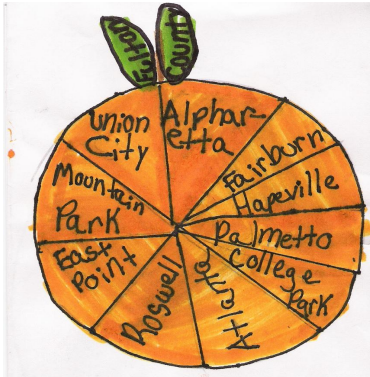


UNDER THE BIG TOP OF GEORGIA GOVERNMENT

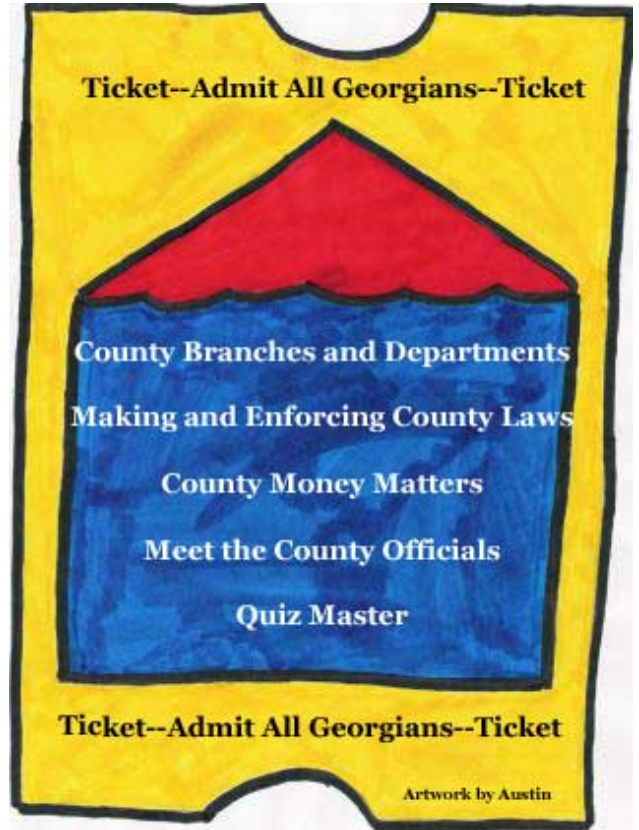
County Lions-- Georgia County Government

By Janna-artwork by Janna



In Georgia there are 159 counties. Fulton county is the most populated counties in Georgia. It has about 820,000 people. Atlanta is the state capitol and the county seat (the place where the courthouse is located and all business is conducted). Other cities in Fulton county noted in the drawing above include Union City, Alpharetta, Fairburn, Hapeville, Palmetto, College Park, Roswell, East Point, and Mountain Park.

A much smaller populated county is Colquitt County which is located in beautiful southwest Georgia. Colquitt County has about 42,000 people. Moultrie is the county seat and biggest city in the county. There are several other cities in Colquitt County which include Norman Park, Funston, and Doerun.



Conway, Kathy, ed. Georgia-The History of an American State. Montgomery: Clairmont Press, 1999.

"People Quick Facts." State and County Quick Facts. 12 2006. U.S. Census Bureau. 28 Jan. 2006 <<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/13/13121.html>>.

UNDER THE BIG TOP OF GEORGIA GOVERNMENT

County Lions-- Branches and Departments

By Janna and Makayla

All Georgia counties must follow the state constitution which has rules about certain departments of government that the county must have. Some of these departments include administration, police, legal systems, road departments, public health, medical care, libraries, and public education. However, each county can decide exactly how they want to organize their government.

For example, Colquitt County is governed by a board of commissioners. This is made up of seven members elected by voters to serve four-year terms including one chairman. The board of commissioners approves the annual budget of each department in county government and makes decisions about ways to improve county services.



[Click here](#) to see a list of current Colquitt County Chairpersons.

[Click here](#) to see a list of various county departments and their descriptions.

The county and city work together through contracts to provide money for some projects. For example, the school system is operated by the Colquitt County Board of Education, but the city is very involved in the school system and helps provide support to the county wherever needed.

[Click here](#) to access the Colquitt County website.



Colquitt County Commissioners as of 01/2006

District #	Name	Year Elected	Next Election Year
District 1	Luke Strong	1987	2006
District 2	Rebecca Whitaker	2004	2008
District 3	Joseph Clark	1985-1994 & 2003	2006
District 4	Billy Herndon	1993	2008
District 5	Ray Sanders	1999	2006
District 6	Meryl Hall	1980-1984 & 1987	2008*
District 7 County Chairman- Elected at Large	Max Hancock	Unavailable	2006

[Click here](#) for commissioner contact information and to view a district map.

County Departments and Descriptions

These are just a few of the county departments. County departments may vary according to size and location of the county.

