

# open line

a monthly newsletter for you, our residents.

APRIL 2023



City of Auburn



The 22nd annual CityFest is almost here! Join Auburn Parks and Recreation on Saturday, April 29, at Kiesel Park from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. for a day filled with food, community and exciting entertainment.

This year's theme is Jurassic Journey with Jurassic Kingdom Lockdown as the featured entertainment. Yes, actual dinosaurs will be arriving in Kiesel Park! Musical entertainment will include Plainsman Percussion and the Auburn Jazz Band who will showcase contemporary arrangements by composers such as Gordon Goodwin and Lyle Mayes as well as music from the libraries of Count Basie and Duke Ellington.

You won't want to miss a performance from the Bama Air Dogs as they jump through the air to catch flying discs. Attendees can learn and play with the Kreher Preserve & Nature Center, get a closer look at the Southeastern Raptor Center's feathered friends, hangout with Aubie the Tiger and take home handmade creations from the ArtFest Tent.

Bring your family and come enjoy Auburn's largest free outdoor festival, featuring over 100 arts and crafts vendors along with local food and nonprofit vendors. For more information, visit [auburncityfest.com](http://auburncityfest.com), email Ann Bergman at [abergman@auburnalabama.org](mailto:abergman@auburnalabama.org) or call CityFest headquarters at (334) 501-2930.

## Board & commission vacancies

Interested in serving our community? The Auburn City Council will make appointments to the Board of Education, Historic Preservation Commission and the Library Board in April. Find applications and more info at [auburnalabama.org/boards](http://auburnalabama.org/boards).

## Trash Amnesty 2023

MARCH 13 - APRIL 7

Ready to clear out the clutter in and around your home this spring? Trash Amnesty 2023 will take place March 13 through April 7, allowing Auburn residents to take care of spring cleaning without paying extra fees.

During Trash Amnesty 2023, collection fees for oversized yard debris and other bulky items that exceed five cubic yards will be waived. Please follow these guidelines when taking advantage of Trash Amnesty:

- We will accept yard waste, appliances and bulky items for collection. Please do not include household garbage or hazardous waste.
- Place debris at the curb no later than 6 a.m. on your regularly scheduled collection day.
- Place items at least 3 feet from mailboxes, utility boxes, poles or other fixed objects.
- Contain or bundle items so they do not fall into the street or down storm drains.
- Limbs and other debris should be no longer than 5 feet.
- Place all items in one pile for pickup.

Because of the large volume of pickup expected during Trash Amnesty 2023, residents may experience a delay in their normal collection schedule.

For questions, contact Environmental Services at (334) 501-3080 or [webenvirsvc@auburnalabama.org](mailto:webenvirsvc@auburnalabama.org).



# PUBLIC SAFETY DIRECTOR RETIRES AFTER 35 YEARS

After nearly 35 years of protecting the loveliest village on the plains, Public Safety Services Executive Director Paul Register retired from the City of Auburn at the end of January.

When Paul arrived in Auburn in 1986, he didn't anticipate a decades-long career in public safety. He came to Auburn University to pursue a degree in business and took a few criminal justice classes as electives. Those classes changed his trajectory. Paul joined the Auburn Police force two years later.

Paul served as a patrol officer for a few years before beginning to rise in the ranks. He held the positions of detective, detective corporal, sergeant, lieutenant and captain before becoming assistant chief in 2010. Paul served under former Auburn Police Chief and current City Councilman Tommy Dawson before he became police chief in 2013. After seven years, Paul took over as Public Safety director in 2020.

Paul holds a bachelor's degree in justice and public safety, a master's in homeland security and emergency management and is a graduate of the FBI National Academy — all of which he obtained while working with Auburn Police.

Of all the roles he held, Paul most enjoyed the nearly nine years he spent in investigations. He helped solve property crimes and larger cases like the murders of Lori Ann Slesinski (2006), Lauren Burke (2008) and Aniah Blanchard (2019).

"You're working from nothing and turning it into something," Paul said. "There's a satisfaction in knowing that you were able to help someone get their property back or help a loved one understand why something happened to a family member and hold those accountable who commit violent crimes."

