2006 Annual Report

COBB COUNTY GOVERNMENT

From the Chairman

Sam Olens, *Chairman, Board of Commissioners*

Quality of life. Low taxes. Excellent customer service. A vision for the future. These are just several reasons we are proud to call Cobb County home and why our county continues to improve. In 2006, we as a community worked hard to take actions that will positively impact the quality of life of our citizens.

Cobb citizens approved a referendum in November allowing the county to issue bond funds to purchase much needed park land. The one-cent sales tax approved by Cobb voters in 2005 is already funding transportation and public safety needs, with road improvement projects moving forward quickly. Our emergency agencies now have state-of-the-art communications capabilities paid for with SPLOST funds, and expansion of the county jail will soon be underway.

Redevelopment is occurring in several areas of our county. The Cumberland Galleria area continues to attract high quality development and we are very pleased with the renovation of Cumberland Mall. Many residents are enjoying the new regional public library in Mableton and the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre is set to open in September 2007. The addition of two new fire stations is making our community safer, and our water system has received national recognition for its Water Efficiency Program. Cobb's responsible fiscal practices have earned us a AAA bond rating for the 10th straight year, and millage rates were lowered to lessen the tax burden on our residents.

As we prepare for Cobb County's 175th birthday in 2007, we look back on our many successes and commit ourselves to continue to raise the bar to make Cobb an excellent place to live, work and play for generations to come.

Sam S. Olens

District Commissioners

Helen Goreham, *Commissioner, District 1*

During the past year in District 1, a balanced approach to development has resulted in positive additions to our community. With the completion of The Avenue West Cobb, construction of several residential senior living communities and creation of a master plan for a passive park on the Leona Price property off Stilesboro Road, our quality of life thrives. The completion of the update of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan and the Comprehensive Transportation Plan will continue to allow for balanced development and provide the framework for a bright future for our residents.

Helen C. Goreham

Joe L. Thompson, *Commissioner, District 2*

The past year has been one of quality growth as District 2 has seen a number of outstanding projects started and completed. The $80 million renovation and expansion of Cumberland Mall is now completed and the new Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre will open in September 2007. The Cumberland/Vinings/Oakdale area has seen a boom in residential development. In East Cobb, the emphasis has been on improving the infrastructure with more sidewalks, trails and intersection improvements.
The future promises to be filled with great things for District 2 as the area continues to be a vibrant driving force of Cobb County's economic development.

Joe L. Thompson

Tim Lee, *Commissioner, District 3*

In 2006 we saw many projects come to fruition as others took steps toward completion. Residents will be better served with the recent opening of the new Fire Station #14, as well as the expansion of the public library and senior center at Mountain View. The opening of the new dog park at Sweat Mountain was a long-awaited event for local dog owners and a new sign ordinance will help clean up roadsides with stricter limitations on weekend and temporary directional signs. We are also starting to see positive results from the Canton Road Corridor Redevelopment Plan. In 2007, we look forward to the input from the arts community in creating a Master Plan for the Arts, and purchasing new park land as a result of the referendum passed by Cobb voters. I thank you for the opportunity to work with you over the next four years.

Annette Kesting, *Commissioner, District 4*

2006 was a year of progress and promise for District 4. Southwest Cobb has experienced a new surge towards prosperity as new homes, shopping and government services are expanding. With the opening of the new South Cobb Regional Library in Mableton, plans to build a new fire station and mini police precinct on Factory Shoals Road and by adding additional police officers in the district we are making things happen. I remain focused on improving public transportation, reducing crime and promoting redevelopment in our community. The Austell, Floyd and Clay Road Corridor Redevelopment projects continue to move forward and it is refreshing to see so many of you involved in the community building process. Knowledge is the foundation of empowerment and your participation has been an important part of our progress.

Community Improvement Projects

■ In November, Cobb voters overwhelmingly approved a referendum that will allow Cobb County to issue $40 million in bond funds for purchasing land that will be used specifically for public parks. The first bond for $25 million will be issued in March 2007 and the second bond for the remaining $15 million will be issued in 2008. Staggering the bond issues in this way will keep the debt millage at the current rate.

■ A 15-member citizens advisory board was appointed to assist in identifying properties and evaluating the potential of identified parcels for possible park space, and to work with county staff to make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners. Another committee assisting with this process consists of staff from the county's finance, legal and parks departments.

■ In 2006, the first proceeds from the one-cent Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) were collected, totaling $100, 509,573 through December. A number of projects specifically designated to be funded by the sales tax also got underway. The SPLOST is scheduled to end in December 2011, bringing in an expected $825 million including federal matching grant funds for capital improvements across the county.

■ Transportation improvements represent the largest portion of projects funded by the SPLOST. As of December, 87 Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) projects were in various phases of design, 12 projects in the right-of-way acquisition phase, 12 projects under construction and six projects completed.

