

**GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES**

**The Exchange Building Ballroom  
125 N Broad Street, Thomasville GA**

**Wednesday, November 15, 2023 | 2:00 pm**

**Compiled by:  
Commissioner's Office  
Georgia Department of Economic Development  
75 Fifth Street N.W., Suite 1200  
Atlanta, Georgia 30308  
Phone: 404 962.4003 Fax: 404.962.4009**

Pursuant to notice duly given, the Board of Directors of the Georgia Department of Economic Development met on November 15, 2023, 2:00 pm, The Exchange Building, Thomasville.

### Attending Board Members

- |                      |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Jake Carter       | 7. Julie Hunt     |
| 2. Drew Ellenburg    | 8. Nick Masino    |
| 3. Dwight Evans      | 9. Jay Neely      |
| 4. Jaclyn Dixon Ford | 10. Mulham Shbeib |
| 5. Randy Hatcher     | 11. Mat Swift     |
| 6. Allen Hodges      | 12. Jay Wells     |

Chairman Jay Neely called the GDEcD Board meeting to order at 2:00 pm and welcomed the board, advisors, senior staff, and guests to Thomasville.

Chairman Neely then called for a motion to vote on the minutes from the August 2023 meeting.

- Motion to approve by Julie Hunt, Seconded by Mulham Shbeib
- Approved 12-0

Chairman Neely called on **Andrew Capezuto, CAO & General Counsel – GDEcD**, to present a resolution to be voted on by the Board.

### Resolution | DOT

- Motion to approve by Randy Hatcher, Seconded by Jay Neely
- Approved 12-0

**Mayor Jay Flowers** – Welcomed the board and guests to the great town of Thomasville.

- Georgia is on an upswing and it's because of all of your efforts. We are enjoying part of that upswing as well.
- Our downtown is our focus – our secret sauce.
- The city of Thomasville had to get together and decide what they wanted and we decided on a city of industry. We needed to bring economic development to Thomasville. It had to be done.
- Before, it was a city of agricultural and resort focus.
- Thomasville has really appreciated business for a long time. We are rich in business, we are rich in a cultural cross up of different businesses and it matters. Whatever you are doing in Atlanta certainly reflects on what we are doing here. So, we just want to say thank you for being here.
- We are really proud of our downtown and the great diversity of stores we have. Almost everything here is locally owned and locally operated. It is one of the things we share with people immediately when they come to visit. When we have prospects here to visit we always bring them downtown.

**State Representative Darlene Taylor**, Georgia House of Representatives

- Thirteen years representing this district has given me a great presentation of Thomasville.

- Thomasville is not Atlanta. We appreciate what you are doing in Atlanta and we are thankful when people get down here and realize how important it is.
- We are a good secret and when people come here, they love it.
- I moved to Thomasville 44 years ago and it has been a wonderful place to raise a family.
- We have a lot of assets and you have recognized a lot of them. Everybody in this community is for this community. We don't have a lot of bickering – we work together for the good of all the people. We have great leadership that has been going on for a number of generations and we can see that continuing on.
- You have been an integral part of the economic development that we have. We have a lot to sell and a lot to do and you are helping us to show that off. Welcome to Thomasville.

**Shelley Zorn, CEO and President, Thomasville Payroll Development Authority**

- I have chosen to be here. I don't come from here. It is so unique that I chose it.
- Tina Herring on your regional team is the best! Since 85% of the jobs that are created from existing industry, we get to spend a lot of time with them. Tina is the best of the best.
- I want to give you an overview of Thomasville and some of the economic development success we have had here during the last 5-10 years:
  - A lot of economic diversity
  - Outdoor living, hunting, fishing
  - We are a gun friendly community in a gun friendly state which is a great niche for us
  - What makes us unique is 72 private hunting preserves – a huge economic engine for us
    - \$67 million are spent here at the plantations, in our downtown, and local businesses.
    - The people who bought the plantations are still here and they still invest in our town.
  - Community of about 44,000 people
  - Thriving downtown, \$83 million invested in the last 20 years to create over 800 jobs
  - We have an award-winning Main Street program
  - We are a tourist destination
  - We have invested in updating our downtown. It is unique because there aren't a lot of chain stores. It is a touristy downtown with food, makers, and artists. Things you can't find on Amazon.
  - We truly have a distinctive art culture – it is economic development. They become businesses in our downtown. We bring art to our students every day.
  - We have a small, budding film industry. It has been fun for us as locals to see Thomasville on the screen.
  - Existing industry
    - more existing industry than any other county in this area
    - Seven corporate HQs here in our small town
      - Flowers, Pursuit, Cleaver Brooks, Hurst, Boiler, Ag Pro, Senior Life Insurance, Oilon
  - Entrepreneurial industries - we have makers here. We have a great entrepreneur spirit here.
    - Blackberry Patch, Sweet Grass Dairy, South Life Supply Co., Everfan, Nichols Lures
  - New industry -Listed 8<sup>th</sup> in the Nation Per Capita