Auburn's number of property crimes reached an all-time high in 2008, but after Paul, former Chief Dawson and others enhanced proactive efforts and analysis, those and

other crimes have declined every year since, even as the city has grown.

In 2015, Paul played a major role in renegotiating the City's contract with Auburn University to provide police services on campus, resulting in the first on-campus Auburn Police precinct in the department's history. He implemented a new radio system for communications, assisted with construction of the new Public Safety Building and an evidence impound yard, and began a part-time officer program that has resulted in resource officers being stationed at every school in the Auburn City School system.

The most difficult time during Paul's career was 2019 when, during two separate incidents, officers were fired upon resulting in serious injuries to three officers and the loss of Officer Will Buechner, the only Auburn Police officer to die in the line of duty.

"As difficult as it was and has been for everyone, there has also been a source of great pride in the way staff supported and rallied around each other as well as the support they showed the affected officers and their families," Paul said. "I have been humbled and amazed at the strength, resiliency and support of the families who suffered the most but also by the support of this community during those difficult times. You know you work for great people when they decide to name a major roadway after Will Buechner."

One of Paul's proudest moments in leadership was Auburn Public Safety's work in the aftermath of the 2019 Beauregard tornado. Partnering with area first responders, more than 75 Auburn firefighters and police officers dedicated over 700 hours to search and rescue and security efforts.

"They stayed out there for days," Paul remembered. "None of them left that very first night until they knew there was no one left in those destroyed homes."

Paul credits the longevity of his career in public safety to the people he has worked with; those he learned from; his wife, Ruth, who has been a source of constant support over the years; and all the time spent outside of work with his children and grandchildren.

After more than three decades, Paul is now looking forward to entering a new phase of his life.

"It's a great time to leave when the department is filled with those who can lead," Paul said. "It's time to step back and give others the opportunities I was afforded over the years."

"I would not have wanted to do this work anywhere else," he added. "People here are so supportive of our police, fire and communication's personnel. They rally around you when something difficult happens, and they continually give you feedback. Auburn — it's just the best community I know."

# Will Mathews takes over as Public Safety director

Before starting a career as a police officer and rising through the ranks to become Auburn's newest Public Safety director, Will Mathews worked at Kmart. This part-time job in his early years planted a seed that would lead to a 31-year career in public safety.

"I always loved going after shoplifters," Will remembered. The interactions he had with police officers on the job sparked an interest in law enforcement.

Formerly the deputy director of Auburn's Public Safety business unit, Will took over as director in February following former director Paul Register's retirement.

Will arrived in Auburn in 1988 and ended up studying criminal justice. Will worked part-time as a security monitor for the Auburn University Police Department and volunteered as a reserve deputy sheriff for the Lee County Sheriff's Department. He graduated from Auburn in 1992 and joined the Auburn Police Department that fall.

Will worked as a patrol officer for seven years. He was promoted to patrol corporal in 1999 where he participated in the department's training efforts for new officers. From there, he was promoted to sergeant in 2000 and lieutenant in 2005. Will implemented new technologies into the patrol section — and would continue to do so throughout his career — including working closely with the City's IT Department to develop an effective mobile computing system.

As lieutenant, Will also worked in the Administrative Section where he served as the training coordinator and commander of the Community Services Section, which included the City's D.A.R.E program and crime prevention efforts. He moved to narcotics in 2012 before being promoted to captain of the Community Services Section. As such, Will oversaw the department's school resource officers, training, crime prevention, hiring and narcotics unit.

In 2016, Will became the City's first assistant police chief dedicated to all Auburn University law enforcement operations. The department had policed on Auburn University's campus since 2004, but officers had worked out of the main police precinct on Ross Street and a small office in AU's Student Center that was only staffed during peak hours.



"We needed more of a home base on campus — a recognizable place for students to see police officers coming and going every day. A place where they knew they could go to get help or to file a report," Will said.

The City collaborated with the university to expand and remodel an existing building to create the current Auburn University Police Precinct, which opened in 2017. Will went to work establishing relationships with university staff, serving as the primary contact for all of the university community's police service needs.

After four years, Will became the deputy director of Public Safety over emergency management and communications.

"Within two months of that, we had a pandemic upon us," he said.

