Hamletdom,  
Grant unto us vast tracts and pliant council ears.  
Let the smallholder toil under thy 20-acre yoke,  
While we, keepers of density and profit,  
May split our lands seventy to thirty,  
Preserving nature in name,  
But reaping gold in fact.  
Amen and adjourned.*

ONE MIGHT ALMOST APPLAUD THE ELEGANCE OF IT ALL, IF THE RESULT WERE NOT SO RUINOUS TO EQUITY, LEGACY, AND THE VERY RURAL CHARACTER THESE RULES CLAIM TO DEFEND.

SO LET IT BE ASKED, DEAR READER: DO THESE CODES KEEP IT RURAL FOR FAMILIES, OR MERELY KEEP THE GATES SHUT WHILE OTHERS BUILD VILLAGES BEHIND THE WALLS?

## By the Code

- 20-Acre Rule: *Chattahoochee Hills UDC, Sec. 35-72, Rural Districts* — “Minimum lot size: 20 acres.”
- 70/30 Split: *Chattahoochee Hills UDC, Sec. 35-73, Hamlet Conservation* — “70% permanent open space; clustered development on 30%.”
- Comp Plan 2021: “Hamlets and Villages permit compact development in exchange for open space preservation.”

Until the next whisper,

Your Faithful Observer in Chattahoochee Hills

# The Chattahoochee Quill

*Whispers from the Hills — Of Data, Ethics & Peacocks*

Dearest Gentle Reader,

When the curtain rose upon this week’s Work Session, one expected the usual overture of zoning minutiae and budget line items. Instead, the Mayor began with what might be called a soliloquy of ambition — recounting his recent pilgrimage to Washington, D.C., where whispers of data centers floated through the marble halls. With a nervous laugh, His Worship suggested Chatt Hills might consider a zoning district for “a small data center” — lest the State impose one upon us.

Ah, the irony: our Mayor, so famously cautious with rural character, now entertaining visions of server farms amid the rolling pastures. The room shifted in its seats.

## Act I: The Ethics Sonata

Next, our learned Professor Lightsey presented his long-awaited ethics draft, seeking at last to bestow upon Chatt Hills the kind of ordinance that civilized municipalities call basic governance. Heads nodded, murmurs of approval hummed — until, like a bassoon entering a string quartet, the City Attorney rose to warn of political leverage such an ordinance might create.

Yes, the very same City Attorney who moonlights as the Mayor’s registered agent for private LLCs. One could scarcely script such ethical theater better: the keeper of conflicts warning against transparency, citing the dangers of political weaponization.

## Act II: The Oversight Tango

Finally, Sir Richie Schmidt, ever the champion of process, rose with banner held high, seeking modest reforms for a permitting board — simple measures of oversight, structure, and decorum. Nothing radical, nothing flashy; only the kind of rules that every other respectable board in Chatt Hills already claims on paper: the Parks Commission, the Tourism & Convention Board, even the mythical Tree Commission — that curious creature existing solely in the city code, its only living member the “on-call” arborist summoned like a minor character in a medieval play.

Yet at every turn, motions met resistance as His Worship bristled at the very notion of constraint. For transparency, you see, is a fine thing in campaign speeches — but in practice, it tends to slow the wheels of power.

And lest we forget, the city’s Tree Ordinance, long written and rarely enforced, stood silently by — another statute gathering dust while the boards tasked with oversight languished in name only.

Across the chamber — and on the Zoom gallery for those watching at home — glares were exchanged, brows furrowed, lips pursed. One could feel the temperature rise as order and oversight knocked politely... only to be shown the door.

## Act III: The Conservancy’s Re-Birth

When the council meeting convened, the evening’s surprise arrived: the re-birth of the long-slumbering Chattahoochee Hills Conservancy, founded years ago by Doug Cloud, environmental lawyer, but lately as active as a barn door in January.

The presentation came not from Lady Camille Lowe — Mayor Pro Tem and newly minted board member — but from Lilly Baucum, the Conservancy’s Chief Operating Officer.

And what a presentation it was: lofty goals, noble ambitions, and visions of stewardship stretching as far as the eye could see. The slides sang of renewal and responsibility; the audience nodded with

SOLEMN HOPE.

YET AS THE APPLAUSE FADED, A WHISPER WANDERED THROUGH THE CHAMBER: IN THIS REVIVAL, MIGHT SOMEONE FINALLY ASK THE COWS WHAT THEY'D LIKE TO SEE?

FOR IN CHATT HILLS, COMMITTEES, COMMISSIONS, AND CONSERVANCIES SPEAK OFTEN FOR THE LAND — BUT RARELY, IT SEEMS, TO THE LAND ITSELF.

UNTIL THE NEXT WHISPER,  
YOUR FAITHFUL OBSERVER IN CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS

BUT TAKE HEED, DEAR READER: POWER PREFERS AN AUDIENCE ASLEEP. WHILE WE SIP OUR SWEET TEA AND APPLAUD POLITE SPEECHES, ORDINANCES GATHER DUST, ETHICS WILT IN COMMITTEE, AND DEALS INK THEMSELVES IN THE QUIET. FOLLOW CLOSELY, FOR THOSE WHO LOOK AWAY TOO LONG OFTEN WAKE TO FIND THE PLAY ALREADY ENDED — AND THEMSELVES WRITTEN OUT OF THE FINAL ACT.

# The Chattahoochee Quill

Whispers from the Hills — The Hamlet Hydra Turns Twenty-Five

Dearest Gentle Reader,

Raise a glass, for Serenbe has turned twenty-five! A quarter century since Steve Nygren traded city steel for rural soil and began building the storybook dream that put Chattahoochee Hills on the map. A vision of hamlets, trails, markets, and a life where farm-to-table felt less like a trend and more like a promise.

Today, Serenbe is a nationally known brand — the developers host conferences, win sustainability awards, Grace Magazine covers. On paper, it is the pride of Chattahoochee Hills, the proof that thoughtful development can thrive amid rolling pastures.

## Act I: The Toast

No one denies the achievement. Serenbe transformed acres of farmland into walkable hamlets admired by planners across the country. The restaurants draw visitors from Atlanta, the Inn hosts retreats, the trails wind through woods as lovely as any pastoral painting.

The marketing remains impeccable: brochures printed on recycled paper, photos kissed by golden-hour sunlight, copy promising serenity, community, and sustainable living.

So let the anniversary cake be cut; Serenbe has earned it.

## Act II: The Juggle

And yet, dear reader, life inside the hamlet tells a more complicated tale.

For while the Nygren story shines brightly in magazines, residents live in a place forever under construction. Streets closed, dust rising, hammers pounding — Serenbe is always becoming, never quite complete.

The HOA goalposts creep steadily: rules shift, design standards morph, what was allowed last year becomes forbidden next, except when marketing to new buyers, where the original vision is recited like scripture.

The branding never wavers. The reality bends with every annexation.