■ Improvements to Cobb County's public safety infrastructure are also a large part of the SPLOST initiative. The fire and police departments have received new radios and updated repeaters have been installed to make sure emergency workers have instant access when calling for assistance or equipment throughout the county. The new radio system will also allow communication across city and county borders making all area public safety agencies that much more effective.

■ Preliminary work has begun on phase one of the expansion of the county jail. This project will add 1,152 beds to the facility, helping to make up the jail's current 500-bed shortfall.

■ The county opened two new fire stations. Station 11, which opened in February, was relocated to a more central location in northwest Cobb. Station 14 opened in October in the Mountain View complex in east Cobb.

■ The Sweat Mountain Dog Park, Cobb County's first off-leash dog park, officially opened in October. The park includes an area for large dogs and another for smaller dogs, allowing owners and their pets to enjoy a safe open area together.

Metro Area Sales Tax Comparison

Atlanta	8%
Fulton	7%
DeKalb	7%
Gwinnett	6%
COBB	6%

Cobb County's sales tax is 6 percent, effective Jan. 1, 2006

■ The Cobb County Water System will undergo an aggressive water main replacement program through 2012, replacing aging infrastructure before it causes service disruption to our customers.

■ The Water System's Annual Water Quality Report – Consumer Confidence Report (CCR), a federally mandated report on the quality of our local drinking water, was distributed to more than 220,000 Cobb County residences and businesses.

Sample Cobb Property Tax Bill

Homestead Exemptions:
$10,000 County BOC / $10,000 Schools / $2,000 State

Based on residential home with market value of $180,000

County Schools (BOE)	**$1,242.80**
Maintenance & Operations	$1,178.00
School Bond	$64.80
County Government (BOC)	**$623.00**
General Fund	$422.84
Fire District	$184.32
Debt Service	$15.84
State Government	**$17.50**
Governor's Tax Credit	**-$229.04**
***TOTAL**	**$1,654.26**

(BOE)	66%	$1,242.80
(BOC)	33%	$623.00
(State)	1%	$17.50
Governor's Tax Credit		-$229.04
*TOTAL		$1,654.26

Other exemptions include BOC Floating Homestead Exemption & BOE Exemption for homeowners over 62

Economy

■ A ribbon cutting ceremony was held in July opening the first phase of the FedEx Ground Package Handling Facility in the Kennesaw area. Upon completion of the second phase, which is currently scheduled for 2010, the facility will be able to handle approximately 35,000 packages per hour and represents a $120 million investment in our community.

■ An $80 million renovation to Cumberland Mall was completed, adding more than 77,000 square feet of space and featuring a pedestrian-friendly streetscape with an open-air plaza complete with fountains and outdoor seating. The renovation includes an array of new dining options, specialty retailers and the addition of Costco Wholesale.

■ Corporate Express has broken ground on a new $16.5 million warehouse and distribution facility, which will be located in the south Cobb area. When it is completed, the facility will employ approximately 225 people.

■ Design guidelines were adopted earlier this year by the Board of Commissioners for the Historic Mableton area. These guidelines ensure that new development and redevelopment anticipated in Mableton will be of high quality and consistent with the community's vision.

■ The ribbon cutting was held May 25 officially opening the South Cobb Regional Library located in the Historic Mableton area. This well-received facility complements the ongoing redevelopment efforts in this area.

■ Cobb County's Latino Initiative was nominated and selected as a winner of the Atlanta Regional Commission's CREATE Community Award for Community Building and Involvement in 2006.

■ The Community Development Agency and the Department of Transportation worked together to develop the Six Flags Drive Corridor Study focusing on the area between I-20 and Factory Shoals Road. Area residents, stakeholders, elected officials and a special steering committee worked with county staff to devise a series of recommendations aimed at addressing issues such as transportation infrastructure, land use patterns, public safety and economic viability.

■ Cobb County once again earned "Triple A" ratings for its general obligation bonds from the nation's top three credit rating agencies, Moody's, Standard and Poor's and Fitch ICBA. This is the 10th year in a row that Cobb has earned this top rating.

■ The Georgia National Guard announced it would take over the Naval Air Station (NAS) Atlanta property, which is being closed due to the Base Realignment and Closure Committee (BRAC) recommendations. The base will serve as the new headquarters for the Georgia Department of Defense (DOD), including the Army and Air National Guard. This property includes 107 acres with 100 buildings for a total of more than 600,000 square feet. The relocation of the DOD headquarters will bring an estimated 700 new full time positions to the county and the National Guard expects the property to be the base for approximately 1,500 soldiers.

