

# Open Line

## A Monthly Newsletter for City of Auburn Citizens

October 2013

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City of Auburn



### Setting the Record Straight: Tax Referendum

With the special school tax referendum requested by Auburn City Schools drawing near, many of you are receiving conflicting information online, on the airwaves, and even in your mailbox. Last month's Open Line provided a guide to the facts behind the upcoming property tax referendum. This month, we'll address some of the specific questions many of you are asking, with the goal of giving you the factual information you need to make an informed decision at the polls on September 24<sup>th</sup>.

#### Q: If the referendum passes, how much will my property taxes increase?

A: Auburn residents currently pay 54 mills in ad valorem taxes. The Auburn City Board of Education is asking Auburn residents to vote to increase local property taxes from 54 mills to 63 mills (a 9 mill increase), which is approximately a 17% increase. The property tax increase would impact all real and personal property, including commercial and residential property and motor vehicles.

To estimate how much the property tax on your residence would increase, you can visit <http://www.auburnalabama.org/elections> and use the property tax calculator. In general, a 9 mill property tax increase will cost the average Auburn homeowner approximately \$16 a month, or \$193 a year, based on the 2012 average home price in Auburn of \$214,673. Commercial property owners would see approximately a \$1,800 increase a year per million dollars of property owned.

#### Q: Why doesn't the Auburn City Board of Education issue a bond instead of raising property taxes?

A: Auburn City Schools will issue a bond to pay for the new high school. Bonds are a form of debt and must be paid back over time just like a mortgage. The property tax increase will be used to pay for the debt incurred by issuing a bond.

#### Q: Why is a tax increase necessary to build a new school?

A: As part of Auburn City Schools' plan to manage enrollment growth, four new elementary schools have been built since 1998 and primary schools have been realigned to make the best possible use of existing facilities. The next phase of the plan will deal with secondary schools as Auburn High School, Auburn Junior High School and J.F. Drake Middle School are currently reaching capacity. To build a new high school (the fifth new school in less than twenty years), perform maintenance on aging facilities and realign secondary facilities, additional funding is needed.

#### Q: Why a property tax?

A: If the property tax referendum passes, 100% of the revenue will go directly to Auburn City Schools. A property tax provides a dedicated,

- Auburn City Schools has experienced **continuous enrollment increases** for 17 years
- Since **1998, four elementary facilities have been constructed** and a realignment of grades was implemented with the new school year
- Auburn High School, Auburn Junior High School and J. F. Drake Middle School are **reaching capacity**
- Growth of Auburn City Schools requires a **long-term solution**, not a series of continual short-term fixes
- These needs require additional local revenue to maintain the **quality of education** this community expects

Source: Auburn City Schools presentation to Council

local revenue source for the schools that is more stable than sales tax, and therefore more appropriate and reliable for paying the long term debt service on the bonds issued to build a new high school.

### **Q: What happens if the property tax referendum doesn't pass?**

A: State funding lags behind enrollment growth and the City of Auburn already provides almost \$10 million a year in funding to Auburn City Schools. If the property tax referendum fails, Auburn City Schools will have to re-allocate existing resources to meet the demands of enrollment growth. This would include considering cuts to programs including bus routes, teachers, art and music programs, athletic programs and even academic programs. Student-teacher ratios would increase and "portable" classrooms would have to be considered as the school system's existing resources would have to be re-allocated to meet the demands of enrollment growth. Auburn City Schools representatives have said that "without additional local funds, programs that make ACS unique will be in jeopardy," and that it would be difficult to maintain the quality of education for which Auburn City Schools is known.

For more information on this tax referendum and the Auburn City Schools plan, please visit <http://www.auburnalabama.org/elections>.

