

Dist. 2 candidates on most pressing issue facing east Cobb

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This week, the Marietta Daily Journal asked the four candidates running to replace retiring east Cobb Commissioner Bob Ott a question: Before the coronavirus arrived in Cobb County, what was the most pressing issue facing District 2?

The candidates include three Republicans — Fitz Johnson, Andy Smith and Kevin Nicholas — and one Democrat, Jerica Richardson.

The district encompasses most of east Cobb and includes Cumberland, Vinings, Smyrna, the Mabry Park area and the Terrell Mill/Powers Ferry area. It has been under Ott's representation since he was first elected to the role in 2008.

The primary election is scheduled for June 9.

Andy Smith

“It’s so hard to even remember back before the coronavirus,” Smith began. If there was an overriding issue, he said, it would probably be “preserving what we all came to Cobb County for. And it’s an issue that (covers) zoning, public safety, and other — maybe even budgetary — boundaries.”

For those living in east Cobb or in Vinings, “I think it’s, ‘How are we going to protect existing neighborhoods, as far as density, as far as what kind of rezoning we’re allowing in those areas?’”

That has to be balanced with population growth, which is expected to increase by another third by 2050, he noted.

County leaders will have to find out “where that increased density is appropriate, and you’ve got to preserve the areas where it isn’t.”

Having served on the county’s planning commission for several years, Smith saw “a number of instances where development was attempted in areas and the development that was being proposed could begin a trend that substantially changes those neighborhoods and I think that as far as in terms of what the citizens of Cobb County expect, I think they expect to be able to enjoy the type of residential, recreational or business environment that attracted them to Cobb County to begin with.”

In sum: “If we allow too much change or the wrong kind of change, I think we’ve done them a disservice.”