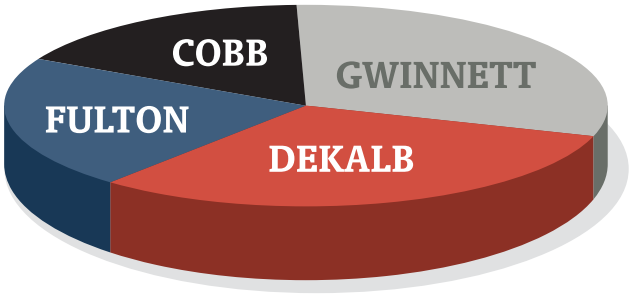
■ Construction continued on the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre, which will open in September 2007 in the Cumberland-Galleria area. The $145 million project will be the first major performing arts facility built in metro Atlanta in four decades and will include a 2,750-seat theater, a 10,000-square-foot ballroom, 6,500-square-foot courtyard, 2,500-square-foot terrace and 1,000 parking spaces.

Total Unincorporated Tax Millages

KEY	FY 02	FY 03	FY 04	FY 05	FY 06
Atlanta	23.67	22.83	21.67	21.21[5]	20.91[0]
Fulton	17.28	16.63	16.38	16.37[6]	16.08[4]
DeKalb	15.58	15.58	15.48	15.48[0]	16.07[0]
Gwinnett	11.32	11.50	11.47	11.47[0]	11.30[0]
COBB	9.72	9.72	9.72	9.72[0]	9.60[0]

Figures are without school & state taxes (based on Financial Year)

Total Operating & Capital Budgets



COBB COUNTY	$ 818,230,143
Fulton County	$ 986,699,962
DeKalb County	$ 1,779,212,521
Gwinnett County	$ 1,543,096,980

Full-time Government Employees

Atlanta	9351
Fulton	6500
DeKalb	8619
Gwinnett	5220
COBB	4210

Cobb County figures = FY 07, other jurisdictions = FY 06

Services

■ Cobb Senior Services (CSS) completed its first 10-year master plan, which was approved by the Board of Commissioners in January. A committee representing the community worked with staff for more than a year to create this comprehensive document which will help the county prepare for the future needs of Cobb's rapidly growing senior population.

■ In January, we launched the Senior to Senior Advocacy Office with 13 senior volunteers trained to assist other seniors with everything from consumer issues to navigating the new Medicare Part D registration. Within the first five months of 2006, more than 2,000 seniors and their families received guidance through the Advocacy Team's efforts.

■ In February, our department worked with the Board of Commissioners and the Alzheimer's Association to make Cobb the first county in the nation to adopt Mattie's Call. This measure established training for the Department of Public Safety and protocol to act upon when a person with Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia is deemed missing. Later the Georgia State Legislature voted Mattie's Call into state law.

■ A $631,000 expansion of the East Cobb Senior Center began in October, including 3,200 square feet of new meeting spaces and a state-of-the-art health and wellness room, renovation of 1,000 square feet of the existing facility, an additional parking lot and improved handicap access parking.

■ The Property Tax Division of the Tax Commissioner's office was relocated in December to the West Park Government Center at 736 Whitlock Ave. Six new positions were received in the 2006 budget for auditing Homestead Exemptions and recovering lost revenue due to unqualified exemptions.

■ The Cobb County Public Library held two book sales which raised more than $50,000, with help from volunteers from the Friends of the Library and the Marietta and Lost Mountain Golden K Kiwanis clubs.

■ Cobbcat, the Library's online public catalog, now features additional content that provides an image of the book cover, a brief synopsis, table of contents, author biographies, first chapters and reviews for most of the

newer books in the library. It also provides several current bestseller lists with links directly into the catalog. This added content saves patrons time by offering a thorough look at resources right from the library's catalog.

■ The library received a federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Family Literacy grant of $99,188, which was used to buy an additional 8,700 children's and young adult books in both print and audio formats. Some of the audiobooks added are in the new "Playaway" format, which are personal listening devices similar to MP3 players with an audiobook pre-recorded on them. The library also received a $4,635 federal LSTA grant for acquiring materials to enhance the Vacation Reading Program.

■ In January, the library began offering downloadable e-Audiobooks from NetLibrary and Recorded Books. This service allows users to download audiobooks to a personal computer and then transfer them to an MP3-type personal listening device. There is no waiting and an unlimited number of people can download the same title at the same time. Also, there are no late fees because the e-audiobook checks itself in automatically (though it can be renewed). As of October, nearly 12,000 of the e-Audiobooks had been checked out.

■ In June, Cobb's Library System began using Sirsi Voice Automation (SVA), which makes recorded telephone calls to notify library patrons about overdue materials or that items on hold are ready to be picked up. SVA also allows users to call and find out about overdue materials and to hear a list of items currently checked out as well as renew them over the phone. This system saves costs on overdue notices, postage and staff time previously spent calling patrons with books on hold.

Services

■ The new 20,000-square-foot South Cobb Regional Library opened May 1 on Clay Road in Mableton, replacing the 8,600-square-foot building on Mableton Parkway. The facility is the third regional library in the Cobb County Public Library System and has 45 computers for public use and wireless access to the Internet. The facility includes a large children's department, three study rooms, a quiet reading room and a multi-purpose room for community use.

