

FAYETTE COUNTY COMMISSION DISTRICT 3 CANDIDATE JAMES CLIFTON (R)

James Clifton is making his fourth bid for elected office in the last 12 years, seeking the District 3 seat on the Fayette County Board of Commissioners. Clifton is an attorney and founder of The Clifton Law Firm whose current campaign has centered on unproven claims that Peachtree City and the Fayette County Development Authority are secretly planning to annex land for a data center. Clifton defeated Phil Crane in the May 19 Republican primary and will face Democrat Chandra Wright in the November general election. According to an article in [Inside Elections](#), Fayette County “represents the type of suburban county that has become central to Democratic victories in Georgia. Its movement mirrors similar changes across the Atlanta metropolitan area, where Republicans have lost some of their advantage with suburban voters.” Historically Republican-leaning (Donald Trump won 57% of the vote in 2016 and Mitt Romney won 65% of the vote in 2012), Kamala Harris won 48% of the vote in 2024—the best showing for a Democrat since Jimmy Carter in 1976.

Key Findings:

Clifton’s central platform plank is “NO DATA CENTERS. NO APARTMENTS. NO MARTA.” Despite there being no known proposal to expand public transportation to Fayette County, Clifton’s campaign states that MARTA expansion should be rejected “to prevent crime intrusion” and warns that public transit “imports urban problems.” On apartment housing, Clifton has said directly: “I don’t think multi-family housing... high density housing apartments is a solution to that problem. It imports crime, it [increases] overcrowding and puts more traffic in our street.” His platform pledges to “reinstate strict land use plans to curb multifamily housing” and cap new residential development at “one unit per two to five acres.”

Clifton has built his campaign around a data center conspiracy theory. Opposition to data centers is a core component of Clifton’s campaign and his activism on the issue has gotten national attention in *Politico*. One of Clifton’s key claims is that Peachtree City officials and the Fayette County Development Authority are secretly working together to annex roughly 1,100 acres of Coweta County land near Lake McIntosh and build a data center there without public knowledge — a theory that multiple officials have denied in writing, and that Clifton has admitted rests on “circumstantial” evidence. Clifton attempted to organize a recall of Peachtree City Council officials in March 2026 despite not having statutory grounds to do so and he has continued pushing the claims even though local columnist Kenneth Hamner has repeatedly called out and documented his lies and “manufactured threats.”

Clifton is a three-time election loser now on his fourth attempt at office. Clifton has made multiple unsuccessful attempts to win office. He lost the 2014 Republican primary for Georgia Senate District 16 finishing sixth of seven candidates and the 2016 Republican primary for Georgia House District 72, finishing third out of three. He then lost a 2025 Peachtree City Council bid running as former mayor Steve Brown’s running mate. Despite his repeated attempts to win local office, retiring Commissioner Edge Gibbons, who endorsed Clifton’s primary opponent, wrote that he has “not seen James Clifton at County Commission meetings.”

Clifton supports collaborating with ICE to “ensure the deportation of criminal illegal immigrants.” Clifton’s campaign website states, “James Clifton will collaborate with ICE to ensure the deportation of criminal illegal immigrants,” and pledges to prevent Fayette County from “adopting sanctuary status.”

<u>POTENTIAL HITS FROM THE LEFT</u>	<u>POTENTIAL HITS FROM THE RIGHT</u>
<u>ICE SUPPORT</u> <u>CONSPIRACY THEORIES & CREDIBILITY</u> <u>CHRONIC ELECTION LOSER LACKING EXPERIENCE</u> <u>NIMBY RHETORIC</u>	<u>NA</u>

BACKGROUND & BIO

2010-Present: Clifton is the founding member of The Clifton Law Firm LLC. “James Clifton is the founding member of The Clifton Law Firm, LLC and oversees the firm's multi-state practice. During the course of his career, Mr. Clifton has focused primarily on real property, wills, trusts, and estates. Additionally, Mr. Clifton possesses vast experience in suits to quiet title, real property and commercial lending transactions, comprehensive contract formation, title insurance claims, will drafting, estate planning, and probate litigation.” [GaPundit, [2/27/14](#); James Clifton LinkedIn, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

2020-Present: Clifton is a manager at AREA (Attorney Real Estate Associates, LLC). [James Clifton LinkedIn, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

March 2026: Clifton announced his candidacy for Fayette County Commission. “James Clifton submitted the following statement to announce his campaign for Fayette County Board of Commissioners District 3. ‘Lifelong Fayette County resident James Clifton announced his candidacy for Fayette County Board of Commissioners, pledging to protect the community’s character, represent priorities of local citizens, and ensure residents have a strong voice in key decisions shaping the county’s future.’ ‘As a lifelong resident, I understand what matters most to the people of Fayette County,’ Clifton said. ‘Our citizens deserve a representative who will advocate for their interests and stand firm on the issues that affect our quality of life — especially as we face major decisions surrounding proposals such as data centers.’ Clifton says his campaign will focus on responsible growth, protecting community standards, and ensuring county government remains accountable to taxpayers.” [Fayette County News, [3/16/26](#)]

- **Retiring County Commissioner Edward Gibbons endorsed Clifton’s opponent in the Republican primary.** “I have personally seen Phil at countless County Commission meetings, consistently showing up to listen, learn, and engage on the issues that matter to Fayette County residents. That level of commitment matters. To be direct, I have not seen James Clifton at County Commission meetings. Showing up, listening, and understanding how county government works – a basic part of being prepared to serve.” [Edward “Edge” Gibbons Letter to the Editor, Fayette County Citizen, [4/29/26](#)]