- Over 1,500 new jobs in 5 years with \$231 million in total investment
  - Check-Mate Industries, Red King Fisher, Walmart Corporation, 1915 South, Ashley Home Store Furniture Distribution, Troy Acoustics, Ecrimesa Group
- Our niche has been natural – families that started businesses in their garage and now have 200+ employees. Our niche is the people that want our quality of life of outdoor living, gun friendly environment, fishing, the slower pace of life, and the amenities here are great for a small town
- 30 minutes south of us is Tallahassee, the Capital of Florida, but they don't have a lot of industrial jobs. We go to them, they come to us.
- Great school systems – Southern Regional Technical College, FSU is close
- Not on the interstate but very close to the airport in Tallahassee and Jacksonville
- Business park

In 2018 we started looking at a workforce plan. We got funding and in 2022, and did a year-long survey on our workforce plan. Business, education, citizens, retirees, the faith community – everybody. There were 5 pinch points that became working committees:

1. Communications & Relationships – the toughest one – the foundation (hard conversations)
2. Early Care & Learning – we have 2,500 children ages zero to 4 but only 1,100 daycare spots.
  - a. We applied for an Expand Grant. We will receive \$750k to incentivize workers to help pay for daycare. We will see if it helps hire/retain people.
3. Literacy by Third Grade – nothing new created - we just combined forces with what we already had.
4. Pipeline to Post Secondary – partners with the Technical College – having them in the room with educators, health care, and the industry brought everyone together. The communication has really worked out.
5. Worker barriers – mental health, transportation, housing, etc. Getting information now in the research stage.

I thought that there was no solution – but with the workforce plan, they have proved me wrong - there is. It helps us recruit. Prospects see the plan before they move their business here. They will see that we are at least doing something about workforce.

**Jackie Santoro**, Check Mate Industries of Thomasville

- In 2019 - cultural change for all of the right reasons. We truly love this state.
- Workforce - struggles – it is a true struggle as a company
- People had lost sight of the difference in a job and career. They had also lost sight of the importance of a job. As a company we are really trying to reassure our people that if you work at Check-Mate, you are part of our business.
- Father started – family owned business. When my father passed, we decided to grow the business – the ability to grow is an opportunity that Georgia provided. We still have ample room for growth.
- We are nothing without our workforce. Our team works for us and we work for them. Culture in business is absolutely the most important thing. It separates us from some of the larger companies.
- New York was very different. The work ethic is very different. The more hours our staff could get the better. Here, 40 hours is a stretch for our people. Quality of life is more important here.

Instead of other things, we try to work on the culture. Sometimes our biggest competition is ourselves. Take time to have the communication. It is paramount. We have broken barriers.

