## MEDIA RELEASE

At Least Three Gwinnett Cities Verbally Agree to New Contracts

“I don’t mind being the first Gwinnett Tax Commissioner to request additional fees for additional responsibility. I’ve been doing firsts my whole life,” Gwinnett Tax Commissioner Tiffany P. Porter.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LAWRENCEVILLE, Ga., March 29, 2021 – Tax Commissioner Tiffany P. Porter is responding to

Commissioner Kirkland Carden’s press release and subsequent media coverage regarding ongoing negotiations with eight Gwinnet cities:

Except for Gwinnett, all cities in Georgia that engage their county tax commissioner’s services pay a fee to both the county and to the tax commissioner personally at rates higher than those proposed. At least three Gwinnett cities have already verbally agreed to the new contracts. Cities continue to willingly contract because it’s extremely cost-effective and tax commissioners continue because it’s legal, fair and customary in both public and private sectors to receive additional compensation for additional responsibility. The tax commissioner does not set or raise tax rates. The cities budget for this service as a cost of doing business and wise planning dictates budgeting for rising costs vs. raising taxes.

I am 100 percent satisfied with my salary and job, which is the ***Gwinnett County*** Tax Commissioner. I did not run or agree to be the tax commissioner for any city. I question the morality of additional responsibility without additional compensation.

It would be like asking the county commissioners to run the cities: It’s essentially the same work, just more of it, after all their staff do the work, right? That seems ludicrous, but if previous commissioners had done that, it would seem ludicrous to change it. That’s the Gwinnett situation because previous Gwinnett tax commissioners did so and the media positioned the topic as a greedy pay raise instead of additional compensations for additional responsibility.

I believe it’s right and fair to receive a fee for shouldering more responsibility. The bank accounts for the $1.6 billion in annual collections aren’t in the name of Gwinnett County or the cities, they’re in the name of Tiffany P. Porter, and I am personally liable and responsible for any errors.

Commissioner Kirkland Carden’s comments were premature and, issued prior to our scheduled meeting to explain the proposal, demonstrate ignorance about the work and role of the tax commissioner and the fair distribution of costs between county and city taxpayers.

The county’s average cost to collect is $16.18 per parcel. To conduct the similar-but-custom 50-plus functions for each city is an additional $1.80 in costs, or $17.98 total average per city parcel. In 2020, cities paid an average of $1.56. ***That’s a county-taxpayer subsidy of $16.42 per parcel.***

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The 2021 contracts propose $3.80 per parcel: $1.80 for the county and $2 for the tax commissioner, and while a reasonable starting place toward paying their fair share.

To be clear, servicing the cities isn’t just printing some extra lines on a bill; it’s that plus creating individual calculations, data bases, records, reports, plus audits and other special assessments and fees that are unique to each city.

I was asked about the fees during my campaign and said I needed to research the dynamics before deciding. Once I understood the situation, I decided in favor of it and proceeded to meet with stakeholders in a proactive and transparent manner, first with the Gwinnet chairwoman, who responded favorably, and then with cities individually to explain in advance of sending new contracts.

My salary stays the same if the cities choose not to engage my services.

The county stands to lose $99,000 if commissioners reject the city contracts, and cities will lose an extremely favorably deal.

If legislators change the laws, it will simply mean that cities get a nearly free ride on the backs of county taxpayers and the shoulders of the tax commissioner.

I don’t mind being the first Gwinnett Tax Commissioner to stand up for extra pay for extra work. I’ve been doing firsts my whole life. I will endure the accusations and watch how it plays out – for myself and all who follow after me.

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*About the Gwinnett County Tax Commissioner*

*Gwinnett County Tax Commissioner Tiffany P. Porter is a constitutionally-elected official responsible to bill, collect and disburse $1.6 billion in personal and property taxes and to administer homestead exemptions for the nearly one million Gwinnett County residents. Serving also as an agent for the state of Georgia, the tax commissioner registers and titles motor vehicles and disburses associated revenue.*

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