Commissioners	A group of seven who keep peace in the county and take care of problems.
Clerk of Court	The clerk of court handles court papers and records.
Judge of Probate Court	Carries out duties given by the laws of Georgia.
Tax Commissioner	Gathers taxes and sells car tags and driver licenses.
Sheriff	The sheriff is responsible for protection of the people and making sure everything in the jail is okay.
Coroner	Gives out state certificates that proves a person has passed away and sees why the person died {performs autopsies}.
County Clerk	Keeps paperwork on homes, deaths, births, etc.
Tax Assessor	To collect all the tax money that is owed in the county.
Fire Chief	Leads a team of fire fighters

[Click here](#) for more information on county departments.

Conway, Kathy, ed. Georgia-The History of an American State. Montgomery: Clairmont Press, 1999.

Cox, Debra . Telephone interview. 12 2005.

London, Bonnie. Georgia and the American Experience. Atlanta: Clairmont Publishing, 2005.

Fonder, Melanie. The Complete Idiots Guide to American Government. New York: Penguin Publishing, 2005.



UNDER THE BIG TOP OF GEORGIA GOVERNMENT

County Lions-- Making and Enforcing the Law

by Makayla and Janna

County governments main purpose is to make sure that the county is following state rules and laws. However, county governments do have executive and legislative powers which means that they can enforce laws of the state and they can create county laws (called ordinances).

Building inspections and permits are examples of county ordinances. While one county may not require someone to inspect a building before it can be used by people, Colquitt County's building inspection ordinance requires inspections.



Fonder, Melanie. The Complete Idiots Guide to American Government. New York: Penguin Publishing, 2005.

Hancock, Max . Personal interview. 12 2005.



UNDER THE BIG TOP OF GEORGIA GOVERNMENT

County Lions-- Money Matters by Makayla

Governments use tax money to pay for the services it provides. Taxes are fees that every citizen must pay. In the year 2000, Colquitt County collected \$20 million dollars in taxes.

Tax Sources

County taxes come from property taxes, excise, and special use taxes sales taxes, service charges, and fees.

Tax Application

Here's an example of how sales taxes are collected in every county.

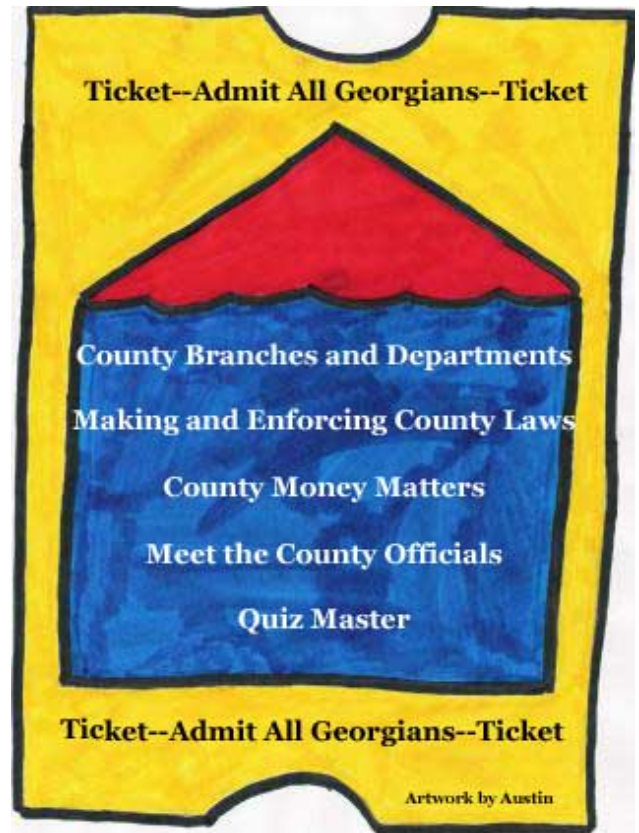
You have exactly \$10.00. You visit a local retail store in Colquitt County. You find a really cool music CD that costs \$7.99. In Colquitt County, sales tax is 7% (as of 01/2006). How much will the CD cost after sales tax is added?

[Click here](#) for the answer.

Here's an example of how property tax is collected in every county.

Your parent's home is valued at \$100,000. For tax reasons, it will be assessed at 45% of its fair market value. Thus, the house will be taxed based on \$45,000. Your parents find out that they can deduct \$2500 for homestead exemption which is credit issued by the county because this is the primary home--not a rental property. Now the taxable value is \$42,500. The millage rate in your county is 33.05 (a "mill" amounts to \$1.00 tax on each \$1,000 property value). What is the property tax owed on your home?

[Click here](#) for the answer.