■ Cobb County Extension, American Cancer Society, Cobb County Public Health, the state's BreasTEST & MORE program and National Institute of Cancer conducted the Cooking for Life Cancer Cooking School, a two-session program held in October during Breast Cancer Awareness month. Participants received information on breast and cervical cancer and learned how to prepare healthy foods for cancer prevention.

■ Cobb County Extension distributed 1,500 copies of Cobb Cares About You, a resource directory for researching information on community agencies and services. Also, Extension Horticulture and Master Gardener volunteers trained 24 elementary school teachers representing eight schools on environmental horticulture. Cobb Extension also provided Agrosecurity training to many departments of public safety in Cobb and surrounding counties.

■ Cobb's 4-H program reached 4,103 youths with its

environmental science curriculum during the school day, after school, in community clubs and through UGA Extension Environmental Education programs. Cobb 4-H members also participated in local and state public speaking competitions, as well as the Junior/Senior Area Project Achievement, both held at Rock Eagle 4-H Center. Cobb 4-H had first, second and third place winners at each competition.

■ Cobb's Records Management department developed a 10-year strategic plan that included converting many paper records to microfilm records or other acceptable storage media. The department also created the county's first Disaster Recovery Plan for Vital Records.

■ Our Purchasing Department earned the Achievement of Excellence in Procurement (AEP) award from the National Purchasing Institute for excellence in public

procurement. We also created a link on our web site that allows vendors to apply for bid opportunities online and conducted an auction of 301 items of surplus county property. The auction generated gross receipts to the county of $369,700, and disposed of obsolete and unused property which would normally be discarded.

■ Community Development continued work on the 10-year update to the county's comprehensive plan. The plan establishes a vision for the growth of Cobb County to the year 2030 in order to meet the needs of current and future residents as the county's population grows to approximately 750,000. The update will allow Cobb County to retain its "Qualified Local Government" status with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, continuing our ability to receive state grants for various types of public infrastructure.

■ Many goals relating to Cobb's cultural and historic resources were accomplished, including adding the Gantt House and the Cheney House to the Cobb County Register of Historic Places, protecting these resources for future generations.

■ The county's first Historic Marker Program was implemented, with approximately 20 sites slated to be marked in the first round of funding. An update of the county's 25-year-old historic resource survey will be completed to catalogue the county's historic resources.

■ A historic resource driving tour of Cobb County is being created to help educate the public about the county's history and provide economic benefits to various sites along the route. A grant was received to help fund the tour program.

■ The Property Management Department completed renovation of the new Public Safety Supply Facility and changes to the Elections Warehouse for improved comfort and effectiveness. Construction of several new facilities was also completed, including expansion of the Health Department, South Cobb Regional Library and Fire Station 14.

Public Safety

■ Cobb County adopted the National Incident Management System (NIMS) developed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which will provide a consistent approach for federal, state and local governments to work together to prevent, prepare, respond and recover from domestic emergencies.

■ Cobb County achieved StormReady recertification to better protect residents against the ravages of Mother Nature. StormReady is a nationwide community preparedness program that uses a grassroots approach to help communities develop plans to handle all types of severe weather.

■ A video was created to educate the public about Cobb County's Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program. The video, which received recognition from the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM), trains Cobb law enforcement an fire personnel to recognize CERT members and be aware of their capabilities and their ability to assist during crisis situations.

■ In June, approximately 300 participants from 60 agencies from Cobb County and across the state participated in the Cobb County Emergency Simulation Full-Scale Exercise held at Lockheed Martin and Dobbins Air Reserve Base. The exercise was designed to assess Cobb's emergency and disaster response by evaluating the capabilities of multiple agencies handling a potential or actual terrorism and weapons of mass destruction incident.

■ Due to the increased threat of a possible pandemic flu outbreak, Cobb EMA, Cobb – Douglas Boards of Health and several other partner agencies are working together to create plans and guidelines to ensure that emergency services continue if an outbreak should occur. The development of the plan will continue into 2007.

■ Cobb EMA formed the Populations at Risk Committee to determine how government agencies and the community can better serve residents with limited abilities to care for themselves in the event of a disaster.

■ The Cobb Police Ranger Unit continued its primary mission to patrol Cobb County parks and create a safe

environment for patrons utilizing the facilities, including parks in local municipalities and the unincorporated areas of Cobb County.

■ Cobb County completed an upgrade of the emergency communications system used by public safety first responders. The project included updating the technology of the radio communications infrastructure and replacing mobile, portable and desktop radios for all Cobb County system users. The $17 million capital improvement project was approved in 2004.

■ The Cobb County Department of Public Safety (DPS) was selected by the Georgia State Patrol for joint participation in an airlift rescue program. Cobb County police officers and firefighters will work with the Georgia State Patrol to provide highly specialized search and rescue services within Cobb County and throughout Georgia.

■ DPS was selected by the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) to receive a grant in the amount of $345,876 to purchase a law enforcement hazardous material response vehicle and related chemical and biological equipment for the truck.

