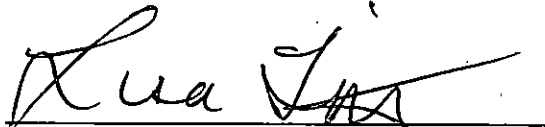


GEORGIA

ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY

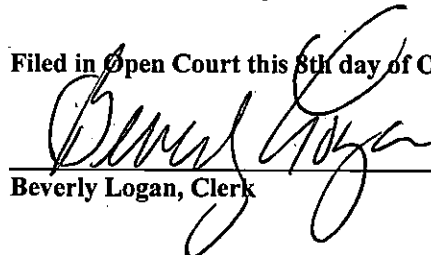
It is ordered that the foregoing presentments of the Grand Jury empanelled for the 2019 July Term of the Superior Court of Athens-Clarke County be entered on the minutes of the Court and published at the expense of the County in the official organ of Athens-Clarke County, Georgia. Exhibits are not to be published, but shall be available for inspection and reproduction in the Office of Clerk of Superior Court Athens-Clarke County,

This 8th day of October, 2019.



**Lisa Lott, Judge
Superior Court Athens-Clarke County
Western Judicial Circuit**

Filed in Open Court this 8th day of October, 2019



Beverly Logan, Clerk

**General Presentments and Reports
Athens-Clarke County Grand Jury
July Term 2019**

On July 8, 2019, 25 jurors, including two alternates, were selected to serve as members of the Grand Jury for the Athens-Clarke County Superior Court for the July 2019 term. Judge Lisa Lott administered the oath to the jurors and charged them with their responsibilities.

The jurors elected David Lerner as Foreperson, Brittany Hulseley as Assistant Foreperson, William (Bill) Parker Sr. as Secretary, and Heather Sitler as Assistant Secretary.

The remaining jurors were Eric Burden (Alternate), Mary (Rachel) Cabaniss, Deborah Carter, Laquan Champion, Arvern Evans, Melanie Hill, Carlton (Bryan) Huff, Constance (Connie) Hunter, Celestine Johnson, Cheryl Mack, Charles McBride, Katherine Patterson, James Patton, Cary Ritzler (Alternate), Rayane Santos, Brian Seelos, Paul Skelton Jr., Shanita Smith, Guadalupe Weeks, Susan White, and Gabriel Whitehill.

I. Criminal Functions

In the capacity of the criminal functions of the Grand Jury, **179 cases** were brought before the Grand Jury for indictment. Of these cases, **175** were returned as **True Bills**, **0** was returned as **No Bills**, and **4** was returned as a **Split Bills**.

II. Civil Functions

The July 2019 Grand Jury undertook five civil functions: (1) inspecting the jail, (2) reviewing the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) from June, 2018, (3) inspecting the Family Protection Center, (4) inspecting the Athens Diversion/Work Release Center, and (5) interviewing and appointing new members for the Athens-Clarke County Board of Tax Equalization.

A. Jail inspection

Although not required this term, three jurors requested the opportunity to tour and inspect the jail on September 17, 2019. Committee members who toured the jail were Bryan Huff, David Lerner, and James Patton.

1. Findings

Upon review, these Grand Jurors were satisfied with their findings and inspection of the Clarke County Jail. The staff displayed a high level of professionalism and organization. The housing facilities were clean and functional. The technology used in their security systems was an improvement over the technology available in previous years, according to the officers who led our tour. In addition, the Grand Jurors were pleased with the educational resources given to inmates in order to help them prepare for a better future.

2. Recommendations: None

B. Finance Committee Report

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. Section 36-1-7, this Grand jury was charged with the task of receiving and reviewing financial returns prepared by the Athens-Clarke County Finance Department, the Judge of the Probate Court, the Office of the Clerk of Superior Courts, and the Office of the Sheriff. Additionally, the Finance Committee received and reviewed the Athens-Clarke County Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the Fiscal year Ended June 30, 2018, which was the latest audited report available for review. The Finance Committee, comprised of jurors Bill Parker and Connie Hunter, reviewed all documents provided prior to meeting with David Boyd, Director of Finance for ACC.

1. Findings

- a. The committee concludes that the amounts listed in the summary statements presented to the Grand Jury were mathematically accurate.
- b. The committee concludes that the figures reported in the Athens-Clarke County General Fund Financial Statement and the Appropriation Summaries for the Probate Court, Clerk of Superior Courts, and the Sheriff's Office for the period July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019 accurately represent the revenues and expenditures for that period, to the best of our knowledge.
- c. The committee concludes that the figures reported in the Agency Fund Receipt and Disbursement Reports for the Probate Court, Clerk of Superior Courts, and the Sheriff's Office for the period April 1, 2019 through June 30, 2019 accurately represent the departmental receipts and disbursements for that period, to the best of our knowledge.
- d. The committee was satisfied with the explanations provided by the Director of Finance to our inquiries about the status of TSPLOST 2018 and the procedure for Agency Fund budget changes (original vs final).