Clifton has run for office four times in the past 12 years. “Clifton has run for office four times in the past twelve years. He ran for Georgia Senate in 2014 and Georgia House in 2016, finishing sixth and last in those primaries respectively. He ran for Peachtree City Council as former mayor Steve Brown’s running mate in November 2025 and lost to Michael Polacek. The county commission race is his fourth attempt at elected office.” [Kenneth Hamner Column, Fayette County Citizen, [5/12/26](#)]

2025: Clifton ran for Peachtree City Council. “James Clifton recently announced his candidacy for Post 4 of the City Council of Peachtree City and submitted the following statement: ‘James Clifton is excited to announce his candidacy for Peachtree City Council Post 4, a position previously held by Frank Destadio. Clifton's campaign is focused on returning Peachtree City to the core principles of its founding, ensuring the quality of life that has attracted families to this wonderful city remains uncompromised. Clifton expressed his disappointment

with the city's direction over the past decade, exemplified by bloated budgets and lower-quality service, as well as suffering through four different city managers in four years — a sentiment shared by many residents.” [Fayette County News, [6/25/25](#)]

- **Clifton lost to Michael Polacek.** “Michael Polacek won the Post 4 City Council race with 54.35% of the vote over James Clifton.” [Fayette County Citizen, [11/5/25](#)]

2016: Clifton ran for State House. “At the Fayette County Republican Party Precinct Mass Meeting Saturday, James Clifton, small business owner and local United States Supreme Court licensed attorney, announced his campaign to run for the State House of Representatives, District 72.” [GaPundit, 2/23/16]

- **Clifton finished third of three candidates in the Republican primary.** In the May 2016 Republican primary for State House District 72, Clifton finished third of three candidates with 14.34% of the vote. [Ballotpedia, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

2014: Clifton ran for State Senate. “Conservative Republican James Clifton, small businessman and local attorney, today announced his campaign to run for State Senate District 16 in the Republican Primary.” [GaPundit, [2/27/14](#)]

- **Clifton finished sixth of seven candidates in the Republican primary.** In the May 2014 Republican primary for State Senate District 16, Clifton finished sixth of seven candidates with 7.8% of the vote. [Ballotpedia, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

2011-2014: Clifton was a partner at The McCann Law Group LLP. “Mr. Clifton is also a former partner with The McCann Law Group, LLP based in Jacksonville, Florida. He served as the head of Georgia operations overseeing the firm's credit card debt negotiation and foreclosure defense practice.” [GaPundit, [2/27/14](#); James Clifton LinkedIn, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

2008-2010: Clifton was a managing attorney at Albertelli Law. [James Clifton LinkedIn, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

2005-2008: Clifton attended Florida Coastal School of Law. “After his undergraduate education, Mr. Clifton matriculated to Florida Coastal School of Law where he was a Governor's Merit Scholarship recipient. He received his Juris Doctor degree in 2008 and graduated seventeenth in his class with a GPA of 3.45, earning him cum laude honors.” [GaPundit, [2/27/14](#); James Clifton LinkedIn, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

2000-2003: Clifton attended the University of Georgia. “Mr. Clifton graduated from Fayette County High School with several academic honors. Following graduation, he attended the University of Georgia on the HOPE scholarship and graduated in three and a half years with two Bachelor Degrees in Psychology and Political Science. During that time, he maintained a 3.49 GPA.” [GaPundit, [2/27/14](#); James Clifton LinkedIn, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

Clifton: “I’ve spent my entire life right here in Fayette County supporting our community in the ways that matter most.” “3. Have you served on a civic board or supported a municipal

government in some way? Clifton: I've spent my entire life right here in Fayette County supporting our community in the ways that matter most. I served as the President of the Fayette County Bar Association, a distinction shared with seven sitting Fayette County judges. For four years, I led the Fayette County Republican Party as First Vice Chairman, championing conservative values in our community. I organized multiple food drives in Fayette County to support the Real Life Center and Midwest Food Bank, collecting several thousand pounds of canned goods to feed the less fortunate. When it comes to local government, I don't just show up at meetings to hold our elected leaders accountable; I work every day to make sure Fayette families have a strong voice against overdevelopment and for government transparency. That real world commitment and conservative common sense is exactly what this seat needs." [Fayette County Citizen, [4/23/26](#)]

Clifton volunteers with Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation providing pro bono represent to "indigent clients who might otherwise face injustice alone." "Yet, what truly sets James apart is his unwavering service to others. On weekends, you'll find him at the Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation's Saturday Lawyer Program, offering pro bono representation to indigent clients who might otherwise face injustice alone. He's represented Fayette County in the Georgia Attorney General's statewide Legal Food Frenzy, rallying our community to combat hunger. His leadership shines through in past roles: a former First Vice Chairman of the Fayette County Republican Party, an elected member of the Executive Council for the State Bar of Georgia's Young Lawyers Division, a graduate of the esteemed Young Lawyer Leadership Academy, and former president of the Fayette County Bar Association. In all things, James embodies the ethic of giving back." [Committee to Elect James Clifton, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

Clifton operates Justice Pinball in Newnan. "Clifton is an attorney at The Clifton Law Firm in Fayetteville. He also operates an AREA real estate brokerage at the same address and runs Justice Pinball in Newnan. His campaign materials describe him as 'a dedicated business owner and conservative who has committed his life to community engagement.'" [Kenneth Hamner Column, Fayette County Citizen, [3/9/26](#)]