Will quickly shifted into providing guidance and direction for a community facing a national health emergency. He led the City's efforts to continue providing services and acquiring personal protective equipment for the City's entire workforce.

When vaccines became available, he was charged with establishing a vaccination clinic through a partnership with East Alabama Health, the City of Opelika and the Lee County Emergency Management Agency. He led the charge to transform the old Tuesday Morning building on Opelika Road into a functional clinic in less than two weeks. Despite the tight timeline, the vaccination clinic opened and administered more than 90,000 vaccinations in spring 2021.

Stepping into his new role, Will says his goal is to continue the efforts they've worked on for years — investing in community relationships, growing alongside the community to match new challenges, and ultimately maintaining the safety and security of all of Auburn.

Some of Public Safety's newest projects include the construction of a new Public Safety Training Center, installing a new communications tower in south Auburn, adding advanced life support systems to all of Auburn Fire's response vehicles and establishing Auburn as a hub for the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network, helping Auburn Police partner with other agencies to solve regional crimes.

"There's a legacy of highly respected and effective leaders within public safety here, and my hope is that I can continue down that path and keep public safety as a highly regarded, efficient machine that keeps our community safe and happy," Will said.

Will encouraged anyone with questions or concerns to reach out to him at wmathews@auburnalabama.org or 334-501-3110.

city council	RON ANDERS, JR, MAYOR 334.703.9000 randers@auburnalabama.org			departments	OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER Megan McGowen Crouch • 334.501.7261 mmcgowen@auburnalabama.org			ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES 334.501.3080 webenvirsvc@auburnalabama.org			INSPECTION SERVICES 334.501.3170 webcodes@auburnalabama.org			PLANNING 334.501.3040 webplanning@auburnalabama.org					
	BETH WITTEN, WARD 3 334.740.8575 bwitten@auburnalabama.org				COMMUNITY SERVICES 334.501.7280 communityservices@auburnalabama.org			FINANCE 334.501.7233 webfinance@auburnalabama.org			AUBURN PUBLIC LIBRARY 334.501.3190 weblibrary@auburnalabama.org			PUBLIC SAFETY (POLICE & FIRE) 334.501.3110 webpubsfty@auburnalabama.org					
	CONNIE TAYLOR, WARD 1 334.704.3970 ctaylor@auburnalabama.org				ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 334.501.7270 webecondev@auburnalabama.org			HUMAN RESOURCES 334.501.7240 webhr@auburnalabama.org			MUNICIPAL COURT 334.501.3180 webjudicial@auburnalabama.org			PUBLIC WORKS 334.501.3000 webpw@auburnalabama.org					
	KELLEY GRISWOLD, WARD 2 256.975.8183 kgriswold@auburnalabama.org				ENGINEERING SERVICES 334.501.7390 webengineering@auburnalabama.org			INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY 334.501.7200 webit@auburnalabama.org			PARKS AND RECREATION 334.501.2930 webparksrec@auburnalabama.org			WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT 334.501.3060 webwtrswr@auburnalabama.org					
TYLER ADAMS, WARD 4 334.748.3198 tadams@auburnalabama.org					BOB PARSONS, WARD 6 334.704.3657 bparsons@auburnalabama.org			MAX COBLENTZ, WARD 7 334.748.2920 mcoblentz@auburnalabama.org			AUBURN PUBLIC LIBRARY 334.501.3190 weblibrary@auburnalabama.org			MUNICIPAL COURT 334.501.3180 webjudicial@auburnalabama.org			PUBLIC SAFETY (POLICE & FIRE) 334.501.3110 webpubsfty@auburnalabama.org		
SONNY MOREMAN, WARD 5 334.748.3075 smoreman@auburnalabama.org					TOMMY DAWSON, WARD 8 334.559.3021 tdawson@auburnalabama.org			COMMUNITY SERVICES 334.501.7280 communityservices@auburnalabama.org			FINANCE 334.501.7233 webfinance@auburnalabama.org			HUMAN RESOURCES 334.501.7240 webhr@auburnalabama.org			PUBLIC WORKS 334.501.3000 webpw@auburnalabama.org		
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RON ANDERS, JR, MAYOR 334.703.9000 randers@auburnalabama.org					BOB PARSONS, WARD 6 334.704.3657 bparsons@auburnalabama.org			MAX COBLENTZ, WARD 7 334.748.2920 mcoblentz@auburnalabama.org			AUBURN PUBLIC LIBRARY 334.501.3190 weblibrary@auburnalabama.org			MUNICIPAL COURT 334.501.3180 webjudicial@auburnalabama.org			PUBLIC SAFETY (POLICE & FIRE) 334.501.3110 webpubsfty@auburnalabama.org		
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# APRIL 2023 **upcoming events**

