

# BRIEFINGS FROM LEE MORRIS



FULTON COUNTY DISTRICT 3 COMMISSIONER

DECEMBER 2015

## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK SESSION



On Thursday, November 19 at St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church, Commissioner Morris held a town hall meeting for the purpose of introducing the 2016 proposed budget and the County's strategic plan to the District 3 community.

The proposed budget was presented to the Board of Commissioners (BOC) on November 15 by the Budget Commission. The Budget Commission is comprised of the Chair of the BOC, the County Manager, and the Chief Financial Officer. The tentative budget was presented to the BOC on December 16. The public will have an opportunity to provide input regarding the 2016 budget at a public hearing in the Assembly Hall of the Fulton County Government Center at 10:00 AM on January 6. The final budget will be considered at the BOC meeting on January 20.

The BOC approved six strategic priority areas for the County, and the 2016 proposed budget was developed based around these areas:

- All People are Safe
- All People are Healthy
- All People are Self-Sufficient
- All People have Economic Opportunities
- All People's Lives are Culturally and Recreationally Enriched
- All People Trust Government is Efficient, Effective and Fiscally Sound

## MAYORS MEETINGS



The Board of Commissioners (BOC) continues to meet with the Mayors of the 14 cities in Fulton County. The BOC met with the mayors on September 21, November 9 and December 14 to continue discussing ways the County and its 14 cities can collaborate on regional efforts. They also discussed options available to all parties through the Transportation Funding Act of 2015 (HB 170). This legislation allows cities and counties to seek sales tax funding to pay for upgrades to transportation infrastructure projects. At the December meeting the Chief Operating Officer of Fulton County, Todd Long, discussed revenue projections, development of a project list, a proposed time line, and a funding distribution method regarding a TSPLOST initiative for the county and its cities.

There was spirited discussion regarding the TSPLOST issue. The county and the cities will continue their dialogue in January to reach an agreement on the TSPLOST issue.



### PUBLIC COMMENT

Along with Chairman John Eaves, Vice Chair Liz Hausmann, and Commissioner Bob Ellis, Commissioner Morris sponsored legislation which expands the public comment period at the Board of Commissioners (BOC) meetings, which are held on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month. The legislation was approved on September 16, 2015.

This initiative expands the public comment period from 15 minutes to 30 minutes at Regular meetings, and maintains the 30 minute public comment period at the Recess meetings. It also allows more citizens to participate in public comment by prohibiting speakers from yielding or donating their time to another speaker. Speakers will each be granted two minutes apiece. The BOC has the option to waive the total 30 minute period in order to allow more citizens to participate.

### EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM

As Chairman Eaves' designated appointee on the Board of Trustees of the Fulton County Employees Retirement System (Defined Benefit Plan), Commissioner Morris spearheaded and the BOC approved the increase of an additional retired member (from 2 to 3) and reduced the number of active members (from 4 to 2) on the Board of Trustees. The legislation was approved on October 7, 2015.

### LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Commissioner Morris co-sponsored legislation with Commissioner Bob Ellis to request that the Library Board of Trustees develop and submit recommendations and options for the BOC to consider the modification of the Library Facility Master Plan. The County will have less than \$108,375,000 available to finance Phase II and any remaining funds from Phase I that may be reprogrammed for Phase II. The legislation was approved on October 21, 2015.

Phase II of the Library Facility Master Plan includes the renovations of 23 existing branch libraries and either construction of a new or renovation of the existing Central Library. On November 4, 2008, the voters of Fulton County approved a \$275 million bond referendum to implement the Library Facility Master Plan. \$167 million of the bonds have been used to finance Phase I (eight new libraries and the major expansion of two existing libraries).

### AD VALOREM TAXES

Vice Chair Hausmann and Commissioners Morris and Ellis introduced legislation to authorize the Fulton County Tax Commissioner to waive penalties and interest accrued by county drivers after notices of their annual ad valorem taxes were delivered late. The legislation was approved unanimously on November 4 and November 18, 2015.