Clifton is a lifelong resident of Fayette County. "Mr. Clifton is a lifelong resident of Fayette County and enjoys staying active in the community. He enjoys playing golf and cheering for the University of Georgia football team." [GaPundit, [2/27/14](#)]

Clifton and his wife and two sons live in the Kedron area of Peachtree City. "James's personal story is one of family first. Married to the brilliant Dr. Whitney Clifton, an Emory-educated epidemiologist and pillar in her own right, they raise their two young sons - precocious Julian, who is 7 and already dreaming big, and playful William, 4, whose voice drips with southern charm that lights up any room - in the welcoming Kedron area of Peachtree City. Weekends often find them at Peachtree City First Baptist Church, where faith and fellowship ground their days. James has a quirky side too: in his spare time, he dives into the nostalgic world of restoring old pinball machines, breathing new life into forgotten classics with the same care he applies to everything he touches. It's a reminder that even in a fast-paced world, there's value in preserving what matters." [Committee to Elect James Clifton, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Total Receipts (Jan 2026 –April 30, 2026)	Total Expenditures (Jan 2026 –April 30, 2026)	Cash On Hand (April 30, 2026)
\$35,675.57	\$21,638.22	\$14,037.35

[Fayette County Elections & Voter Registration, [filed 4/30/26](#)]

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Clifton has made no recorded contributions to federal candidates.

[Federal Elections Commission, accessed 7/30/26]

According to Georgia campaign finance records, Clifton has made contributions to the Georgia Republican Party and to his own previous campaigns.

Category	Contributor	Employer	Occupation	Date	Amount	Recipient	Recipient Jurisdiction
Money to Parties	CLIFTON, JAMES W BROOKS, GA 30205	BEST EFFORT	ATTORNEY	03-11-2016	\$400	GEORGIA REPUBLICAN PARTY (R)	GA
Money to Candidates	CLIFTON, JAMES W PEACHTREE CITY, GA 30269	Clifton Law Firm Lic	ATTORNEY	03-24-2016	\$28,035	CLIFTON, JAMES W (R)	GA
Money to Parties	CLIFTON, JAMES W BROOKS, GA 30205	BEST EFFORT	ATTORNEY	03-05-2014	\$400	GEORGIA REPUBLICAN PARTY (R)	GA
Money to Candidates	CLIFTON, JAMES W BROOKS, GA 30205	Clifton Law Firm Lic	ATTORNEY	07-15-2014	-\$6,227	CLIFTON, JAMES W (R)	GA
Money to Candidates	CLIFTON, JAMES W BROOKS, GA 30205	Clifton Law Firm Lic	ATTORNEY	07-22-2016	-\$26,977	CLIFTON, JAMES W (R)	GA
Money to Candidates	CLIFTON, JAMES W BROOKS, GA 30205	Clifton Law Firm Lic	ATTORNEY	07-27-2016	\$2,920	CLIFTON, JAMES W (R)	GA

[Open Secrets, accessed 7/30/26]

AFFORDABILITY

No findings identified.

BUDGETS & TAXES

Campaign website: “James Clifton is committed to addressing community issues in Fayette County by reducing budgets and cutting property taxes.” “Reduce Budget/Cut Taxes. Championing fiscal conservatism, James Clifton is committed to addressing community issues in Fayette County by reducing budgets and cutting property taxes as a County Commissioner. As

municipal budgets continue to expand while services delivered to citizens falter, Clifton advocates for the elimination of property taxes on homeowners, utilizing the additional tax dollars generated by the already existing QTS data centers. Furthermore, James Clifton supports reduced budgets to curtail reckless spending. ” [Committee to Elect James Clifton, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

2026: Clifton: “My plan is clear: cut the county budget and reduce property taxes for homeowners by using revenue we already get from the existing QTS data center.” “2. All candidates run on fiscal responsibility and/or reducing taxes. What are your specific proposals to do this? Material costs and personnel costs go up every year so how will you counteract this in the County’s budget? Clifton: My plan is clear: cut the county budget and reduce property taxes for homeowners by using revenue we already get from the existing QTS data center. This is what we were promised when that data center came to town, and I will make sure they deliver on that promise. We also need to stop reckless spending and use the money we have smarter. Rising material and personnel costs are real, but the answer isn’t raising taxes or approving developments that bring even more people and strain our services, like apartments and high-density housing. It’s about tightening the budget, eliminating waste, and prioritizing what matters – public safety, roads, and schools – without overburdening taxpayers. As a small business owner, I live this every day. You control costs by making smart choices and saying ‘no’ to unnecessary expenses. That’s exactly what I’ll do on the Commission.”” [Fayette County Citizen, [4/23/26](#)]

