

From: The Oconee Enterprise
highlighting and emphasis added

Thomas to run again

By [Caitlin Farmer](#) | January 25, 2024 | 0



Mark Thomas has served on the Oconee Board of Commissioners since 2017 and recently announced his bid for re-election. [Submitted photo]

Mark Thomas, who has served on the Oconee Board of Commissioners since 2017, recently announced his bid for re-election.

The Republican candidate has previously served on **the Board of Education, Tax Equalization Board and Industrial Development Authority**. Many in the community know him through his family farm, event venue and restaurant, Hot Thomas BBQ, which closed several years ago but still does catering.

“Having the history here is important to me,” Thomas said about his family. “We feel like we’re heavily invested here and that we would like to continue the quality of life that we have.”

Thomas said he’s proud of how emergency services have excelled, had their equipment needs funded and where Oconee Fire Rescue is now (his late father was one of the founders).

“Our response time equals that or better of paid departments,” Thomas said.

Thomas is also proud of the strategic plan that included **cell phone service and internet improvements** throughout the county, especially the south end.

Among the other accomplishments, Thomas mentioned Moody's bond rating of Aaa that assessed financial health, the Transportation Special Local Option Sales Tax passing for **road improvements** and the reduction of the millage rate. He believes sales tax has helped diversify the county's tax base, putting less burden on the residential sector and pulling in the commercial sector.

Thomas also mentioned adding parks throughout the county, such as a 200-acre tract near North Oconee High School that will be transformed into a park later in the decade and improvements to Heritage Park that will come even sooner. He **said he's looking forward to seeing Calls Creek Wastewater Treatment Plan nearly double its capacity in the near future.**

If elected, Thomas **hopes to work on road improvements** with TSPLOST funds, such as adding roundabouts along Hog Mountain Road near NOHS, improving intersections along Ga. 316 and **repaving and overlaying roads.**

"The Oconee Connector is one of our highest traffic accident areas, so in working with GDOT and some of **our consultants**, that's certainly on the top of our list," Thomas said.

Thomas said the commissioners are working to secure future access to water by **adding new water towers and improving infrastructure.**

"Water is going to be a very valuable resource in the future," he said. "Communities can't survive without it, and so to have good, clean drinking water is a very important thing."

When asked about requests for reconsideration of materials at the Oconee County Library, Thomas said because of his Christian faith, he thinks certain books that aren't age-appropriate shouldn't be easily accessible but also shouldn't be removed. He supports continuing to fund the library and the library having oversight on requests.

Thomas graduated from Oconee County High School in 1978 and received a bachelor of science in agricultural engineering from the University of Georgia in 1983.

He was manager of member and public relations for Flint EMC from 1983 until 1988 when he started **Mark Thomas Enterprises Inc., a grading and electrical construction business.** Thomas and his wife, Dianne, took over Hot Thomas BBQ, Inc. in 2012 after his father, Howard "Hot" Thomas, passed away.

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