

A rare time when government worked well

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By: Art Parker, Editor

There was a day last week that provided us with a breath of fresh air; for those of us that voice ongoing complaints about government and elected officials. It was the day when two local governments and several elected officials got together and did something right. They did something good for the people. They did something that made sense.

Probate Judge John Enslin has been trying to modernize and make the Elmore County Probate Office more efficient. On occasion Enslin has ruffled some feathers of some of our county commissioners and some of the commissioners have done the same to him. It has been something of a struggle between the Probate Office and the County Commission especially when it comes to some budgetary items. Generally speaking, I have sided with Enslin simply because I believe his actions have always put taxpayers first.

The latest development between the Probate Office and the commissioners had a much better outcome. As reported in the Indy last week, Enslin has been an advocate for relocating the probate satellite office in Millbrook, which is located next to the Millbrook Public Library in Memorial Park on Grandview Road. The office can be used to renew car tags and drivers licenses in Millbrook rather than driving to Wetumpka. It's no secret but the building is in bad shape and there is very limited space. Since taking office Enslin has stated frequently that making renovations to the current building is not the best use of taxpayer dollars. He's right.

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Seeking solutions to the problem Enslin even introduced local legislation to amend an existing statute that would help fund a new location. Enslin's proposal would provide the Probate Office with a wider discretion of some specific Probate Office revenue so that funding for suitable office space would be legal. Another of Enslin's goals is to expand the size of the office with an accompanying expansion of services, such as allowing west Elmore County residents the opportunity to pay their property taxes here in Millbrook instead of driving to the Courthouse in Wetumpka. I think the idea is brilliant, after all, somewhere between 40%-50% of the county's population lives west of the canal bridge.

Enslin some support from the County Commission to help get his bill through the legislature. Enter Millbrook Mayor Al Kelley. The Mayor and City Council went to bat for the people of west Elmore County by making it easier for the commission to support a new location. Millbrook agreed to subsidize leased office space in an amount not to exceed \$6,000 per year for the probate satellite office to temporarily relocate. "Our people deserve better and if we can get the finances right we should give them the best services possible. I see this as a way to help Millbrook and the citizens of our area but also help the county with the overall delivery of its services," Kelley told me.

Last week the County and the City approved a joint resolution that will pave the way for the relocation of the current Elmore County Probate Satellite Office in Millbrook and eventually construct a new one. The commission and city council agreed to construct a replacement office at 3481 Grandview Road, the site of the former Millbrook Police and Court Departments. Kelley said the current structure will be demolished and a new building constructed that will house the satellite office as well as additional office space for the City of Millbrook.

Enslin asked the commission to pass a symbolic resolution to support his legislation, which passed by a 3-2 vote. One of those dissenting was Stephanie Daniels-Smoke of Millbrook. Joe Faulk, Millbrook's other commissioner voted for the resolution. The bottom line in all of this is that several elected officials got together and made something good happen for the people. The most impressive thing is that they found a way to make the best use of existing resources.

To all of those elected officials that helped to get this done I say "thank you."

I know, it's hard to believe I said something nice to a bunch of politicians.