Manager Blaine Williams named Hayley Banerjee as the new Director of the Housing and Community Development (HCD) Department in December.

Banerjee has worked in HCD since 2016 and has served as Interim Director since April 2019, when former director Deborah Lonon was named an Assistant Manager.

Banerjee earned both a Bachelor and a Master of Social Work from the University of Georgia, with the Master degree focused on community empowerment and program development.

She also plays the violin in the Athens Symphony Orchestra.

The Unified Government recently opened its first official morgue facility and Coroner’s Office.

Coroner Sonny Wilson previously performed his duties in the basement of Bernstein Funeral Home. When this partnership was established, he knew it was not a permanent arrangement. “This facility has been long overdue for a county the size of ours with the case volume that we have,” says Wilson.

The Coroner investigates and determines the causes and manners of people’s deaths. The new facility houses the morgue and the Coroner’s Office under the same roof, greatly improving work flow and making the process more efficient for the Coroner, his staff, and the public.

An unused ACCGov building on Buddy Christian Way was renovated for the new facility. Changes involved constructing a new addition, installing appliances, and updating electrical, plumbing, and other major systems.

One new feature is a viewing room where families can identify remains, a function that was not possible before.

Other new features include a large intake room, a storage area for past case files and supplies, and an overhead lift for moving larger cases between cots and tables. The facility is also equipped with an air purification system to keep inside air clean.

Externally, the facility has a safety fence and a covered area for unloading in inclement weather.

The same type of refrigeration units Wilson used at the funeral home were installed, in addition to one new cooling system. The new facility can house up to 12 bodies at one time, triple the amount of the previous storage capacity. This increase in efficiency is necessary, since the work of the Coroner’s Office is time sensitive and refrigeration is needed quickly.

State inmate mobile construction crews worked on the new facility. Using offender labor with supervision, the Georgia Department of Corrections builds, remolds, and restores facilities for other government entities.
Viewpoint
Manager Blaine Williams

Last month, the Mayor and Commission took part in a two day retreat. One of the primary goals was for them to look at their strategic commitments. These six commitments - highlighted every month in the Manager’s Snapshot at accgov.com/snapshot - are designed to highlight what the residents of Athens-Clarke County should expect from their local government.

The Commission uses these as a way to group their goals and objectives with specific action items for the coming fiscal year. This not only helps the Commission, but also helps staff and the community to see these areas of common concerns and the progress of specific items.

While the Mayor and Commission used this time to look at status updates related to some of the FY20 projects, they also used the time to consider projects and plans that might guide their work during the development of the FY21 budget.

One thing that I heard during this retreat is something I’ve actually heard quite a bit from Commissioners: their admiration for the work that you do on a daily basis for this community.

This is particularly apparent during the recent holidays when a number of employees work on traditional holidays and during times when nearly every other ACCGov employee is off-duty.

The Mayor mentioned this during his remarks at the Employee Luncheon, and the same can be said from all of the Commissioners.

continued on p. 4

Changes to ACCENT for 2020

You may have noticed some changes to ACCENT this month. The Public Information Office (PIO) is ‘refreshing’ the newsletter for the first time in several years in terms of both its design and content. In October, we conducted a readers’ survey to help guide the changes. Thanks to those who responded.

These aren’t its first changes. Since launching ACCENT in September 1998, the PIO has added and removed sections, increased the use of images, varied the design, and even added colors over the years.

Changes for 2020 include a new color palette and a different font, style and image changes, and a few other subtle adjustments. Other changes will be evident throughout the year as new sections of content are introduced and others retired.

One thing hasn’t changed since ACCENT launched 22 years ago: its focus on employees and retirees. Much of the content comes from the Communications Work Team (CWT) representatives from most departments. These employees inform us about happenings in their departments and in the lives of their co-workers.

The survey showed that not everyone knows their CWT rep. We encourage readers to know their CWT rep and reach out to that person with any noteworthy personal or professional news. Find out about your rep at accgov.com/cwt or by calling the Public Information Office at 706-613-3795.

Thank you for reading ACCENT and learning more about the Unified Government and your co-workers and retirees. We hope you like the refresh.

News & Notes

No-cost composting: ACC residents can now bring their food scraps and compostable items free of charge to the following Solid Waste locations during normal hours of their operation:
- ChaRM at 1005 College Avenue
- Solid Waste main office at 725 Hancock Industrial Way
- Landfill at 5700 Lexington Rd.
More information is available at accgov.com/compost.

Agency of the Year: Leisure Services received the Georgia Recreation and Park Association’s “Agency of The Year” Award for populations of 80,000 - 150,000 for a significant contribution to the recreation, park, or leisure services. The department also received a Marketing and Publication “Marketing Campaign Award” for its “Leisure Services 2030,” a ten-year plan for the future of the department.