- We have a team focus group where their entire job is to make up leaders within our team – it allows us to go to them first. They are our eyes and ears on the floor and they understand workforce needs. They hear the gossip, etc.
- We can have honest conversations about real concerns instead of having the person that is always stirring the pot.
- Communication – Every Monday morning we have team leads meetings (it was their idea). They go over our safety ratings, on-time deliveries, etc.
- Teammates – it is about the entire team, the entire line. We have seen a tremendous uptick about positive impact on the floor. We do monthly town halls to present to our employees – goals, tracking, next steps, etc. They really appreciate the fact that we are transparent with them. The good, the bad, the ugly.
- We do a lot of community work – community tours, a lot of youth coming in. We have multiple community events where employees can bring their families, neighbors, whoever they want. They get to take them on a tour and show off where they work. Not just for the employee but also for their families.
- We have some employees that have financial issues – they don't know fundamentally how to calculate their hours, their bank accounts. We have some financial investors that come in the first of the year to help. We are willing to invest in them.
- We have to be more flexible with our hours. It's more challenging because it is manufacturing but there are departments, divisions, times where we can do it.
- A high school diploma is standard – if they don't have one, they can do two years with us and attend Southern Regional to get a GED.
- Recognition, accountability, communication. Our touch points. We ask them to find their why. True motivation – once they understand that, they are willing to try anything and to do anything and work the extra hours needed.
- Rolled out the Nectar Program - an app that all employees have, which is an employee-to-employee and leadership-to-employee recognition program. Staff can recognize each other and give each other points. Those points will accumulate into currency that they can cash in for gift cards, time, etc. Tremendous success.
- Next year we will launch our Community Star Program where we identify a charitable organization and partner with them. If an employee commits to 100 hours of volunteer work for a year, it will equate into a bonus.
- Christmas Parade every year where we enter a float. The employees build it during working hours. If they need a break, they can go work on the float. We want them to be happy to be part of a family business.
- My motto: Building on my father's legacy, providing for my family. bringing someone else along and making them better.

**Commissioner Greg Dozier, Technical College System of Georgia**

- We are in good times. The Chancellor announced that we have robust growth in the USG system – 3%. I'm here to say that we have seen that same growth at TCSG. It is tied to workforce, it is tied to your mission of economic development. Selling this and partnering with us and making

sure that folks understand that you can go to work across this state, have a career, have a family and change your own community.

- TCSG is here to provide the workforce for our state. We believe in it so much that we start with our mission in every presentation – because I believe if you don't have a mission statement – you are not in business. Our mission was changed this year to say “recruit and grow”.
- Several years ago, TCSG looked at it differently. If somebody shows up we are going to make sure they are ready for the workforce. We have worked really hard the last 10 years of saying that but we also want to be part of the recruiting and growing because without the enrollment, we can't provide the workforce.
- When you look at what the General Assembly and the Governor has done, as far as this agency goes, we continue to add different arms of what the workforce pipeline looks like. This last session included the Wagner-Peyser services which is employment services.
- We truly are recruiting and growing a workforce for the state. Beyond that, we are making sure that every citizen has an opportunity for economic prosperity.
- Georgia Match – Governor – to make sure that every graduation student has an opportunity for economic prosperity in this state. Over 12,000 have checked the box that says, “save me a spot.”

Workforce development – that's who we are:

- Technical Education/Academics
- Adult Education
- Economic Development
- Career Services
  - Quick Start – we are not separate agencies – we are once agency working to build our workforce.
- We have gone into micro-credentialing which will bring all of those areas together. It shows a small skill that someone has earned – they can go into the social media apps and put on their applications, not only their main skill set, but also all of these badges for the micro-credentialing skills that they have earned.
  - We believe that this is the key that will bring all of our degrees together.
  - But bigger than that, it's going to give our employers a way to look at the specific skills that they are searching for.

Students

- Average age of 25 (used to be 36) robustness of dual enrollment has helped with closing that gap. The growth is traditional students – you can get a really good job in this state with a technical education and folks are making technical education a first choice. This is important in making sure we can keep being that Number One State to Do Business.
- 7 years in workforce
- 75% are part time
- 44% first generation college student
- 75% graduation rate

Growth

- 550,314 – total served in 2023
- 183,402 – total new customers served through the addition of Employment Services

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- Adult Education – 10% growth
- Economic Development – 21% growth
- Technical Education 4% growth

Enrollment

- Enrollment is projected to be 144,000 in 2024
- 138,114 total credit enrollment AY 2023
- 3.78% over prior year
- 8.9% growth in high demand programs
- 25,706 earned 80,640 awards
- 5% increase in graduates

Fall '23 vs Fall '22

- 10% enrollment increase over last fall
- 10% growth credit hours over last fall
- 13% growth in high demand programs
- 14% in high demand credit hours
- 6% increase in traditional enrollment
- 18% increase in dual enrollment

Master Teacher experience – giving back to the community TCSG – we send our instructors all over the state to this training

High Demand Areas

- Nursing – 12% growth
- CDL – 3% growth
- Aviation – 7% growth
- Manufacturing – 13% growth
- Cybersecurity – 17% growth
- Law Enforcement – 6% growth
  - 13% increase in total high demand enrollment
  - 21% of all students enrolled in high demand

35,706 graduates

- 32 active Quick Start projects sprinkled around the state
- Related projects all around
- We are blessed with the partnership and we are thrilled to hear that they make the difference and it is because of them, but Quick Start has their hands full – y'all have done a good job selling the state.

