

Special Edition

An Open Letter To The Fulton County Board of Commissioners

The proposal to create Milton County was never voted in the House of Representatives during the last session. However, an informal poll has indicated that over 100 members of the House favor the creation of Milton County.

Splitting up Fulton County will devastate the remaining areas of Atlanta and South Fulton because it is estimated that North Fulton accounts for \$193 million of Fulton County's revenues (29% of the county budget), and many of Fulton County's major expenses are fixed, i.e., Courts and Courts-Related Services, Office of the Sheriff, Human Services, etc. *If Milton County is approved, County taxes (including property taxes, sales, business license, etc.) will likely increase for the remaining residents in Atlanta and South Fulton – assuming no improvements to the cost structure are made.*

On April 14th, the Fulton County Taxpayers Foundation sponsored a luncheon to discuss what steps Fulton County should take to prevent the secession of North Fulton.

Although all the members of the Fulton County Board of Commissioners were invited to attend the luncheon as guests of the Taxpayers Foundation, only two of the seven attended, Chairman John Eaves and Commissioner Lynne Riley. Attending from North Fulton were Mayor Eva Galambos of Sandy Springs, Mayor Jere Wood of Roswell, and Mayor Mike Bodker of Johns Creek.

During the luncheon meeting, each of the North Fulton Mayors referred to the 2006 Fulton County Blue Ribbon Commission Report. The Report identified sev-

eral recommendations to improve the management and delivery of services. Below are four (4) major recommendations from the report. These recommendations should be seriously evaluated and considered by the Fulton County Board of Commissioners:

- 1. A County Government Closer To All Taxpayers:** “The Blue Ribbon Commission recommends that the present structure of the County Commission be revised so that there are seven District Commissioners, each elected from an equally-populated geographic district, but elected at-large. The election of the County Chairman is recommended by the seven District Commissioners.”
- 2. Improving the Management of Fulton County:** “The Blue Ribbon Commission recommends that Fulton County appoint an ‘Area Manager’ who would organizationally report to the County Manager. The ‘Area Manager’ would be responsible for establishing and managing the budget for a particular area, based on the wants/needs of the residents of that area. The ‘Area Manager’ would also be responsible for the delivery of services to a particular area - achieving the benchmarks desired by the residents of that area.”
- 3. Improving The Services of Fulton County:** “The Blue Ribbon Commission recommends that Fulton County establish per-

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formance benchmarks for each service in each area of the County. Furthermore, Fulton County must look for the most cost-effective way to achieve the benchmarks, comparing the cost of privatization to the cost of the County self-performing the service.”

- 4. Reducing the Cost of Services In Fulton County:** “The Blue Ribbon Commission recommends that the County adopt a full-cost accounting system and secure the services of a professional firm to provide appropriate benchmarks, best practices, and national comparables in service delivery, governance structure, and financing operations.”

Conclusion

There is a window of opportunity between now and the next session of the General Assembly (January 2010) to overcome the discontent and unrest between Fulton County and its northern municipalities. As President of the FCTF, I urge both groups to work together on behalf of all taxpayers of the county to resolve their differences. The Taxpayers Foundation is prepared to serve as a neutral, third-party mediator.

John S. Sherman



President

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