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OFFICE OF CLERK SUPERIOR COURT
EASTERN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF GEORGIA

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My Fellow Citizens of Chatham County, Georgia:

Each day citizens of this county receive business solicitations from companies desiring to sell you a certified copy of your real estate deed. This generally occurs not long after a real estate transaction has taken place. The cost is generally stated to be between \$80.00 and \$90.00 for this service. I have also received these offers.

The company will purchase from the public records a copy of their customer's deed and then resell it for a profit. While there is nothing illegal about offering this service I feel the need to notify the citizens of Chatham County that they may obtain the same information from my office in the County Courthouse at substantially less cost. The company will often have on their solicitation the notation that the records can be obtained from the local clerk or recorder at less cost.

We welcome the citizens of Chatham County to come by the Clerk of Superior Court offices on the 3rd floor of the Montgomery Street Courthouse. We have public computer terminals available for your use and employees who are willing to show you how to maneuver around our user friendly software so you may look up your own records. If you choose to print your deed from one of these terminals the cost is fifty cents per page, total cost in most instances would be less than \$5.00. If you desire to have certified copies then the cost would be slightly higher. These cost are set by the state legislature.

A second way to obtain this information is from the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority. This is an Authority established by the State of Georgia and is located in the Metro Atlanta area. The Clerk of Superior Court in each county, in conformance to state law, transmits to the Authority scanned images of all real estate transactions that occur in the state. Anyone throughout the world may view these records via the internet. The Clerks' Authority charges a small monthly charge to access the information in their data base and there are no long term contractual obligations. If a person then wishes to print an image (deed, map, plat, lien or UCC) the cost would be fifty cents per page and the document would be printed on your printer in your home or office. The print charge is returned to Chatham County to assist us in maintaining our

technology resources as they relate to the recording of real estate transactions. Copies printed from the Authority website are not certified copies.

Your original deed may be returned to you or your closing attorney after it has been recorded in the Clerk's office. In Chatham County we do not keep any original documents from a real estate closing. All of our real estate records, with the exception of some years from the 70's, 80's and early 90's, are in a digital format. The documents are scanned and indexed and microfilm created from the scanned image. The microfilm is stored in the state archives in Jonesboro, GA. The scanned document and indexing are also sent to the Clerks Authority in Atlanta. Chatham County backs up the computer system located in the courthouse to a completely different system located in another section of the county. In addition to what may seem like an abundance of caution I also back up Clerk of Superior Court files to an undisclosed location far outside of the coastal zone at no cost to local citizens. Your property rights are important to us and we make every effort to protect the documents and information you may need to assert your interest in certain real estate, now and in the future.

Only the clerk or a deputy clerk can certify the record of the court so please do not accept a certification from other sources. While the company that made the solicitation openly tells their potential customers that the records they are selling are derived from public record, I felt it was important for each citizen of this county to understand what steps and precautions are taken locally to memorialize your real estate transaction. If you don't mind paying a premium price for someone else to do what you may not have the time to do then by all means use such a service. My only hope is that every citizen will be informed and make that choice with full knowledge of their options.

It is also important to understand that this office does not sell lists of any kind to private businesses. We do not sell criminal or civil case dispositions, liens, UCC filings, real estate transactions, trade names, notary commissions or any other type of filings that are handled by my office. I have chosen not to maintain lists of such filings because the lists would then become public record which could be bought and sold freely throughout the business community. I do not want the citizens of this county to be bombarded with solicitations from companies around the world that may or may not be reputable. We make every effort to guard your privacy while continuing to maintain public records in accordance with state and federal laws. The major way in which we can do this is to avoid the creation of list and reports that would be usable by list service companies.

Again I offer a standing invitation for every citizen of this county to come by our offices and see the good work that is being performed. The Clerk of Superior Court records account for fifty to sixty percent of all the records created each year in your county government. Our records date to 1785 and it is my honor and that of my staff to build upon and care for the history of Chatham County and the State of Georgia.

Sincerely,
Daniel W. Massey
Clerk, Superior Court E. J. C. of GA.