Apprenticeships – Rivian get Quick Start training then move to Illinois to get training so that when the plant opens they will be ready.

We are really proud to be able to say that we are part of the engine that is running the state.

**Andrew Capezuto**, Chief Administrative Officer & General Counsel – GDEcD

This Board Book is a good example of the benefits we're already seeing. You'll notice style enhancements including, but not limited to, larger visuals, with helpful elements like the description of the cover image at the bottom of page 2; a more consistent and digestible format for division highlights; and a streamlined approach to all events, opportunities and contact information at the end of the book.

We hope you like the improved design, and more importantly, that it better meets your needs.

Additionally, I want to recognize some of our regional GDEcD staff who are here with us today:

- Existing Industry Director Michelle Shaw and Assistant Existing Industry Director Tina Herring
- Regional Tourism Manager Lori Hennesy

These pros keep us connected and engaged, and we are so fortunate to have them!

### **Georgia Council for the Arts**

As we already announced FY24 grants in communities large and small all across the State of Georgia

### **Center of Innovation**

We love to say how the Center of Innovation is “where you need them to be” rather than in one single location. That’s certainly true, and the team is constantly traveling across the state to understand the needs of business and industry of all sizes.

Partnerships within education – K-12 through college – help keep our collective needs aligned, and you can check out some recent examples of this, along with their work to grow industries in the state like AgTech, in the Board Book.

We’re also excited that, to continue the Center’s strong connection with the state’s robust aerospace industry, we have an aerospace leader joining the team in January.

- Steve Shaffer is the former CIO of Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport and active in the aviation industry. He has a passion for educating future pilots, and also worked at Beechcraft. We look forward to having him on the GDEcD team.

### **Film**

Celebrating 50 years of the Georgia Film Office, we announced that TV and film productions spent \$4.1 billion in the state in FY23. This is direct spend of course and doesn’t take into account the wider “economic impact” of the industry.

- What DOES take those numbers into account is a recent Georgia Screen Entertainment Coalition study, which found that Georgia’s film industry is responsible for \$3.54 billion in labor value and \$5.54 billion of additional economic value.
- Every \$1 in film tax credits generates \$6.30 in economic impact.

Also exciting: Along with the Georgia Screen Entertainment Coalition, or GSEC, the Georgia Entertainment News group has been traveling to communities across the state to connect the entertainment industry and creative communities through networking and educational opportunities and highlight the impact of the industry at the local levels.



- Having more engagement from the industry and partners in the private sector is really exciting to see and helpful to our collective aims as this industry continues to grow across Georgia.

And of course, we heard great news last week on the Actor's Strike, and we are ready and working with productions as work resumes.

### **Global Commerce**

Deputy Commissioner Kristi Brigman shared the record-breaking FY23 news at the last Board Meeting in-depth.

Since then, Georgia was named the No. 1 State for Business for the 10<sup>th</sup> year!

Also during the last quarter, one of the state's major international partners gave us a platform and stage that was just an incredible opportunity. We traveled with Governor Kemp to New York in September where he not only delivered the keynote speech – but the State of Georgia was the first state to ever win The Korea Society's "Van Fleet Award."

- This award has been presented to U.S. presidents, genuine titans of industry, and diplomats who have furthered U.S.-Korea relations. The ballroom was filled with business decision-makers, and the ongoing communications from this respected 70-year organization, only continue to amplify the state's large and growing relationship with Korea in front of a critical business audience.
- From a diplomacy, business, and a marketing perspective – this event was a major "win" for Georgia, and we appreciate Governor Kemp's acceptance of the award on behalf of GDECD.

### **International Relations**

This is the perfect lead-in to International Relations, which has also been staying busy! And The Korea Society's award is really a great example of the wide breadth of "economic development" and Georgia's approach.