CONTROVERSIES

Columnist Kenneth Hamner has accused Clifton of “straight up lying” to support a conspiracy theory that Peachtree City and the Fayette County Development Authority are working together to annex land for a data center. “If you’ve read my previous columns, you know I have been very critical of James Clifton, and for good reason. Since losing his Peachtree City Council race last November, Clifton has been promoting a conspiracy theory that Peachtree City and the Fayette County Development Authority are quietly working together to annex Coweta County land for a data center. The mayor of Peachtree City, the council member who proposed the annexation study at issue, and the president of the Fayette County Development Authority have all denied the claim in writing. Clifton himself acknowledged to The Citizen that his evidence is, in his own words, ‘circumstantial,’ yet he continues to push the claims to others as fact. He has also straight up lied to support his conspiracy. At one point, after obtaining recordings from a January city council retreat, Clifton posted a video to Facebook titled “The Peachtree City data center conversation that supposedly never happened.” The audio he used was of FCDA President Niki Vanderslice discussing a data center project in Fayetteville that had been reviewed by the Fayetteville Planning and Zoning Commission two days before the retreat. Vanderslice was not discussing Peachtree City. Clifton stripped the context, applied a Peachtree City label, and told his followers the recording was proof that city officials had been planning a data center behind their backs. He has never corrected the video or acknowledged that the audio was about Fayetteville (I documented the full details with screenshots and the video here). When confronted with facts like these, Clifton does not address them. He tells his followers the coverage is a political attack, frames himself as the target of a campaign to silence him, and moves on to his next post without engaging with what was actually documented. What Clifton is

ultimately doing is using a manufactured threat to build a base of supporters for his county commission campaign.” [Kenneth Hamner Column, Fayette County Citizen, [5/12/26](#)]

- **Clifton threatened recalls against members of Peachtree City Council without any grounds.** “Clifton has also referenced Georgia’s recall statute, O.C.G.A. § 21-4-1 et seq., in response to questions about possible recall efforts. In a recent Facebook comment, Clifton wrote, ‘I want to get each council member on the record for each of these items first. Then we need to set up a recall petition website.’ When asked on what grounds he would pursue recall, Clifton cited the statute but did not identify specific actions taken by council members. Under Georgia law, recall petitions must allege statutory grounds related to conduct in office. At this time, the only formal action taken by the Peachtree City Council related to the issue is the unanimous approval of an annexation study — not an annexation ordinance, zoning change, or infrastructure extension.” [Fayette County Citizen, [3/2/26](#)]

Columnist Kenneth Hamner: Clifton “frightened people who trusted him into contacting their elected officials about a threat that did not exist, forced city staff to spend hours responding to panic he manufactured, and poisoned his community’s trust in its own government for his own political benefit.” “After losing the Peachtree City Post 4 race last November, Clifton created a Facebook group called “Stop Peachtree City Data Center” and began posting claims that city officials were secretly laying the groundwork to annex land from Coweta County and rezone it for a data center behind the public’s back. He built his case on four things: A city council retreat he claimed was deliberately hidden from the public. A meeting the Fayette County Development Authority (FCDA) requested with him that he framed as an attempt to silence him. The February purchase of approximately 1,100 acres near Lake McIntosh by Brent Scarbrough and Company. The city council’s unanimous vote to commission an annexation study He packaged those four things into a timeline and presented it to residents as confirmed fact. When The Citizen asked him directly about his evidence, he admitted in writing that it was circumstantial. Three officials across three separate institutions then denied his claims in writing, but Clifton posted through all of it, telling his followers that every denial proved the cover-up rather than disproved it. He frightened people who trusted him into contacting their elected officials about a threat that did not exist, forced city staff to spend hours responding to panic he manufactured, and poisoned his community’s trust in its own government for his own political benefit.” [Kenneth Hamner Column, Fayette County Citizen, [4/1/26](#)]

- **Hamner called on Clifton to withdraw from the County Commission race.** “As for James Clifton, he should withdraw from this race for three separate reasons. The first is well documented. Clifton has repeatedly and deliberately misled this community because winning this election matters more to him than the damage he leaves behind. The second reason is that he cannot do the job if elected. The Fayette County Board of Commissioners governs land use and zoning across the entire county, sets the budget, oversees public safety, and makes decisions about development that will shape how this county looks for decades. That work requires credibility with the FCDA, whose president said he had misrepresented her words so badly she could no longer respond to his questions. That work also requires collaboration with Peachtree City’s mayor and councilmembers, who are on the record saying he has wasted countless hours of their

time and resources responding to panicked residents. Clifton has damaged every one of those relationships before casting a single vote. The third reason is that a candidate who campaigns the way Clifton has will govern the same way as a county commissioner. He will manufacture fears from his seat the same way he has manufactured them now, and when the record catches up with him, he will blame whoever documented it. Fayette County cannot afford to find out what this behavior would look like from inside the commissioner's office." [Kenneth Hamner Column, Fayette County Citizen, [4/1/26](#)]

Columnist Kenneth Hamner: Clifton is “a conspiracy theorist and a liar.” “The Board of Commissioners governs land use, zoning, transportation, the county budget, and public services for every resident across every city and every unincorporated community. The person who holds it makes decisions that shape how this county looks and functions for decades. It requires someone who has earned the public's trust rather than manufactured its fear. Clifton has spent the past four months doing the latter. Since losing the Peachtree City Council Post 4 race last November, he has built a Facebook group around a data center conspiracy theory he invented, misrepresented public officials, and organized residents around a threat that three independent officials have denied in writing. He then filed for county commissioner on the last day of qualifying and is now asking Fayette County voters to give him authority over the very zoning and land use decisions his central claim has already been proven false about. At a recent Peachtree City Council meeting, Clifton acknowledged he has been called a conspiracy theorist and a liar, and he raised it as though it were an injustice committed against him. He has been called those things because that is what he is, and voters deserve to know it before May 19th.” [Kenneth Hamner Column, Fayette County Citizen, [3/9/26](#)]