■ DPS also began training police officers and firefighters in the National Incident Management System courses. The courses provide important training to assist first responders and command staff to effectively manage large scale and multi-jurisdictional events.

■ DPS continued to work closely with citizen volunteers appointed to the Neighborhood Safety Commission, hosting two Gang Awareness seminars this year. These programs were designed with the parent in mind and emphasized education about gangs, the importance of the community partnering with government and practical advice for helping at-risk children.

■ Fire Station 11 in northwest Cobb County was relocated and began operations in February at the new facility at 4550 Cowan Road in Acworth. The new location addressed concerns about having a more central location for fire and emergency response in that area.

■ Cobb County Fire and Emergency Services (CCFES)

began operating out of new Fire Station 14 in October 2006. The new Station 14 was built on Library Lane, which is a part of the Mountain View Campus in Marietta.

■ In August, CCFES received two new rescue units at Fire Stations 11 and 24. Two new Pierce fire engines began operation in September at Stations 7 and 14. A new 40-foot, custom-chassis technical rescue unit went into service at Station 4 in December.

■ Also in August, CCFES placed into service a new inflatable water rescue boat and trailer. The Zodiac Mark III HD is equipped with a Yamaha 60 horsepower four-stroke jet drive outboard motor. The boat has been assigned to the Technical Rescue Team at Station 4, where it will be used for swift water rescue.

■ With the passage of the 2005 SPLOST, the Sheriff's Office will receive $110 million to begin the much needed expansion of the Cobb County jail, which will include the addition of 1,152 maximum/medium security beds, a new visitor center, jail administration offices, jail command center as well as renovations to the current facility. Construction is slated to begin in June 2007 and will take approximately two years to complete.

■ The Sheriff's Office received authorization from the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency to enforce federal immigration statutes of the Immigration and Nationality Act. Efforts are underway to select and train deputies to identify and initiate deportation proceedings for inmates in the United States illegally.

■ Cobb County Police Department's Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit was created in March to enhance the safety of domestic violence victims and the accountability of domestic violence offenders through effective response and investigation.

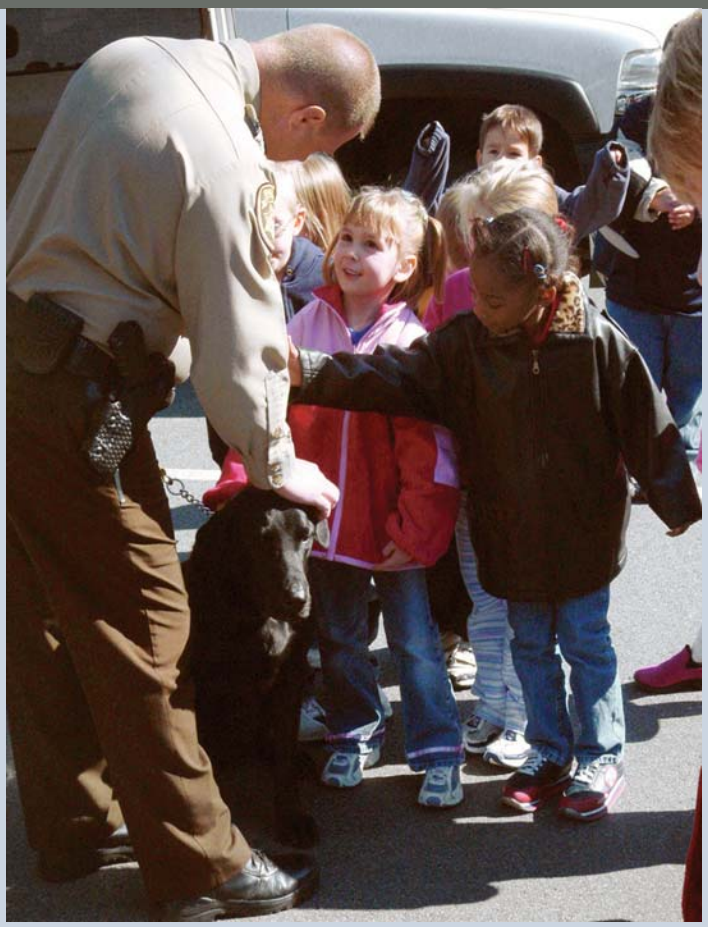
■ Cobb County Police Department Bomb Squad upgraded its technology, equipment and capabilities to be able to handle emergencies involving chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosives, enabling the squad to be classified as a Level 1 bomb squad. The upgrade was the result of a $932,000 federal grant

received in 2005. The squad is one of the few regional response Level 1 bomb squads in the state and is capable of responding to multiple bomb threats across the region.

■ In March, the Cobb County Police Department's Special Operations DUI Task Force received the 2005 MADD Agency of the Year Award. This award is given to the law enforcement agency that demonstrates excellence in implementing innovative techniques in the detection and deterrence of DUI, participates in statewide collaborations and has emphasized community outreach.

