Metro News

GWINNETT COMMISSION: Leader takes county office: Jace Brooks aims to regain trust shaken by bribery scandal.

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399 words
18 September 2012
The Atlanta Journal - Constitution
ATJC
Main
B1

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Former Suwanee City Councilman Jace Brooks was sworn in as a Gwinnett County commissioner Monday, giving District 1 an elected representative for the first time in 3 1/2 months.

Brooks replaces Commissioner Shirley Lasseter, who resigned May 31 as she pleaded guilty to a bribery charge.

Brooks said his top priority will be to try to regain the trust lost during a series of scandals involving the County Commission. He said he'll focus on making government "as transparent as possible."

"I think I was elected because people sense that I'm a man of integrity," Brooks said. "Now I need to show them with my actions."

Lasseter, a Republican, announced in February she would not seek re-election, and Brooks defeated fellow Republican Laurie McClain in the July primary election. No Democrat is seeking the office.

A special election had been scheduled for Nov. 6 to decide who would fill the remainder of Lasseter's current term, but Brooks was the only candidate to qualify, so state and county attorneys determined he could take office Monday, according to county spokeswoman Heather Sawyer. The four-year term he was elected to in July begins in January.

Brooks, a financial planner and former Suwanee city councilman, will attend his first commission meeting today.

He'll join a commission that has been rocked by three resignations in two years. Commissioner Kevin Kenerly resigned in 2010 after a special grand jury indicted him for bribery (Kenerly denies the charge, which is still pending). Chairman Charles Bannister also resigned in 2010 to avoid prosecution on a perjury charge stemming from the same investigation.

"When I was out campaigning, it seemed like that was the No. 1 issue," Brooks said. "There's a lack of trust, which I totally understand."

Meet Jace Brooks

Occupation: Financial planner at Summit Wealth Management

Education: Bachelor's degree in finance, Louisiana Tech University, master's degrees from Georgia State University and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

Public office: 10 years on the Suwanee City Council, past president of the Gwinnett Municipal Association

Personal: He and wife Kirste, a math teacher in Gwinnett County Public Schools, have 11-year-old twins.