- Auburn City Schools is the **fastest growing district** in Alabama over the last 5 years
- In the **last 5 years**, ACS has grown by **1,697 students**
- In the **last 10 years**, ACS has grown by **2,796 students**
- In the next 10 years, Auburn City Schools is **projected to grow by 2,919 students**

Source: Auburn City Schools presentation to Council

## **Setting the Record Straight: Police Allegations**

In July, there was a brief focus by an online media outlet on the Auburn Police Division, after allegations of arrest and ticket quotas were made by a former Auburn Police officer. Some media outlets reported these allegations as fact, including the allegation that a police officer was fired for speaking out about quotas. Radio ads running in opposition to the upcoming property tax referendum have repeated these allegations.

Auburn City Manager Charles M. Duggan, Jr. released a statement in response to the allegations, available on the City's home page at <http://www.auburnalabama.org>. The essential facts on this issue are:

1. The City of Auburn and Auburn Police Division have a long standing policy that there are no quotas for police "contacts."
2. In 2012, a police supervisor in a briefing did suggest a specific number of contacts should be made by police officers. When several police officers informed former Police Chief Tommy Dawson of the briefing, he took action to correct the perception that a quota was required and to make it clear to supervisors that they should not communicate a required number of contacts.
3. The former police officer making these allegations was not fired for speaking out against quotas. Other officers who reported the briefing are still on the police force.

"The Auburn Police Division is made up of quality officers who are men and women of integrity," said Auburn City Manager Charles M. Duggan, Jr. "The real damage done by these false allegations is that they make it more difficult for good officers to do their job since some people will simply assume that the allegations are true. Whether Auburn residents will support the needs of Auburn City Schools in this property tax vote is, and should be, a completely separate issue."

## MEETING SCHEDULE OCTOBER

- 1 Parks & Recreation Advisory Board**, 5:15 p.m., Harris Center, 425 Perry Street  
**Committee of the Whole**, 6:55 p.m., Council Chamber, 141 North Ross Street  
**City Council**, 7 p.m., Council Chamber, 141 North Ross Street
- 2 Board of Zoning Adjustment**, 4:30 p.m., Council Chamber, 141 North Ross Street
- 7 Cemeteries Advisory Board**, 4:00 p.m., Harris Center, 425 Perry Street
- 8 Greenspace Advisory Board**, Noon, Harris Center, 425 Perry Street  
**Historic Preservation Commission**, 4 p.m., Library Board Room, 749 East Thach Avenue  
**Board of Education**, 6 p.m., AHS Multi-Media Room, 405 South Dean Road
- 10 Planning Commission**, 5 p.m., Council Chamber, 141 North Ross Street
- 15 Committee of the Whole**, 6:55 p.m., Council Chamber, 141 North Ross Street  
**City Council**, 7 p.m., Council Chamber, 141 North Ross Street
- 17 Water Works Board**, 4 p.m., Water Board Conference Room, 1501 West Samford Avenue
- 29 Bicycle Committee**, 7 p.m., Dean Road Recreation Center, 307 South Dean Road

**Meeting times and places are subject to change.**

**For more information, including a map of City meeting locations, please visit [www.auburnalabama.org/boards](http://www.auburnalabama.org/boards).**

## Genealogy Care and Share Session

The Auburn Public Library will host a Care and Share Session on Genealogy on Thursday, October 17 at 2:00 p.m. This summer, the library received increased interest in "Genealogy 101," which has prompted this informal follow-up session. The "Care and Share" will be an informal gathering open to anyone working on genealogy. The program will mainly focus on discussion among participants who want to share interesting things found during their genealogy research.



## Friends of the Library Book Sale

The Friends of the Library are hosting a book sale on Saturday, September 28 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Dean Road Recreation Center. The sale is open to the public, and hundreds of gently used books will be available for purchase, including bestsellers, classics, fiction, nonfiction, textbooks, and children's books. All proceeds benefit the Auburn Public Library. If you would like more information about the book sale, or if you're interested in volunteering or joining the Friends of the Library, please call (334) 501-3190.