Spending Taxes

Tax money (also called revenue) go to services like public safety (which includes law enforcement), fire department, and jail. The second and largest use of tax money in Colquitt County is for county administration. Health and Human Services and the Colquitt County School System are also large users of tax money. The school system spends an average \$4900 per student per year. This is a small summary of where our taxes go. To see a more details on Colquitt County taxes, [click here](#).

Tax Answers

Sales Tax

To find the answer, multiply $7.99 \times .07$ (7% is converted to .07)=.5593

.5593 is rounded up to .56

Add .56 to 7.99=8.55

If you have \$10.00, your change will be \$1.45

Local and state governments will divide \$0.56 to spend on government services.

Property Tax

To find the answer, multiply $42,500 \times .03305$ (33.05 is converted to .03305)=\$1,404.63. Local government will get to keep \$1,404.63 to spend on government services.

[Back to the County Money Matters](#) | [Back to City Money Matters](#)

"Colquitt County." [Georgia Snapshots](#). 2002. Georgia Department of Community Affairs. 28 Jan. 2006 <<http://www.dca.state.ga.us>>.



UNDER THE BIG TOP OF GEORGIA GOVERNMENT

County Lions-- Meet the Officials

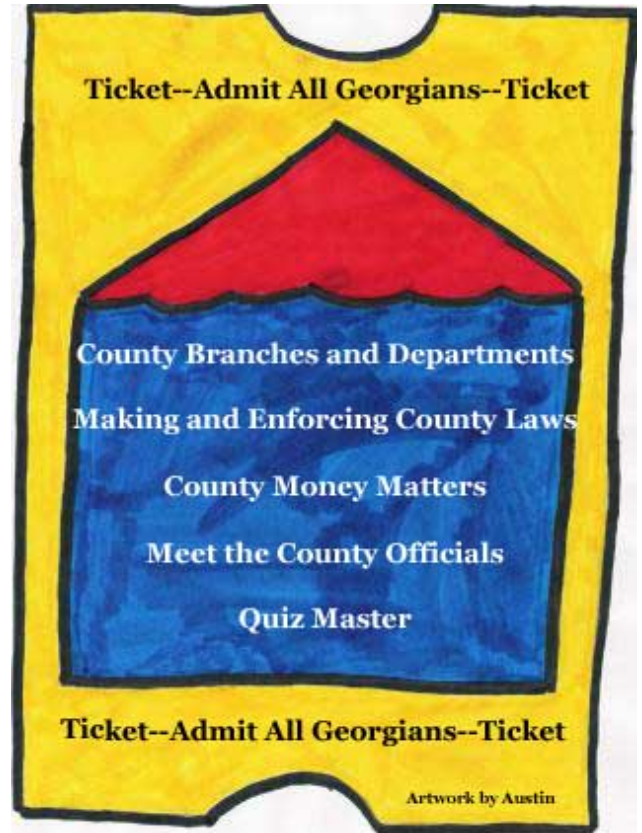
by Janna and Makayla

Ms. Meryl Hall and Mr. Max Hancock, two Colquitt County Commissioners visited our program to discuss county government. Pictured below is Ms. Hall, Mr. Hancock, Mikayla, Janna, and Sevanne. Picture taken by Nick.



[Click here](#) to see a video clip of the Meryle Hall interview--she speaks about why she decided to run for the board of commissioners and about taxation. **Video and movie by Nick.**

[Click here](#) to see a video clip of the Max Hancock interview--he speaks about the responsibilities of the chairman of commissioners and about voting. **Video and movie by Nick.**



Ms. Hall passed away in late December 2005--just two weeks after her visit with us. We will miss Ms. Hall and will be forever grateful for her devotion to Colquitt County.

Mr. Hancock also spoke to the Colquitt County Gifted Program in 2004. Below are his comments:

We asked Mr. Hancock to tell us about the duties of the Chairman of the Commissioners of Colquitt County. This is what he shared with us:

"The Chairman is an elected position that is "at large," meaning that the Chairman is elected by the entire county as opposed to the other six commissioners being elected by their respective districts. The six commissioner districts have approximately 7,000 eligible voters.

The Chairman is the Chief Elected Official/Officer and as such must all sign all legal and official documents and checks of the County. The Chairman represents the board on a number of committees as well as other functions. The Chairman is also the key contact person for the Board. The Chairman conducts all meetings, accepting motions, seconds, and calling for votes on all issues. The chairman has a vote the same as the other six commissioners.

As Chairman, I meet with the administrator and/or the county clerk on a daily basis. I am needed to sign documents, discuss problems, projects, or any other type of county business. The administrator, who is hired by the Board of Commissioners, is responsible for the day to day operations of the county and all employees answer o him except for Constitutional officers and their employees. The Board of Commissioners establishes county policy. No one commissioner has any authority, but rather the authority lies in the total Board."

Hall, Meryle . Personal interview. 12 2005.

Hancock, Max . Personal interview. 12 2005, 2004.