The vendor under contract with the Georgia Department of Revenue filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy, resulting in drivers in Fulton County (as well as across the state) receiving delinquent pre-bills for motor vehicle registration renewals. Affected motorists' birthdays fell in October, November and December.

### FRESHMENTS AT FULTON

Fulton County partnered with Avanti Markets to bring breakfast, lunch, snacks and healthy food options to Fulton County employees starting Wednesday, September 16, 2015. This market is part of the county's effort to improve the working environment for its employees and visitors to the government center, and to upgrade some of its facilities. The employees appreciate a place to purchase juices, sandwiches, and other snacks in the building where they work.



## LITERACY ACTION

As a member of the Board of Trustees of Literacy Action, Commissioner Morris attended the organization's Breakfast and Networking function held on November 10, 2015 at the Commerce Club.



Charlotte Whitlock, a Literacy Action student, addressed the audience about conquering her fears and becoming a leader in the classroom. Her comments were very uplifting and showed how Literacy Action is developing people to thrive outside their comfort zone.

The Right Reverend Robert C. Wright, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta gave the keynote address, Ann Cramer of Coxe Curry & Associates welcomed the group and Austin Dickson, Executive Director of Literacy Action, gave closing remarks.



## ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS



Every year the Fulton County Citizens Commission on the Environment (FCCCE), an advisory group appointed by the members of the Board of Commissioners, recognizes an individual, group or program that demonstrates excellence in establishing or supporting environmental practices. Citizens of Fulton County can submit nominations to the FCCCE for consideration. The award categories are Best Environmental Advocate, Best Environmental Development and Best Environmental Program.

Commissioner Morris and friends and family of the awardees attended a reception in their honor prior to the October 21 BOC meeting where the awards were presented.

The following groups, individuals and programs received the 2015 awards for their advocacy for environmental sustainability:

- Fulton County Library System – Best Environmental Development
- Northwood Elementary School, Environmental Club – Outstanding Environmental Program
- Mountain Park Community Garden – Outstanding Environmental Program
- Jerry Hightower – Exemplary Environmental Advocate
- Park Pride – Outstanding Environmental Program
- Fulton County Cooperative Extension Service – Outstanding Environmental Program
- John Raulet – Exemplary Environmental Advocate

**Happy Holidays from  
Commissioner Lee Morris**



## 2016 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

On November 18, 2015, the BOC approved their legislative priorities for 2016 and subsequently submitted them to the Fulton County Delegation for its support. Not all priorities are supported by all seven Commissioners, but all received at least majority support. Following are the list of priorities for 2016:

**Seek legislation to enhance Fulton's administrative operations:** Change Fulton County's budget year from a calendar year to a different fiscal year.

**Seek changes to Georgia's annexation law:** Broaden annexation objections beyond land use, add additional time for review of annexations, change the petition verification process, and create a de-annexation process.

**Seek Justice Reform:** Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the courts and county administration, improve efficiencies in the justice system, find alternatives to incarceration, and seek additional financial support from the State for justice and juvenile justice programs.

**Vote on Cityhood:** Provide an opportunity for residents of unincorporated Fulton County to vote on the possible formation of a new city.

**Support changes to public health service delivery:** Enhance delivery of public health and behavioral health services in collaboration with other major public health partners, and leverage additional State resources to meet the needs of Fulton County residents.

**Seek balanced 911 funding:** Modernize and balance funding of the E-911 system, and implement a uniform 911 fee of \$1.50 per line on all wireless and prepaid services.

**Protection of Home Rule:** Oppose legislation introduced in 2015 to increase homestead exemptions, and oppose legislation that threatens the county's right to home rule.

**Review special homestead exemptions:** Seek the establishment of an informal legislative study committee to review the numerous varying qualifications for special homestead exemptions.

**Homeowner protections:** Seek changes to the Property Owners Act to offer greater protections for property owners.

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