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To: The Citizens of Butts County Georgia

From: Dr. Keith Moffett, County Administrator for Butts County Georgia

Subj: Letter from County Administrator on Fiscal Year 2017 Budget

One characteristic I have observed firsthand in Butts County is its resiliency. In the beginning of this year, the Board of Commissioners, County Administrator with the Executive staff, and County Department Heads held a retreat to discuss the Vision of Butts County. At that meeting, various ideas were discussed which resulted in a recommitment to the Vision statement previously created by the Commissioners in 2014.

The Vision of Butts County is to be "A unified diverse and progressive community fostering leadership, innovation, and good southern living". In order to achieve this vision, the Commissioners identified the strategic priorities that would provide direction and priorities for the upcoming budget year. All subsequent operational and planning of resource allocation would thus be based on the following strategic priorities:

- Economic Development
- Infrastructure
- Responsible Governance
- Historic and Natural Resources
- Safety, Health and Well-Being
- Leisure and Recreation
- Intergovernmental and Community Relationships

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**, which has been identified as our highest priority, our economic development initiatives will be aggressive and proactive and our strategic marketing and branding will be exceptional. We will focus on recruitment of new business and industry while retaining our current partners. The Fiscal Year 2017 Budget has an inclusion of up to a \$1 million investment spread over two budget years for Highway 16/I-75 infrastructure used to attract major distribution center to the interchange, which will act as an engine for growth along that corridor. There is also an investment of \$100,000 in a new, state-managed Conference Center at Indian Springs State Park, which will increase the estimated \$675,000 of tourism dollars already spent in Butts County last year.

**INFRASTRUCTURE**, our transportation and water and sewer systems will be strategically planned and designed to fully address our current need and future growth patterns. Master plans will allow for coordinated systems design and construction to optimize industrial, commercial and residential development. In order to accomplish this priority, we have continued upgrades with Honeywell Systems for energy cost savings and reassessed our roads paving and resurfacing priority list. In addition, the Fiscal Year 2017 Budget includes a new part-time

building inspector position due to the significant increase in residential and commercial building inspections.

**RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE**, our elected body and our staff will create an organizational culture of workforce enrichment, encouragement, teamwork, trust, respect, creativity and innovation. We will be leaders in innovation, fiscal responsibility, targeted financial resource planning and have a sustainable tax base. In order to accomplish this priority, we will continue to invest in our employees and infrastructure. It is our goal to invest more resources into across-the-board employee training as well as targeted individual personnel enhancement, which in turn creates a stronger and more rounded workforce. The Fiscal Year 2017 Budget includes a 2.5% Employee COLA increase (mandated up to 3% for elected officials), an increase in the pension fund allocation to ensure greater stability and solvency, all while accounting for the increase in expenses due to rising health care cost and workers compensation insurance. To better focus on fiscal responsibility, a budget analysis position will be created to focus our financial resource planning on the areas that will need the greatest attention, ensuring our stewardship of county assets addressing the current and future needs.

The Fiscal Year 2016 Budget introduced the Capital Improvement Program which is our community planning and fiscal management tool used to coordinate the location, timing and financing of capital improvements over a multi-year period — usually 4-6 years. Capital improvements refer to major, non-recurring physical expenditures such as land, buildings, public infrastructure and equipment. The CIP includes a description of proposed capital improvement projects ranked by priority, a year-by-year schedule of expected project funding, and an estimate of project costs and financing sources. The CIP is a working document reviewed and updated annually to reflect changing community needs, priorities and funding opportunities. The current Capital Improvement Program includes proposed funding for renovation of our animal control building; the purchase and repairs of equipment for our leisure services department; the reconditioning of our parking lots at the Administration building, Leisure Services area, and DFACS; the planning for a new courthouse annex; and the purchase of new vehicles for County departments.