## Act III: Too Many Balls in the Air

At twenty-five, Serenbe juggles villages, commercial districts, private roads, sewer systems, water systems, trail networks, festivals, conferences, new phases, old promises, and the expectations of residents who wonder whether serenity was meant to include so many bulldozers.

Like a circus performer with one ball too many, the risk grows visible: details slip. Enforcement falters. Design guidelines fade unless tied to glossy marketing for the next phase.

## Act IV: The Bouckaert Nine and a City Asleep

And now come the Bouckaert hamlets, nine phases recently approved, promising growth that dwarfs Serenbe itself. Yet the City of Chattahoochee Hills, aside from fire trucks and ribbon cuttings, offers little governance beyond polite drive-by policing.

- *No expanded code enforcement.*
- *No traffic control for the golf-cart rodeos.*
- *No planning for the schools, the roads, the playgrounds, the infrastructure to come.*

The Hamlet Hydra grows new heads while City Hall naps in the shade.

Act V: A Gentle Warning

SO LET US INDEED CONGRATULATE SERENBE AT TWENTY-FIVE: A VISION REALIZED, A BRAND ADMIRED, A SUCCESS STORY  
TOLD FROM ATLANTA TO ASPEN.

BUT AS NEW PHASES RISE, AS GOALPOSTS CREEP, AS BRANDING OUTPACES ENFORCEMENT AND CONSTRUCTION DUST OUTPACES  
SERENITY, PERHAPS IT IS TIME TO PAUSE.

FOR A COMMUNITY FOREVER BECOMING RISKS LOSING THE VERY THING IT PROMISED TO BE.

UNTIL THE NEXT WHISPER,  
YOUR FAITHFUL OBSERVER IN CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS

# The Chattahoochee Quill

Whispers from the Hills — Edition No. 14: Observations from the Hills Last Night  
September 18, 2025

Dearest Gentle Reader,

On the evening of **September 16, 2025**, beneath the warm lights of the Mayor Pro Tem’s Town Hall, citizens gathered with one question heavier than any campaign promise:

Who speaks for the land when the sprayers come?

For the chemicals had already traced their way along fence lines, seeped into creeks, and drifted toward pastures where livestock graze and children play. Bees had died. A family’s pet rabbit lay buried. Dogs returned from walks with burned paws. And the water flowed on — silent witness to a city that praises process, ethics, and stewardship... until those things are actually required.

## Act I: The Missed Opportunity

It comes from a most reliable whisperer that, two weeks earlier, at a **private campaign event on a local farmer’s homestead**, the Mayor Pro Tem, when asked about the spraying, deferred to the retiring Mayor.

His answer was simple, memorable, and now hangs in the air like the very chemicals themselves:

*“It will never happen again.”*

That moment handed City Hall a perfect chance: arrive at the Town Hall with public notice reforms, environmental safeguards, and a plan for accountability.

But when the lights rose on September 16? Nothing.

No ordinance. No reform. Not even acknowledgment that the poisons had already flowed.

The promise made in private never became policy in public.

## Act II: Outrage in the Open

From Rants & Raves, the digital conscience of Chattahoochee Hills:

“Bees dead. Rabbit dead. Dogs with burned paws. How was there no notice before spraying?”  
“I’m a Vietnam vet. I’ve had Agent Orange cancer... **SPRAYING** fogs in the air!”  
“You can’t scream ‘keep it rural’ while poisoning the very land you say you’re protecting.”

The chemicals — *AquaMaster, Polaris, Escort, and Trycera* — cut across fence lines, pastures, creeks, even livestock pens.

Legal and health experts, including Hill & Ponton, warn that glyphosate-based herbicides like **AquaMaster** carry heightened risks when applied near water or without strict controls — cancer links, pollinator collapse, and ecosystem harm among them.

## Act III: The Record Shows

Emails from citizens revealed that city officials were aware of the “spot spraying.” Apparently, residents had to remind the contractor that Hearn Road was off limits.

Farmers reported chemical drift near livestock pastures. Residents near creeks feeding the Chattahoochee River documented runoff. Impacted waters, by citizen reports, may now include

BEAR CREEK, COCHRAN MILL, LEE, MOSS, PINE, WHITE OAK, AND CEDAR CREEK — A ROLL CALL OF STREAMS ASKED TO CARRY MORE THAN JUST RAINWATER THIS SUMMER.

AND ALL OF IT, DEAR READER, HAPPENED WITH NO ORDINANCE REQUIRING PUBLIC NOTICE, ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW, OR HEALTH RISK DISCLOSURE.

Act IV: A City Unprepared

OUR REVIEW OF THE CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS CODE SHOWS:

- **Environmental Protection Ordinances** EXIST FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS (SEC. 14-14 POLLUTION; TREE PRESERVATION).
- **Unified Development Code** ADDRESSES FENCE HEIGHTS, GOLF CART PATHS, AND SUBDIVISION SETBACKS.
- **But nothing** IN CITY LAW REQUIRES PUBLIC NOTICE BEFORE HERBICIDE SPRAYING, ETHICS DISCLOSURES FOR DECISION-MAKERS, OR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REVIEWS FOR MUNICIPAL ACTIONS.

EVEN THE CONSERVANCY — FOUNDED BY AN ENVIRONMENTAL LAWYER AND REVIVED WITH GREAT FANFARE AT CITY HALL — SAID NOTHING AS POISONS RAN THROUGH THE DITCHES.

RECEIPTS: A TIMELINE OF SPRAYING & SILENCE

**Aug 15, 2025 – RESIDENT REPORTS, RANTS & RAVES**

“Bees dead. Rabbit dead. Dogs with burned paws.”

**Aug 20, 2025 – CITY OFFICIAL RESPONDS, RANTS & RAVES**

“You only noticed because it was done in summer instead of winter.”

**Aug 25, 2025 – CONSERVANCY RE-BIRTH ANNOUNCED**

No mention of spraying. No policy proposals follow.

**Early Sept 2025 – FARMER’S HOMESTEAD CAMPAIGN EVENT**

Mayor Pro Tem defers. Retiring Mayor promises: *“It will never happen again.”*

**Sept 16, 2025 – Town Hall**

NO ORDINANCE. NO PLAN. A CHANCE MISSED.

**Sept 17, 2025 – CITIZEN RESPONSE, RANTS & RAVES**

“We have no process, no policy, no ethics — this is negligence dressed up as leadership.”

FACT BOX: WHAT THE LAW SAYS (AND DOESN’T)

**City Code Sec. 14-14 — POLLUTION & TREE PRESERVATION ORDINANCES:**

- Protects trees in development zones.
- Prohibits pollution of streams and ponds.
- *Silent on chemical spraying notification.*

**Unified Development Code:**

- Regulates fences, golf carts, subdivisions.
- *Silent on environmental review for municipal actions.*

**No Ethics Ordinance:**

- No code of conduct for city officials on conflicts of interest, public notice, or environmental stewardship.

**Chemical Risks:**



- **AquaMaster (Glyphosate):** PROBABLE HUMAN CARCINOGEN, EPA RISK WARNINGS.
- **Triclopyr & Imazapyr:** AQUATIC TOXICITY, NON-TARGET PLANT DAMAGE RISKS.

