

# Gwinnett County Government NEWS RELEASE

Charles E. Bannister, Chairman  
Board of Commissioners

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## RETIREMENTS WILL SAVE COUNTY MILLIONS

(Lawrenceville, Ga., Aug. 25, 2009) – The first step in Gwinnett County’s plan to eliminate more than 250 jobs in a major cost-saving effort resulted in 202 employees opting for retirement under an incentive offer. The vast majority, who are already eligible for retirement, will retire on or before Sept. 18. The remaining 33 are going on leave without pay until their retirement date.

“I am confident our remaining employees will step up to the task and continue providing the best possible public service under the circumstances,” said Commission Chairman Charles Bannister. “The loss of 250 employees in any community our size is significant. Unfortunately, this reduction of more than 4,400 combined years of service and institutional knowledge will not go unnoticed, but we will pull together as a team and do our best with what we have.”

The retirement incentive offer, or RIO, could save the organization more than \$55.2 million over the next three years. At a cost of just over \$4.7 million for the retirement incentives, the savings represent a greater than 1:10 return on investment. Most of the positions will be eliminated, while a select few will be replaced, typically at a lower pay rate. The final net savings will not be known, however, until the next step, a reduction in force, is implemented and those mission-critical positions are filled. This next step could take several months.

In response to the public’s desire to cut services rather than raise taxes, the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners approved a series of reductions to the 2009 budget and the five-year financial plan earlier this summer. In order to achieve the savings needed to bring the budgets into balance, departments modified their business plans to emphasize core services. Staff reductions are a key part of most of the plans.

“Gwinnett County Government has long been an efficient and effective organization,” said County Administrator Jock Connell. “But economic realities forced us to examine our business model and make tough decisions about what services are no longer at the top of the priority list. In many instances, reducing or eliminating services necessitated departmental reorganizations and staffing reductions.”

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## Retirements/Page 2

“When we analyzed our options for reducing staff, it became clear that by incentivizing employees who were eligible to retire, we could make a dramatic overall headcount reduction that would hopefully lessen the impact on other employees who may otherwise lose their jobs through a reduction in force,” said Human Resources Director Kenneth Poe. “Legally we can’t force someone to retire, so it made sense to provide incentives given the significant return on investment. The private sector often uses a similar tool when reducing staff.”

The RIO program was offered to 316 employees who are eligible to retire between now and December 31, 2010. These are employees who work only under departments that report to the County Administrator. Staff is working on plans for separately elected and Constitutional officers.

The County’s reduction in force program will be released next. Officials have not finalized specifics on when that will take place and the Human Resources staff is working on details with each department involved in that process. This final step will solidify the County’s staffing models and plans across the organization.

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