CHAIRMAN OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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Chairman

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October 22, 2026

Van R. Johnson, II, Mayor
City of Savannah
2 E. Bay Street
Savannah, Georgia 31401

Via E-mail: mayorjohnson@savannahga.gov

Re: Proposed Annexation Lot 1 Mendelville Subdivision and 43.83 acre tract part of Bethesda Union Society of Savannah, Inc. Campus

Dear Van:

I am writing to inform you that the Chatham County Board of Commissioners unanimously voted on Friday, October 16, 2026 to object to the annexation of the two parcels of land located and surrounded by unincorporated Chatham County and known as the 43.83 acre tract located at 9520 Ferguson Avenue with PIN# 10444 01001 and a second parcel known as Lot 1, located at 9503 Whitefield Avenue with PIN# 10503 01012 being a single lot in a subdivision known as Mendelville Subdivision.

Based on a recent letter received from the City of Savannah, the County is on notice of the City's intention to annex both the single subdivision lot and the 43.83 acre tract part of the Bethesda Campus. Again, the Board of Commissioners voted to unanimously object to this unlawful annexation.

Lot 1 of Mendelville Subdivision is not contiguous to the city limits of the City of Savannah. The City of Savannah current city limits are separated by marshes, a river, additional marshes, a tributary, and a marsh, which are claimed by the State of Georgia. Further, the property is not contiguous, in any part, as it is separated by the Vernon River. Additionally, the Vernon River marshland on the eastern side of the river is also claimed as property of the State of Georgia. The attached map, Exhibit "A," shows the eastern marsh line of the Vernon River containing hundreds of acres of pristine marsh, which is not accessible, and the marsh

is further down the eastern side of the Vernon River from the City limits line of the City of Savannah as it is currently extended. Said marsh being in unincorporated Chatham County, the hundreds of acres of marsh in between the Vernon River blocking the line of sight of the non-contiguous Lot 1 Mendelville subdivision further support the County's position to object to such an annexation.
The distance of Lot 1 Mendelville subdivision separation from the city limits of Savannah is 3,500 feet of marsh, river and marsh. This is approximately a half a mile of separation. Simply put, Lot 1 of Mendelville Subdivision is not remotely close to being contiguous.

The legal description for Lot 1 Mendelville subdivision is described in deeds as the northern 80 feet of said lot as measured from Whitefield Avenue. The legal description has been consistently described as 80 feet of northern said lot whose most recent acquisition was in June 2009 by Michael and Shelia Koncul. The property in question has changed ownership five times over the past fifty years. The legal description has been consistently described in the conveyance deed as the northern 80 feet of said lot.

The 43.83 acre tract which is a portion of the property of Bethesda Union Society of Savannah, Inc. like the rest of the Bethesda campus is totally surrounded on all sides by land of unincorporated Chatham County. The annexation of the tract will create an isolated illegal island surrounded by the unincorporated County. Additionally, the isolated area of this large tract creates an illegal island in unincorporated Chatham County and is located more than a half mile away from the City limits of Savannah.

O.C.G.A. §36-36-4(a) and (c)(3) provides:

(a) Annexation…which would result in the creation of an unincorporated area to which the County would have no reasonable means of access for the provision of services provided by the County governing authority solely to the unincorporated area of the County.

This annexation will entail taking vacant land that has been traditionally used for an agricultural purpose and rezoning it to obtain an inappropriate intense mixed use of apartments, condominiums, single family homes, and undefined retail use which severely increases the intensity of the property density which is not in keeping with the comprehensive plan of the County. (O.C.G.A. § 36-36-113(d)(1)(A) and (d)(1)(B)(2)). The present zoning of this property is now R-A with an environmental overlay may be lost due to the intensity of the development.

It is understood, under Georgia law, that the alleged proposed annexation will not initially change the zoning but, the future development plan is for a multi-use residential apartment, single family residences, and undetermined retail use. O.C.G.A. § 36-36-112 provides "that as a condition of annexation the municipality shall not change the zoning of the land use plan relative to the annexed property to a more intense density than what is stated in original notice under O.C.G.A. §36-36-111 for one year after effective date of annexation…"

Should the City of Savannah obtain the right to create a municipal isolated island situated and surrounded by unincorporated Chatham County, the City would not be able to provide municipal services in the same manner that they provide municipal services in other areas of the City with the exception of water and sewer. However, the City has no means by which to provide police stations or patrol officers to these two tracts of land both of which are situated in unincorporated County. Likewise, the City does not have a fire department or equipment located near this property. The City has no means by which to provide street lighting. The City has no means to provide dry trash pick to residents contained in the lot or tract in question. The City is not able to provide services in the same manner that it can provide in other areas of the City.

This letter formally exercises the County right to place the proposed annexation of the City of Savannah in dispute under O.C.G.A. § 36-36-113 and calls upon the City of Savannah and County to complete dispute resolution for all the foreign issues and others prior to undertaking consideration of annexation which would create an unlawful island. The County requests the City not attempt to consolidate the first and second reading of this annexation matter. The County invites further discussion.

Sincerely,

Chester A. Ellis, Chairman
Chatham County Commission

cc: Fellow Members of the Board
Aldermen of the City of Savannah
Michael Kaigler, County Manager
Linda Cramer, Assistant County Manager
R. Jonathan Hart, County Attorney
Bates Lovett, City of Savannah Attorney
Robert McCorkle, Esq.

Exhibit "A"

ArcGIS Web Map



10/20/2026, 3:30:05 PM

Property Boundaries (Parcels)

1:2,949

0 0.03 0.06 0.12 mi

0 0.05 0.1 0.2 km

SAGIS, SAGIS, Chatham County Board of Assessors, Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

STATE OF GEORGIA)
COUNTY OF CHATHAM)

RESOLUTION OF BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF CHATHAM COUNTY

BE IT RESOLVED that **Chatham County is a political subdivision of State of Georgia** did at a regularly scheduled meeting on October 16, 2026 discuss the letter sent by the City of Savannah indicating the annexation attempt upon a single subdivision lot and lot and a 43.83 acre tract of land owned by the Bethesda Union Society of Savannah, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners discussed the various issues involved in the annexation of such property in executive session and the Board of Commissioners did terminate executive session and in open session of the Board of Commissioners upon motion made and properly seconded unanimously passed said motion and a resolution stating the County should object to the annexation of the single subdivision lot and the 43.83 acre tract of land known as the Bethesda property as being an attempt to illegally annex said property which is non-contiguous to the city limits Savannah and the property being surrounded by unincorporated Chatham County and the annexation of the lot and tract would constitute a illegal island that would have negative impacts on the County development plans and would be in non-compliance with the law and it is hereby directed that the County inform the City of Savannah of its concerns in writing and exercise its rights under Service Delivery Strategy statute and work toward a mutually acceptable resolution; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED this Resolution is **ADOPTED** and **PASSED** this 16th day of October, 2026.

The Board of Commissioners of Chatham County

By: Chester A. Ellis
Its: Chairman

By: Janice Bocook
Its: Clerk of The Board of Commissioners