**HISTORIC AND NATURAL RESOURCES**, our historic heritage and natural resources will be well preserved, developed and marketed as part of Butts County's tourism initiatives to be a destination for visitors and a place of pride for our citizens. Sites will be further developed and expanded as part of our strategic plan. The Fiscal Year 2017 Budget includes funding to continue the preservation of key historic sites. Several new initiatives have been taken with the common vein of tourism, with a specific emphasis on heritage/cultural tourism and natural/outdoor activities. Specific examples of community actions include the establishment this year of a position responsible for marketing for the County, the Cities' refurbishing of historic buildings and beginning the process for National Historic Registry listing; extensive blight removal and park development; local citizen groups and clubs joining forces to save buildings and planning for their future use to promote cultural tourism, all while creating jobs, and thus tax revenue; completion of a 2,500 seat outdoor amphitheater surrounded by the whimsical Gardens of the World with all continents represented to "accidentally educate" our kids; and the newest being the Flovilla Schoolhouse and Dinner Theater (circa 1885) in which music and theater performances will be held.

**SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**, Butts County will be a safe and secure community with the best in public safety services. The well-being of our citizens is paramount as we give full support and encouragement to quality health care options and education excellence for the people of Butts County as our community grows. The Fiscal Year 2017 Budget both maintains existing levels of public safety delivery strategy while increasing the number of public safety officers and equipment dedicated to protecting lives and property. Additionally, with the new management of Sylvan Grove Hospital by WellStar Healthcare, there will be new opportunity for further enhancements to the hospital and its ability to deliver quality healthcare to all citizens. Considerable progress has been made in bringing our Animal Control Department out of the 1990's and work is planned to continue to make physical improvements that will focus on the well-being of

the animals we shelter while our employees, in partnership with community action agencies seek to find permanent homes for potential pets.

**LEISURE AND RECREATION**, our community's entertainment and recreational options will be second to none. Our open passive green spaces will be expansive, our active recreation parks will have unlimited options and there will be entertainment venues for all our citizens and visitors. The Fiscal Year 2017 Budget increases funding to Leisure Services which is expanding and growing after a period of stagnation. Physical and capital improvements invested in our countywide leisure and senior adult services will raise the quality of life attractiveness for our community and play a key role in economic vitality. It is our goal to continue working with our local government partners to develop future greenspace environments that will only enhance our reputation as a place where people love to live, work, and play.

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS**, Butts County's relationships with community leaders and citizens, local boards and authorities, municipalities, state agencies and citizens will be unmatched in the region. We will continue to work in a spirit of unity and collaboration for the good of all citizens of our Butts County Community. The Fiscal Year 2017 Budget invests funding towards public safety in Jackson, Jenkinsburg and the Flovilla/Indian Springs area. It addresses both recent radio dispatch and jail changes in Jackson as well as invests towards economic development that will benefit all stakeholders. We will continue to invest funding into a number of initiatives that work along geopolitical boundaries with our cities, school system, local authorities, regional authorities and more. Support will be provided wherever possible using county resources to ensure that municipal citizens enjoy the full benefit of being Butts County stakeholders.

To ensure better communications throughout the county, we will be launching our newly redesigned website in July focused on improved navigation with quick links directly from the home page which will allow easier navigation and improved information sharing in order to provide quality customer service to visitors and residents of Butts County. The redesigned site features enhanced colors, graphics and navigational tools to encourage users to more regularly interface with online offerings. There will also be an increase in our social media presence with applications such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and email alerts and updates. Along with the new website and social media, we are creating a citizen information center in the administration building connecting our citizens with the government information and services they need to make life a little easier.

Our budget is a planning tool that lays out a roadmap for how spending will be accomplished during the fiscal year. While there is always necessary spending, it should also be looked at wherever possible as investing in our county, its citizens and its future. This year's budget, for the first time in years, makes two major investments in projects that are anticipated to pay large dividends in the future, as well as many smaller investments in employees, facilities and service delivery. While the overall budget is larger, we have been able to capture this with lowering the millage rate for Fiscal Year 2017 Budget due to new growth that has been added to the digest. The adoption of the County's new millage rate would drop to the lowest it has been in decades. This should help to mitigate the impact to taxpayers who are beginning to finally see their property values recover after the long recession. A balanced budget that includes all of the items that were deemed critical remains intact.

As we close out a successful Fiscal Year 2016 Budget, I am personally looking forward to the challenges that Fiscal Year 2017 Budget will bring as we work to fulfill our vision and mission for this year.

Sincerely,

Dr. Keith Moffett  
County Administrator, Butts County Georgia