



Development Authority of Washington County Selects Jayson Johnston As New Executive Director

(For Immediate Release – July 21, 2017) The Development Authority of Washington County has announced plans to approve Jayson Johnston as the new executive director of the economic development organization. Charles Lee is currently serving in the position and has announced his plans to retire later this year.

“Jayson has the experience, knowledge and commitment to lead our community to the next level in economic development,” according to Mike Sheppard, chair of the Development Authority. “Building upon the solid foundation put in place by Charles over the past few years, I am excited about the opportunities for Washington County in the future.”



***Jayson Johnston Named
Executive Director***

Johnston currently serves as president and chief executive officer of the Harris County Chamber of Commerce in Hamilton, Georgia, a position held since 2012. He is a member of the Harris County Development Authority and the key contact for industrial prospects considering locating in the community. Prior to joining the chamber, Johnston was Executive Director of Matthews Alive Festival in Matthews, North Carolina and Director of Event Operations at Charlotte Center City Partners in Charlotte, North Carolina. In 2014, he was recognized by Georgia Trend magazine as an up and coming leader in the state under 40 years old.

“Washington County has the components to grow the tax base and create jobs,” Johnston says. “With two industrial sites that are GRAD certified (Georgia Ready for Accelerated Development), my direction from the Development Authority is to build the relationships necessary and market those tracts to statewide economic development project managers, site location consultants, and current businesses in the community. When you add the transportation systems and utilities already in place to the mix, Washington County has a product to sell. Economic development is a team sport and I am looking forward to becoming a part of that team.”

There were seventeen candidates considered for the executive director’s position. Thirteen of the applicants were from Georgia. Other states represented in the mix included Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Virginia.

“The Development Authority conducted extensive interviews with several professionals,” Sheppard said. “In a good way, we had a very difficult decision choosing the candidate who will be best suited for the role of Washington County’s leader in attracting new investments and

working closely with our existing industries. The Development Authority is in full agreement that Jayson will have a positive influence on our community. We had several excellent candidates and a tough decision before us.”

“Washington County is the type of area my family and I want to live in at this season in our lives,” Johnston said. “We believe in becoming involved, not only in our careers, but the community around us.”

Johnston, a native of the Columbus, Georgia area, graduated from the University of Georgia in 1998 and went on to further his education at Wake Forrester University. Currently he serves on the Board of the Georgia Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives, Targeted Economic Growth Committee of Columbus - a regional economic development initiative, the Harris County Airport Authority, and the Harris County Local School Council. Johnston is a past president of the Harris County Rotary Club where he remains extremely active.

“The members of the Development Authority are appointed by the Board of Commissioners and serve as volunteers,” according to Sheppard. “The process of selecting a new leader for the Authority is one of the most important decisions we will make during our service. You will begin to see each of us become more involved in the marketing of the community and working with the existing companies who are located here.”

Other members of the Development Authority include: Carl Cummings, Andra’ Jenkins, Ron May, Trey Sheppard, Ben Tarbutton, III, and Aubin Willis.

Georgia law requires public entities such as the Development Authority to announce their final candidate at least 14 days prior to a vote to extend an offer. The countdown of the 14 days begins July 21.

Johnston and his wife, Laura, will be moving to the community with their 4-year-old son. The first day on the job for the new executive is scheduled for September 5.