



FORSYTHCOUNTY
Department of Communications
Release 000810
March 3, 2015

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**RIBBON CUTTING FOR NEW FORSYTH COUNTY
COURTHOUSE TO BE HELD MARCH 12**

New facility funded by voter-approved sales tax program

FORSYTHCOUNTY, Georgia – A ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Forsyth County Courthouse will be held Thursday, March 12 at 10 a.m. The ceremony will be held at the new courthouse, located at 101 E. Courthouse Square at the intersection of Main Street and Veterans Memorial Boulevard in downtown Cumming. The public is invited to attend. Following the ceremony, guests will have an opportunity to go inside and see the new courthouse.

The new courthouse will officially open for business on Monday, March 16. Until that time, the existing courthouse will remain operational.

Construction of the new courthouse and of a new jail was funded by the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) VII program approved by Forsyth County voters in November 2011. The new jail is slated to open later this year.

“Without the voters’ approval of SPLOST VII, we would not have been able to construct the new courthouse and jail, which are absolutely critical components of Forsyth County’s judicial and public safety infrastructure,” Commission Chairman R.J. (Pete) Amos said. “A sincere thank you is extended to the residents of Forsyth County for recognizing the need for these new facilities and for approving for them to be funded by the SPLOST penny sales tax.”

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In order to take advantage of lower construction costs and move forward with these important projects prior to SPLOST VII revenues being received, the county borrowed future SPLOST VII revenues in advance of their collection. The SPLOST funds borrowed for the courthouse and jail project are scheduled to be paid off within four years of the start of SPLOST VII collections, which began in 2013.

About the New Courthouse

The new Forsyth County Courthouse is approximately 158,000 total square feet. The building includes five floors plus a basement and will house Superior Court, State Court, Solicitor-General, District Attorney, Clerk of Courts, Court Administration, Grand Jury, Jury Assembly, Pre-Trial Services, Accountability Courts and Indigent Defense. The courthouse will feature enhanced security systems and overall improved efficiency. Approximately 30,000 square feet of the new courthouse will be unfinished at this time, to allow for future expansion.

“The courthouse has historically been the center of the community, located in the town square,” Chief Superior Court Judge Jeffrey S. Bagley said. “The decision to place our courthouse once again in the center of the county seat symbolizes the importance our community places upon the business we will conduct in the new courthouse; proceedings that will affect the lives, property and honor of our citizens for years to come.”

Once the new courthouse opens, renovations to the existing courthouse are slated to commence. It will be called the Forsyth County Courthouse Annex and, once renovated, will house the Sheriff’s Office headquarters and Probate Court, eliminating the need for rental properties currently in use. Renovations are expected to be completed in the third quarter of 2015.

About the New Jail

The new jail will be approximately 177,000 square feet and will include three inmate levels plus a support level. At start-up it will include 356 beds, with a total inmate capacity of 608. Like the courthouse, the new jail was designed with the county’s future growth in mind. The jail has been designed in such a manner as to allow for future expansion to the south.

The new jail will include enhanced security systems, will be staff efficient, and is being constructed at the maximum security level. Its connectivity to the new courthouse via a bridge will allow for the secure transport of inmates to court.

Once the new jail is completed, the current jail will be demolished to make way for surface parking.

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Parking Facilities

As part of the SPLOST VII-funded courthouse and jail project, two new parking facilities were constructed in downtown Cumming. The new three-level, 222-space Castleberry Parking Facility located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Castleberry Road and Maple Street opened in the summer of 2014. The new five-level, 491-space Mason Street Parking Facility located near the Forsyth County Administration Building opened for use in December 2014.

About the Project Team

Prior to the construction of the new courthouse, jail and parking facilities, the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners assembled a SPLOST VII Jail/Courthouse Project Team, consisting of nine members, to oversee the projects:

From the Board of Commissioners – Commissioners Todd Levent and R.J. (Pete) Amos

Representing the Judiciary/Courts – Chief Superior Court Judge Jeffrey Bagley

From the Sheriff's Office – Sheriff Duane Piper

From the county's Finance Department – Finance Director/CFO David Gruen

From the county's Public Facilities Management – Public Facilities Director David Thornton

From the county's Procurement Department – Director of Procurement Donna Kukarola

From the County Manager's Office – County Manager Doug Derrer, who serves as chairman of the Project Team

Representing the city of Cumming – Mayor Ford Gravitt

The program manager for the project was CGL, A Hunt Company. The architectural/engineering firms were Wakefield Beasley & Associates; HOK; and Pond and Company. Turner/Winter Joint Venture served as construction manager at risk.

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