We also had an Economic Development mission to Japan for the first time in many years. This mission included Georgia's delegation to SEUS-Japan – and of course Georgia was host, the last time the conference was held in 2019, in Savannah.

And of course, we are working on our strategic goals for the state in 2024. Our numbers show how international missions can help us attract new opportunities across the board.

### **Tourism**

At the Governor's Tourism Conference on Jekyll Island in September, Governor Kemp announced that our tourism economy has never been stronger.

In calendar year 2022, a record 167.7 million visitors spent \$39.8 billion in Georgia, surpassing the previous record set in 2019 by \$2 billion.

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- Georgia tourism generated \$73 billion in total economic impact and supported more than 442,600 jobs.
- Georgia maintained its No. 5 market share ranking for domestic overnight visitation among all 50 states and Washington, D.C. for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row.
- GA Tourism set a new record of \$4.7 billion in state and local tax revenue, a 10.1% increase over the prior record set in 2021.

**Closing**

- We are also thrilled that we closed on the Rivian project last week!
- Site grading work will be completed by the State and JDA in the coming weeks, and construction will begin on Rivian’s electric vehicle manufacturing facility at Stanton Springs North by early 2024. We are excited for these next steps in our adventure together with Rivian!
- Rivian announced experienced automotive leader Arnhelm Mittelback as Georgia Plant Manager on November 2, and Rivian Chief Commercial Officer and President, Business Growth Dr. Kjell Gruner is active in Georgia. Gruner serves on the board of the German American Chamber of Commerce of the Southern United States, Inc. in Atlanta, and the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, as well as the board of trustees at the Woodruff Arts Center. These are additional steps towards Rivian putting down roots in Georgia and advancing progress on its facility.

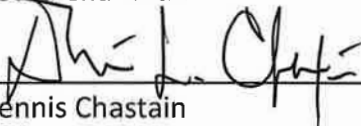
Chairman Neely adjourned the meeting at 4:40pm.

Respectfully Submitted:



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Jay Neely  
Board Chairman



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Dennis Chastain  
Board Secretary

attachments

**Resolution | DOT**

**RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS**, the Georgia Department of Transportation (“GDOT”) needs to acquire custody to certain property owned by the State of Georgia with such custody currently being held by the Georgia Department of Economic Development (“GDEcD”) in order to carry out road improvements which will service the Rivian Site (the “Project”);

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 50-16-38, the State Properties Commission has the authority to acquire real property on behalf of State Agencies; and

**WHEREAS**, GDEcD, pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 50-7-16, acting through the State Properties Commission, previously acquired title to certain real property which is described in greater detail at the attached **Exhibit “A”** (the “Property”); and

**WHEREAS**, GDEcD, pursuant to its powers in paragraph (b) of O.C.G.A. § 50-7-16, hereby supports authorizing this resolution so as to allow the Commission to transfer custody of the Property to GDOT; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED THAT THE BOARD OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** request that the State Properties Commission authorize the transfer of custody for the Property to GDOT;

**AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Chairman is hereby authorized to do all things necessary and proper to implement the purpose of this resolution.

Adopted this 17th day of November, 2023.

*John J. Neely III*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman  
Georgia Department of Economic Development

Attest: *Dennis Chastain*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary or Assistant Secretary

{Department Seal}

CERTIFICATE

The undersigned hereby certifies that I hold the position of Secretary or Assistant Secretary, as stated below my signature, of the Board of the Georgia Department of Economic Development and that the Resolution a true and correct copy of which is attached to this Certificate was duly adopted by the Board of the Department at and in a public meeting duly scheduled and for which all public notices required by law were given.

November 17

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_, 2023.