■ The Cobb County Police Department Animal Control Unit established agreements to enforce the Cobb County Animal Control Ordinance within the cities of Acworth, Marietta, Powder Springs and Smyrna. Each of these cities passed animal control ordinances that were similar to Cobb County to allow universal laws and the enforcement of the laws within the county and in these cities.

■ The Sheriff's Office, working in cooperation with the Cobb County Department of Public Safety 911, turned over dispatch responsibilities to the department on June 1. Cobb 911 now handles all radio traffic and unit location changes for the Sheriff's Office. In order to staff the additional 24-hour Sheriff's radio, the 911 center acquired five 911 operator/dispatcher positions.



■ The Tactical Dispatch team was created, trained and nationally certified. The purpose of the Tactical Dispatch team is to take the role of an emergency dispatcher to the field and to work with scene commanders during large scale operations or SWAT call outs.

■ The 911 center worked with the Cobb Fire Department to implement a state-of-the-art weather satellite system in the 911 center. The BARON's system will provide interactive tracking information about where severe weather systems are headed and the strength of the system, along with lightening strike information.

Judicial Services

■ The Sheriff's Office, working with the courts, has adopted a formal plan and began implementation of security measures at the Cobb Judicial Complex. Partially funded by a federal grant, changes include improved security for judicial chambers, enhanced CCTV monitoring, better security staffing in the courtrooms and additional security training for courthouse staff members.

■ The State Court Administration added juror reporting information to its county web page in an effort to improve communication of information to jurors.

■ The Cobb County State Court Clerk's Office was awarded $21,000 for the installation of a digital video recorder and 16 cameras to monitor the areas of the court that receive money and that have high traffic volume. As the office processed more than $33 million in FY2005, this equipment will help make the office safer and more secure.

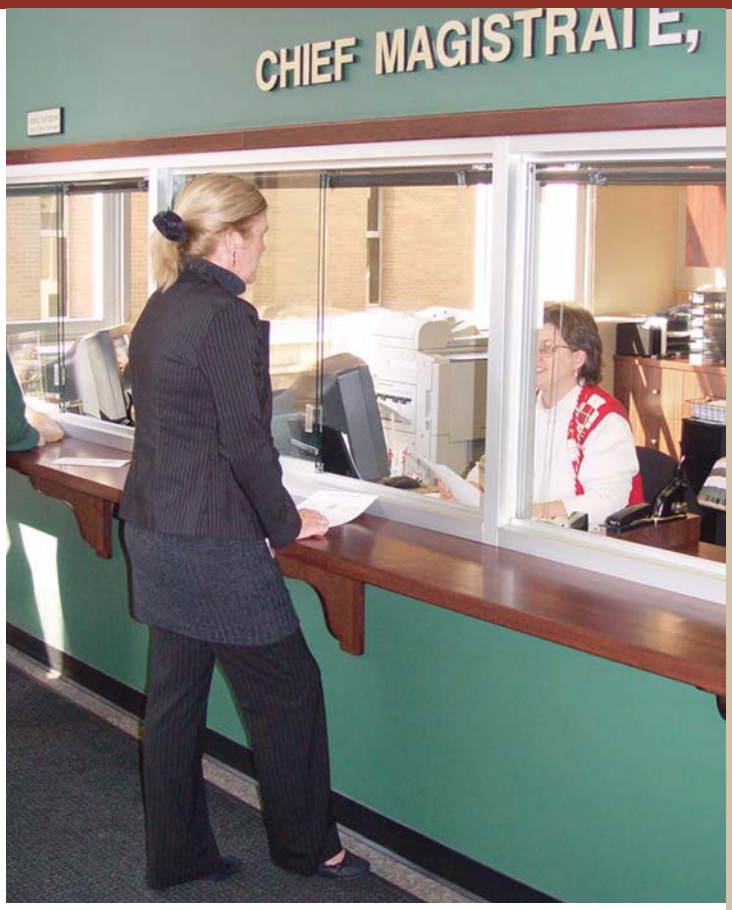
■ The Superior Court Clerk made all real estate records from 1977 forward available online and accessible to the public at no cost. The average processing time from receipt of the real estate document until it is publicly available at the courthouse and online is three hours.

■ The Superior Court Clerk participated with a state authority in a program to create and transmit data from existing older deed records, generating more than $2.8 million in revenue for Cobb County.

■ The Solicitor General's Office relocated to its new location at 10 East Park Square, Suite 300. The staff also worked as a Partner in Education with McClure Middle School, visiting the school to help enhance students' understanding of how the judicial system works and how the office prosecutes crimes.

■ The District Attorney's Office recently underwent a renovation project, initiated and completed during regular working hours without the interruption of services to the public or the courts. This was the first renovation of the offices in more than 15 years.