Open Line is produced by the Office of the City Manager  
334.501.7268 | [openline@auburnlabama.org](mailto:openline@auburnlabama.org)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
<p><i>Background Photo: Auburn CityFest</i></p>	<p>Programs &amp; events are subject to change.</p> <p>Find up-to-date information at <a href="http://auburnlabama.org">auburnlabama.org</a>.</p>	<p><b>Auburn Public Library</b> <a href="http://auburnlabama.org/library">auburnlabama.org/library</a></p> <p><b>City Meetings</b> <a href="http://auburnlabama.org/boards">auburnlabama.org/boards</a></p> <p><b>Parks &amp; Recreation</b> <a href="http://auburnlabama.org/parks">auburnlabama.org/parks</a></p> <p><b>Citywide Events</b> <a href="http://auburnlabama.org">auburnlabama.org</a></p>	<p><b>Trash Amnesty Underway</b> March 13-April 7</p>			<p>1</p> <p><b>Breakfast with the Bunny</b> 8-11 a.m. @ Kiesel Park</p> <p><b>Story Time (in person/virtual)</b> Saturdays @ 9:30 a.m. &amp; 1 p.m.</p>
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	<p><b>Family Movie Matinee</b> 3:30 p.m.</p> <p><b>Cemetery Advisory Board</b> 4 p.m.</p>	<p><b>Story Time (in person/virtual)</b> Tuesdays @ 9:30 a.m. &amp; 1 p.m.</p> <p><b>Parks &amp; Recreation Advisory Board</b> 11:45 a.m.</p> <p><b>Committee of the Whole</b> TBD</p> <p><b>City Council</b> 6 p.m.</p>	<p><b>Story Time (in person/virtual)</b> Wednesdays @ 9:30 a.m. &amp; 1 p.m.</p> <p><b>Board of Zoning Adjustment</b> 4:30 p.m.</p>	<p><b>Story Time (in person/virtual)</b> Thursdays @ 9:30 a.m. &amp; 1 p.m.</p>	<p><b>Puppet Shows (in person/virtual)</b> Fridays @ 9:30 a.m. &amp; 3:30 p.m.</p> <p><b>Tree Commission</b> 11:30 a.m.</p>	<p><b>Easter Egg Hunt</b> 10 a.m.-noon @ Kiesel Park</p>
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	<p><b>Planning Commission Packet Meeting</b> Noon</p>	<p><b>Historic Preservation Commission</b> 4 p.m.</p>		<p><b>City Council Agenda Review Meeting</b> 4 p.m.</p> <p><b>Planning Commission</b> 5 p.m.</p>		
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
	<p><b>Family Movie Matinee</b> 3:30 p.m.</p>	<p><b>Library Board</b> 10 a.m.</p> <p><b>Greenspace Advisory Board</b> Noon</p> <p><b>STEAM Into Spring</b> 3:30 p.m.</p> <p><b>Reader's Review Virtual Book Club</b> 5:30 p.m.</p> <p><b>Committee of the Whole</b> TBD</p> <p><b>City Council</b> 6 p.m.</p>		<p><b>Water Works Board</b> 4 p.m.</p> <p><b>Organic Gardening</b> 101 5:30 p.m.</p>		<p><b>Earth Day Crafts</b> 10:30 a.m.</p>
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
				<p><b>City Council Agenda Review Meeting</b> 4 p.m.</p> <p><b>Juried Art Show Preview Exhibition &amp; Reception</b> 5:30 p.m. @ Kiesel Park</p>		
30						<p><b>Auburn CityFest</b> 9 a.m.-4 p.m. @ Kiesel Park</p>