



BEAUFORT COUNTY TREASURER

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BeaufortCountyTreasurer.com

October 6, 2023

An Open Letter to the Citizens of Beaufort County: You are needed more than ever.

I have always believed that no matter what was happening to me, you deserved my best as your Treasurer. Through fear, anxiety and [unimaginable circumstances](#), I delivered outstanding results because that is what you deserve from your elected officials.

Outstanding should not be the exception in government, it should be the rule.

In 2020, I and other women [filed lawsuits](#) against Beaufort County and ex-Auditor Jim Beckert for the harassment and hostile environment we endured. Despite this pending litigation, members of the County and I managed to work together productively until April of this year when mediation between the parties failed.

Since then, the County has retaliated, making a concerted effort to interfere with and impede my ability to continue serving you successfully. Administration prohibited staff from speaking or interacting with me and made threats to withdraw vital services from our team if I did not conform and fall in line with their now defunct administration. Most recently, Administration attempted to assert control over the Treasurer's Office, preventing our Office from hiring and compensating employees in a manner that is appropriate and necessary to retain them and serve you.

Since 2017, Beaufort County has had 7 different County Administrators. Throughout my years of service, never has an elected County Council shifted such a significant amount of power to the unelected bureaucrat they hired.

Members of Administration and County Council were aware of my concerns for months before the public comments I made at a meeting of Beaufort County Council on May 22, 2023 ([Video 1](#), [Video 2](#)). I emailed multiple times, called Councilmembers on more than one occasion, and sent [certified letters](#).

Numerous attempts were made and every possible avenue was taken to avoid the judicial process but my efforts were met with resistance at every turn. The County refused and neglected to address these concerns and continued encroaching on the checks and balances you have demanded.

When I joined the Treasurer's Office 12 years ago, it was in the aftermath of a [massive fraud](#), and in a [crisis of public trust](#) and [utter dysfunction](#). Within a year, I had restored our operations and internal controls, passed every test from the County's external auditors, and regained the public's trust in the Treasurer's Office.

The Beaufort County Treasurer's Office, professionals serving with innovation and enthusiasm.

As a result, you voted by a landslide in [2012](#) and then again in [2021](#), unequivocally deciding that your Treasurer's Office should maintain its autonomy from Administration. I am determined to defend your vote against an organization that shows a complete lack of ownership for the massive [failure of leadership](#) unfolding before us all.

On October 6, 2023, a [lawsuit](#) was filed against Beaufort County; the only remaining option if we are to preserve the separation of powers our State Constitution intended and your vote demanded.

I expect the County's retaliation to continue. I expect false and misleading accusations to be made about me, the Treasurer's Office, or others who are striving to bring sunlight to the darkness that has become Beaufort County's culture.

Although outranked and, possibly, outnumbered, there are still good people in Beaufort County Government trying to provide the kind of ethical and outstanding organization you deserve but they cannot do it without you. They need your voice.

When [whistleblowers are marginalized](#), you are needed. When victims are retaliated against, you are needed. When [unethical acts](#) are swept under the rug, you are needed. When egos create [dysfunction](#), you are needed. When government services are destructive, you are needed.

Without your engagement and voice, your involvement in public meetings, your letters to the editor, or your votes at the ballot box, Beaufort County will never become what we are capable of.

In unwavering service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Maria Walls". The signature is cursive and fluid.

Maria Walls, CPA
Beaufort County Treasurer