■ In January, the Family Dependency Treatment Court worked with the Mothers Making a Change Program and



the Cobb County Department of Family and Children's Services to implement an innovative program designed to help break the cycle of addiction and subsequent child neglect that is often the result of a mother's addiction to drugs and alcohol.

■ Magistrate Court and Information Services personnel developed a computer interface to transfer information from civil cases filed by citizens to the Sheriff's Department service process logs. This effort has reduced entry duplication into two computer systems, saving employee work hours and cost to Cobb County.

■ Magistrate Court has given attorneys access to print copies of warrants and bond orders via the Internet, saving employee work hours and increasing convenience by supplying instantaneous information at any time of day. This has reduced traffic in the judicial complex and eliminated wait time for part of the court's customer base.

■ In an effort to save time for citizens and reduce work hours for the judiciary staff, the Magistrate Court developed a new process to schedule admitted eviction cases for mediation. This helps settle cases through a trained and skilled third party intermediary and eliminates the need for the case to be scheduled for a court hearing. This change has proven to be highly effective, reducing the overall civil calendar and eliminating the need for night court, which was previously held one day per week, thus saving money while more effectively serving the needs of the citizens.

Transportation

■ The Cobb County Department of Transportation (DOT) launched a two-year effort to create a Long Range Comprehensive Transportation Plan including a specific focus on the impact of Paulding County traffic on the Cobb County road network.

■ DOT completed a study of transit needs resulting in significant improvements to the system. The department also began the Senior Adult Transportation Study and a Livable Centers Initiative Study of the Austell Road corridor.

■ DOT began implementing the six-year $1.2 billion 2005 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). There are 87 TIP projects now in various phases of design, 12 projects in the right-of-way acquisition phase, 12 projects under construction and six projects completed. Engineering has begun on the Stilesboro Road and the Macland Road/ Windy Hill Connector. Two resurfacing contracts are also underway and will result in the resurfacing of 400 roads over the next year.

■ Design proceeded on the Atlanta Road Bridge over the Chattahoochee project, which will replace the two-lane bridge with a modern four-lane bridge with a median, sidewalk on one side and a multi-use trail on the other side. The project should be completed in 2009. Also in the design stage is the Roswell Road improvement project from the State Route 120 Loop to Bridgegate Drive, scheduled to be completed in 2010.

■ Intersection improvements on Austell Road are in design and will add turn lanes, deceleration lanes and other upgrades. The project is to be completed in 2009. The intersection improvements on State Route 176 Lost Mountain Road/ Mars Hill Road will improve the efficiency of the roadway and are scheduled for completion in 2009.

■ DOT maintenance crews cleaned up more than 40,000 cubic yards of debris left behind by a tornado and storm in April at a cost of $131,402.

■ A traffic signal timing project on 11 corridors in Cobb resulted in a reduction of total delay time. We also replaced approximately 200 traffic signal controllers with new controllers which allow traffic signals to be

coordinated across jurisdictional boundaries. Also, all incandescent traffic signal bulbs have been changed to LEDs (Light Emitting Diodes), resulting in an 80 percent power usage reduction and increased life of the signals.

■ The final phase of a three year adaptive traffic signal timing system was completed. This system, known as "SCATS," currently located in 73 intersections in the Cumberland Community Improvement District (CID) area, counts vehicles in each lane approaching the intersections and makes real time decisions on changes in the signal timing to adjust to differing volumes and demand.

■ For the fourth year in a row, Cobb County Community Transit (CCT) reached a ridership record, with ridership exceeding 4.2 million trips. CCT received 19 new express buses and replaced eight paratransit buses. Two express routes were added including one route from the Town Center area Park and Ride Lot to downtown Atlanta, and service from Canton and Woodstock to downtown Atlanta.

■ Mike Padgett, an air traffic controller at McCollum Airport, was named RVA's Air Traffic Controller of the Year. RVA manages and operates McCollum's Control Tower.

■ The Aviation Division installed a perimeter fence and a card access gate system to improve safety at McCollum Airport by restricting access to critical areas. The Taxiway A lighting system at the airport was replaced and new lighted signage was installed to meet current Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) standards.

Recreation

■ Cobb County Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs began using a computerized registration system which allows participants to register in person, by phone, by mail or online. The new online registration system was put in place to eliminate the long lines that formed hours in advance at many of our facilities to register for our programs.

■ Lost Mountain Tennis Center was named "Outstanding Tennis Facility" for 2006 by the United States Tennis Association. The award recognizes facilities based on their overall quality and structure and the facilities programs promoting tennis and serving the community.

■ Tennis courts at Sewell Park, Kennworth Park, and Harrison Park were repaired this year with funds received from cellular towers located on park property. The lighting on the initial eight courts at Harrison Park was also upgraded to a higher light level.

■ A bridge was constructed to connect East Cobb Park and Fullers Park which will allow foot traffic from nearby Robinson Road to funnel into East Cobb Park and vice versa.

