



# Rotary



## The Rotary Club of Macon

 **THROBS**

*Published Weekly Since 1914*

**July 22, 2024**  
*Macon Action Plan*

After being away from our usual meeting place for a week, we'll be back at First Presbyterian Church on July 22. The speaker will be our own Alex Morrison, who is Executive Director of the Macon-Bibb Urban Development Authority. He'll get us up to date on the Macon Action Plan, which is a comprehensive, community-driven, plan that envisions the future of Macon's Urban Core.

The original Macon Action Plan was approved in October of 2015. Within five years of completing the first plan, Downtown had attracted \$5 million in foundation grants and over \$400 million of additional public and private investment. MAP's partners and the Downtown community had implemented 80 percent of the strategies from the original plan! It was time for a refresh...



### No Zoom Recording

Since we met offsite July 15, there is no Zoom recording of the meeting.

### **FUTURE MONDAY PROGRAMS AND CLUB EVENTS:**

#### **July, 2024**

22 Macon Action Plan  
29 No meeting (fifth week)

Alex Morrison

More programs are coming soon!

# MEETING July 15, 2024

Attendance: 48.5% - 59 in person, plus 8 guests

CART \$35, No Raffle

Club Membership: 145

Our meeting was held at Fall Line Station, adjacent to Fall Line Brewing Company, and was a refreshing change to our normal routine. Attendance was pretty good for an off-site meeting with no Zoom option.

President Danny Gibson rang the bell and welcomed the members and guests. He called on Jeffery Monroe to do double duty by leading the song and pledge as well as offering the prayer. Jeffrey led us in *God Bless America*, and is one of the very few members (the only one?) who could have done that *a cappella* (and in tune!) Lacking a flag, we pledged allegiance in the general direction of the courthouse.

Danny thanked member Kaitlynn Kressin for opening up her wonderful facility for us while the church is holding Vacation Bible School. We'll be back at the church for the July 22 meeting. He then welcomed our many guests, which included several young people learning the insurance and legal professions.

Danny announced that Julie Petherbridge celebrated her birthday July 11 and Sam Robinson's will be the 21<sup>st</sup>. Past President Katherine Dennis marks 24 years of service to our club.

It was then time for CART brags. Steve Allen encouraged members to put money in the blue buckets even if they didn't have a brag, to make up for not having a raffle today.



President Danny reminded us that we will be back at First Presbyterian Church for our meeting next week. He will be out of town, so Susan Welsh will lead the meeting. He also offered a "today in

history” lesson from 1927. In that year, 21-year-old golfer Bobby Jones won the British Open Men’s Golf title at St. Andrews, Scotland.

It was then time for the program. Jessica Walden introduced Gary Bechtel, Chairman of the Macon Water Authority, who is already well-known in Macon and is a former member of our club. She thanked him for his many years of service which included leadership positions on the Bibb County Board of Education, Planning and Zoning, the Professional Standards Commission, and many others. His business background is in banking and finance. Jessica noted that he met his wife at a Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours event.

Gary began by complimenting our club for being a staple in the community for over 100 years and thanked us for the honor of being with us today.

He was elected Chairman of MWA in 2022, following in the footsteps of many who served the community and built the institution into what it is today. Notably, Frank Amerson, whose name graces the water treatment plant in Jones county that he was so instrumental in establishing on the heels of the 1994 flood. Last month marked 30 years since Tropical Storm Alberto struck the Gulf coast and caused major flooding that changed this community forever. It was leaders like Frank Amerson who turned a disaster into an opportunity and as a result we now have a state-of-the-art water treatment plant which appropriately bears his name and a 5.8-billion-gallon reservoir that protects the citizens and businesses of Macon-Bibb and surrounding counties from other disasters or events that may impact us in the future.

Gary further explained how MWA works and then commended the vision of Macon leaders who, in the 1970’s, created the Macon Water Authority to be separate from government. It was formerly the Macon Water Commission, and Gary said if you look at some of the problems that have occurred in other large cities in the last few years we can appreciate this vision. By establishing the Authority, they took it out of a political environment that did not always prioritize the health of the system. This is evident with the problems in Jackson, Mississippi, Flint, Michigan and more recently Atlanta.

The Macon Water Authority has one goal, to provide water and sewer services and grow and maintain the system for that purpose. “Our service is not restricted by political subdivisions and as a result, we sell water to Monroe County which is distributed and billed by the Monroe County commission. We provide sewer service to the City of Byron in Peach County and of course provide limited water and sewer service in parts of Jones County.”

Gary offered a wide-ranging overview of the water and sewer system replete with statistics. The Amerson Water Treatment plant has a maximum treatment rate of 60 million gallons per day with the capability of producing 90 MGD. During non-summer months use averages 25-28 MGD with an increase up to 33-35MGD during the summer, so we have the capacity to sell a lot of water.





The river reservoir has a capacity of 5.8 billion gallons of water. The reservoir can hold a 90- to 120-day water supply. The entire Amerson Plant, including the Javors Lucas reservoir is over 3,000 acres.

“But when you sell water you have to have sewer capacity to treat the wastewater. We have two wastewater plants, Lower Poplar Water Reclamation Facility and Rocky Creek Water Reclamation Facility. Lower Poplar was built in 1959 as a 12 MGD facility for the princely sum of \$1.72 million. With further improvement and renovations totaling \$31 million it is now capable of processing 20 MGD of wastewater. Lower Poplar averages 13.5 MGD. We are now in the process of upgrading additional systems at Lower Poplar. We are investing to ensure the redundancy we need to protect the plant in the event of failure of the primary pumps as well as allowing us opportunities for the preventive maintenance that is needed on these large pumps. That work has been designed and planned and should start in earnest at the end of 2024.