Columnist Paul Schultz said Clifton treats people “as a means to an end.” “This brings me to the next point: how Clifton interacts with people. If Clifton is elected he will have to work with people he has spent treating as a means to an end. The County Commission must work with the FCDA, and if I led the FCDA, I would say as little as possible given how Clifton misrepresented the meeting with Peachtree City. As an editorialist and someone who makes comments at public meetings, it is fair to push back on me, but Clifton should be careful about facts versus conjecture, and it is interesting how he uses the phrases ‘discredit me’ and, especially, ‘smear my reputation.’ Use of these phrases is designed to chill public discourse. It is fair for me to question his motives and narrative since he is a political candidate- he's asking us to trust him after all, but it is way out of bounds for him to claim I'm trying to damage his reputation. I'm simply holding up an alternative to a shaky narrative and pointing out that some things really are coincidences. As for Clifton's reputation, I'm not the one who aligned my campaign with one of the least popular former mayors of Peachtree City. Aligning campaigns is tactically fraught with problems even with the best of partnerships. When you don't have friends among fellow politicians or county staff because of how you campaigned, being an elected official will be a very lonely experience.” [Paul Schultz Column, Fayette County Citizen, [5/1/26](#)]

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Campaign website: “James leads the fight against data centers in Fayette County.” “No Data Centers. James leads the fight against data centers in Fayette County. In his bid for Fayette County Board of Commissioners, James Clifton strongly opposes the proliferation of data

centers, aiming to protect residential areas from environmental, aesthetic, and financial harm, as evidenced by recent community victories. Clifton recently uncovered Peachtree City's plan to build a data center on Lake Macintosh through the annexation of 1,100 additional acres into the city. Additionally, James has raised community awareness regarding a second planned data center in Fayetteville. Thanks to his efforts, the Fayetteville Planning Commission denied a proposed data center in January 2026 amid opposition from over 100 residents, who voiced concerns about public safety, noise, deforestation, and potential property value drops of 5-15% near existing facilities like QTS. Activists have urged state lawmakers to address these community issues, emphasizing how massive poles and clear-cutting disrupt scenic neighborhoods. This aligns with Clifton's call for a moratorium to prioritize citizens over industrial interests that strain local resources while offering minimal benefits, including the impact on property taxes." [Committee to Elect James Clifton, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

2026: Clifton: "Growth just for the sake of growth is not progress." "Edward Smith, Director of Institutional Client Services with the JTC Group, opened the questioning with a 2025 cost-of-community-services study showing that residential properties in Fayette County cost \$1.05 in services for every dollar of property tax they generate, while industrial properties cost only \$0.55. Given that gap, what would each candidate's main economic development priority be? [...] Clifton offered a critique rather than a priority. 'Growth just for the sake of growth is not progress,' he said, with his memorable line about paving over a strawberry farm to build a parking lot. He did not name a sector, an industry, or any specific approach to economic development." [Kenneth Hamner Column, Fayette County Citizen, [5/12/26](#)]

2026: Clifton was an anti-data center activist who uncovered a data center using 30 million gallons of Fayette County water. "The neighbors of a data center in Georgia are steaming after they discovered the facility had sucked up nearly 30 million gallons of water — without initially paying for it. Outrage started bubbling up last year when residents of an affluent subdivision named Annelise Park in Fayetteville, Georgia, noticed their water pressure was unusually low. When the county utility investigated, officials discovered two industrial-scale water hookups feeding a data center campus located 20 miles south of downtown Atlanta. One water connection had been installed without the utility's knowledge, and the other was not linked to the company's account and therefore wasn't being billed. [...] The incident became public last week when a county resident obtained the 2025 letter to QTS through a public records request and posted it on Facebook, prompting outrage from residents concerned about the data center's water consumption. [...] One resident said frustration with data centers boiled over after local officials told community members to scale back their water usage. 'We get this notification from Fayette County water system saying you need to stop watering your lawns to help conserve water,' said James Clifton, an attorney and property rights advocate who obtained and shared the 2025 letter to QTS. 'So the first thing they do is lean on the individuals and the citizens to stop water consumption when we have QTS that's just absolutely draining us — most months it's the No. 1 consumer of water in the county,' said Clifton, who is also running for a seat on the Fayette County Board of Commissioners." [Politico, [5/9/26](#)]

- **Clifton on data centers: "It's just frustrating to see them come into our community and run all over us like the citizens don't matter."** "While the utility charged the data center a higher construction rate for the unapproved water consumption, Tigert confirmed

the utility did not penalize or fine the data center. That decision has some residents stewing. ‘It’s just frustrating to see them come into our community and run all over us like the citizens don’t matter, and then they’re above the law when they do break it,’ Clifton said.” [Politico, [5/9/26](#)]

- **Columnist Kenneth Hamner said Clifton “sucker[ed] the national media with the same playbook he has been running locally.”** “Some of these false framings mirror the public statements of James Clifton, the local attorney who is running for the Fayette County Board of Commissioners and who obtained the May 2025 letter through a public records request. I have written about Clifton’s pattern of dishonesty multiple times already, and I do not need to relitigate in detail here. But Clifton posted the letter on Facebook with commentary that accused QTS of stealing water. He has been quoted by E&E News claiming that residents were told to stop watering their lawns while QTS drained the county dry. That claim does not appear to be supported by the actual record of county water restrictions during the relevant period. What Clifton also did (and what is worth saying plainly) is sucker the national media with the same playbook he has been running locally for the better part of 2026. He took a document, stripped it of context, posted it publicly with incendiary framing, and watched his story travel exactly the way he needed it to travel days before his primary election. The irony is that the actual accountability story is one a county commissioner could do something about. The Board of Commissioners has direct oversight of the water system. The Board could ask Rapson and Tigert publicly what went wrong. The Board could require a review of commercial billing controls. The Board could ask why a misleading letter went out without internal review. None of that is in Clifton’s platform. He has the real accountability story sitting in his hand, and he is using it as a prop for a different fight.” [Kenneth Hamner Column, Fayette County Citizen, [5/14/26](#)]

ELECTIONS & BALLOT ACCESS

No findings identified.