January blood drive: The next blood drive takes place on:
- Tuesday, January 14 at Snipes Water Resource Center, 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, January 15 at Snipes Water Resource Center, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
- Thursday, January 16 at the Police Department on Lexington Road, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
To register online, visit accgov.com/blooddrive.

KACCB awarded: Keep Athens-Clarke County Beautiful (KACCB) received the Keep Georgia Beautiful Foundation Affiliate Award. This award recognizes the Keep America Beautiful affiliates that prevent litter, improve their community’s waste handling practices, and preserve the natural beauty and environment at the grassroots level. KACCB also received a 2019/2020 Governor’s Circle Award for its outstanding achievements in community beautification and environmental sustainability.
**Police:** James Austin, Jr. and Craig Turner - both Police Officer First Class and Caleb Emmett - Senior Police Officer

**Public Utilities:** Gregory Mattox - Water Reclamation Plant Supervisor

**Trans. & Public Works:** Joshua Archer - Heavy Equipment Operator I and Kyle Dean - ITS Technician

### Promotions (Effective Nov. 17)

**Police:** James Austin, Jr. and Craig Turner - both Police Officer First Class and Caleb Emmett - Senior Police Officer

**Public Utilities:** Gregory Mattox - Water Reclamation Plant Supervisor

**Trans. & Public Works:** Joshua Archer - Heavy Equipment Operator I and Kyle Dean - ITS Technician

### Employees of the Quarter: Sheriff: Marcia Thomas (Sworn) and Jamie Drake (Civilian).

**Richard Vaughn** (Fire) completed the Life Safety Code class at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center.

**Rachel Hopkins** (Transit) placed second in the nation for women 50+ with her team at the USA Track and Field Club Cross Country National Championships. She was also named the ACCGov Communications Work Team (CWT) Representative of the Year (see ‘Changes’ on p. 2 for more on the CWT).

### Births

**Tyler Patterson** (Sheriff) - daughter Blue Bird.

**Brian Meadows** (Sheriff) - son Wesley Meadows.

### Retirements (Effective Jan. 1)

- Eugene Christopher - Trans. & Public Works 11 years
- James Gary Epps - Police 30 years
- Curtis Hunsinger - Sheriff 18 years
- Richard Rosario - Solid Waste 21 years

### Sympathy

**Kenneth Stula** (Retiree) passed away on December 8. He was a State Court Solicitor for the Western Judicial Circuit and retired after 19 years of service.

**Gary B. Smith** (Public Utilities) passed away on December 13. He was an employee of seven years and worked at the Cedar Creek Water Reclamation Facility.

### Get Well

**Kathy Davis** (Municipal Court)

‘Jobs’ was the most searched term on accgov.com in 2019.

### “Viewpoint...” from p. 2

I hear it time and time again in personal conversations with them and during public meetings. Part of the reason you may not hear it as often directly from them is simply due to the nature of our form of government. Governments with a professional manager are set up in a way to keep employees from getting caught up as much in political winds and focus on doing their jobs in the best way possible.

It keeps employees insulated from wholesale staff changes just due to an election or from personal requests from elected officials to staff that might be of concern. While these aren’t problems here, they certainly are in other places.

Elected officials work much more often with the Manager’s Office and department directors. That’s by design, set up almost 30 years ago in our charter, and allows us to function as well as we do. The downside is that you might not hear their kudos as often.

As we enter a new year, let me make sure that I express it directly to you: the Mayor and Commission appreciate all that you do on a daily basis to carry out the ACCGov’s strategic commitments and goals that they guide.

They didn’t need a retreat to express that, but it certainly was a good time of year for all of us to be reminded of it.

P.S. Blaine Williams is the Manager of the Unified Government.
These Sheriff’s Office employees received a Field Training Officer Pin award: Glenn Cliver, Tommy Dorsey, Adrian Goodman, Christopher Haag, Travis Irvin, Randy Jordan, Shirley Lowery, Timothy Lyon, Patricia Marks, Lillie Perkins, Kenneth Straughter, and Sharon Willis.

These Sheriff’s Office employees received a Jail Training Officer Pin award: Glenn Bonit, Jessica Goings, Curtis Hunsinger, Brain Meadows, Sharlene Questelles, Elizabeth Robinson, Takia Taylor, Marcia Thomas, John Truitt, and Grady Wright.

Keith Kelley and Jonathan Jones (both Police) graduated from the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) Center Manager Certification Program.

To Your Health

National Diabetes Prevention Program: Open to full-time and part-time employees and retirees, this 22-session program teaches participants how to prevent diabetes, lower the risk of having a heart attack or stroke, improve overall health, and even reverse prediabetes diagnoses.

