

State of District 4 Address

For those unaware, Super District 4 was a newly created district in Lowndes County two years ago. I assumed this office without a predecessor to this district seat. It was my understanding of this district to compliment the other districts by adding more responsiveness and accountability for the citizens of Lowndes County.

Upon being elected and occupying the seat, I inherited a wonderful staff; however, the county faced several challenges. The economy was still trying to bounce back. Like much of the country, the housing market in Lowndes County was at a standstill. Initially, two of the main challenges for the commission was the SPLOST VII referendum and sanitation franchise agreement. The SPLOST VII referendum had failed on the previous ballot. Many have different opinions of why it failed, but it was very important to find out what the citizens desired from their tax dollars versus previous recommendations.

Speaking of the SPLOST VII, I must admit that I struggled with identifying bridges and road paving requests from the 1990s and early 2000s. I understand projects can take the length of a SPLOST collection, which has been 6 years. But, I could not and still do not understand two decades! I still believe Forrest Street in the county portion and city limits need at least another lane and sidewalks. The

children are walking in the grass. Yet, there are sidewalk where people do not even walk.

Back to the challenges, a sanitation ordinance and agreement signed by the previous commission became into effect after I was in office one month. I still receive complaints about illegal dumping and the customer service of the county's sanitation provider. While the deal appeared to be good to some, it created an uproar to others because of the bad customer service and the exclusive agreement in the contract. So, let me be clear. If we are to talk about anything with ADS, it needs to be their customer service. I am pro-business and believe in the free market. I think that it is time to revisit the sanitation issue.

As many of you know, our community has suffered several tragedies. The death of Kendrick Johnson will never be forgotten in our community. The death of a VSU student found dead in the dorms name Jasmine Benjamin. A VSU student, Elizabeth Lohmar, hit by a truck and died from walking to campus. We should continue to pray for these families.

Since in office, despite the economic downturn and other challenges, Super District 4 has been flourishing with housing and community development (Cat Creek Bridge, Oak Street @ Lake Laurie traffic lights etc.). Many homes have been built and new subdivisions approved in Super District 4 (Bemiss Knights Academy, Ivy Gate, Cottonwood, and Crestwood, etc.), which supplies an array of

jobs. Roads are being paved and widened (Boring Pond Road and Val Del Road) and we're working on the Alapaha boat ramp right now. The Valdosta-Lowndes Industrial Authority has been renamed to improve solicitation of businesses (Valdosta-Lowndes County Development Authority). We have adopted resolutions to express our dedication to valuing property rights of all of our citizens. Recently, the LCBOC adopted a Special Events Ordinance. It created a standardized process for all promoters of events to perform concerts. We are improving our fire service in the county. If you don't know, Valdosta High School will be in District 4; which means addition development will come with it!

In closing, I encourage everyone to utilize the county services and facilities. As county commissioners, we are able to affect funding and services provided in Lowndes County. To name a few, the health department, 4 H Camp, libraries, roads, and bridges. It is equally important to remember that the LCBOC also appoints members to boards and authorities such as the Hospital Authority, Development Authority, Park and Recreation Authority. These authorities make critical decisions with tax payer dollars. We need people to serve on boards and authorities besides the same individuals. If we want people, in particular our young professionals, to remain in the area, we need to have board members to reflect some of their interests. Diversity includes age, gender, race, and nationalities. We have a wonderful Air Force base and Valdosta State University community here. I

want to make them feel at home away from home. Let's look forward to the upcoming year in Lowndes County. We have some critical decisions in the near future. Your participation in the process would be greatly appreciated. May God continue to bless Lowndes County, the State of Georgia, and May God bless the United States of America. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Dr. Demarcus Marshall
County Commissioner
Super District 4
Lowndes County, Georgia