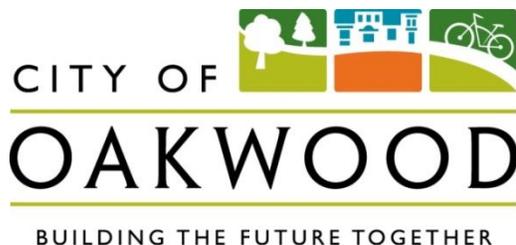


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Montie Robinson, Sr.
Todd Wilson



CITY MANAGER
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CITY CLERK
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NEWS ARTICLE: Gainesville Times on January 10, 2016

Oakwood going through transition in city leadership

Trio of newcomers part of City Council

At this time last year, Oakwood City Council was a group of political veterans, with three of the members having a combined 76 years of service.

It's a different story as the South Hall County city starts 2016.

In December, Oakwood said goodbye to Martha Collins and Montie Robinson, who chose not to seek new four-year terms, and Ron McFarland, who resigned mid-term earlier in the year.

Sheri Millwood and Dwight Wood will be sworn in as new members at tonight's council meeting, joining Pat Jones, who was sworn in after she won a Nov. 3 election to replace McFarland.

Jones and Wood are serving their first council terms, and Millwood is returning to the council after a more than two-decade absence.

"I'm basically looking forward to getting in there and learning more about how that side of government works," said Wood, who was Hall County clerk of court for 24 years, retiring in 2008.

Wood, whose late father, Donald Wood, served on the Oakwood City Council for 20-plus years, recalls wrangling every year with the Hall County Board of Commissioners over his office's budget.

"So now, I get to see the other side of government," he said.

And there's a learning process, as Jones has acknowledged, even though she has served four years on the Oakwood Planning Commission.

"I'm still a newbie," said the retired educator.

Millwood has served Oakwood government in some capacity since 1983, including a four-year term on council in the late 1980s and early 1990s. And like Jones, she has served on the Oakwood Planning Commission.

"I feel like with the experience I've gained ... I feel like I have more to offer this time around," she said, speaking of her second council stint.

She comes into the job familiar with Oakwood's issues. And as a longtime real estate broker, she certainly has watched the city grow.

Oakwood has seen a burst of activity the past couple of years, particularly in the Mundy Mill Road area, with new eateries, Northeast Georgia Health System offices and a Toyota dealership.

"We have room for growth," Millwood said. "We still have great lots in Oakwood for sit-down restaurants ... and beautiful land that's available for industrial growth. I personally would like to see another industrial park in the city or maybe an extension of the one that we have."

Wood said he particularly would like to see more sit-down restaurants, as well as more industries and commercial establishments.

"I would like to see the sewer (system) continue (to expand) and even hopefully one day get it to subdivisions and maybe some individual homes," he said.

Oakwood doesn't operate a sewer utility but has relied on neighboring Gainesville and Flowery Branch for the service. It also has a sewer agreement with Braselton.

"We're still looking for more industry because there is still room to grow," Jones said.

At the same time, "it would be nice to have housing for all these people who come here to work," she said.

She cited council's recent decision to approve a 105-townhouse complex across from Johnson High School off Poplar Springs Road. Completion of Hawthorne Village is expected in 2018.

"Let's keep some of those people here," Jones said.

Councilman Todd Wilson, who started a second term Jan. 1, also will be given the oath of office tonight.