

Life on the hill

BRYAN COUNTY NEWS

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County Administrator – Ben Taylor

Facing the Challenges of Growth in Bryan County – Leaving a Footprint



Photos provided

Ben pictured with wife Sarah, a 3rd grade teacher at McAllister Elementary.

By Evelyn Fallon
Bryan County News

Ben Taylor, county administrator, husband and father of three, has spent the last 14 years devoted to public administration. As a boy, Taylor grew up in Sylvester, Georgia with his brother and parents, both retired teachers. It was the influence of his father and his involvement in local politics that really sparked the public administration interest for Taylor, who now leads an estimated 300 county employees.

He said he accepts the challenges ahead and is grateful for the chance to make a mark and leave his footprint right here in Bryan County.

After graduating from the University of Georgia in 2000 with a degree in political science, Taylor transitioned to Georgia Southern University, where he finished up in 2002 with a master's in public administration. It was during his time at GSU, he met Sarah. The two wed in 2004.

After graduation, they found themselves in

Ashburn, Georgia, where Taylor took his first job as city manager for the city of Ashburn.

At 25, this was an amazing opportunity and kick started his plans to work in public administration. It was also in Ashburn that Ben and Sarah welcomed their three boys; Colton, 9, Chase, 5 and Colby, 3.

Their sons were a big reason the Taylors decided to take the job in Bryan County.

"We had the opportunity to move here and we knew it had a great family atmosphere. We looked at school systems all over the coast, Richmond Hill and Bryan County schools initially brought my attention to it. Not every place in Georgia, especially Southeast Georgia, has the economic opportunity that we have here. If we had stayed in Ashburn our kids would have been in private schools," said Taylor.

On Aug. 1, 2014, Taylor was appointed as county administrator in Bryan County.

From managing a city with 65 employees to now leading estimated 300 county workers, Taylor has had a wide variety of experiences and recognizes the value in having an opportunity to plan and prepare for the changes expected to come in the county.

Taylor's biggest supporter is wife Sarah.

"Sarah has been around since the beginning. To run the city at 25, thank God I got through it. I was thrown into the fire. She is my

rock and so is my family. In the community and in this county, we are lucky to have the commissioners we have. They have been a great support system too. They initially saw a need, cast the vision they wanted and set all this into motion," Taylor said.

With a community that is growing at a rapid and record pace, Taylor believes some of the issues facing Bryan County are a retiring workforce, transportation, and schools quickly reaching capacity.

The county is focusing on staffing up and making sure they are developing the right team to face the sobering statistics ahead, in regards to these issues. Richmond Hill and Bryan County recently teamed up to supply new data on the usage of roadways in the area. Those in the community already see a change in flow of traffic and how it impacts one's ability to navigate through town. Change is coming, and the county is working to put plans in place to make the growth as smooth as possible.

"We want to meet the expectations of our citizens," said Taylor.

2017 is going to be a big year with ESPLOST

renewal voting coming up in November and a TSPLOST vote in 2018. Both will impact the ability to focus on transportation and schools. One of the greatest challenges faced by the county is assembling the right team. Human resources have been vital and having someone who recruits talent has been a new and key component to the process. "We now we have a really good planner, we are able to conceptualize what we need and implement it," Taylor said.

Chairman Carter Infinger along with commissioners Noah Covington, District 1; Wade Price, District 2; Steve Myers, District 3; Brad Brookshire, District 4; and Rick Gardner of District 5 decide policy.

One of the greatest blessings for Taylor has been having the ability to leave a footprint. "Being able to create something out of nothing is a blessing. My biggest joy is watching this team come together and meet the demands upon us. We have a lot of projects over the next few years, we are going to be very busy. It is a very important time, the team we develop and direction we go is crucial for the county as we move forward," Taylor said.

The administrator's office is responsible for the implementation of all policies, programs, contracts, ordinances, and resolutions as approved and directed by the Bryan County Board of Commissioners. This office performs the administrative functions of the government, which support the activities of the Commissioners. Bryan County's day-to-day operations are overseen by the Administrator, who is appointed by the Commission. The administrator directs the staff of Bryan County to effectively perform all responsibilities of government under his or her control, in order to fulfill the mission of our county government. The administrator is also responsible for the preparation of the annual operating budget, and various capital budgets, which fund the services provided by the Board of Commissioners and many elected Constitutional Officers.



The Taylor's taking a moment to pause for a picture at the 2016 Christmas Parade.

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Q/A WITH CARTER INFINGER



Photo provided

Carter Infinger

Q: What is your name and current job title?

A: Carter Infinger- Chairman of the Board- Bryan County Commissioners

Q: When did you first meet Ben Taylor?

A: I met Ben during our search for a new county administrator.

Q: How have you

seen his leadership impact the county?

A: Ben has a great impact on our county because of his diverse background and his education. He is beginning to bring our county into the future by implementing the latest technology so that our county can run more efficiently This will save our residents in the long run

Q: What are some of the greatest challenges lying ahead for the county?

A: Our greatest challenge is growth. How are we going to pay for infrastructure, where is our water supply coming from and what are our long-range plans for Bryan County. It's like a puzzle and all the pieces must fit together. Ben is responsible for making sure those pieces fit

together. He will achieve this by working closely with his Department heads making sure they are an expert on their piece of that puzzle.

Q: What makes County Administrator, Ben Taylor an asset to the future of the county?

A: Ben has a master's degree and this is one of the reasons we hired him. He's quiet, but he is always listening and trying to solve the problems in the county. His experience as a city manager also makes him an asset because he can help both Richmond Hill and Pembroke, when needed to help the whole county solve issues. Under Ben's leadership the future of Bryan County is in good hands.

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