

Georgia Trust for Local News

dba/ The Houston Home Journal - 1210 Washington St., Perry, GA 31069
dba/ The Macon Melody - 1675 Montpelier Ave., Macon, GA 31201

December 15, 2025

TO:
Sheriff David J. Davis
Macon-Bibb County
668 Oglethorpe St
Macon, GA 31201

The Honorable Sarah S. Harris
Judge of the Probate Court of Macon-Bibb County
601 Mulberry Street, Suite 202
Macon, GA 31201

The Honorable Erica L. Woodford
Clerk, Superior Court of Macon-Bibb County
601 Mulberry Street, Suite 216
Macon, GA 31201

The Honorable S. Wade McCord
Bibb County Tax Commissioner
188 3rd. St.
Macon, GA 31201

**RE: Appointment of The Macon Melody as the Bibb County Legal Organ pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 9-13-142
Sheriff Davis, Judge Harris, Ms. Woodford, and Commissioner McCord,**

I am the Executive Director of the Georgia Trust for Local News, d/b/a The Macon Melody and The Houston Home Journal. I was recently informed by Sheriff Davis of the decision to appoint the Monroe Co./Macon Reporter, formerly known as the Monroe County Reporter, as the legal organ for Macon-Bibb County.

I write to draw your attention to O.C.G.A. § 9-13-142(b)(2), which effectively requires the County to appoint The Macon Melody as the legal organ as soon as it reaches the qualifications set forth within O.C.G.A. § 9-13-142(a), which will occur in June of 2026.

As you are likely already aware, the statutory qualifications for the selection of the legal organ are set forth within O.C.G.A. § 9-13-142 (a).

The Monroe Co./Macon Reporter, formerly known as The Monroe County Reporter, cannot meet the requirement of O.C.G.A. § 9-13-142 (a)(2), which requires, in part, that the “newspaper shall be published within the county and continuously at least weekly for a period of two years or is the direct successor of such a newspaper.” The Monroe Co./ Macon Reporter, formerly known as The Monroe County Reporter, is not “published” within Macon-Bibb County, as the term “published” has been defined by the Georgia Court of Appeals. See *Catoosa Cnty. v. Rome News Media*, 349 Ga. App. 123, 132 (2019) (holding that the word “published” refers to “a newspaper having its home in the county” and finding that a newspaper with its headquarters outside of the county could not serve as the legal organ, despite the fact that the newspaper had distribution centers and employees within the county limits).

Similarly, The Macon Melody has not been in circulation for two years as required by O.C.G.A. § 9-13-142 (a)(2). However, The Macon Melody will meet all of the statutory qualifications, including the two-year circulation qualification, in June of 2026.

We understand that the Monroe Co./Macon Reporter, formerly known as the Monroe County Reporter, was selected as the “interim legal organ” pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 9-13-142 (b)(2), which permits the appointment of an out-of-county paper if no newspaper within the county can meet the statutory qualifications.

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 9-13-142 (b)(2), when The Macon Melody becomes the only qualified newspaper to be the County’s legal organ in June of 2026, the “interim designation shall terminate....” Therefore, despite any vote of the County to the contrary, the Monroe Co./Macon Reporter’s, formerly known as the Monroe County Reporter’s, status as the legal organ will legally terminate in June 2026, as required to effectuate the legislature’s “clear purpose” in “requiring a newspaper to be published in a particular county,” which was “to compel the letting of printing contracts to local newspapers, in order that local capital and local labor should secure the benefits of the expenditure of money derived from local taxes, including their own” Rome News Media, 349 Ga. App. at 132 (internal quotations and citations omitted); see also *Henry Cnty. Rec., Inc. v. Cmtv. Newspaper Holdings, Inc.*, 274 Ga. 353, 353 (2001) (“...the broad discretion vested in the designated county officials to select the legal organ for the county does not authorize those officials to disregard the clear and unambiguous language regarding the statutorily-mandated qualifications the Legislature has set forth in O.C.G.A. § 9-13-142.”).

We are disappointed that the County has elected to send its business to a non-local newspaper when a newspaper within the County will become the statutorily qualified legal organ within five months.

We are writing to inform you that as soon as The Macon Melody qualifies in June of 2026, we will pursue every available option, including legal action, to protect The Macon Melody’s lawful status as the only statutorily qualified legal organ for Macon-Bibb County.

We hope that will not be necessary, and that the County will revisit this issue early in the new year to ensure that The Macon Melody is designated as the legal organ as soon as it qualifies.

Further, the legal ad currently running in The Telegraph states that you have designated The Macon Reporter as the legal organ for Bibb County. There is no stand alone publication by that name.

If the County intends to designate the Monroe Co./Macon Reporter, formerly known as the Monroe County Reporter, as the legal organ, it’s odd that you chose to reference it as only the “Macon Reporter.”

The Monroe Reporter/Macon Reporter newspaper is headquartered in Monroe County, and shortening its name to only include “the Macon Reporter” misleads and confuses the public.

In my opinion it is also deceptive to do so. By having named a publication that does not exist, you have jeopardized the legality of every legal ad and have subjected each to be challenged.

The ad should be rerun reflecting the real name of the newspaper you selected. That newspaper, whatever you call it, is published in Monroe County, not Bibb.

Please feel free to reach out to me. My email is dubose@tnln.org and my cell phone # is 4782900726. Look forward to getting together with you personally soon.

Sincerely,



DeBose Porter, Executive Director

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