“Rocky Creek Water Reclamation Facility was completed in 1974 as a 14 MGD plant at a cost of \$3.3 million. The original facility has undergone a series of expansions and upgrades since 1974 that has increased the treatment capacity to 28 MGD. Approximately 40% of the capacity is used by Graphic Packaging which averages between 9 and 11 MGD and is MWA’s largest customer. Additionally, Irving Paper is a heavy user of Rocky Creek. For these reasons, we are in the process of designing and funding an expansion of Rocky Creek.

“We currently have 54,256 customer connections for water service. We have six pump stations, 1400 miles of pipe ranging from 72” to 6’, we have over 19,301 valves to control pressure, 20 water tanks, 10 elevated and 10 ground tanks. We have over 8,208 fire hydrants and seven different pressure zones that are controlled and managed at Amerson Water Plant. On the sewer side, we have 43,545 sewer connections, 55 pump stations, 8 major pump(lift) stations, over 1,020 miles of pipe ranging from 54’ to 8’ pipe as well as 20,000 manholes.



“It is a large system and MWA currently has over 260 employees working on our system.”

This large system does have its problems, chiefly aging infrastructure. In the last five years MWA has replaced all the residential meters with ones that can be read remotely, and plans are in place to replace all the commercial meters.

MWA is also in charge of the levee and took over stormwater responsibilities in 2021. It's important to keep catch basins free of litter but unfortunately many see them as a place to throw garbage. Since 2021 the Authority has removed almost 12,000 tons of debris.

In short, Gary Bechtel and the Authority are tasked with an enormous responsibility that they seem to be managing admirably.

There was no CART raffle, so the \$578 jackpot will be carried over and increased at our next meeting.

As always, the meeting concluded with recitation of the Four Way test.

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## Donate to Rotary Foundation and CART

Club members can make donations to The Rotary Foundation or the CART Fund online line using credit cards or EFT. These can be made in memory of, honor of, or personal donations. They can be setup as recurring or one-time. These online donations qualify as a tax deduction (but ask your accountant). Follow these easy steps:

**The Rotary Foundation:** Go to <https://rotary.org/> If you have never signed in you will need to register so it credits your Paul Harris Fellow account and our club. You may need our District number 6920 and club number 4202. Once registered you can SIGN IN to MY ROTARY then click DONATE button in upper right. Check the area ANNUAL FUND, DISASTER RELIEF FUND, or POLIO PLUS to donate, then just follow easy steps to make payment.

**CART FUND:** <https://mycartfund.org/Login.cfm> follow the online instructions. You will need our **Club number 4202** and **District number 6920**. (This link requires logging in to DACdb. If you have trouble with that, use <https://mycartfund.org/NewUser.cfm> instead.) All donations to CART go to support cutting-edge research on Alzheimer's.

## Approved Makeups-Family of Rotary Events:

**Reminder - Makeups can only be used two weeks before or after a missed meeting**

Anytime      Rotary Project or Rotary Committee meeting  
Anytime      Volunteer at Macon Volunteer Clinic  
Viewing of Monday meeting recorded on Zoom - See current or past *Throbs* link

## HOW TO MAKE UP MISSED MEETINGS

Please make up missed meetings to help our club's attendance percentage rank with District 6920 and Rotary International. Our attendance is reported each month to the district and is required to be reported before the 15<sup>th</sup> of the following month. **Members are encouraged to maintain an attendance average of 60%.**

Missed meetings must be made up **14 days before or after the meeting you miss.**

See list above of approved makeups. You can make up from the comfort of your home or office online at <http://rotaryclubone.org/> They will email a notice of the makeup to the Club Administrator and you will be credited. Also, attendance at another Rotary Club is a great option when you are traveling!

When you make up using the **Zoom link** of our meetings listed in meeting summary above or makeup in person at another club please send an email immediately afterwards to the Club Administrator, [steve@eggmedia.com](mailto:steve@eggmedia.com) so your makeup can be recorded. Do not expect the club you visit to report to our club.

## Excused Absences

Members have the opportunity to receive a board approved Excused Absence during a long-term family, health, or business crisis. When a member realizes they have a situation that will keep them from attending Monday meetings for an extended period they can contact the Club Administrator or President with the reason. This contact needs to be immediate and not after the crisis. The board can approve a beginning and ending date and attendance is excused on club and district level. Short term absences are best made up online.

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## Club Membership Applications

*We are purpose-driven leaders of influence and action. To sponsor a prospective candidate to join our membership, contact Membership Chair Gene Dunwody [gdunwodyjr@dunwodybeeland.com](mailto:gdunwodyjr@dunwodybeeland.com) or any member of the Board of Directors to ensure a vocational classification is available for your candidate.*

*Once the Classification Committee approves the classification, invite your new member candidate to a weekly meeting. If the candidate expresses interest in joining our club, then ask Membership Chair Charles to send the candidate an invitation to apply online. Once the new member candidate completes the application, Board members review the application. Then, new member candidates are presented for formal approval at the monthly Board meeting. Once approved by the Board, new member candidates are announced in Throbs. Unless there is objection by any existing member, the new member is scheduled for orientation and formal induction. All members of our club need to think about who would make good Rotarians!*