## BIOPHILIC BRANDING VS. GROUND TRUTH

CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS MARKETS ITSELF AS BIOPHILIC — “LIVING IN HARMONY WITH NATURE AND COMMUNITY.”

BUT BIOPHILIA, IT SEEMS, STOPS AT THE ORDINANCE BOOK.

FOR WHILE WE REGULATE FENCE HEIGHTS AND GOLF CART PATHS, NO LAW PROTECTED THE CREEKS, THE BEES, THE LIVESTOCK, OR THE FAMILIES LIVING HERE WHEN THE SPRAYERS CAME.

## THE CURTAIN FALLS

TAKE HEED, DEAR READER:

WHEN POISONS FLOW BEFORE POLICIES, WHEN CONSERVANCIES STAY SILENT, WHEN TOWN HALLS DEFER INSTEAD OF DECIDE — THE LAND KEEPS ITS OWN RECORD.

The bees remember.

The farmers remember.

And so do the voters.

UNTIL THE NEXT WHISPER,

YOUR FAITHFUL OBSERVER IN CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS

# THE CHATTAHOOCHEE QUILL

Whispers from the Hills — Edition No. 12: A Man Without a Country

Dearest Gentle Reader,

In every tale, there comes a moment when the messenger bears news the court does not wish to hear. In Chattahoochee Hills, that role fell to a zoning commissioner living in Serenbe — a man who believed zoning decisions should follow law, process, and full disclosure rather than rumor, back-slaps, and half-packets arriving just before the vote.

When incomplete rezoning packets appeared for the Merrill and later the Bouckaert Farm properties, he asked for the full record. When residents whispered of bald eagles nesting on the land — birds protected under both state and federal law — he asked for the environmental studies the law requires.

And for this, the chorus labeled him an obstructionist, an alarmist, a man out of step with “neighborliness.”

## Act I: The Incomplete Packets

The record did not come as a symphony but as a shuffle: traffic studies missing here, environmental reports absent there, promises made in private meetings never finding their way into public view.

Lord Mike Morton, keeper of packets, plans, and plats, delivered the documents as though tearing pages from a book — leaving zoning commissioners, citizens, and yes, our nobleman Mitchell Wolff, to wonder what was being hidden behind the curtain.

Votes moved forward. Questions did not.

## Act II: The Silent Nest

And here lies the question polite society prefers not to ask:

If bald eagles nest upon these lands — as residents claim — then the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act forbids disturbing those nests at any time. No bulldozers may roar within 330 feet of an active nest under Georgia law. No developer may touch a nest, even an unused one, without a federal permit.

Yet the rezoning packets came incomplete. The environmental studies, if they exist, never surfaced before the votes.

“Shall the eagles, like the critics, be told to perch elsewhere while the ground beneath them is rezoned... or sprayed?”

## Act III: Serenbe’s Selective Chorus

Meanwhile, the neighborhood pages applauded rescue boat launches, expansions, anniversaries, and the applause of progress.

Critics? Their posts disappeared.

QUESTIONS ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL LAW, PUBLIC PROCESS, AND MISSING RECORDS FOUND NO ECHO THERE — ONLY THE SILENCE OF CURATED CIVILITY, AS THOUGH GOOD MANNERS WERE MEASURED NOT BY TRUTH BUT BY HOW LITTLE ONE DISRUPTED THE STORY.

AND BEHIND THAT CURATED SILENCE, DECISIONS WERE MADE THAT LEFT THE CITY EXPOSED — TO SPRAWL, TO SECRECY, TO WHATEVER COMES NEXT WHEN PUBLIC SCRUTINY IS TREATED AS THE ENEMY.

## Act IV: A Man Without a Country

FOR INSISTING ON PROCESS, FOR DEMANDING THE FULL RECORD BEFORE VOTES THAT WILL SHAPE CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS FOR GENERATIONS, OUR ZONING COMMISSIONER WAS REMOVED FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION.

BUT THE SILENCING DID NOT STOP THERE.

IT WAS NOT ENOUGH TO CLOSE THE DOOR ON HIS QUESTIONS IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS; THE CHORUS CARRIED ITS TUNE TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD PAGES, WHERE CHEAP SHOTS AND WHISPERED CONDEMNATIONS SPREAD FASTER THAN FACTS EVER COULD.

HERE WAS A MAN MOST CRITICS HAD NEVER MET, YET THEY PROTESTED HIS EXISTENCE AS THOUGH PRINCIPLE ITSELF WERE THE OFFENSE. A BUSINESSMAN AND PROFESSOR WHO ASKED FOR SUNLIGHT WAS PAINTED AS AN OBSTRUCTIONIST; A NEIGHBOR WHO INSISTED ON LAW AND PROCESS BECAME THE VILLAIN IN A DRAMA WRITTEN BY THOSE WHO PROFIT FROM SPEED AND SILENCE.

LIVING IN SERENBE, SERVING THE WHOLE OF CHATT HILLS, HE NOW STANDS ABANDONED BY THE VERY NEIGHBORS WHO BENEFIT MOST WHEN GOVERNMENT REMEMBERS ITS OWN RULES.

A MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY IN HIS OWN HOME.

## The Curtain Falls

AND SO, DEAR READER, THE MERRILL HAMLET DEFERRAL FOR RICO ROAD WAITS CONVENIENTLY ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE ELECTION — A DECISION DEFERRED UNTIL BALLOTS ARE COUNTED, CAMPAIGNS CONCLUDED, AND ACCOUNTABILITY SAFELY TUCKED AWAY.

NINE PHASES OF GROWTH, APPROVED ON PACKETS MISSING STUDIES, ETHICS CODES UNWRITTEN, PROCESSES IGNORED, AND ORDINANCES UNPREPARED — THIS IS THE LEGACY TAKING SHAPE WHILE THE PUBLIC IS TOLD TO CLAP POLITELY AND KEEP MOVING ALONG.

TO APPROVE SUCH SWEEPING CHANGE WITHOUT THE BEDROCK OF FULL RECORDS, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTIONS, AND REAL GOVERNANCE BENEATH IT? THAT IS NOT LEADERSHIP.

THAT IS GAMBLING WITH THE FUTURE OF CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS.

AND SO THE CRITICS CRY, “SHAME ON YOU, NOBLEMAN MITCHELL WOLFF,” FOR DOING THE UNTHINKABLE — DEMANDING FACTS BEFORE VOTES, LAW BEFORE CELEBRATIONS, AND PROCESS BEFORE POLITICS.

PERHAPS, DEAR READER, THE SHAME BELONGS ELSEWHERE.

UNTIL THE NEXT WHISPER,  
YOUR FAITHFUL OBSERVER IN CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS

# WHAT THE LAW SAYS ABOUT BALD EAGLES

For Readers of the Chattahoochee Quill — Edition No. 12

## FEDERAL PROTECTIONS

- Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) — 16 U.S.C. 668-668d
  - Prohibits “take” of bald and golden eagles — including killing, disturbing, or interfering with nests or habitat.
  - Nest protections apply *at all times* — even when nests are not in use.
  - Federal permits required for any disturbance within protected areas.
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) — 16 U.S.C. 703-712
  - Protects migratory birds (including bald eagles) from take, possession, or destruction of eggs and nests.
  - Violations can carry civil and criminal penalties.

