By Evelyn Fallon

Bryan County News

In January, Richmond Hill’s Carter Infinger stepped into a new role for the county. After serving six years as Bryan County Commissioner for District 4, he went all in for the opportunity to serve as chair for the county commission.

Infinger is a full-time pharmaceutical sales representative who strives to carry the load of career, husband to wife Karen of 27 years and father to daughters Leah and Caroline. A dainging chairman to his list of responsibilities has been no easy task.

Infinger is fresh off the planning, preparation and recovery phases for the state’s second major hurricane in three years. He said he is proud of the efforts that went into making this process smoother and knowing there’s a structure in place that has room to improve on many fronts.

Infinger was born and raised in Charleston, South Carolina, and obtained a business degree from Berry College before moving to the area for a job with his role as chairman. He recognizes that the organization must grow and expand with the increasing population within its borders.

The company also began the planning, preparation, and recovery phases for the state’s second major hurricane in three years. The delegation was there and people knew what their role was expected to play.

Everyone had their role and they did an excellent job. Carter Infinger answers this week’s questions.

Q: How do you feel the county responded to handling Hurricanes Matthew and Irma?

Infinger explained, “Ben Taylor, county administration and Freddy Howell, Bryan County Emergency Services fire chief made sure the appropriate people were in place.”

“The National Guard showed up the Friday before Irma and did not deploy until Tuesday. The phone lines were activated in advance. There was 35-40 pieces of equipment strategically placed around the county and ready to go. Fifty to 60 people also strategically placed and ready to move out as needed,” he continued.

“Once we had everything in place, we were so much more prepared for this hurricane compared to Matthew.”

A: For the most part, we were prepared. We learned a lot from Hurricane Matthew. We knew a lot about damage, and locals were able to get back to life and business soon after Hurricane Irma.

County leaders are still waiting on official data on the estimated cost incurred is still unknown. “There was 400-man hours dedicated to Hurricane Irma,” he explained. “We do our part and want to see this community come together in all scenarios. I want people to know what goes on behind the scenes. We are thinking about so many details when planning the processes to prepare, endure and recover from these types of situations.”

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We have a good community. Bryan County is the 22nd fastest-growing county in the state of Georgia, as of six months ago,” he said. “We are a blank can- vas. We all have a chance to steer and make this community better and better.”

“We can’t stop the growth, so we must try to make it as positive as possible. It’s hard to do. People don’t always understand the factors going into the decisions. We are all puzzle pieces. We are all experts in certain areas. At the end of the day, we must bring our expertise together to craft the big picture, or puzzle if you will, and bring out the best of the community.”

A few months off from closure with FEMA and dealing with Hurricane Matthew, Hurricane Irma came with a “spaghetti model” and a list of unknowns.

This time, community leaders took a different approach and began the preparation phase with full intentions of putting key figures, equipment and plans in place as quickly as possible before the storm hit.

Unlike with Matthew, FEMA, two different units of the National Guard and the National Weather Service were in place before Irma hit the area.

“FEMA was there and people knew what their role was expected to play. Everyone had their role and they did an excellent job,” he said.

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Q: What’s your name and current job title?

A: Ben Taylor, county administrator

Q: How has Carter Infinger impacted the county with his role as chair?

A: Moving forward, do you see areas of improvement?

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“So much went into being prepared. So many people don’t realize how much goes into this,” Infinger said.

Along with these efforts was the BCES Black Hawk that was placed in city limits to serve as the city command center. The sheer undertaking of getting people and equipment in place was only half the battle.

“Even down to considering what we were feeding everyone, we were so much more prepared for this hurricane compared to Matthew.”

“We are fortunate, many counties are still dealing with the aftermath of this,” he said.

Like Irma, the county’s future also holds many unknowns — growth, schools, infrastructure, roads, policies and procedures, recreation and more.

Infinger said he feels responsible for seeing a long-term plan for the county.

“We have to think big. We need to establish standards for builders, business owners and locals that are fair,” he said. “We need to work on finding a happy medium. This county can be anything we want it to be. It’s a blank slate right now.”