**JOSEPH (JOE) MURRAY RIVERS, JR.**

**1939-2017**

**FORMER 2ND DISTRICT CHATHAM COUNTY COMMISSIONER FROM 1985 to 2004**

**SAVANNAH/CHATHAM COUNTY PUBLIC SERVANT AND SERVANT LEADER**

**WHEREAS:** Joseph "Joe” Murray Rivers, Jr. was born in Savannah, Georgia to Joseph Rivers, Sr. and Sarah Frazier, and grew up in the “Old Fort” Neighborhood, playing in Crawford Square. He graduated from A.E. Beach High School and later attended the U.S. Air Force Institute (University of Maryland), City College of New York and Savannah State College; and

**WHEREAS:** Commissioner Rivers joined the U.S. Marine Corps and served with the Merchant Marines. Upon returning to Savannah he owned and operated the Olympic Sport Shop in Downtown Savannah; and worked on behalf of loan programs for small and minority business owners, for which he received a "Special Achievement Award" from the Coastal Area District Development Authority (CADDA) where he also served on the Board of Directors; and

**WHEREAS:** Commissioner Rivers served as the District 2 representative on the Board of Commissioners of Chatham County for 20 years. During his tenure he was the board's acknowledged leader on public transit, an active supporter of the Commission-Manager Plan, vocal proponent of increased minority participation in purchasing and in employment and avid supporter of minority and small business development; and

**WHEREAS:** Commissioner Rivers spent most of his adult life serving the community of Chatham County. From his work at the Frank Callen Boys and Girls Club through his service on the Chatham County Commission he believed in giving back to the community loved; and

**WHEREAS:** Commissioner Rivers co-sponsored the plan that restructured the community’s transit system. Through this restructuring, it became transformed from one of the worst in Georgia to one of America’s best (APTA Award Winner, 1989). Besides his leadership in championing the restructuring before the community and General Assembly, he served as chairman of the Countywide Transit Task Force in 1985 and in 1991; and

**WHEREAS:** Commissioner Rivers also served on the Metropolitan Planning Organization, which sets planning policies for transportation in the community; and Region III President from 1991-1992 while remaining active in COMTO. His interest in health and indigent care prompted his service on the Chatham County Board of Health, which has expanded service in the inner city during his tenure through the Teen Clinic, Women’s Clinic and the Mid-Town Health Clinic; and

**WHEREAS:** Joe Rivers helped to champion an innovative approach to indigent health, which led to the reopening of the Westside Urban Health Center in downtown Savannah. As a member of the State Mental Health/Retardation/Substance Abuse Commission, he helped to restructure the delivery of these services statewide through the development and passage of HB 100. Through his involvement he remained active in the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG); and

**WHEREAS:** Commissioner Rivers served as chairman of the General Government Policy Committee as well as the ACCG’s Transportation Policy Committee from 1990-1991. He remained active in the National Association of Counties. He also served on the Board of Directors, chairman of NACO's Community Economic Development Steering Committee, and director of the ACCG’s Board of Managers for the 1991-present term; and

**WHEREAS:** Commissioner Rivers directed and chaired campaigns for local, state, and U.S. candidates for elected services from the Chatham County School board; Mayor and Council members of the City of Savannah; Chatham County Commissioners and the U.S. House of Representative First District of Georgia; and

**WHEREAS:** Commissioner Rivers’ dedication to Chatham Area Transit led to the renovation of a new “Joe Murray Rivers, Jr. Intermodal Transit Center.” Just as his heart was to improve transportation, it was also in the needs of inner city residents and those who could not speak for themselves; providing personal service to get out the vote, seeing they received absentee ballots, housing and supporting work force development. He also was a servant who was elected overwhelmingly by the people because they all knew and respected him. His influence spanned our community, St. Benedict the Moore Catholic Church, state and nation.

**WHEREAS:** He is survived by his fiancé Virgie Williams, Savannah, Georgia, sons Kenneth Bryant, Kiyauni Rivers and Rashad Rivers all of Savannah, Georgia; sister-in-law Helen Murray, Savannah, GA, nieces, Calanthia Green, Clinton, MD, Chanta Green, Raleigh, NC, Karen (Mark) Fripp, Port Royal, SC, nephews Boyce (Jerl) Green, Davidson, North Carolina, Stanley (Gina) Green, Columbia, SC, Ronald Murray, Denver, CO, Edgar(Gayle) Green, Sanford, FL, James "Jada" Pope, Aransas Pass, TX. He also leaves to cherish his memories a host of grand nieces, nephews and other relatives and many friends; and

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Savannah do hereby express their deep appreciation for Commissioner Joe Murray Rivers, Jr. life and service to his beloved Savannah/Chatham County community where he served untiringly with commitment, dedication and excellence. We are all blessed by his life and his legacy of service.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this resolution be presented for adoption and inclusion in the official Minutes of the Meeting of Savannah City Council on Thursday, April 13, 2017 and presented to his family in thanksgiving for a life well lived through his unselfish commitment to others thereby leaving a permanent historical legacy of service.