2. Recommendations: None

C. Family Protection Center Inspection

The grand jury requested the opportunity to tour and inspect the Family Protection Center (FPC) on September 3, 2019. Committee members who toured the FPC were Deb Carter, Rachel Cabaniss, David Lerner, Cheryl Mack, Heather Sitler, and Shanita Smith.

1. Findings

The tour of the facility was guided by Lieutenant Derek Scott, who showed us through each wing of the building and offered a history of the Family Protection Center, noting the ways in which it has provided a model for other similar centers throughout the country. We were all impressed with the sensitivity and support that victims of domestic violence receive, and the care we witnessed on the part of law enforcement officers. It is also clear that the partnerships between the Athens-Clarke County Police Department and Project Safe are productive for both institutions, with the members of Project Safe learning to be increasingly attentive to the risks of violence in domestic

violence encounters and to logistical matters involving these cases, and the police officers gaining sensitivity training in their encounters with victims and emotionally fraught situations.

2. Recommendations

- a. The detectives deployed to the Family Protection Center have been understaffed for more than a year. Based on the cases we have encountered during the July 2019 term and having seen the preponderance of cases in which domestic violence is a central component, we, the grand jury, believe that increased resources should be allocated to the Family Protection Center such that they are never running with fewer than **eight** full-time detectives.
- b. The medical staff at the Family Protection Center (in association with the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners) are able to employ a full-time medical professional to perform medical exams on adult victims of domestic violence, but they can currently only afford part-time support for medical exams for children. We, the grand jury, recommend that the Family Protection Center and SANE figure out a way to provide a budget line item that allows for an additional full-time medical examiner at the Center.
- c. Based on our discussions with Lieutenant Scott and other staff members, we believe that domestic violence is a problem that takes root in individuals long before the outbreak of the actual violence itself. Unfortunately, it is only at the point that legal authorities and others can intervene and, too often, much of the emotional and physical trauma has already occurred. We understand that there is a Domestic Violence Task Force for Athens-Clarke and Oconee Counties. We would like a committee to be formed with representatives from Family Protection Center, Project Safe, SANE, and the District Attorney's office to investigate the possibility of intervention and education around domestic violence and healthy relationship and communication strategies at a younger age. Partnerships with the resources at UGA, including Schools of Education and Social Work, would be strongly encouraged to enact such a significant project.

D. Athens Diversion/Work Release Center

The grand jury requested the opportunity to tour and inspect the Athens Diversion/Work Release Center on September 3, 2019. Committee members who toured the Center were Deb Carter, Rachel Cabaniss, Celestine Johnson, David Lerner, Cheryl Mack, and Heather Sitler.

1. Findings

The tour of the facility was guided by Superintendent Daniel Young, who showed us through the building and offered a history of the Athens Diversion/Work Release Center. We saw the areas where the inmates move in and out of the facility to attend to their work programs, and we were given an overview over the different populations which are housed at the Center.

2. Recommendations

- a. The Athens Diversion/Work Release Center employs guards and case managers, but, despite having offices allocated for such a role, does not employ full-time mental health counselors, social workers, or career therapists. We, the grand jury, feel that this is an oversight, and that mental health counseling is an essential tool for the inmates to have access to as they prepare to transition from the detention center to life outside of the prison system.
- b. The Athens Diversion/Work Release Center is a relatively new addition to the Athens-Clarke County criminal justice system, but, according to people we spoke with, there has yet to be a longitudinal study considering the degree of its effectiveness on the employment rates of its former residents, their current status, and rates of recidivism. We, the grand jury, recommend that a full investigation is undertaken to gather data and develop statistical analysis of the Center, and to consider the rate of its inmates' success as compared to higher security prison in the county as well as to similar work-release centers in other counties.

E. Board of Tax Equalization Appointments

This Grand Jury was charged with the responsibility of appointing or reappointing one (1) regular member and three (3) alternate members to the Board of Tax Equalization for a three-year term beginning January 1, 2020. A Committee was established to interview applicants for the Board, including several current members who wished to reapply for appointment. The grand jurors who formed this committee were: David Lerner, James Patton, and Susan White.

In addition to the necessary legal advertisement, a public service announcement requesting applicants was made through the normal Athens-Clarke County public information outlets. After interviews were conducted of the applicants, the Committee recommended to the Grand Jury as a whole to make the following appointments to the Athens-Clarke County Board of Tax Equalization for the three-year term beginning January 1, 2020:

Regular Member: Benjamin Walker;

First Alternate: Ray Rozier;

Second Alternate: Linda Wright; and

Third Alternate: Steven Feig.

On October 8, 2019, the Committee presented its recommendations to the Grand Jury. The Grand Jury voted to endorse the recommendations of the Committee and hereby makes these appointments to the Athens-Clarke County Board of Tax Equalization as set forth above.

III. Acknowledgements

The grand jury extends its thanks to District Attorney Ken Mauldin and all the assistant D.A.s for their patience and helpfulness during our term. Our thanks also to officers at the Athens-Clarke County jail for their kindness and courtesy in facilitating our tour of the jail. We are also grateful to dedicated leaders and staff members at the Family Protection Center and the Detention Center,

particularly Derek Scott and Daniel Young who generously took time out of their days to give us a detailed tour and to field all of our questions with candor. Further, we particularly thank the hard-working bailiffs who saw to the smooth operation of the grand jury week after week, insuring that everyone's work slips were in order, and always keeping the coffee pot brewing.