## GEORGIA STATE PROTECTIONS

- Threatened Species Classification
  - Bald eagles remain listed as *threatened* in Georgia.
  - Active nests require a 330-foot buffer zone where development and human intrusion are restricted.
- Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Guidelines
  - Recommends coordination with Georgia DNR Wildlife Resources Division before any construction within eagle habitat.
  - Buffers may be expanded if topography, visibility, or noise conditions threaten nesting success.

## WHY IT MATTERS

If *bald eagles* nest on rezoned land:

- Environmental studies must document nest locations before any grading, clearing, or construction.
- Rezoning packets lacking this information raise not only civic questions — but potential legal liabilities for developers and the city.

UNTIL THE NEXT WHISPER,

YOUR FAITHFUL OBSERVER IN CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS

# The Chattahoochee Quill

Whispers from the Hills — Edition No. 13: The Hypocrisy of Neighborly Silence

Dearest Gentle Reader,

One might think that in the pleasant pastures of Serenbe, where the fences may not exceed six feet, the golf carts may not exceed fifteen miles an hour, and the porch lights must point politely downward by Dark Sky decree, speech itself would also enjoy a measure of neighborly civility.

Alas, reality offers something more... curated.

## Act I: The Vanishing Voices

First went a post about something as ordinary as the neighborhood pool, slipped quietly into the digital shadows as though chlorine itself were a subversive element.

Then, over on the Rants & Raves page — far livelier than the hushed halls of Serenbe’s own neighborhood page — came a resident proposing a “cage match” for local political debates. A jest, no doubt, but one that drew fifty-three applause, laughter, and even the approving “like” of his worship, the mayor himself.

“It is whispered, dear reader, that the property at Goode’s corner — land awaiting development, where the fence-line messages shift like weather vanes as the rezoning winds change — speaks louder than any post upon the page.”

Meanwhile, thoughtful criticism elsewhere disappears without a trace.

What determines what remains and what vanishes, dear reader? The rules offer no clarity. The pattern offers no comfort.

## Act II: The Fence at Goode’s Corner

At Goode’s corner, the banners speak before the residents do.

First came the bold declarations:

- “70/30 *Stay the Course*”
- “*Solutions Not Scare Tactics*”

But as rezoning debates swelled and open records began whispering inconvenient truths, the signs quietly vanished, replaced almost overnight with:

- “*Planning Not Panic*”
- “*Fear Divides Us, Facts Unite Us*”

Perhaps, dear reader, the fence simply reflects what the moderators enforce: change the message, keep the story tidy, carry on.

## Act III: Neighborliness, Selectively Applied

“Keep it neighborly,” they say. Yet neighborliness, it seems, now means:

- Celebrate expansions, galas, and curated anniversaries.

- Applaud the jesters and the cheerleaders.
- Post sunsets, puppies, ribbon-cuttings.

BUT QUESTION THE PROCESS? CRITIQUE THE PLAYERS? WHISPER TOO CLOSE TO THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS?

ONE MIGHT FIND ONE’S WORDS DISAPPEARING AS QUIETLY AS LAST SEASON’S REAL ESTATE LISTINGS.

## Act IV: The Uneven Broom

WE DO NOT YET CLAIM TO KNOW WHO SWEEPS OR WHY.

BUT WE NOTE, WITH GROWING INTEREST, THE ASYMMETRY: THE “LIKES” UPON JOKES AND JABS AIMED AT CRITICS; THE DELETIONS OF THOSE WHO QUESTION THE CROWNED HEADS OR ZONING FIEFDOMS; THE WARNINGS FOR SOME WHILE OTHERS REVEL IN RHETORICAL IMPUNITY.

NEIGHBORLINESS, IT SEEMS, IS LESS ABOUT MANNERS — AND MORE ABOUT MESSAGE.

## A CALL FOR RECEIPTS

To all residents:

- Save screenshots before posts vanish.
- Record timestamps when warnings arrive.
- Document deletions so the pattern can no longer hide behind silence.

FOR WITHOUT RECEIPTS, HYPOCRISY WEARS THE MASK OF MODERATION; WITH THEM, IT STANDS NAKED IN THE TOWN SQUARE, LEAVING EVERY READER TO ASK WHETHER SILENCE IS THE TRUEST MEASURE OF NEIGHBORLINESS — OR SIMPLY ITS MOST CONVENIENT DISGUISE.

“TAKE HEED, DEAR READER: THE SILENCE OF NEIGHBORLINESS MAY YET PROVE THE LOUDEST VOICE OF ALL.”

UNTIL THE NEXT WHISPER,  
YOUR FAITHFUL OBSERVER IN CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS

# The Chattahoochee Quill

Whispers from the Hills — Edition No. 15: Whose Land This Is

Thursday, September 25, 2025

Whose land this is, I think I know,  
The council's hands have made it so.  
They will not see me pausing here,  
To watch the signs of progress grow.

The packets came half-filled with haste,  
Deferrals masked, the questions faced.  
A vote postponed till ballots fall,  
Yet plans advance without a trace.

The sprayers came when summer burned,  
The bees, the streams, the pastures turned.  
The Conservancy spoke too late,  
While eagles nested, unconfirmed.

The neighbors whisper, "Keep it kind,"  
While critics meet a fate malignant.  
The louder truths the land could tell,  
Are lost to posts the mods declined.

So here we stand as autumn calls,  
Nine hamlets planned beyond these walls.  
Whose land this is, the future knows—  
The shame will rest where silence falls.

*—with apologies to Robert Frost,  
who knew the woods were lovely, dark, and deep...  
but also knew the promises we keep.*

UNTIL THE NEXT WHISPER,  
YOUR FAITHFUL OBSERVER IN CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS

# The Chattahoochee Quill

Whispers from the Hills — Edition No. 16: *The Man with the Hammer*

DEAREST GENTLE READER,

THERE ARE HAMMERS, AND THEN THERE ARE ANVILS.

LAST WEEK, UPON THE DIGITAL STAGE OF CHATT HILLS RANTS & RAVES, AN ANONYMOUS TROUPE STAGED A PERFORMANCE ENTITLED *A Man with a Hammer* — A TALE OF LAWSUITS, CHARACTER FLAWS, AND OMINOUS WARNINGS AIMED SQUARELY AT NOBLEMAN MITCHELL WOLFF.

WE NOTE WITH INTEREST THAT AMONG THE CHORUS BEHIND THIS LITTLE DRAMA STANDS A MAN OF THE BAR HIMSELF — A CITIZEN WHO SURELY KNOWS THAT REPUTATION, LIKE LIBERTY, OUGHT NOT TO BE ASSAULTED UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS.