■ The department's Natural Resource Management Unit completed the first year of our Partners in Education Program with the Chattahoochee Nature Center and the Cobb County Board of Education. More than 2,300 third graders in 18 schools took part in the program that utilizes Cobb's environmental education facilities and the Chattahoochee Nature Center to teach environmental lessons.

■ The Ron Anderson Community Center is growing into a full recreation center. A $2 million renovation is underway adding a gymnasium with two full courts, a game room, a multi-purpose room, a newly renovated community room and caterer's kitchen. Parking will also be added for increased traffic at the facility.

■ The department's matching grant program distributed $175,000 to fund more than $350,000 in

improvements to our parks system-wide. The program provides matching funds for capital improvements to the volunteer associations that offer programs in county parks. Since the program's inception, more than $2.3 million in improvements have been made to parks throughout the county.

■ The Cobb County adult softball program continues to be the largest in the state of Georgia. Almost 600 teams with 10,094 players competed in the spring/summer and fall seasons at Bells Ferry, Kennworth, Lost Mountain, Nickajack, Sweetwater, Terrell Mill and Al Bishop parks. The Al Bishop Complex hosted 66 tournaments this year that included 1,075 teams and 16,125 participants.

■ Construction began on the new West Sandtown Soccer Complex on Barrett Parkway just south of Macland Road. The complex will boast five fields, parking, restroom/concession building, playground and walking trails The complex will open in late 2007.

■ The department celebrated its 20th year of running a youth track program. The league serves 14 track clubs and more than 1,200 runners from Cobb County and neighboring communities.

■ The Cultural Affairs Division has been working to develop a five year master plan for the arts. A long range

arts focus group made up of community leaders has been working to address issues such as future facility development, programming needs, local arts group interaction and marketing possibilities.

■ The Encore Series at the Jennie T. Anderson Theatre was a huge success with acts like Debbie Reynolds, Tony Orlando, the American Big Band, Spirit of the Dance and Pebblebrook's production of Beauty and the Beast. Every show sold out except one and many patrons went away from these shows excited about the series of performances.

■ The Mable House Art Center's new Holiday Tour of Homes program included intimate tours of five homes in the Mableton area noted for their historical significance or for the owner's love of decorating for the holidays. Former Governor Roy Barnes' house was included in this inaugural event.

Water and Environment

■ Expansion of the Northwest Water Reclamation Facility (WRF) from 8 to 12 million gallons per day (mgd) is nearing completion. The expansion project will result in an increase in treatment capacity in the county from 128 to 132 mgd, which was identified by the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District Plan as adequate through the year 2030.

■ Construction continued on the Solids Handling System for the R.L. Sutton WRF which will provide incineration capacity for both the Sutton and South Cobb WRFs.

■ The number of customers served by Cobb Water grew by nearly 3 percent for a total of 171,609, representing more than a 50 percent increase in the last 20 years.

■ Cobb County Water System continues to have the second lowest, typical combined water and wastewater monthly bill of 11 comparable utilities in the metro Atlanta region.

■ The Cobb County Water Efficiency Program received a 2006 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo) for creative and innovative program development and implementation, efficient administrative management of county agencies and responsible government to local citizens.

■ Successful Community Outreach resulted in Cobb County Water System's recognition as the Outstanding Public Education Program of the Year by the Georgia Association of Water Professionals.

■ Design of the South Cobb Tunnel and Lift Station is about 80 percent complete. Construction is expected to begin in early FY2008 and the project is scheduled to be completed in 2013.

■ This is the second year of the Water Efficiency Program for Cobb County, which has become a model for the other jurisdictions in the district. Partnerships were formed with 15 other local governments on water education efforts and with UGA Extension services on five major projects throughout the year. More than 1,000 conservation kits and water conservation packets have been mailed to customers.

Remarks from the County Manager

David Hankerson, *County Manager*

There are many factors that contribute toward making Cobb County the best and most progressive county in the state.

Each year, Cobb County is recognized for achieving results due to the hard work of our employees. We take pride in saving our citizens money through conservative fiscal managment, which has allowed the county to roll back millage rates and to achieve "Triple A" bond ratings for the 10th year in a row.

The work ethic of Cobb employees and their commitment to excellence has led to recognition and awards from around the state and across the country. Our water system has won national awards for its programs to conserve water and to help our citizens save money. Our law enforcement agencies have been nationally accredited. Even the tennis courts in our parks have received national recognition for excellence.

Cobb is a county that cares about its residents. Cobb was the first county in the nation to adopt Mattie's Call, which establishes procedures to help find missing persons with Alzheimer's. And, Cobb's Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program coordinated by Cobb Emergency Management Agency has become a model in Georgia for training citizen volunteers to respond to crisis situations.

One of the main reasons our citizens can "expect the best" is because of the hard work of our employees who will always strive to do the best job possible in providing services to our customers. Our desire to go above and beyond when it comes to customer service has been another driving force for Cobb County.

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Cobb County...Expect the Best!