



LONGTIME EMPLOYEE DONNA WATERS TO RETIRE AFTER 41 YEARS AS BRYAN COUNTY CLERK

BRYAN COUNTY, GA – January 27, 2021 – Bryan County Clerk Donna Waters has announced she is retiring from her position, effective Jan. 31, 2021. Waters has served Bryan County in different capacities for 41 years and 8 months, beginning in 1979 when she was just 18 years old. Throughout that period, she has worked with six commission chairmen, 33 commissioners, and five county administrators. She has amassed countless memories and friends.

When she first started at the county as the payroll/accounts payable clerk, Waters was one of only two employees in the commissioner's office. The other was the county clerk – a role that Waters would later assume in 1993. From the beginning, she enjoyed her job and was dedicated to it. When she was expecting her first child in 1982, the county hired someone to fill in for her while she was on maternity leave. However, that staffer didn't last long and unexpectedly quit the week Waters welcomed her daughter into the world.

"There was no one else who could do payroll, and people need their checks. So, during maternity leave, I still came up every Tuesday to run the payroll to make sure everyone got paid. My coworkers were a good group of people to work for, though, so I didn't mind it at all," Waters said.

That kind of commitment to her work never faltered over the years and in 2013, it was recognized at the state level when Waters was named County Clerk of the Year in Georgia by the Association County Commissioners of Georgia. During her time with the county, Waters has worked on and overseen many projects and upgrades.

"When I started, we had no computers because it was 1979. I remember manually typing all checks and W2s – with W2s, you had use six pieces of carbon paper between each one to get copies," Waters said.

Thankfully, computers were introduced in county offices in 1990, and Waters was instrumental in implementing the new system. She also worked on the codification of ordinances and, just

last year, digitized the county's Freedom of Information Act process, so now FOIA requests can be submitted online and they can be processed and tracked virtually.

Of all the memorable moments that transpired over the decades, though, there are a few that stand out above most of the others.

"Once, probably in the late 90s or early 2000s, we had a lady come in right at 5 p.m. She went straight to the chairman's office and chained herself to his desk. WTOC came in and the news started covering it. Turns out, she was unhappy with a recent planning and zoning decision. So, we called the sheriff, the commission chairman, the county attorney and the planning and zoning director. They all worked with her until it was figured out," Waters recalls.

Soon, Waters' days will spend her days making a different kind of memories – ones that involve her grandchildren and fair amount of travel. She has visited 42 states and hopes to soon check out the remaining eight -- Oregon, North and South Dakota, Minnesota, Nebraska, Ohio, Iowa and Delaware. A year ago, she and her husband bought a large travel trailer RV and have only taken two trips in it, so they plan to get some more usage out of it.

Waters, age 60, and her husband have two daughters, two grandsons, ages 17 and 5, and a granddaughter, age 6, all of whom live within a four-mile radius of her home in Black Creek. They often take family trips and enjoy camping and being outdoors.

"We like to go camping and we have a boat, so we take the grandkids water skiing and tubing. They love it, and we'll probably do a little more of that. I also plan to help my daughter out by watching my grandchildren more often, in general, likely by staying with them after school while she's at work and on other occasions," Waters said.

She also has some more laid-back plans and small things she hopes to accomplish, such as spending more time on her favorite hobbies, reading and crocheting. And she's working on a "sweet skill" as well.

"I want to perfect my sugar-cookie decorating," she says with a laugh. "I already make really good, soft sugar cookies, but I want to get to the point where I can decorate them so well it looks professional. I need to work on that."

Waters admits she'll sorely miss her co-workers but feels that now is the right time to transition into a new phase – one that will benefit her family and allow her to spend more time with loved ones.

“I’ll really miss being around my coworkers the most. You make friends over the years, and it’ll be tough not seeing them every day. But this just feels like the right time,” Waters said. “Dealing with the threat of COVID-19 over the past 10 months has given me a different perspective on things. My time with my family is precious and I want to help them more while I am. I do enjoy my job very much, though, and I sure will miss it.”

Conversely, Waters will be dearly missed by those who’ve worked with her over the years, including Bryan County’s leaders, elected officials and various team members.

“Bryan County has been lucky to have Donna Waters. I am sad to see her retire, but glad she can finally travel more and do the things she has earned with 41 years of service to this county. She has been an encyclopedia of knowledge for me over my 6 1/2 years here,” County Administrator Ben Taylor said.

Commission Chairman Carter Infinger echoed Taylor’s sentiment.

“The commission and I congratulate Donna on her well-earned retirement and thank her for over four decades of exemplary service to Bryan County. She’s been wonderful to work with – a professional through and through – and she certainly will be missed here every day,” Infinger said.

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