## Act I: The Pattern They Pretend

THE POSTING STITCHED TOGETHER COURT FILINGS AND PUBLIC RECORDS, PRESENTING THEM AS THOUGH THEY REVEALED A MAN ADDICTED TO QUARREL RATHER THAN ONE DEFENDING HEALTH BENEFITS, WAGES, AND CONTRACTS AFTER A PARTNER’S RUINOUS MISMANAGEMENT.

The facts tell another story:

- In 2005, after a heart attack ended his full-time career, Mr. Wolff watched as his former business partner ran a once-profitable venture into the ground.
- When workers’ wages and health benefits teetered on the brink, Mr. Wolff turned to the courts — as the law permits, as contracts require, as justice demands.

TO WIELD THESE FILINGS NOW AS PROOF OF VILLAINY IS NOT MERELY DISHONEST; IT IS THEATRICAL MALICE DRESSED AS PUBLIC SERVICE.

Source Documents:

- Court Decision, *Wolff v. Former Partner* (PDF)
- Industrial Board of Appeals Ruling, NYS Dept. of Labor (Article)

## Act II: The Hammer & the Gavel

THAT A LAWYER JOINS THIS CHORUS — ANONYMOUSLY, NO LESS — LENDS THE AFFAIR BOTH IRONY AND INTRIGUE.

For he knows:

- That slander wears a thin disguise when facts are cut from context.
- That anonymity in civic discourse is the refuge of those unwilling to defend their words in daylight.

WE WILL NOT NAME HIM HERE. COWARDICE NEEDS NO MORE SPOTLIGHT THAN IT ALREADY CRAVES.

## Act III: The Real Erosion

WHAT CORRODES A CITY FASTER: INCOMPLETE REZONING PACKETS MISSING ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES? ETHICS CODES LEFT UNWRITTEN? A PERMITTING PROCESS THAT TREATS OVERSIGHT AS INSULT?



OR ONE MAN INSISTING, TOO FIRMLY FOR THE COMFORTABLE, THAT RULES MATTER?

YET HERE WE ARE: A FUNCTIONING CITY, IMPERFECT BUT REAL, NOW SPENDING ITS OXYGEN ON PERSONAL ATTACKS WHILE 9-PHASE HAMLETS RISE ON HALF-PREPARED GROUND.

The Curtain Falls

TAKE HEED, DEAR READER: WHEN GOSSIP REPLACES GOVERNANCE, WHEN LAWYERS LEND THEIR LEARNING TO SHADOWS RATHER THAN SUNLIGHT, WHEN ELECTIONS DROWN OUT ETHICS, THE CITY ITSELF BECOMES THE NAIL BENEATH THE HAMMER.

FOR THOSE WHO WISH THE TRUTH, THE RECORDS REMAIN. READ THEM. JUDGE FOR YOURSELF.

Editor’s Note -

AND TO THE WOULD-BE AUTHOR OF A MAN WITH A HAMMER — THE CHATTAHOOCHEE QUILL THANKS YOU FOR YOUR UNSOLICITED AUDITION.

CONSIDER THIS YOUR FORMAL NOTICE: YOU ARE HEREBY FIRED FOR CAUSE.

FOR HERE, EVEN UNDER THE SHELTER OF A QUILL, THE STANDARD HOLDS:  
FACTS OVER SLANDER. RECORDS OVER RUMOR. COURAGE OVER PETTY THEATRICALS.

ANONYMOUS WIT HAS ITS PLACE. ANONYMOUS MALICE HAS NONE.

UNTIL THE NEXT WHISPER,  
YOUR FAITHFUL OBSERVER IN CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS

Source Documents & Records

- Index No. 09-2279
- Attached PDF Wolff v. Hoffman et al
- Supreme Court of the State of New York, County of Ulster
- Honorable Mary M. Work, Assigned Justice

# The Chattahoochee Quill

Whispers from the Hills — Edition No. 17: **A Visitor in the Chamber**

Dearest Gentle Reader,

On August 5th, the Council Chamber welcomed a guest whose very presence tolled louder than any gavel: Fulton County Chairman Robb Pitts.

He did not arrive alone. Photos show him flanked by His Worship the Mayor, Lady Camille Lowe, and Lady Angela Addition — a tableau worth more than the staged smiles it produced.

For Pitts, no stranger to the levers of regional power, is not the sort to idle away an evening in a rural Council Chamber. His presence whispers of alignments and agendas larger than the room itself. And in a city where three-quarters of every property tax dollar flows to Fulton County or Fulton County Schools, his interest is neither casual nor charitable.

With rezoning decisions now on the books promising \$100 million in projected benefit to Fulton County, one wonders: was Pitts here to applaud, to anoint, or to ensure the wheels of growth remain well-oiled?

Until the next whisper,  
Your Faithful Observer in Chattahoochee Hills

Editor’s Notes: Who Is Robb Pitts?

- **Current Role:** Chairman, Fulton County Board of Commissioners (since 2017; reelected 2020, 2024).
- **Regional Power:**
  - Board Member, **Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)** — shaping long-range planning, transportation, and growth in metro Atlanta.
  - Board Member, **Aerotropolis Atlanta Alliance** — a coalition driving development around Hartsfield-Jackson Airport, linking Fulton County directly to major growth corridors.
- **Past Roles:**
  - President, Atlanta City Council (1997–2001)
  - Member, Atlanta City Council (1983–1997)
  - Vice Chair, Fulton County Board of Commissioners (2002–2014)
- **Development Stance:** A career-long **pro-development politician**, Pitts has consistently backed growth-oriented policies, positioning Fulton as a beneficiary of rezoning and infrastructure expansions.
- **Why It Matters:**
  - **Property Tax Reality:** Roughly ¾ of Chattahoochee Hills’ property tax revenues flow to Fulton County or its schools.
  - **Rezoning Windfall:** With the approval of recent rezonings, Fulton County stands to gain **\$100 million in projected benefits** — a fact that gives weight to Pitts’ August 5th appearance.

# THE CHATTAHOOCHEE QUILL

Whispers from the Hills — Edition No. 17: There Is Nothing to See Here... Except the Future of Chatt Hills

DEAREST GENTLE READER,

THEY SAY THERE IS “NOTHING TO SEE HERE.” YET THE PAPERWORK TELLS ANOTHER STORY. SERENBE’S OWN TRAFFIC STUDY, SUBMITTED AS PART OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL IMPACT (DRI) WITH ARC AND GRTA, IS CLEAR: THE GROWTH ENVISIONED WILL NOT FIT WITHIN CURRENT ROADS.

INSIDE SERENBE

THE TRAFFIC STUDY DOES NOT SIMPLY POINT TO THE 8 ROUNDABOUTS PROPOSED OUTSIDE THE GATES. IT ALSO FLAGS **internal intersections** THAT MUST BE RE-ENGINEERED TO HANDLE FLOW. EVEN SERENBE’S CAREFULLY PLANNED LANES CANNOT ABSORB THE NEW LOAD.

