

## **PRESS RELEASE – EMA DIRECTOR OF LANIER COUNTY**

Tony Galardo resigned the position of Emergency Management Agency Director of Lanier County (the “Director”) effective August 19, 2025.

On August 22, Timothy Balch was appointed as Interim/Acting Emergency Management Agency Director. Mr. Balch can be reached at Mobile (229) 230-0261; Office (229) 482-2595.

After Mr. Balch’s appointment as Interim/Acting Director, Mr. Galardo was appointed as an Emergency Management Specialist in the Lanier County Emergency Management Department. In that position he will work under the jurisdiction and supervision of Mr. Balch.

The Lanier County Board of Commissioners (the “Commission”) is considering long term goals and personnel decisions for the Lanier County Emergency Management Department but believes that Interim/Acting Director Balch and EM Specialist Galardo will ably serve the immediate needs of Lanier County this 2025 hurricane season.

Mr. Galardo has served as the Director for more than three years, but recently the state director of the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (the “GEMA/HS”) reviewed Mr. Galardo’s qualifications and determined that he does not satisfy the minimum standards set out in Georgia law to be Director - specifically finding that a pardon does not clear past felony convictions. GEMA/HS had no issues with Mr. Galardo’s performance as Director, but because of its determination concerning the Pardon’s effect on the felonies, Mr. Galardo resigned his position as Director.

In Georgia, a local board, such as the Commission, nominates a candidate for the position of local EMA director and the state director of the GEMA/HS makes a final determination as to whether to appoint a nominee as the Director. The local board is responsible for providing the nominee’s fingerprints and GEMA/HS is responsible for conducting and reviewing the nominee’s criminal background check.

In 2022, when the Commission nominated Mr. Galardo for the position of Director. Mr. Galardo provided his fingerprints and a pardon for 27-year-old felony convictions from South Carolina (the “Pardon”). The Commission forwarded Mr. Galardo’s fingerprints and the Pardon to GEMA/HS. GEMA/HS interviewed Mr. Galardo and ultimately appointed him as the Director.

The Commission trusted the process and has confirmed that GEMA/HS did in fact conduct a criminal background check and reviewed the Pardon. After GEMA/HS

appointed Mr. Galardo, the Commission assumed that the Pardon addressed any concerns about his qualifications to be the Director.

The Commission thanks Mr. Galardo for his leadership as Director and the improvements he made in the way Lanier County responds to emergencies. As we saw with the last two years' hurricanes and storms, Mr. Galardo's leadership and dedicated service were key to responding to some of the worst of times in the recent history of Lanier County.