EDUCATION

Campaign website: Clifton “aims to limit density to prevent overburdening our educational system and to ensure that teachers and administrators have the necessary resources.” “Top Ranked Schools. James Clifton's vision for Fayette County focuses on addressing community issues by sustaining top-ranked schools. He aims to limit density to prevent overburdening our educational system and to ensure that teachers and administrators have the necessary resources to positively impact students. Although all five high schools in Fayette County currently rank in the top 17% nationally, James has raised awareness about the concerning low reading and math proficiency rates in some of these schools. In the past, Fayette County’s schools ranked among the top 5%, and Clifton is committed to restoring that esteemed position. He also advocates for supporting families seeking resources for children with IEPs and special needs, emphasizing the importance of public safety and quality education in local elections, along with the need for responsible property taxes.” [Committee to Elect James Clifton, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

ENVIRONMENT

Campaign website: “It is crucial to prioritize green spaces and nature areas over urban sprawl and industrial data centers.” “Enhance Recreation. James Clifton's campaign focuses on addressing community issues by enhancing recreation responsibly in Fayette County. It is crucial to prioritize green spaces and nature areas over urban sprawl and industrial data centers. Providing residents with access to athletic and leisure opportunities is vital for healthy living and aligns with James's mission to reverse unhealthy lifestyles. The recreation budget for Fayette County should concentrate on maintaining existing amenities that attract high participation rates and ensuring bathroom access at all facilities. These initiatives are part of Clifton's commitment to boost quality of life without increasing property taxes. James Clifton's campaign is dedicated to enhancing recreation responsibly while also considering fiscal responsibility.” [Committee to Elect James Clifton, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

ETHICS & GOOD GOVERNMENT

Campaign website: “James firmly believes all government meetings should be open and transparent.” “Government Transparency. Spearheading efforts to enhance government transparency in local governance by exposing hidden government retreats and advocating for unrestricted public participation in commission meetings, James firmly believes all government meetings should be open and transparent. He also maintains a public Facebook page to welcome comments, contrasting with opponents, and has publicly responded to criticisms by outlining commitments to transparency alongside issues like housing, traffic, taxes, and zoning, positioning himself as a champion for fair representation and reducing special interest influence in the County Commission.” [Committee to Elect James Clifton, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

2025: Clifton campaigned for Peachtree City Council promising “open dialogue” and to “ensure every voice is heard.” “Encourage Free Speech and Transparent Government: Clifton is concerned about the heavy restrictions on citizens who want to speak at council meetings, where citizens are sometimes restricted to less than one minute to speak. He believes elected officials should encourage open dialogue and ensure every voice is heard.” [Fayette County News, [6/25/25](#)]

HEALTHCARE

No findings identified.

HOUSING

Campaign website: “James Clifton pledges to oppose new apartment developments and high-density housing proposals.” “No Apartments or High Density Housing. As a dedicated advocate for preserving Fayette County's suburban charm, James Clifton pledges to oppose new apartment developments and high-density housing proposals during the local elections for the Board of Commissioners. He aims to build on the county's history of prioritizing single-family homes to maintain community character and prevent infrastructure overload, which are key community issues. The construction of hundreds of apartments in the area has raised alarms

about straining top-ranked schools, overburdening class sizes, and increasing property taxes. James leads the fight against Fayetteville's apartment expansion and stands in solidarity with residents packed in city council meetings to oppose these development projects. Clifton's vision of reinstating strict land use plans to curb multifamily housing is a crucial step toward preserving Fayette County's suburban character while ensuring public safety." [Committee to Elect James Clifton, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

Campaign website: Clifton supports “low-density zoning” and “limiting new residential development to one unit per two to five acres.” “Stop Urbanization. James Clifton's campaign for Commissioner addresses key community issues by focusing on halting urbanization to preserve Fayette County's rural and suburban essence. He supports low-density zoning, limiting new residential development to one unit per two to five acres for the conservation of greenspace. Clifton aims to combat sprawl and redundant commercial strip malls while ensuring separation between municipalities. These strategies are part of his commitment to enhancing public safety and maintaining the non-urban appeal that attracts families to Fayette County, especially during local elections, where property taxes and community well-being are significant concern.” [Committee to Elect James Clifton, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

Clifton: “My long-term vision is we continue down the path of suburban life, that we have low density housing, and that we do not overdevelop.” “‘The whole purpose of comprehensive plan is to ensure that the county has a long-term vision,’ Clifton said. ‘My long-term vision is we continue down the path of suburban life, that we have low density housing, and that we do not overdevelop.’” [Fayette County News, [5/13/26](#)]

Clifton claimed apartment buildings “imports crime.” “‘What specific strategies would you support to help balance growth with housing affordability while preserving the character of our communities?’ Frieson asked. [...] ‘I don’t think multi-family housing... high density housing apartments is a solution to that problem,’ Clifton said. ‘It imports crime, it creases overcrowding and puts more traffic in our street.’” [Fayette County News, [5/13/26](#)]