OUTSIDE SERENBE

BEYOND THE HAMLET BORDERS, INTERSECTIONS LIKE **Church & Toombs** — A REGIONAL ARTERY TO PALMETTO — ARE SWEEPED INTO THE STUDY. WHY? BECAUSE SERENBE’S GROWTH ALONE IS ENOUGH TO ALTER **regional traffic patterns, not just local ones.**

WHEN A SINGLE DEVELOPMENT FORCES A REWORK OF ROADS MILES BEYOND ITS BORDERS, IT IS NOT A NEIGHBORHOOD ISSUE. IT IS A REGIONAL ONE.

UNDERSTANDING THE CODES

FOR THE LAY PERSON, THE TRAFFIC STUDY USES “INTERSECTION CONTROL” CODES:

- **Signalized:** *Traffic lights required, not just signs.*
- **Roundabout (RAB):** *Continuous flow circle designed to reduce collisions, but costly to build and maintain.*
- **All-Way Stop (AWSC):** *Every direction stops — works at low volumes, fails under heavy load.*
- **Unsignalized:** *The least control, relying on stop or yield signs.*

WHEN THE STUDY CODES AN INTERSECTION FOR CHANGE, IT MEANS THE CURRENT ROAD DESIGN CANNOT SAFELY SUPPORT PROJECTED TRAFFIC.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

SOME ARGUE ONLY ABOUT THE ROUNDABOUTS — “DO WE LIKE THEM OR NOT?” BUT THAT MISSES THE FOREST FOR THE TREES. THE STUDY SHOWS SOMETHING LARGER:

- **Internal redesigns inside Serenbe**
- **Regional roads pulled into scope**
- **Nine new hamlets soon to follow**

THIS IS NO “minor tweak.” IT IS A **map of how Chatt Hills itself will be reshaped.**

NOT ONE VOICE — BUT MANY

“THIS IS NOT ABOUT ONE PERSON’S OPINION — THOUGH SOME WOULD LIKE YOU TO BELIEVE IT IS. IF ONLY TRAFFIC COULD BE VOTED AWAY ON FACEBOOK COMMENTS, HOW SIMPLE LIFE WOULD BE. EVERY CITIZEN HAS THE RIGHT — AND RESPONSIBILITY — TO REVIEW THE TRAFFIC STUDIES, SITE PLANS, AND GRTA FINDINGS FOR THEMSELVES.”

IF YOU STOP AT “ROUNDAABOUTS ARE BAD,” YOU MISS THE WARNING THAT OUR ENTIRE ROAD NETWORK IS BEING REWRITTEN.

A CALL TO ACTION

- SHOW UP.
- READ THE DOCUMENTS.
- ASK THE QUESTIONS.
- AND LET YOUR PRESENCE BE FELT.

SILENCE IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS TODAY WILL ECHO FOR DECADES ON OUR ROADS TOMORROW. FOR THIS DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL IMPACT IS NOT A MINOR REZONING, NOT A SINGLE ROUNDABOUT, NOT A SIMPLE ADJUSTMENT TO TRAFFIC FLOW. IT IS A **course correction for our entire city**. ONCE APPROVED, IT SETS CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS ON A TRAJECTORY THAT WILL SHAPE OUR ROADS, OUR NEIGHBORHOODS, AND OUR WAY OF LIFE FOR DECADES TO COME.

COUNCIL CHAMBERS SHOULD NOT ECHO WITH SILENCE WHILE OTHERS DECIDE YOUR FUTURE. IF YOU WANT A CITY PREPARED FOR WHAT LIES AHEAD, IT BEGINS WITH YOUR VOICE IN THE ROOM.

FACT BOX: WHY A DRI MATTERS

A DRI is triggered when a development exceeds state-set thresholds. Examples in Georgia’s rules:

- **Residential: 500+ new homes or lots**
- **Commercial: 400,000+ sq. ft. retail/commercial space**
- **Office: 400,000+ sq. ft. office space**
- **Industrial: 500,000+ sq. ft. warehouse/industrial use**
- **Mixed-use: Any project with multiple categories above threshold**

SERENBE’S EXPANSION INCLUDES:

- **1,100 new residential units (triggered — more than double the threshold)**
- **235,000 sq. ft. commercial space**
- **75,000 sq. ft. civic space (schools + community buildings)**
- **180 hotel rooms**

BECAUSE IT CROSSES MULTIPLE CATEGORIES, THE SERENBE DRI AUTOMATICALLY TRIGGERS STATE OVERSIGHT AND MANDATORY TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND INFRASTRUCTURE STUDIES.

IN PLAIN TERMS: A DRI IS THE STATE’S WAY OF SAYING, “THIS PROJECT IS TOO BIG TO IGNORE — YOU MUST PROVE IT WON’T OVERWHELM YOUR NEIGHBORS, YOUR ROADS, OR YOUR ENVIRONMENT.”

RECEIPTS & CITATIONS

- [Serenbe DRI Traffic Study \(Sept 2025, PDF\)](#)
- [GRTA Letter of Understanding \(May 2025, PDF\)](#)
- [Serenbe DRI Site Plan \(Jan 2025, PDF\)](#)
- [Traffic Counts \(Appendix C\)](#)

UNTIL THE NEXT WHISPER,  
YOUR FAITHFUL OBSERVER IN CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS — A NEIGHBOR WHO READS THE DOCUMENTS, WALKS THESE ROADS, AND BELIEVES SUNLIGHT IS THE BEST SAFEGUARD FOR OUR CITY’S FUTURE.

# The Chattahoochee Quill

Whispers from the Hills — Edition No. 17: “The Quiet Taking”

Dearest Gentle Reader,

There are days when the hills seem to hold their breath.  
When what once was neighborly becomes strategic,  
and when the sound of laughter on the wind gives way to whispers of war.

Just a day ago, the people of Chattahoochee Hills gathered for the annual Memorial Barbecue — a simple, beautiful thing: neighbors breaking bread, remembering life, and raising funds for scholarships in the name of those who came before.

It was a moment of what this place once was —  
a community bound not by politics, but by purpose.

Now, even that quiet spirit feels under siege.  
Even our corners of fellowship have been turned into campaigns.

## Act I: The Hollowing

The land has always spoken here.  
It told the first families where to build,  
where the soil was kindest to the roots,  
where the oaks would stand against time.

But now its voice is muffled —  
beneath surveys, filings, and hands that weigh its worth in square footage.  
What was once community has become commodity.  
And those who would speak for it are met with cameras, recordings,  
and the cold precision of those who trade legacy for leverage.

## Act II: The Quiet Hand Behind the Code

The same hands that praise “sustainability” now draw the lines that erase legacies.  
They call it progress — but progress for whom?  
  
For the restaurateur-turned-developer whose fortune grows with every rezoning...  
  
For the county coffers promised millions from hamlets still unbuilt?  
Or for those who walk these roads,  
knowing the forest once had their name carved into its oaks?

## Act III: The Reckoning of Legacy

This is not about parties or platforms.  
It is about preservation — of spirit as much as soil.  
The hills were never meant to be subdivided into soundbites.