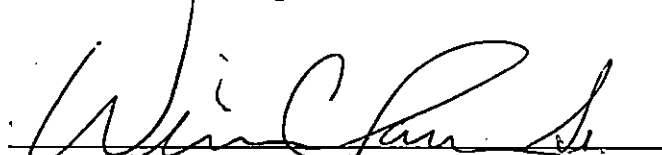
IV. Closing Remarks

It is customary for a grand jury to take this opportunity to express gratitude for the opportunity to serve. Jury duty is a solemn and important civic responsibility. However, it should also be remembered that jurors are not volunteers. Serving on the grand jury is an eye-opening, sometimes stressful experience, and a heavy responsibility. The members of the grand jury are grateful to live in a society where those accused of crimes have the right to due process, and we are mindful of our role in that process. We acknowledge the effort, sacrifice and dedication of each of our members in fulfilling this duty, and we appreciate the support of our employers, co-workers and family, the District Attorney's office, and the community.

Respectfully submitted, this 8th day of October, 2019.




David Lerner, Foreperson



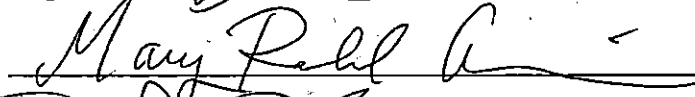
William Parker Sr., Secretary

GRAND JURORS' SIGNATURES:

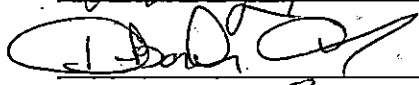
Eric Burden



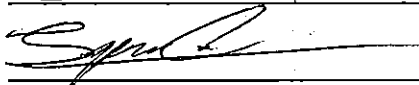
Mary (Rachel) Cabaniss



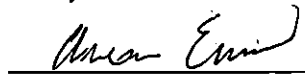
Deborah Carter



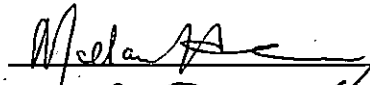
Laquan Champion



Arvern Evans



Melanie Hill



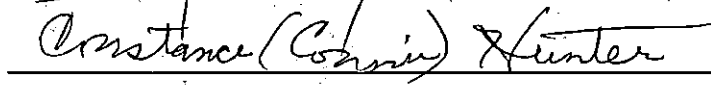
Carlton (Bryan) Huff



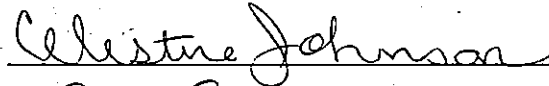
Brittany Hulsey



Constance (Connie) Hunter



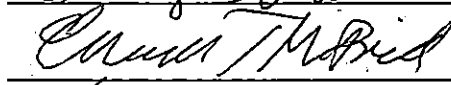
Celestine Johnson



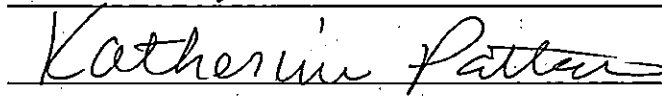
Cheryl Mack



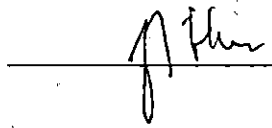
Charles McBride



Katherine Patterson



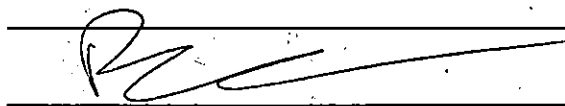
James Patton



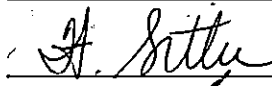
Cary Ritzler



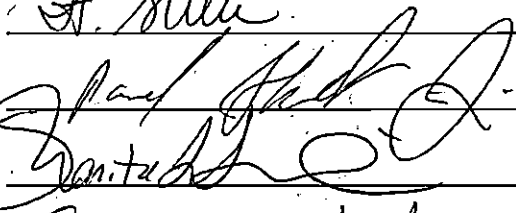
Rayane Santos



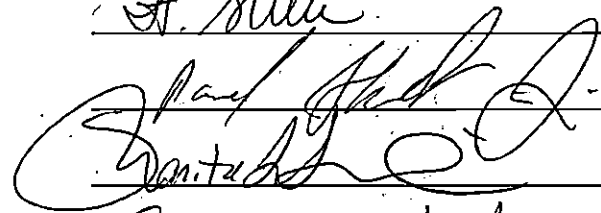
Brian Seelos



Heather Sittler



Paul Skelton Jr.



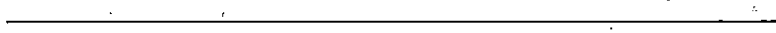
Shanita Smith



Guadalupe Weeks



Susan White



Gabriel Whitehill

