



August 21st, 2020

Dear City,

All across our country people are talking. Communities and cities and political parties and neighborhoods are in deep conversation about inclusion, diversity, and systemic racism while simultaneously figuring out *how* to talk about inclusion, diversity, and systemic racism. Our City is no different. We are having these conversations. We have been having these conversations. We will continue to have these conversations. Just as important, we are charting our call to action.

Many neighbors have talked to me about their journey as individuals, their change-efforts at their jobs, and their continued and often painful work toward equity. These conversations are important. The informed actions we take and the well-considered work we do is critical.

In the City of Pine Lake our work—both as elected leaders and as a whole community— continues. And there will always be work. To that end, Councilperson Tracey Brantley and I are currently working on two upcoming community meetings: a ZOOM Town Hall and a separate facilitated Town Hall on race for residents interested in attending; the dates of each TBA.

Here is some of the work done in the past few years:

In November of 2016 we passed the Safe Harbor Resolution, stating that “*the City Council affirms that no individual should be discriminated against by another individual or body based upon their individual sex, race, color, disability, national origin, religion, beliefs, sexual orientation or gender identity.*” I wrote this resolution, passed unanimously, as a principled text for our leadership and our city to reference.

In the spring of last year our council and I sought out and attended a weekend training on racism held by The People’s Institute (<https://www.pisab.org>). We wanted to give ourselves, as leaders, a shared vocabulary to help detect unconscious bias in our work as elected officials. Jean Bordeaux, Brandy Hall, Augusta Woods, Megan Pulsts (since retired from council) and I took the training together. The lessons we learned during that weekend still inform how we work to move the City forward.

And we continue on. The work of inclusion and equity in all its forms is the infrastructure of community.

Five years ago we began work on the development of our Rockbridge corridor. This has continued, to date, with the goal of bringing together the residential and commercial identities of our City. Progress has been slow, interrupted by construction and COVID, but the relocation of City Hall marked a significant move forward as we seek ways to further support our long-term, independent businesses on Rockbridge Road.

When we consider our city and the various forms inclusion can take, I was reminded of our Kids Town Halls when I heard the Mayor of LaGrange talk about their efforts to get young people involved. I had no comment when I listened to Mayor Davis bemoan the fact that no women were running for local office in Augusta. I took notice that nobody mentioned LGBTQ leadership, period—all of this during a recent GPB Mayor’s Town Hall on Equity and Inclusion.

As public servants, we keep learning and researching, expanding our understanding through the experience and knowledge of the women we’ve entrusted to handle public safety and justice in our City: Chief Green and Judge Wiggins. In January we began the process of reviewing our probation operations to better analyze each part of our system—from ticketing to final disposition. We’ve asked Judge Wiggins

(who also serves as city attorney for the City of Riverdale and as municipal Judge for the City of Stone Mountain) to hold a ZOOM class for elected officials on the workings of municipal courts in Georgia. Judge Wiggins' ZOOM class is open to the public and will be held on Monday, August 31 from 1-3pm. We will post the address on the City website once it becomes available.

This is not a letter heralding solutions or touting past accomplishments. This is a letter about everyone, working together from an informed place. That's a complex process—beyond description. It requires time, clarity of purpose, immense stamina, and compassion. To manage these complexities, we have to commit to tough conversations and, equally, to the resulting work.

In these times, we all require compassion— freely given, to others as well as ourselves.

Especially now.

Your Mayor,

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Melanie Hammet

Mayor, City Of Pine Lake GA

"Arts' Natural Habitat"

Pine Lake City Council Meetings - Zoom – second and last Tuesday at 7:00 PM

Conference line: 1 (929) 205 6099

Meeting ID: 813 0156 9377

PL COVID-19 webpage: <https://www.pinelakega.net/Covid19Updates.aspx>

Georgia COVID-19 hotline: 1-844-442-2681.

<https://www.dekalbhealth.net/covid-19dekalb/>

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