THEY BELONG TO THOSE WHO STILL HEAR THE WHIPPOORWILL AT DUSK  
AND KNOW THAT STEWARDSHIP IS OLDER THAN ZONING.

AND YET, WITH EACH DEFERRAL, EACH “UNIFIED” CODE,  
WE MOVE FURTHER FROM THE VERY PRINCIPLES THAT ONCE HELD THIS LAND IN TRUST.

## Act IV: The Curtain of Irony

IT IS IRONIC, ISN’T IT?  
THAT UNDER THE PROMISE OF “PRESERVING OUR RURAL CHARACTER,”  
WE HAVE BEEN DENIED THE RIGHT TO PRESERVE OUR OWN FAMILIES.  
THAT A “UNIFIED” DEVELOPMENT CODE UNIFIES ONLY THE DEVELOPERS.  
THAT THE WORD INTENTION APPEARS IN EVERY MARKETING BROCHURE,  
BUT NOT IN A SINGLE VARIANCE FOR THE PEOPLE WHO BUILT THIS PLACE.

## The Curtain Falls

DEAR READER,  
THIS ELECTION IS NO LONGER ABOUT SLOGANS.  
IT IS ABOUT WHO WILL OWN THE STORY OF CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS —  
THOSE WHO LIVE IT,  
OR THOSE WHO LEVERAGE IT.

THE HILLS REMEMBER.  
THEY REMEMBER WHEN STEWARDSHIP MEANT SACRIFICE, NOT SPECULATION.  
THEY REMEMBER WHO TILLED THE SOIL,  
AND WHO TILLS THE ZONING CODE.

AND WHEN THE LAST ROUNDABOUT IS BUILT,  
AND THE LAST FAMILY FENCED OFF,  
PERHAPS THEN THE HILLS WILL WHISPER:  
“THEY CALLED IT PRESERVATION.  
WE CALLED IT LOSS.”

UNTIL THE NEXT WHISPER,  
YOUR FAITHFUL OBSERVER IN CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS

(And for those who mock anonymous pens — remember: the Federalist Papers were written in secret, too. Not to hide the truth, but to protect it until the country was ready to hear it.)

# The Chattahoochee Quill

Whispers from the Hills — Edition No. 20: The Reckoning at City Hall

Dearest Gentle Reader,

Last night, the Council chambers shook — not from debate, but from fury. Neighbors filled the room, voices sharp and unforgiving, as Councilman Richie Schmidt stood once again to apologize for words already dragged, dissected, and printed across the front page of the AJC.

It was not forgiveness that filled the air — it was theater. Cameras rolled. Allies of a mayoral campaign that has made development its north star leaned forward to savor the spectacle. Civility was the costume; punishment, the play.

## Act I: The Pound of Flesh

The crowd came not merely to listen but to judge. And though contrition was offered, it was never enough. Vitriol replaced reason; righteousness replaced reflection. In a city that once prided itself on community, we witnessed a trial without a bench — and verdicts handed down by applause.

## Act II: The Hidden Stage

Do not be fooled, dear reader. This was never about one man’s words. This is about power — and who will hold the pen that redraws our map. The campaign now roaring through Chatt Hills is not waged in the name of unity, but in pursuit of expansion. The developer’s road is paved with promises, and the chorus has been paid to sing. The goal is simple: a council of Yes-Men to wave through the next Hamlet applications, the next Serenbe traffic study, the next reshaping of what once was rural soul into suburban sprawl.

## Act III: The Unseen Reports

Amid the outrage, two quieter truths slipped by:

- The audit report confirmed what citizens long suspected — the city is not broke!
- The police report confirmed something darker — our safety and traffic concerns are real.

Yet these revelations barely earned a nod. The anger was too useful to those who prefer distraction over accountability.

## Act IV: The Crossroads

The ballots are coming. This election is not about personalities; it is about preservation. Do we remain a city that believes in process, balance, and protection of legacy — or do we become a staging ground for those who see our land as inventory?

THE CHOICE IS NOT BETWEEN CANDIDATES; IT IS BETWEEN A COMMUNITY THAT GOVERNS ITSELF AND ONE THAT SELLS ITSELF.

The Curtain Falls

WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS IS A “CITY LIKE NO OTHER.”  
IF THAT IS STILL TRUE, THEN LET IT BE BECAUSE OUR PEOPLE REFUSED TO BE DIVIDED BY THOSE WHO PROFIT FROM DIVISION.  
LET IT BE SAID THAT WHEN THE LIGHTS BURNED HOTTEST AND TEMPERS FLARED LOUDEST, CITIZENS DID NOT WALK AWAY — THEY SHOWED UP, READ THE STUDIES, AND RECLAIMED THE STORY.

Editor’s Note

THE CHATTAHOOCHEE QUILL WAS BORN FROM THE CONVICTION THAT TRUTH DESERVES A WITNESS — ESPECIALLY WHEN POWER PREFERS SILENCE.  
WE DO NOT TRADE IN GOSSIP OR ALLEGIANCE, BUT IN OBSERVATION AND RECORD.  
WHAT HAPPENS IN THESE HILLS MATTERS — NOT BECAUSE IT IS LOUD, BUT BECAUSE IT IS OURS.  
  
UNTIL THE NEXT WHISPER,  
YOUR FAITHFUL OBSERVER IN CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS



# The Chattahoochee Quill

Whispers from the Hills — Special Edition No. 21: The October Surprise

Dearest Gentle Reader,

Autumn came early to Chattahoochee Hills — not in color, but in character. It wasn't the maples turning crimson this October; it was the politics.

The small-town charm we once claimed with pride has curdled into a campaign season where moral outrage passes for civic virtue and neighborly discourse has been replaced with digital duels.

Suddenly, everyone is a judge. Everyone is a journalist. And everyone seems certain that their voice is the only one that deserves to be heard.

## Act I: The Surprise Beneath the Slogans

The real October surprise wasn't found on a ballot — it was on the message boards. Citizens, candidates, and self-appointed commentators unleashed a torrent of “truths” and “gotchas,” convinced that moral superiority could be proven in pixels. Freedom of speech was weaponized into freedom from consequence.

And for those who dared to speak against the favored narrative, the verdict was swift: You don't pay enough taxes to have an opinion. You're from the hills — not the hamlet.

Translation: Your voice is expendable.

## Act II: Privilege in Plain Sight

Yes, dear reader, they said the quiet part out loud. Those who pay “the bulk of the taxes” decided they should also set the terms of democracy — as if stewardship of the land and lineage of the soil no longer matter in a city built by those very hands.

And while many were distracted by slogans and scandals, something far older stirred beneath it all. In the dim light of public meetings and the bright glare of social feeds, we quietly witnessed the unmasking of a political machine — one polished, well-funded, and perfectly timed. It wears the face of civility, yet moves with the precision of ambition. It speaks of community, yet whispers of control.

Perhaps they've forgotten that democracy isn't a luxury brand — it's a birthright. And yet here we are, waiting the “comp plan” paraded like a public listening session, when in truth, the ears are already closed. Public input has become a performance; decisions are scripted long before the curtain rises.

