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## City Considering New Contract with Gwinnett County Tax Commissioner to Continue Collecting Special Assessment Fees

**PEACHTREE CORNERS, GA, June 1, 2021** – When Tiffany Porter officially took office as the Gwinnett County Tax Commissioner the first of the year, it ended the contract that eight Gwinnett municipalities, including Peachtree Corners, had with her predecessor for the billing and collection of ad valorem property tax and special assessment fees (streetlight, stormwater, and sanitation). And since Peachtree Corners’ property owners pay no city taxes due to its zero (0) millage rate, the tax commissioner’s office had only been collecting the special assessment fees on the city’s 14,000 parcels resulting in nearly \$5 million collected annually on behalf of the city.

On March 17, 2021, Commissioner Porter introduced a new restructured contract similar in form to that used by 40 of the state’s 159 county tax commissioners where tax commissioners, in addition to charging for the cost of the services, also charge a personal fee for providing the services. While this personal fee is permitted by state law, the county’s previous tax commissioner did not charge this fee.

In response to this proposal from Commissioner Porter, a bi-partisan group of state legislators hurriedly changed state law to prohibit tax commissioners in large metro Atlanta counties (including Gwinnett) from charging a personal fee to collect city taxes. However, the new law, signed by Governor Kemp on May 10, 2021, does not refer to special assessment (“non-tax”) fees, which are also collected on tax bills. Commissioner Porter has stated that she will not collect these fees unless she is paid to do so.

Based on this position taken by Commissioner Porter, the city considered a number of alternatives including setting up its own billing and collection department or outsourcing to a third-party collection agency. Unfortunately, every alternative the city explored was found to be cost prohibitive due to the associated increased costs and/or decreased collections ranging anywhere from \$500,000 to \$1 million annually.

At the conclusion of its due diligence, the city determined that it was in its best interest to negotiate and ultimately execute a contract for the tax commissioner’s office to continue billing and collecting special assessment fees on behalf of Peachtree Corners. The annual cost to Peachtree Corners under a new agreement will increase from the previous amount of approximately \$25,000 to \$50,000 going forward. However, the city will absorb the additional costs and the increase will not be passed along to its residents.

“Using her office to continue billing and collecting on behalf of the city was a simple business decision,” said City Manager Brian Johnson. “It was the only fiscally prudent option we had.”

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