Sessions are on Wednesdays starting January 29 from 5:30-6:30 p.m. at Fire Station #4. To register or for more details, email kendra.houghton@accgov.com or call 706-613-3934.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Program: This physical, emotional, and mental stress management program focuses on mindfulness, which is the practice of paying attention and bringing awareness to the present moment.

Open to full-time employees and retirees, sessions are on Wednesdays starting January 29 from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. at Fire Station #7. Register by January 22 by emailing wellnesssteam@accgov.com.

To Your Health provides health-related notes from ACC’s Wellness Program and other sources.

Photo gallery: Fall bowling league ends

Team Livin’ on a Spare won the Fall 2019 employee bowling league. The team members are (below right; L to R): Blaine Williams (Manager), Joanie Williams, Chris Caldwell (Finance), and Julie Caldwell.

Men’s high average bowler was Ted Katt (Police - below middle) and the women’s high average bowler was Rebecca Holcomb (Sheriff - below left).

The winter league begins in February. Interested employees can contact Emily Mann (Leisure Services) at 706-613-3589 or by email at emily.mann@accgov.com.

“Accomplishments...” from p. 3

“Morgue...” from p. 1

on a limited basis.

These crews use their existing skills to work on projects in locations around the state while keeping their skills updated for post-incarceration work. While staying at the ACCGov Corrections facility over approximately 18 months, several crews worked on this project and some others in Wilkes County east of Athens-Clarke County.

The Facilities Management Division of Central Services also worked extensively on the project. Wilson noted that Facilities Administrator Beth Smith was instrumental to the project success.

“She was the driving force when we first started talking and planning,” says Wilson.

Using the state mobile inmate crews in conjunction with Facilities staff saved an estimated $60,000 on the cost of the facility renovations.
Congratulations to the following employees on receiving service pins in 2019

Clerk of Commission: Jean Spratlin
Public Utilities: Tommy Tate
Trans. & Public Works: Donald Maxey

Central Services: Howard Harris
Fire: Charles Freeman, Gary Freeman
Manager: Cynthia Lambright
Public Utilities: Steven Pittard, Michelle Stroud


Building Inspections: Tracy Lamey, Suzanne McCook • Central Services: Terry Gantt • Finance: Michele Tully-Busbin • Fire: Jeffery Carithers • GIS: Mary Martin • Leisure Services: Mark McCoy • Magistrate Court: Christine Zachmann • Operational Analysis: Jill Arquette • Police: James Carter, Jr., Donald Eckert III, Eric Higginbotham, Richard Odum, Len Thomas • Public Utilities: William Cottrell, Jamie Johnson, James Kethley, Bruce Perkins • Sheriff: Jimps Cole III, Clyvette Daniels-Driskell, Lisa Gabriell, Clarence Grier, Jr., Bobby Toole, Jr. • Tax Assessor: Virginia Brazil

continued on reverse
Airport: Christopher Lewis • Building Inspections: Dawn Armstrong, George Pope, Jr. • District Attorney: Kelly Meredith • Fire: Roger Barfield, Jr., Clint Canaday, Benjamin Eberhart, Phillip Hansford, Michael Moon, Michael Tolbert, Jeremy Williams • IT: Barry Fuller • Leisure Services: Randolph Smith • Planning: Sherry McDuffie • Police: Philip Basinger, Marbel Escalante, L. Frost, Joseph Geiger, Keith Kelley, Jr., Richie McDougald, James Moss, Ronnie Norris • Probate Court: Sarah Cook • Public Utilities: Earl Sims, Robert Smith • Solicitor: Amelia Addison Rushton, Jeffery Mack • Solid Waste: Christopher Griffin • Trans. & Public Works: Eddie Arnold

Central Services: Kathy Sisk • Finance: Toro Holt • Fire: Michael Cahoon, Matthew Ferman, Jacob Jones, Bruce McCullough, Jr., James Morris • Housing & Community Development: Chadsity Young • Leisure Services: Robert Betz, Kate Mowbray, Robert Sockman • Police: Stephen Daniel, Gregory Dickson, Melissa Green, Juan Guardado-Yanez, Melissa Hood, Michael Poole, Kathryn Thornton • Public Utilities: Ethel Brown, Charles Busbin, Charles Cowart, Marvin Evans, Jr., Al Figueroa, Daphne Little • Sheriff: Terrance Branch, Charles Dolan, Douglas Harrison, Patricia Marks, Minnie Raines, Tiffany Thomas, John Williams • Solid Waste: Suki Janssen, Susan Lyon • Trans. & Public Works: Brad McCook, Noah Westmoreland