Columnist Kenneth Hamner: On housing, “Clifton is promising to enforce a constraint that physical infrastructure already enforces, on land where the County Commission cannot act in the first place.” “Letrissa Frieson, Chair of the Fayette Board of Realtors, asked what specific strategies each candidate would support to balance growth with housing affordability for working families, teachers, first responders, and young professionals. [...] Clifton used his sixty seconds to argue against multifamily housing, high-density housing, and apartments. He proposed competitive wages for public employees as the affordability solution. This is the second place where the jurisdictional issue matters, and it matters more here than in any other answer Clifton gave all night. Clifton’s promise to oppose high-density housing in Fayette County runs into a basic infrastructure reality. The unincorporated parts of Fayette County, the only parts the County Commission has zoning authority over, do not have a countywide sewer system. Everything is on septic, and septic systems do not support apartment-density development. The county’s own Comprehensive Plan states this clearly. Within the cities, where sewer does exist, zoning decisions are made by city councils rather than the county commission. As Edge Gibbons wrote in his endorsement letter, ‘Apartments require sewer and cannot be approved in the unincorporated county.’ Clifton is promising to enforce a constraint that physical

infrastructure already enforces, on land where the County Commission cannot act in the first place, which makes his answer a slogan rather than a policy position.” [Kenneth Hamner Column, Fayette County Citizen, [5/12/26](#)]

2025: Clifton “opposes high density housing.” “Restrict High-Density Housing: Clifton opposes high-density housing and aims to reinstate the city's pre-2022 comprehensive land use plan, which restricted further development of property for multifamily use. This initiative seeks to preserve neighborhood character, enhance safety, prevent schools from being overburdened, and city services from being exhausted by unchecked population growth.” [Fayette County News, [6/25/25](#)]

2025: Clifton pledged to “stop the annexation and rezoning crisis.” “Stop the Annexation and Rezoning Crisis: Land intended for revenue-positive corporate headquarters and light industry was rezoned to revenue-negative, dense residential zoning. Annexing for residential zoning has forced an extremely expensive expansion of all city services and increased taxes on all of us to cover the costs. It’s simple; go back to the former land plan and follow the zoning ordinances.” [Fayette County News, [6/25/25](#)]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Campaign website: “James Clifton emphatically rejects MARTA expansion into Fayette County.” “No MARTA or Public Transportation. James Clifton emphatically rejects MARTA expansion into Fayette County to prevent crime intrusion and safeguard local autonomy, while also addressing community issues and avoiding the push for urbanization. This stance echoes the county's longstanding resistance since the 1970s. Allowing public transportation in Fayette County imports urban problems and significantly increases property taxes for local taxpayers. Clifton’s fight against MARTA and public transportation aligns with suburban voters' desires during local elections for solutions that prioritize public safety and community preservation over regional entanglements that increase density and conflict with essential priorities like fiscal responsibility.” [Committee to Elect James Clifton, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

Campaign website: “James Clifton promises to fix traffic problems as Commissioner.” “Fix Traffic Problems Addressing community issues and voter frustrations with congestion in Fayette County, James Clifton promises to fix traffic problems as Commissioner. He aims to achieve this through cooperation between our cities and the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) to implement real, tangible, and long-lasting solutions. A primary concern for traffic improvement is the 54/74 intersection. GDOT is currently engaged in a \$20 million project for this intersection, yet the lead engineer indicates it will not significantly reduce traffic on Highway 54. James Clifton will focus on effective solutions that truly make a difference rather than relying on costly band-aids, ensuring that property taxes are utilized wisely and public safety is prioritized during local elections.” [Committee to Elect James Clifton, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

Campaign website: “James is actively opposing the Crosstown/TDK extension.” “No Crosstown/TDK Extension. James is actively opposing the Crosstown/TDK extension by uncovering and publicizing evidence of the city's annexation plans tied to the extension, emailing council members to demand transparency on road expansions, and circulating educational

primers on annexation laws to rally community opposition and pressure officials to halt the project before it advances. The proposed Crosstown/TDK extension in Peachtree City, Georgia, aimed at connecting to Coweta County and potentially facilitating large-scale developments like a data center, would exacerbate traffic congestion at the already hazardous intersection of Highway 74 and TDK/Crosstown, funneling heavy commercial vehicles and thousands of more cars past Oak Grove Elementary School and increasing risks to children, pedestrians, and local drivers through higher accident rates, noise pollution, and air quality degradation. This influx of traffic would ripple through Peachtree City's residential subdivisions, disrupting the community's golf cart-friendly, low-density lifestyle by straining infrastructure, diminishing property values in quiet neighborhoods, and overburdening local resources without commensurate benefits, as the extension would primarily serve Coweta County and external industrial interests rather than local needs.” [Committee to Elect James Clifton, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

PHILOSOPHY & IDEOLOGY

Campaign website: “James is ready to tackle our shared challenges: from stopping urbanization to ensuring our tax dollars are spent wisely.” “As a lifelong resident of Fayette County, James is running to give back to the county that’s given him everything. With deep roots in Fayette County, a family that inspires him daily, and a proven track record of conservative advocacy for protecting property rights, supporting the vulnerable, and leading with integrity, James is ready to tackle our shared challenges: from stopping urbanization to ensuring our tax dollars are spent wisely. He’s the neighbor who’s always been there, the advocate who’s fought for fairness, and the leader we need now. Vote for James Clifton—a true son of Fayette, building a brighter tomorrow for all of us.” [Committee to Elect James Clifton, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