## Act III: Receipts in the Cloud

They posted their thoughts boldly — on the great public record we call the Internet. And while their words may fade from timelines, they will not fade from memory.

WE HAVE KEPT THE SCREENSHOTS, THE STATEMENTS, THE RECEIPTS.

SOMEDAY, WHEN THE SPIN QUIETS AND THE CAMPAIGNS COLLAPSE INTO HISTORY, WE WILL REMEMBER EXACTLY WHO SAID WHAT.

BECAUSE IN THE END, IT IS NOT THE TAXES PAID THAT DETERMINE WORTH — IT IS THE INTEGRITY SPENT.

## The Curtain Falls

CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS STANDS DIVIDED NOT BY GEOGRAPHY, BUT BY GRATITUDE.

SOME STILL SEE THIS PLACE AS A PROMISE TO KEEP; OTHERS, AS AN ASSET TO FLIP.

AND THOUGH THEY MAY TELL US TO “MOVE ALONG, NOTHING TO SEE HERE,”

WE REMAIN — WATCHING, RECORDING, REMEMBERING.

## Editor’s Note: On Speech and Civility

The Chattahoochee Quill believes in the sacred right of free speech — the same right that protects dissent as surely as it protects applause.

But rights are not the same as righteousness.

The First Amendment guarantees that we may speak without fear of government reprisal.

It does not promise that speech will be free of consequence, nor that it should be wielded like a weapon against our neighbors.

Decorum, by contrast, is not a law — it is a choice.

It is the decision to argue a point without poisoning the well, to differ without degrading, and to remember that behind every opinion stands a person who must still share this soil when the shouting stops.

Let it never be said that Chattahoochee Hills forgot how to disagree with grace.

For when we lose that, we lose more than elections — we lose each other.

UNTIL THE NEXT WHISPER,

— THE EDITORS OF THE CHATTAHOOCHEE QUILL

# The Chattahoochee Quill

Whispers from the Hills — Sunday Edition No. 21: The Quiet Before the Vote

Dearest Gentle Reader,

It has been unusually quiet in the hills.  
Too quiet.

A week from now, the ballots will speak — but the silence already says plenty.  
It is the stillness of calculation, not calm.  
The hush that comes when deals are made in back rooms, when tickets are “reserved,” and  
when the storylines have been scripted before the curtain ever rises.

## Act I: The Theater of Control

They say every voice matters — yet somehow, the rural seats were taken before the play  
began.  
The citizens who built this city’s foundation were told there was no room left in the hall.  
The League of Women Voters’ debate — meant to be open to all — became another gated  
event in a town already carved by invisible fences.  
And the darling of the developer smiled from center stage: polished, prepared, perfectly in  
line.  
District 4’s favorite daughter of the growth machine.

Meanwhile, her anointed heir smiled politely — his résumé a fraction the length and none  
of the depth of his opponent’s.  
Not worthy of our vote, they whisper, because... “he’s from New Jersey.”

## Act II: The Echo of Conscience

First came the disingenuous olive branch —  
from the man who once yelled “rumble,” and now asks residents to tell him stories about  
what makes Chattahoochee Hills special.  
It was a curious invitation — nostalgia offered in place of accountability.  
You cannot summon unity from the same stage where you set the fires burning.  
Then came another voice —  
the one that not long ago called hill country residents “yahoos,”  
as if the measure of belonging were written in property lines or tax bills.

Now that same voice pleads for speed bumps in Spela,  
suddenly concerned with safety, suddenly aware that unchecked growth has consequences.  
He wonders aloud if his new Hamlet should come first —  
as if the rest of us haven’t been asking for the same protections all along.

Get in line, he says.  
Funny — we already are.

## Act III: The Machinery at Work

THE CAMPAIGN’S DIGITAL FINGERPRINTS ARE EVERYWHERE:  
RANDOM FRIEND REQUESTS, ODD MESSAGES, QUIET CALLS ASKING, “HOW ARE YOU VOTING?”

THEY CALL IT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.  
WE CALL IT SURVEILLANCE OF THE SOUL.

AND IN CITY HALL, THE CLOCK TICKS TOWARD DECEMBER 2ND —  
THE FINAL MEETING FOR A LAME-DUCK COUNCIL THAT HAS FORGOTTEN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN  
SERVING THE CITIZENS AND SELLING THE CITY.

WILL THEY USE THEIR REMAINING TIME TO RESTORE TRUST?  
OR TO PAVE ONE LAST ROAD TO THE DEVELOPERS’ DOOR?

The Curtain Falls

IT MAY LOOK CALM FROM THE OUTSIDE,  
BUT ANYONE WHO HAS LIVED THROUGH A SOUTHERN SUMMER KNOWS:  
THE AIR GROWS STILL RIGHT BEFORE THE STORM.

ELECTION DAY WILL NOT JUST MEASURE CANDIDATES.  
IT WILL MEASURE CHARACTER —  
OURS, THEIRS, AND THE CITY’S.

Editor’s Note: On the Right to Listen

THE RIGHT TO SPEAK IS SACRED — BUT SO TOO IS THE RIGHT TO LISTEN.  
WHEN A CITY BEGINS TO DECIDE WHO MAY ENTER THE ROOM, WHO MAY ASK THE QUESTIONS, AND WHO  
MAY SIT QUIETLY AND SIMPLY HEAR, IT IS NO LONGER A CITY OF CITIZENS.  
IT BECOMES A STAGE FOR ACTORS PLAYING DEMOCRACY WHILE THE AUDIENCE WAITS OUTSIDE.

FREE SPEECH IS NOT JUST THE PRIVILEGE OF THOSE WITH MICROPHONES AND MEDIA.  
IT BELONGS EQUALLY TO THE FARMER WHO CAN’T GET A TICKET TO THE DEBATE,  
TO THE MOTHER WHO ASKS WHY WE ARE TOLERATING THE CHEMICAL SPRAYING,  
TO THE COUNCIL CRITIC WHO DARES TO READ THE ORDINANCES OUT LOUD.

A DEMOCRACY THAT FEARS ITS OWN LISTENERS HAS ALREADY FORGOTTEN HOW TO LEAD.

SO AS ELECTION DAY NEARS, REMEMBER — SILENCE IS NOT PEACE.  
IT IS THE PAUSE BEFORE THE PEOPLE SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES.

Receipts: Election Timeline & Council Calendar

- Election Day: Tuesday, November 4, 2025
- Next Council Meeting: Noveber 6<sup>th</sup> & December 2, 2025 — final sessions for the current council
- Open Records Window: Requests for DRI, ethics, or rezoning documents may be filed at any time with the City Clerk
- Chattahoochee Hills City Charter: mandates council ethics review and public participation in all zoning processes
- Your Voice: Every citizen may attend, speak, and submit written comment before any final development vote.

UNTIL THE NEXT WHISPER,  
YOUR FAITHFUL OBSERVER IN CHATTAHOOCHEE HILLS