## Sundown Concert Series at Kiesel Park

Join Auburn Parks and Recreation for FREE fall entertainment on Thursdays in October at 6 p.m.! The Fall Concert Series at Kiesel Park will offer live musical entertainment from a variety of genres. Bring the family, a picnic, lawn chairs, and a blanket and join us for an evening of entertainment. Don't forget – dogs are always welcome! Ample parking is available, so large groups are welcome! Shake up your weekly routine and make your next Bunco night or organizational meeting a social event at the Fall Concert Series! Join us for the following performances:

- Oct. 3** The Lonely Wolves
- Oct. 10** Damaged Goods
- Oct. 17** Kate and Corey
- Oct. 24** JW Young

The Fall Concert Series is a free, family-friendly event. No alcohol, please. For more information, please visit [www.auburnalabama.org/parks](http://www.auburnalabama.org/parks) or contact Auburn Parks and Recreation at 501-2930.

## Board Vacancies

Two vacancies on the **Industrial Development Board** will be announced at the September 3, 2013 meeting and will be filled at the October 1, 2013 City Council meeting.



One vacancy on the **Auburn Public Library Board** will be announced at the September 3, 2013 meeting and will be filled at the October 1, 2013 City Council meeting.

Three vacancies on the **Tree Commission** will be announced at the October 1, 2013 meeting and will be filled at the November 5, 2013 City Council meeting.

Two vacancies on the **Parks and Recreation Advisory Board** will be announced at the October 15, 2013 meeting and will be filled at the November 19, 2013 City Council meeting.

*Citizens interested in serving are encouraged to contact their City Council member or notify the City Manager's Office.*

## 13th Annual Downtown Trick or Treat Thursday, October 31

Bring your monsters, rock stars, princesses, and superheroes and join Auburn Parks and Recreation and the Auburn Downtown Merchants for the 13th Annual Downtown Trick or Treat on Thursday, October 31 from 6 – 8 p.m. in downtown Auburn. This FREE, family-friendly event features giveaways from downtown "Monster Merchants" and live music. Special mystery judges will be walking around throughout the evening selecting participants for the Best Costume Contest. Bring your favorite four-legged friend and enter for a chance to win the Best Pet Costume Contest!

Downtown Trick-or-Treat is for children ages 12 years and under. All children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Downtown streets are subject to closing during the event. Please visit our website at [www.auburnalabama.org/parks](http://www.auburnalabama.org/parks) for the latest information on the event and street closings. For more information, or if your business or organization would like to participate, please contact Dana Stewart, Special Programs Coordinator, at 501-2930.

Special thanks to the Auburn Downtown Merchants for making Downtown Trick or Treat possible!



# City Management

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## Open Line Feedback

Do you have any suggestions, feedback, or story ideas that you would like to share?

If so, please contact us at [openline@auburnalabama.org](mailto:openline@auburnalabama.org) or call 501-7255.

# up COMING EVENTS

Due to space considerations, we are unable to publicize any events that are not directly affiliated with a City department.

## Auburn Public Library

For more information, contact Auburn Public Library's Youth Services at 501-3196.

**Baby Time** - Tuesdays at 10:00 a.m. for ages birth – 18 months and their caregivers.

**Toddler Time** - Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. for ages 18 months - 3 years and their caregivers.

**Preschool Time** - Thursdays at 10:00 a.m. for preschoolers ages 3 - 5 years and their caregivers.

**Legomania** – Join us every Saturday from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. for “free play” with Legos®.

### Special Programs

**Living Listeners with Rosie** – Join our canine friend, Rosie, for a special reading time. Call Youth Services for days and times.

**Live Poets Workshop (grades K-5)** – Wednesday, October 9 at 4:30p.m. for students in grades K - 5. The AU Live Poets Society will lead sessions for students to explore and learn various poetry writing styles.

**Live Poets Workshop (grades 6-12)** – October 23 at 4:30p.m. for students in grades 6-12. The AU Live Poets Society will lead sessions for students to explore and learn various poetry writing styles.

