

Ben is Troop 21 Eagle Scout number 170.



January 3, 2011

City's new addition is homegrown



Americus native Ben Andrews is Community Development coordinator for the City and a graduate student at Georgia Southwestern State University. Keven Gilbert

(<http://americustimesrecorder.com/local/x2131362298/City-s-new-addition-is-homegrown>)

Keven Gilbert

The Americus Times-Recorder (<http://americustimesrecorder.com>)

AMERICUS — The newest addition to the City of Americus' Community and Economic Development Department is Americus native Ben Andrews who was hired on in September 2010, as Community Development coordinator.

On top of working with the cemetery clerk and overseeing the City transit system, Andrews is also responsible for writing grant applications for the City. Since September Andrews has attended two workshops in order to become more knowledgeable about writing grants.

"It is unusual for cities to write grants in-house, but it saves them a lot of money," Andrews said. "A lot of firms can be expensive."

One ongoing City project that has been in the headlines since early 2010 is the Tripp Street corridor project which Andrews said has been given a new name by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). A design for the Georgia Southwestern State University (GSW) Gateway Enhancement Project, as it is now known, was approved by the City Council in April. At that time, Community Development Coordinator Mandy Young was given the go-ahead by the Council to seek funding for the project. One option for the City was apply for a Transportation Enhancement (TE) grant designated to make transportation improvements.

Andrews said that when he came on board in September, the City had already been given permission to use funds from earlier TE grants that were for projects that the City had been

preparing to do for several years but were no longer viable.

"And we just applied for more TE funds for the project," he said.

Andrews also attended a workshop in Macon four weeks ago which he said was specific to writing grant applications for Community Development Block Grants (CDGB), which go to fund local community development areas of infrastructure, anti-poverty programs and affordable housing initiatives. Andrews said that he is now starting the grant application for a new project that just recently was approved by the City Council in October. The CDGB grant, which has an April deadline for submission, will be for funding for renovation of Furlow School. In October Young was given the OK by the Council to go forward with beginning the grant application process for funding the renovation of Furlow School to house the Sumter County Head Start program. Andrews said that applying for the CDBG grant with the purposes of accommodating the Head Start program, the City can have access to funds that will go toward the renovation. Andrews is optimistic that the grant will come through.

"The DCA really likes the Head Start program. They get the most return from programs like that." Andrews said.

Andrews, who also came on board in time last fall to assist River Valley Regional Development Commission representatives in conducting a housing inventory in the City, says he has enjoyed working on the projects he has been involved with so far.

He said that the "high visibility" projects that Young is taking on like Furlow School is exciting.

Andrews, who interned with the American Association of Advertising Agencies, while a student at Georgia Tech, said he also is interested in the aspect of "re-branding" that is much of the focus right now by the Community and Economic Development Department as they market Americus as a college town.

At Georgia Tech, Andrews also worked at the College of Computing in public relations and marketing programs where he launched new websites and was part of a group that hosted the "Robo Cup," a robotics soccer tournament.

Graduating from Georgia Tech in 2009, Andrews received a bachelor of science in business management with certificates in finance and marketing. He said that during his undergraduate he wavered in which kind of job he wanted to pursue after college.

"I just knew I wanted a job where I interacted with a lot of people. I want to attach faces with the projects that I am working on. I just don't want to work in a cubicle my whole life," he said.

Andrews is also currently enrolled in the masters of business (MBA) program at GSW, which he plans to finish in August. Last fall Andrews became involved in Students In Free Enterprise (SIFE) through GSW's MBA program where he has been involved with several projects that focus on marketing and fundraising with established businesses and organizations such as Café Campesino and the Sumter Historic Trust. Through his SIFE participation, he also booked a booth at the Taste of Sumter and volunteered at the Traveling Vietnam Memorial Wall at Andersonville.

Andrews said that as a native of Americus and being a visitor while away at college along with his new experiences as a grad student and beginning a career are all helpful in many aspects of his new job, and provide a unique perspective as well.

Andrews is the son of Ben and Michelle Andrews of Americus.