2026: Clifton’s campaign tagline is “No Data Centers. No Apartments. No MARTA.” “Fighting for Fayette's Future. Preserve Our Quality of Life. NO DATA CENTERS. NO APARTMENTS. NO MARTA.” [Committee to Elect James Clifton, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

2026: Clifton claims he is “already delivering results” for Fayette County and is “the only candidate with the skill set, the conservative values, and the willingness to actually stand up for Fayette County families.” “5. How does your platform differentiate you from the other candidates? Clifton: What sets me apart is simple. I’m already delivering results. Together with other dedicated members of the community, I have helped stop a second Fayetteville data center, put the brakes on a massive apartment complex on Highway 54, and exposed Peachtree City’s plan to annex 1,500 acres for a possible data center. I am the only candidate with the skill set, the conservative values, and the willingness to actually stand up for Fayette County families. While others talk in general terms, my platform is clear – No data centers. No apartments. No MARTA. Other candidates may promise the same old things. I’m already working to preserve the Fayette County quality of life we love. That’s the difference.” [Fayette County Citizen, [4/23/26](#)]

2026: Clifton: “I’m not a career politician.” “4. Some of you have run for office before. Why shouldn’t voters just categorize you as serial candidates? Clifton: I’m not a career politician. I’m a Fayette County businessman and dad who was urged by the community to step up because our future was at risk. This race is about protecting what we love, not collecting titles or building a political resume. Voters can see the difference between the candidates. I’m in this to deliver

results on the issues that matter most right now – stopping data centers and apartments, cutting taxes, and preserving our neighborhoods. I’m running because I care deeply about Fayette’s future, and I have the backbone and real life experience to fight for it every single day on the Commission.” [Fayette County Citizen, [4/23/26](#)]

2026: Clifton: “Fayette families deserve a commissioner who puts our community first, not big developers or outside interests.” “If elected what are your top priorities? Clifton: If elected to the Fayette County Board of Commissioners, my top priorities are simple and straightforward: protect our quality of life, keep our taxes low, and make sure Fayette County stays the great place we all love to call home. That means stopping unwanted data centers, apartment complexes, and MARTA expansion that would change our suburban neighborhoods forever. I’ll fight for low-density zoning to preserve our green spaces, fix our traffic problems the right way, support our law enforcement, keep our schools strong, and bring real transparency to county government. Fayette families deserve a commissioner who puts our community first, not big developers or outside interests.” [Fayette County Citizen, [4/23/26](#)]

2016: Clifton: “I believe in limited government and intend to make that priority.” “‘I’m going to work hard for the people of this District and defend the Constitutional liberties with which we are endowed, especially those enumerated in the First Amendment. I will be a strong fiscal conservative and oppose tax hikes, while promoting a system of reduced spending. I believe in limited government and intend to make that a priority. These policies are what bring businesses to Georgia, which in turn create jobs and grow the economy. In addition, I’ll work to improve education in Georgia and ensure that we preserve the HOPE Scholarship. Last, the Republican party needs to work together to form a coalition of younger leaders to fight the radical socialist ideology that many millenials are gravitating towards, and that is precisely what I intend to do’ continued Clifton.” [Fayette County Citizen, [2/24/16](#)]

2014: Clifton described himself as a “strong fiscal conservative” who would “fight to oppose radical state and federal policies.” “‘I’m going to work hard to earn the support of the people of this district. If elected, I will be a strong fiscal conservative. As a small business owner, I understand the importance of frugal spending, which allows me to keep prices down for my clients. I will take the same philosophy to the State Senate to help reduce taxes, balance the budget and limit the size of government. I’ll support pro-jobs reforms to grow our local economy and attract high-paying jobs with a special focus on the recovery of the real estate sector. In addition, I’ll work to improve education in Georgia and ensure that we preserve the HOPE Scholarship. It is integral in maintaining our state and our country’s preeminence in education, and it is vital to future job growth. Lastly, I will stand strong for our conservative values and fight to oppose radical state and federal policies in Georgia,’ continued Clifton.” [GaPundit, [2/27/14](#)]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Campaign website: “James Clifton will collaborate with ICE to ensure the deportation of criminal illegal immigrants.” “No Sanctuary Policies. Fayette County faces pressing community issues that require the enforcement of strict immigration policies. James Clifton will collaborate with ICE to ensure the deportation of criminal illegal immigrants. He is committed to

preventing Fayette County from adopting sanctuary status, prioritizing public safety to safeguard residents and reduce the risk of future tragedies during the local elections. Additionally, addressing property taxes will be essential to support these initiatives.” [Committee to Elect James Clifton, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

Campaign website: “James Clifton pledges unwavering support for law enforcement.”

“Support Law Enforcement As a proponent of strong public safety, James Clifton pledges unwavering support for law enforcement, Sheriff Barry Babb, and our municipal police departments in Fayette County. From 2021 to 2023, Peachtree City’s violent crime rate increased by 50%. Those victims and their families now feel unsafe in our community, highlighting significant community issues. Criminals from surrounding counties continue to target our businesses and citizens. James commits to steadfast support of law enforcement and proactive policing to reduce the crime rate, stop criminals in their tracks, and ensure that property taxes are used effectively to enhance public safety.” [Committee to Elect James Clifton, [accessed 7/30/26](#)]

LINKS

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PUBLIC RECORDS

No findings identified.