

Comments to BOC 05 06 08

Lee Becker
1050 Scott Terrace
Athens (Oconee County)
706 548 1525

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Commission:

The decisions that this Board makes affect the lives of citizens of Oconee County in many and profound ways.

These decisions affect the water we drink, the air we breath, the roads we travel, what happens to our waste, where we can shop, what we can drink at our restaurants, the places we go for recreation, the churches we attend, the quality of our schools, and much, much more.

You know these things. I know these things. The people who turn out at these meetings know these things.

Unfortunately, not enough people come to these meetings, and not enough people know what happens in this chamber.

The cynic says these people don't care. I think the cynics are wrong.

When I talk to people in my neighborhood, I find them intensely interested in schools, taxes, shopping, roads, recreation, and the other issues discussed here.

These people live busy lives. They have demands on their time from their families, their churches, and their jobs.

These things keep them from being involved in the goings on of this Board. They do not attend meetings.

Frankly, they should not have to.

This County should be making it possible for its citizens to know what is going on in these chambers by telecasting the meetings, by webcasting them, and by making them available as video on demand.

Athens-Clarke County does this. Sandi Turner, who is in charge of these activities, tells me that there is much evidence the citizens use these methods of staying informed about their

government.

Surveys show this, she said, as does informal feedback.

In addition, Ms. Turner said that in the first 14 months that Athens-Clarke had webcast and offered video on demand, it had nearly 9,000 downloads or views.

Yesterday I talked to Kevin Little, chairman of the Walton BOC, and he told me Walton County plans to begin webcasting its meetings in July. It has used delayed telecasts in the past, and it may do so again in the future, he said.

I talked with a clerk in the Commission office in Barrow County yesterday as well, and she told me Barrow currently is discussing the launch of webcasts of its Commission meetings.

Oconee County should be a leader here. It should be reaching out to its citizens, engaging them in the important work of this Board.

Videocasting the BOC meetings would have a second benefit. At present, the written minutes of the work of this Board often do not reflect the questions that are asked, the conversations that are held, or the rationale behind the decisions that are made.

A video record would be a complete record of the work of this Board.

To better involve the citizens of this County in the work of its government and to create a more complete record of that work, I ask this Board to take action immediately to begin telecasting and webcasting its meetings and to create video on demand of those same meetings.

Thank you.