

**CITY OF PINE LAKE**  
**MINUTES**  
**July 18, 2021**  
**9:00 AM**  
**Agnes Scott College Higher Education Hub**  
**342 South McDonough Street Decatur, GA**

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**Call to Order** at 9:00 AM by Mayor Melanie Hammet. Present – Mayor Melanie Hammet, Mayor pro tem Jean Bordeaux, and Council members Tracey Brantley, Brandy Hall, and Augusta Woods. Also, present was Acting City Administrator Peggy Merriss. Council member Brandy Beavers was not in attendance.

**Opening Discussion**

Mayor and Council members began the retreat with general discussion of several topics including:

What were the positive things that came out of 2020.

- Time to make decisions that were based on what we could choose to do instead of doing things out of habit.
- Making connections to family and friends and concentrating on existing relationships.
- Seeing examples of the goodness of others.
- Time to consider resets and focus on future.
- Realizing there were options to consumer culture.
- Time wasn't ruled by the calendar.
- Looked for opportunities to find joy instead of investing in dread.

What issues/concerns were made clearer in 2020.

- Ability to grind it out on the ground with a long game perspective.
  - Focus on transformation of hope for the future.
- Court issues and controversy response.
  - Researched issues to get data on actual Court activities.
  - Acted as a Council in addressing issues.
  - Spent intentional time.
- Held weekly Mayor/Council update meetings that included members of the public.
- Showed faith that was the ability to get to the other side.
- Concerned with the failure of people (on a state and national scale particularly) to come together to assure better outcomes for each other.

Why were Mayor/Council drawn to public service.

- Public service expresses love for the community.
  - Service is the rent we pay for being, It is the very purpose of life, and not something you do in your spare time. – Marian Wright Edelman.
  - Because I can.

- To help create, build and nurture community.
- To do something bigger than me,
- Responsibility for environment.
- Support creative community.

What was accomplished in 2020.

- Mayor/Council stayed intact and connected to each other and continued talking with the community.
- COVID response for the organization and the community, including weekly meetings.
- Public Safety report.
- Acknowledging the death of George Floyd, Brianna Taylor and Ahmad Aubrey in visible, intentional and obvious ways.
- Drainage improvements in the Rockbridge Road improvements project
- COVID outreach to Rockbridge businesses.
- Taking care of staff, including the unemployment program during lay-offs.
- 7000+ meals served to first responders.

What issues became clearer in 2020.

- The fragility of the budget.
- What services does Pine Lake need to continue with considerations for how the City and surrounding community are served considering the City's financial and staff resources.
- Management of the City's environmental resources is being impacted by climate change and regulatory requirements.
- That there is community cohesion, but it shows signs of fragility.
  - Because of its size, face to face communication has always been important and that communication hasn't been possible in the last 16 months.
  - New residents want to influence and participate in community decision making and they have not had a chance to understand the context of Pine Lake.
- Fear, concern and uncertainty regarding the COVID pandemic.

### **North Star Discussion**

The North Star provides a steadfast direction. It never changes and is a fixed constant that helps to reorient when you are off course. However, the North Star is not an objective – it is not a goal that you reach - it's the guide you use to get to your destination. Mayor and Council members began a discussion of the North Star concept.

What is most important to inform your decisions today, tomorrow and the next day to keep you moving forward.

- Ensuring the possibility of an intact world for future generations.
  - Will daughter have a world to live in.
  - Recognizing how micro level decisions can have impact on global challenges.
- Maintaining Pine Lake as a middle-class community.
  - Affordability of housing does not price people into oblivion.
  - Community remains a safe haven for unique residents.

- Assuring operational stability for the City.
  - Financial Sustainability for budget.
  - Affordability of taxes.
  - Equitable provision of services.
- Truth.
  - Using the best of what we know to make the decisions.
  - Be willing to dig deeper to determine what facts and conditions exist.
- Creativity – come up with models that can be replicated to scale and result in high impact.

How symbols can help define the North Star concept, including:

- Trees have many branches and go through seasons of growth and rest.
- Love requires making decisions even when it is hard.
- Smile to gain inner peace.
- Cross to represent higher power and faith (not a particular denomination or religion).
- Triangle to show equity for people.