**Children's Halloween Party** - Thursday, October 24 at 6:00 - 7:00 p.m. for students ages 3 - 11. Come in costume and join us for our annual event. Prizes and games will be provided!



## Teen Read Week, October 13 - 19

**SHOUT!** - Monday, October 14 at 6:30p.m. for students in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades. Come in costume to this Halloween party for Tweens only! We'll have some spooky snacks and beverages along with games and crafts.

**Into the Darkness: Fiction, Mystery & Imagination** - Tuesday, October 15 at 4:30p.m. The Auburn Student Writing Council will present a writing workshop to students in grades 8-12 on writing “flash fiction.” The workshop will include topics such as alien abductions, haunted factories and foggy cemeteries.

**Zombie Ball** - Thursday, October 17 from 6:30-8:30p.m. Students in grades 8–12 are invited wear their best Zombie costume and join us for dancing, games and party snacks for the “undead”.

## Parks and Recreation

For more information on any of the events listed, or to pre-register for a program, contact Auburn Parks and Recreation at 501-2930 or visit [www.auburnalabama.org/parks](http://www.auburnalabama.org/parks).

**Now Showing...Jan Dempsey Community Arts Center Exhibitions** – Mark your calendar for the following Jan Dempsey Community Arts Center Exhibitions. The exhibits are free and open to the public Monday - Friday from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. For more information, visit [www.auburnalabama.org/arts](http://www.auburnalabama.org/arts) or contact the Arts Center at 501-2963.



**Fall Invitational**, through Oct. 18. An invitational exhibition of selected works by area artists and craftpersons.

**Photo XV Annual Juried Exhibition**, Oct. 21 - Nov. 22. Photographs by artists in Alabama and adjacent states.

**Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays in October...Auburn Stride Walkers** – Get moving with the Auburn Stride Walkers Club! Citizens of all ages are invited to join the club for walks at various City walking trails every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 9 a.m. Participation is free. For more information, contact Melissa Weldon at 501-2946 or Dee Watson at 501-2948.

**Sept. 30 - Oct. 25...Youth Winter Basketball Registration** – Register for youth winter basketball Sept. 30 - Oct. 25. Registration will be held online at [www.auburnalabama.org/basketball](http://www.auburnalabama.org/basketball). Walk-in registration will be held on Tuesday, Oct. 22 from 6 - 7 p.m. at the Dean Road Recreation Center. Youth basketball is for participants ages 6 - 13 years. Players on school teams are not eligible to play. Tryouts will be held the week following registration. Players must be registered to attend tryouts. The season begins in December and continues through February.

**Available Oct. 1...Auburn CityFest 2014 Applications** - Applications for arts & crafts, fine arts, food, and nonprofit vendors for Auburn CityFest 2014 will be available Oct. 1. Save the date for Auburn CityFest 2014 on Saturday, April 26 from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. at Kiesel Park. This FREE event is Auburn's largest outdoor festival held on the last Saturday in April each year. Visit [www.auburncityfest.com](http://www.auburncityfest.com) to download an application. Don't delay - spaces fill quickly!

**Oct. 4...First Friday Night Tennis Mixer** – Join the Auburn Community Tennis Association (ACTA) for the First Friday Night Tennis Mixer on Friday, Oct. 4 at 6:30 p.m. at the City of Auburn/Auburn University Yarbrough Tennis Center. Citizens ages 19 and up are encouraged to play. All levels of play are welcome. No partner is necessary. The event will be held rain or shine. Yarbrough Tennis Center non-member court fees apply.

**Oct. 12...Teen Scene Field Trip to US Space & Rocket Center** – Youth ages 12 - 15 are invited to join us as we blast off to the US Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville on Saturday, Oct. 12 from 6 a.m. - 6 p.m. We will explore the Spacedome Theater, Rocket Park, the Education Training Center, and more. Bring your friends and explore the integral role Alabama has played in space exploration. The cost of the trip is \$25, payable in cash on the day of the trip. Participants must be registered by Tuesday, Oct. 1.