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MADISON COUNTY CHANCERY CLERK

We Have Done What We Set About to Do

Since taking office as Madison County Chancery Clerk in January of 2004, I have made it a point to refrain as much as possible from public commentary on general county affairs. My practice has been to do my job and allow the results to speak for themselves. However, this week's receipt of Madison County's 2004 Audit Report compels me to share some very good news. The report, which reflects the state of county finances for the period October 1, 2003 through September 30, 2004, documents the tremendous turn-around in fiscal management which the new Madison County Board of Supervisors has engineered. In sharp contrast to county audit reports dating back four years or more, this report contains no substantial audit findings and presents a clean bill of health for county fiscal affairs.

For the last nine of the twelve months reported in this Audit, Paul Griffin, Karl Banks, Andy Taggart, Tim Johnson, and Doug Jones have been in charge of county business. To their everlasting credit, these five men have made county fiscal management a top priority of government, and, working together with other elected and appointed officials, they have insisted on policies and processes that correspond with standard business management practices. These policies and practices, together with their day-to-day administration by County Administrator Donnie Caughman, Comptroller Mark Houston, and many other dedicated county employees, have led directly to this very positive result for the citizens of our county.

Prior to 2004, Madison County government received sharp and severe, if also deserved, criticism – much of it based on prior audit reports – by various media outlets. Those of us who ran for and won county offices in 2003 pledged to rectify the situation. Indeed, news coverage of the financial difficulties of the past helped spur my own interest in public service.

So, today I am proud to offer official proof that we have done what we set about to do. Those troubled times are gone, and although political differences may persist, Madison Countians can rest assured that county officials, particularly the members of the current Board of Supervisors, are honest, hard working and have the long term fiscal best interest of the county at heart. As County Treasurer and County Auditor, I am proud to be associated with them and to have played a small part in achieving these results.

Copies of prior county audit reports together with a copy of our 2004 report are available in my office during regular business hours, at all county public libraries, and are available on the county's website at www.madison-co.com. I urge this paper – and I invite members of the public – to make the appropriate comparisons.

Arthur Johnston is Madison County's Chancery Clerk. Prior to taking office in 2004, he served as Senior Policy Advisor to State Superintendent of Education Henry Johnson and was a partner in the law firm of Daniel Coker Horton & Bell.