

How Our Local Governments are Using Pandemic Funds

July 24th – Apple Blossom Restaurant

We met at the Apple Blossom in Clinton for an informative talk by Ellen Smith (Oak Ridge City Council Member) and Joshua Anderson (Anderson County Commissioner) on how our local governments are using the Covid Relief Plan and the Infrastructure Plan funds from the Federal Government.

Ellen reported that the City of Oak Ridge's budget includes items that are funded via tax dollars, items that come from grants, and items that are paid by subscribers (such as



electric/water/sewer). The Federal funds have provided money for specific Oak Ridge projects. Water and wastewater are acceptable projects, and the city is moving ahead on a new waterline for the Oak Ridge Water Treatment Plant (off Scarboro Rd.). The city will also use Federal funds to replace an aging water main along West Outer Dr. to the east of Illinois Ave. The fire training tower repairs and restoration were paid with assistance from the county in trade for the understanding that the tower will be available for training the county fire fighters also. The county was able to use some of their Federal funds to pay for the tower repairs.

Joshua reported that the county was allocated about \$15 million in pandemic funds – of that approximately \$10 million is already committed for 27 different projects. The remaining funds need to be spent by 2026. In addition, they have a CBDG grant to get the last of the county covered with municipal water. The Sheriff's Department will get some of the funds with a body scanner that will help keep drugs out of the jail, and help toward violent crime intervention. There will also be improvements to the parks, and to broadband services, and water & sewer services from a variety of funding sources.

We learned that the proposed general aviation airport near the old K-25 site, will be paid by nonlocal money. After construction, the airport will become a city airport for small planes and jets, and the airport maintenance will transfer to the City. The goal is that the airport will be beneficial for economic and industrial growth, and help with pickup & delivery of time sensitive materials used and created at the labs. The Oak Ridge City Council approved the land for the

airport, and the FAA will make their determination after hearing input at an August 8th public meeting.

We also learned that the new substation off Edgemoor Rd. near Melton Lake Dr. is a TVA project. Grid support that was done by the Bull Run plant will be done by the new substation when Bull Run is decommissioned.