Wm. Weston J. Newton, Chairman
October 21, 2008
Altamaha Town Heritage Preserve

Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome and thank you for accepting our invitation to help us celebrate the opening of our new Beaufort County park – Altamaha Town Heritage Preserve.

I've asked Councilman Herbert Glaze to lead us in a benediction/

(Benediction)

Now, I am pleased to introduce and welcome a small but dynamic segment of the Huspah Baptist Church B.J. Scott Choir who will sing for us this afternoon.

Thank you. That was beautiful. I would like to take a moment to recognize a few people who have devoted many years to the preservation of this historic site. Allow me to applaud the good work of archeologists Chester De Pratter, Bill Green and Chris Judge and historian Ian Hill. I would also like to express appreciation to Truitt Rabun and The Land Plan Partnership for the technical assistance given to the purchasing partners and for creating a beautiful conceptual design for the preserve.

We are standing on one of Beaufort County's most historically significant sites and it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The opening of Altamaha Heritage Town Preserve to the public is the result of collaboration between the County, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources and the DNR Heritage Trust Advisory Board. Without the help of the state and the Heritage Trust, we would not have cause for celebration today. Thank you all!

The Beaufort County Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program is the mechanism through which your county government acquires vulnerable sites such as Altamaha and preserves them forever. Land preservation is good for our environment, it protects animal habitat, it protects our valuable local military bases from encroachment, it provides buffers and scenic vistas and places for passive parks for our families and future generations to enjoy.

Our County land preservation program is an initiative that grew out of the comprehensive plan in 1997. The need to preserve land was clear. Beaufort County was growing and our resources were strained. In 1997, one-mill was set aside by county council to purchase and preserve undeveloped properties. That was upped to two mills in 1998 and in 2000 voters overwhelmingly approved a $40 million bond

referendum for land preservation, with more than 72-percent voting "yes". In 2006 another bond referendum was held – this time voter approval was even greater, 75-percent.

In 2003 the county contracted with the national non-profit, Trust for Public Land and the program really caught on, I will let TPL tell you how that works, but I am proud to say that to date, with the help of TPL, Beaufort County has preserved nearly 17,000 acres of undeveloped property here in our county. We estimate that this has removed the potential for an additional 75,000 plus vehicle trips per day from Beaufort County roadways, an additional 1.5 million square feet of commercial property and 6,465 homes. Imagine the strain this takes off law enforcement, EMS, fire services, libraries and schools. These services do not pay for themselves and residential property taxes don't cover their costs.

Now, it is my pleasure to introduce Elizabeth Grace, Gubernatorial appointee to the SC DNR Heritage Trust Advisory Board

(Elizabeth Grace speaks)

Slade Gleaton, the South Carolina Director of the Trust for Public Land was detained today by jury duty today. However, I am pleased to introduce TPL project manager, Glenn Stanford.

(Glenn Stanford speaks)

Thank you. I would like to ask the B.J. Scott choir to provide us with another selection.

Thank you once again. You sing like angels. After the ribbon cutting we invite you to board the PALS bus and take a drive walk through the preserve to the old plantation clearing where you will have a view of the water. We have a few cans of bug spray here if you wish to use it. When we return, we will have some refreshments.

Now, we will take scissors in hand and cut the ribbon. Choir, if you would like to sing while we cut the ribbon, we would be very pleased.