

# Cobb District 2 candidates talk transparency

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The Marietta Daily Journal asked candidates running to replace retiring east Cobb Commissioner Bob Ott a question about sunshine ahead of the June 9 primary elections: If elected, what would you do to improve transparency in Cobb County government?

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.

## **Andy Smith**

Smith was upfront when asked about transparency in county government:

“I don’t know if there’s an issue with transparency within Cobb county government,” the former Cobb planning commissioner said. “My experience is that there is not. It’s as open and accessible a group as you can imagine.”

As an example, he said a neighbor had called him shortly after the county’s emergency declaration was announced, asking what it would mean for her business. He didn’t know, but he told her he’d find out, and called county manager Jackie McMorris late one evening.

“Remember, this is a time when it probably couldn’t have been any busier for those people, and before 8 o’clock the next morning, she was on my phone,” he said.

Smith acknowledged online rumbblings to the contrary, saying he has “seen things posted lately where there was a feeling that freedom of info act requests weren’t researched thoroughly, but I have no idea whether that’s true or not.”

He said transparency often comes down to communication and accessibility — a point of pride for someone whose cellphone number was on his planning commission business card and who will put the number on mailers that will be going out soon.

“If there is a lack of transparency, I would do everything I could to make sure that we understand that we work for the community, and the community has every right to know everything we’re doing,” he said. “If we’re not being transparent, then we’re not serving those that elected us.”