

## State of the County 2022

On behalf of the Ben Hill County Board of Commissioners I would like to share with you the position of your county government. This position is the result of continuous review, reassessment, and challenges both internally and externally. The state of Ben Hill County in 2022 is healthy with a strong financial reserve, functional policies and procedures, and upgraded resources. I prefer not to bore you with various stats or accomplishments over the past year, but rather share three areas that I feel truly represent the State of the County: Committed, compliant, and community.

Ben Hill County is committed to provide services, both those required and expected, to our community. This is accomplished through sound financial practices, relevant organizational policies, and updated resources and assets. Manager Michael Dinnerman continues to work diligently and search for ways to improve Ben Hill County's ability to provide effective and efficient services to her citizens while being good stewards of the tax payor's money. The commission is willing to be open to changes as well as evaluate and promote updated policies which advance the health and foundation of this government. This is evident in the fact that the County's reserve continues to grow which is in phase with a best practice policy for managing an organization. A sound financial best practice policy includes a strong reserve. A reserve is necessary to offset an unforeseen or catastrophic event, thereby protecting our county.

Our committed organization is made possible through the strong team effort throughout the county government organization. Recognizing the increasing complexity and scope of providing and funding county government services, we realize it takes everyone from citizens speaking during public comments to the constitutional officers operating their respective departments. Our manager, administrative staff, constitutional officers, judges, department managers, employees, and commissioners work hard toward the goal of making our community the best it can be. Over the past several years we have faced significant challenges from hurricanes to healthcare issues, and our team has met each challenge.

We as a commission recognize that in everything we do, or every decision we make, we must be focused on investing in the people of our community. Our people are our greatest resource for our future. We build our future based on the foundation we establish now, because we understand a strong foundation will stand the test of time. We are committed to making the effort to move beyond the current or existing state. We commit to you that we will continuously strive to improve because status quo is not acceptable.

Compliance refers to the willingness to follow a prescribed plan. We place a great deal of emphasis on creating updated and relevant policies and procedures. It is important this entity not only has this game plan to follow consistently for day to day operations, but also for the compliance of others to follow in the implementing of short term and long term goals. We continue to evaluate our programs and look to advance and upgrade them to maintain this compliance.

We are in the process of maintaining and upgrading our information technology assets and policies. This area is becoming more of a focus on smaller governments and we cannot afford to be behind the curve with obsolete computers and inconsistent policies. We are also constantly evaluating and upgrading equipment and vehicles which allow for our employees to deliver safe, efficient, and adequate services while maintaining their safety. Another aspect is the importance we put on maintaining compliance through continuing to provide and promote education and training for our employees.

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Community is the third area, but I feel it is the most important. It was listed last so if there is only one idea that is remembered it will be this one. Community relates to not only the greater Ben Hill Community, but it speaks to the smaller communities within. Whether it is an individual community of friends, faith based groups, governments, or co-workers, each community is essential to the greater good of the Ben Hill Community.

As a government we have the responsibility of working to improve community with our citizens, industries, and local governments. There have been times in the past that each of these areas have been fractured. I feel like we have made advancements to improve these relationships and will continue to pursue improvements. I am encouraged to work with my friend, Mayor Jason Holt in promoting community among our entities which can only bring about a stronger Ben Hill Community.

On a final note please allow me to discuss another important community to me. That is the employees of Ben Hill County and the Ben Hill County Commission. I can assure you that each and every one serves each of you with the goal of making our little place in South Georgia the best place for you and me. Each is dedicated to improving the way we serve you. Sometimes one may not want to be out clearing roads in the middle of the night in a storm, but they do. One may prefer to not have to put themselves in a potential life threatening position, but because they wear a badge they do. Some would rather not have to inform you that property values have changed, or a bill is due, or you have been summoned to jury duty, but they do. They do this because they love Ben Hill Community.

I have referred to the 254 square miles area bordered by the boundaries of Ben Hill County and including the City of Fitzgerald as Ben Hill Community for several years. We are that greater community. I look forward to continuing to promote a better community each day.

God Bless you, God bless Ben Hill Community, and God bless America.

Steve Taylor, Chairman  
Ben Hill County  
Board of Commissioners