



Jayson Johnston Approved as Executive Director for Development Authority of Washington County

(For Immediate Release – August 7, 2017) Jayson Johnston has been approved as the new executive director of the Development Authority of Washington County. An official vote was taken this morning during a called meeting of the authority. Johnston will begin his new duties September 5.

“This marks a very important step for the economic development arm of our community,” said Mike Sheppard, chair of the authority. “We have in place our product in terms of available industrial property. We have the strong support of the cities, county, chamber, and technical college. We have the leadership of the development authority members. We have the solid, professional marketing foundation Charles Lee has put in place over the past few years. And now we have a professional in Jayson who has been given the task of continuously taking our message to state economic development project managers, our utility partners, site consultants, and business prospects.”

Johnston currently serves as president and chief executive officer of the Harris County Chamber of Commerce in Hamilton, Georgia, a position he has 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 as an up and coming leader by Georgia Trend magazine’s 40-Under-40 program.

After Lee announced in February his desire to retire in 2017, the authority began the search process by first identifying the needs of the community in terms of an economic development leader and then casting a broad net for candidates. 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. Extensive interviews were held with several candidates, according to Sheppard.



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“This position with the development authority will allow me to utilize the experiences and contacts I currently have as well as expand my knowledge of the profession,” according to Johnston. “The assets of the community are very strong. Two industrial sites with GRAD certification (Georgia Ready for Accelerated Development) is extremely important to the economic development initiatives of the area. Marketing and developing relationships are two of my strong suits that I look forward to sharing as executive director.”

Johnston, a native of the Columbus, Georgia area, graduated from the University of Georgia in 1998 and continued his education at Wake Forrest 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 Washington County 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.

The development authority partnered with The Chason Group, Inc., an executive search firm specializing in economic development, to lead the process of employing a new executive director.

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 began on July 21.

Johnston, along with his wife Laura and four-year-old son, will be moving to the community soon.