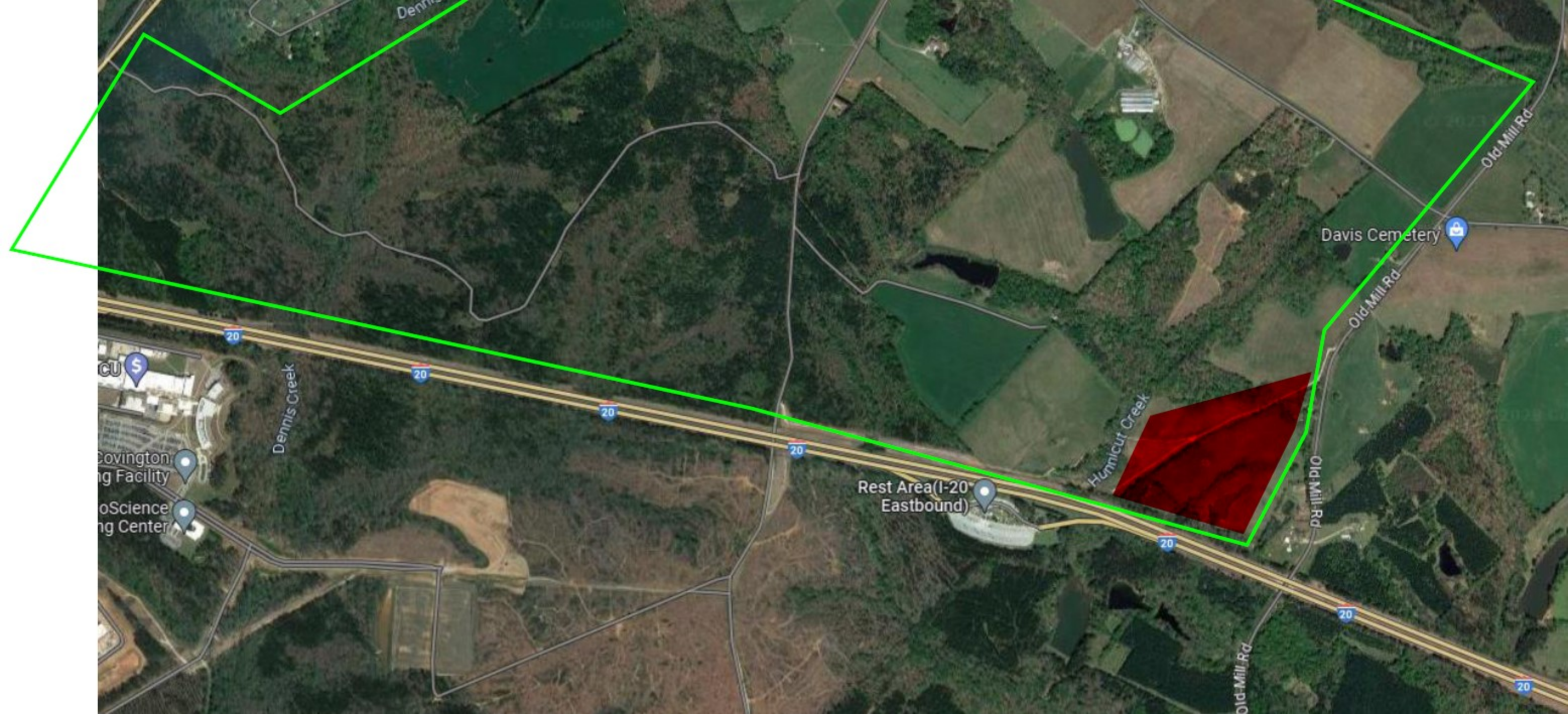
*Dennis Chastain*

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Secretary or Assistant Secretary

{Department Seal}

## **Exhibit A**



TRACT 2  
± 1,927.204 AC.

N/F  
SARA V TUELL  
PARCEL 013-018A

N/F  
ALBERT F JENKINS JR  
TESTAMENTARY TRUST  
PARCEL 013-028

N/F  
SARA V TUELL  
PARCEL 013-018C

N/F  
SARA V TUELL  
PARCEL 013-018E

N/F  
WILLIAM H VERNER  
PARCEL 013-018B

N/F  
THE ESTATE OF  
JOHN R BROADWELL  
PARCEL 013-026D

N/F  
NANCY J GREENE  
PARCEL 013-026C

N/F  
THE ALBERT FELTON JENKINS JR  
TESTAMENTARY TRUST  
PARCEL 013-026

N/F  
JAMES E PRESTON  
PARCEL 013-026A

APPROX. L.L.L.

APPROX. L.L.L.

OLD MILL ROAD  
(100' R/W)

INTERSTATE 20  
(R/W VARIES)

CITY OF JASPER,  
ON COUNTIES  
OF

