

## The Post-Searchlight

Bainbridge, GA • Georgia's First Inland Port

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### Martin leaving for St. Bernard Parish

By: CAROL P. HEARD

Not wanting to pass up the opportunity to help rebuild the economic well-being of one of the nation's hardest hit community by a natural disaster, Bainbridge-Decatur County Development Authority Executive Director Rebecca Martin said she is leaving for Louisiana.

Martin told authority board members Thursday she will resign effect July 17 to become the executive director of the St. Bernard Parish's Economic Development Foundation.

"It was an opportunity. I would regret not undertaking that challenge. I would always wonder about it, and that was the deciding factor," Martin said Friday. "It had no reason whatsoever about leaving Decatur County. We've had some successes in the last couple of years. Potential here is terrific and the momentum has begun for us. It was a hard decision."

In fact, she said she was showing a prospect the community Friday.

Martin is leaving the comforts of Decatur County to help rebuild a city that was nearly wiped off the map by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. One estimate said that less than half the 67,000 pre-storm population is back in the New Orleans suburb.



**Martin**

Flooding from Katrina came from almost every direction, which surveys showed virtually every building in St. Bernard was

damaged.

"There are some very unique set of challenges in St. Bernard and a unique set of opportunities," Martin said.

Another reason for going to St. Bernard is its place in history, she said.

"Katrina was the worst natural disaster to affect the United States. I had done some reading on St. Bernard, the community and the people there, and I've found that intriguing. St. Bernard also has a port. I like that aspect of it," Martin said.

Martin she her experience with complicated water issues will help her in St. Bernard Parish.

Prior to coming to Bainbridge, Martin was the director of TriRivers Waterway Development Association in Dothan, Ala., which was involved with the tri-state water wars that has been ongoing among Georgia, Florida and Alabama.

"I'm very comfortable here. I have great people to work with, all the way up the chain of the command," Martin said. She was emphatic that her decision had nothing to do with a recent board meeting where her time dealing with water issues was questioned.

Martin became the executive director of the authority in August 2004.

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During her tenure, she successfully recruited TRACO, a national window and door manufacturer, to the county; and more importantly, TRACO agreed to renovate and occupy the county's spec building, which had been an incomplete two-sided building for several years prior to their occupancy.

The authority has helped SIPS, Atlanta Structural Concrete and Seminole Biodiesel establish here.

"With any luck, we should be able to have the rail spur, if not completed, very near completed by July 17," Martin said.

However, she said she doesn't deserve all the credit for the authority's recent successes.

"Economic development is not generated out of one office. It is a collaborative effort, from start to finish," Martin said.

Decatur County Board of Commissioners Chairman Palmer Rich said Martin was "instrumental" in doing good things for the county. He said her work in recruiting industrial prospects would continue to bear positive results.

"She was very cooperative with the Industrial Development Authority," Rich said. "We wish her the best in her new endeavor."

Bainbridge City Manager Chris Hobby said Martin will be missed, especially in regard to the many contacts she had made with state officials and industrial project managers.

"I don't think there's any question that she accomplished more in her four years here than had been accomplished in some time," Hobby said. "That's due in no small part to her hard work and ability."

Martin was born in Toronto but raised in a small Canadian town named Brantford, Ontario. Martin is single and has a grown son, Nathan, and a cat.

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