### **City of Pine Lake Discussion.**

The City's tag line is "Arts' Natural Habitat." With that in mind, does it encompass all that the City currently is and what it needs to be in the future? Mayor and Council members held a discussion of the "why" of Pine Lake.

Why does Pine Lake exist as a City?

- The "why" has changed over time.
- Provides a mechanism to achieve a mission and implement goals.
  - Set own priorities.
  - Self-determination
- Without the City, community needs and desires would be diluted as part of the larger constituency of DeKalb County.
  - Would be subject to larger priorities of Dekalb County.
- Provides more specific control over activities such as zoning, development, use of the lake and stormwater.
- Control environmental issues.
- Ability to provide policing and increase the safety factor.
- Ability to support residents' self-identification with arts (creative) and environment identity.

What functions does the City provide that would be missed if they went away? (no rank order was done, listed as items were mentioned.)

- Police.
- Landscaping and general maintenance of the community.
  - Streetsweeping
- Being able to contact a City official and get a response quickly.
  - Being able to call or email and have someone answer the phone or respond to an email.
- Development Enforcement.

- City Council
  - Direct access to local government officials.
  - Hyper local communication from Mayor/Council
- Control over budget and finances.
  - Addressing tangible needs such as items being in disrepair
  - Control over tax rates
- Community amenities
  - Lake
  - Trail system
  - Use of Club House and Beach House
- Website

What functions does the City provide that would not be missed if they went away? (no rank order was done, listed as items were mentioned.)

- Internal operating functions (i.e., personnel, finance, insurance).
- Rentals for non-residential users.
- A change in the number of Council members.
- Economic development – specifically if the business district was no longer in the City.

Note: Municipal Court was mentioned as both a function that would be, and would not be, missed if it went away.

### **North Star Principles for Decision Making Discussion.**

Mayor and Council members held a discussion of what central principles should be considered when making a big decision or facing a big challenge to remain true to the vision as moving forward for the long-term good of the community. They agreed on the overarching approach and the eight principles listed below and identified what they meant and how they expressed themselves in the City.

From Ridge to Rockbridge, these are our principles (North Stars):

- Creative
  - Solution-oriented
    - Doing more with less
    - Committed to problem-solving
  - Arts
  - Programming
    - Policy models that are replicable
  - People
    - MAP, SEED, Special Events
- Participatory
  - Volunteerism
    - MAP/SEED/PLAIN/ROKS
  - Outside Partnerships
    - PRISM
    - DeKalb County Initiatives

- Learning Opportunities
  - Town Halls for adults, kids and tots
  - Life Court being developed
- Events
- Accessible
  - Welcoming City
    - Pancake breakfast
  - Lake and Beach
  - Free open parking
  - Events
  - Town Halls
  - Responsive government officials
  - Transparency
- Communicative
  - Transparency in actions
  - Website
  - Pine lake News brief
  - Mayor's Letters
- Protective of our Habitat
  - Development Standards
    - Zoning
    - Tree Protection
    - Building codes and ordinances
  - Stormwater Utility
  - Wetlands and other natural habitats
  - Poplar Park
- Safety
  - Community Policing
    - SALT
    - Traffic studies
    - Beach Monitor
  - Communication
  - Eyes on the street
- Future focused
  - Cultivating leadership opportunities
  - Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Plan Development
  - Budget with defined initiatives
  - Upgrading of Rockbridge Road
  - Poplar Park
- Fiscally responsible
  - Budget is balanced and managed

- Strategic Planning
  - Funding for DAM repairs and then on-going maintenance
  - Funding to assure living wage for staff
- Partnerships and Relationships
- ARPA funding opportunities
- Equitable
  - Internal programs and policies
  - Welcoming City
    - Community Policing
  - Recognize residents consist of homeowners and renters
  - Recognize surrounding community
  - Service delivery for all
    - Town Halls (adult, kids and tots)
    - SALT
    - Court Administration

### **Next Steps**

Mayor and Council members agreed to convene on September 19, 2021 from 9am – 4pm to continue the discussion and identify the decisions, challenges and programs/projects that will face Pine Lake in the next 6-12 months and then apply North Star principles to remain true to the vision of moving forward for the long-term good of the community.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 4:00pm.

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