



“You know, we-- we're in a bad position. And we're not going to get out of this overnight. But everybody is in our position. So let's embrace this space. Let's work on the trust that we've built up all of these years. Let's go out and make stuff happen that we want to see happen, we have to move very fast, but we have to be even more process-oriented and more deliberate. And that's how you master a moment of chaos. And that is also the strength of jazz.”

—Wynton Marsalis April, 2020 “60 Minutes” interview

*At 7pm on January 6, Judge L’Erin Barnes Wiggins called the swearing-in ceremony of 2020 to order. Addressing the packed courtroom, the Judge began with an explanation of the significance of the oath of office. This was preamble to administering that same oath to first-time city council members Tracey Brantley and Brandy Beavers. I came next, raising my right hand as part of the ritual and entering my second term as Mayor. Witnessed by family, friends and neighbors, the three of us made our commitment to the City of Pine Lake that night.*

*It was the beginning of the next four years serving as public servants. Together with Jean Bordeaux, Augusta Woods, and Brandy Hall we began 2020.*

*Barely two months later, on March 3rd, the COVID-19 global pandemic reached Georgia. Fulton County flagged two cases, and by March 17th Governor Kemp closed public schools. Shutdown and sheltering in place began, even as we all scrambled to understand what was happening. As Dekalb CEO Michael Thurman said at the time: “There is no playbook.”*

*In Pine Lake we closed public spaces, public buildings, and public facilities. By the end of that first month our leadership had pivoted to weekly ZOOM council meetings, ensuring regular and frequent availability. We were all stunned as the situation rapidly evolved and information emerged, sometimes contrary to the news from even a day prior. I began a regular practice of writing letters to the community and attended weekly statewide conference calls for public health updates.*

This is the remarkable context for where we’ve been; the weeks and months where we struggled to become “*masters of chaos.*” As a musician I find meaning in the words of Wynton Marsalis. We continue to “*work on the trust that we've built up all of these years.*” So here we are, at the start of 2021: another chapter and year in our City’s ongoing commitment to resilience, relationships, and renewal.

The State of the City for 2021 is now posted on the website.

—Mayor Melanie Hammet



## City of Pine Lake

### 2020-2021: challenges and opportunities

#### COVID

On the Feb. 2, 2021 COVID Mayor’s call Dr. Carlos Del Rio reminded all of us—even in this current year of the pandemic— where we still all are in the understanding of this virus: “We are building the plane as we fly it.”

Nearly a year later Pine Lake has had approximately 35 cases. We continue policies focused on public health and Chief Green has continued as our Chief of Police—our director of public safety. Despite the cancellations and closures much has happened and progress continues. This years’ review of the City both highlights many events of the last year and projects moving forward.



#### ***Summer Beach and Lake Management:***

Due to COVID-19 pandemic safety protocols, the beach and lake were closed. Reopening will be a consideration of public health and safety, dependent on the state of the pandemic, vaccination rates and management capacities in order to provide a welcoming and sociable experience but also insure safe and monitored usage.



## **ARTS**

As always, PL residents found ways to create opportunities for artistic outlets in 2020. Whether it be a uniquely located choir, community painted stencils and adopted planters, or an artists' pop-up with room for commerce and COVID safety, or an impromptu string duet sparks of imagination throughout the year.

### **Socially-distanced tennis court concert**



### **Parking planters and turtle stencils**



### **Artists' Market**



### **Christmas concert with Merry Rose**



## **BUDGET and FINANCE**

### ***Brief Summary:***

In 2020, the City had a revenue shortfall of \$261K, which was addressed by reducing expenses by \$135K. We used \$40K from prior years' surplus funds and \$85K in COVID relief funds.

To balance the 2021 budget, we have reduced expenses in the budget and we expect to use \$125K of prior year surplus funds, unless we receive additional COVID relief in the coming year.

### ***COVID 2021 Budget Implications:***

The change in federal leadership *may* bring changes in federal budget support to local governments. We will remain prepared to respond to any future funding possibilities and continue to classify and retain documentation of COVID-19 related expenditures.

## **BUSINESS CORRIDOR**

In April 2020 the City created a business support team to assist Rockbridge business owners. The team worked to keep businesses updated on grants and financial assistance as they became available and provided online help.

***ROKS (Rockbridge Opportunity Kick Start):*** Created in 2019, this commercial development group started with a statement envisioning the Rockbridge Road corridor as a safe and thriving commercial area reflecting Pine Lake's passion for the environment and the arts while celebrating the tremendous diversity in and around Pine Lake. ROKS has taken on business support in 2021 as the area navigates the dual challenges of COVID-19 and Rockbridge construction.



## COMMUNITY



***Conversations on Race:*** As a continuation of the policies and work of city leadership and the community this series was originally scheduled for November 2020. It was necessarily postponed for a more optimal participation time. We are currently looking to reschedule these facilitated conversations in late winter/early spring of 2021.

***Food Pantry:*** organized and operated by more than 25 neighborhood volunteers, the pantry began delivering kits on 3/31/20. Each kit provides a week of groceries; to date 93 kits have been delivered. The pantry is funded by donations and remains open.



***Food Truck:*** on 3/30/20 Pine Lake resident Stephanie Morales opened her craft services trailer in the PD parking lot and begin "Feeding The Front Lines." Over the next two months more than 7000 lunches were served to Dekalb first responders, funded by donations.



## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

***Refresh and Update:*** With the Atlanta Regional Commission serving as consultant, a steering committee has been appointed to oversee the completion of this regular update: Jean Bordeaux, Augusta Woods, David Burt, Megan Pulsts, and Tom Ramsey will help direct this project to completion. Timeline: February, 2021 – October, 2021.

## **COURT**

### **Report on Public Safety and Judicial Practices**

In response to council and community concern for social justice, the Mayor and Council began studying the impact that traffic citations given by the Pine Lake Police and adjudicated in the Pine Lake Municipal Court have on the surrounding community. The resulting report was completed in early September 2020. The high level summary was added in mid-October to improve accessibility. The summary continues to be reviewed and updated.

### **Municipal Court 101**

On August 31, 2020 Judge Wiggins held a ZOOM class for council, open to the public. “Municipal Court 101” was an opportunity for both elected officials and the community to gain a deeper understanding of the basic workings of municipal traffic court.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

***SEED***-began 2020 by sponsoring a February talk given by the Department of Natural Resources about co-existing with urban wildlife. SEED also created a unique public distribution of the book *The Hidden Life of Trees*—by hiding copies in trees around Pine Lake.



***Trees Planted:*** Through a grant from ALFI the City received a dozen fruit trees which were planted behind the Public Works building in March 2020. Many thanks to the Hall-Pincus family.

Volunteers in the community have adopted individual trees and are watering and monitoring the trees for issues. Many thanks to the tree-brigade.



***Berm and wetlands repair:*** In July of 2020 Councilpersons Hall, Woods and I met with city engineer Rich Eldridge and began consultations regarding the repairs to the back berm and Eastern wetlands. On February 9th, 2021 City Council approved phase 1 of a three-phase approach to address the project provided by Clark, Patterson and Lee.

***FoodWell Grant:*** We began 2020 with a FoodWell grant to design and plant a teaching garden adjacent to the lake on the gazebo side of the Beach House. Due to the pandemic we asked for a postponement and will begin work in 2021.

## **ROCKBRIDGE ROAD CONSTRUCTION**

The Rockbridge Road widening project, scheduled to be completed in the fall of this year, actually began more than a decade ago through the hard work of the Zarus administration and has finally come to fruition. Once finished, it will include a center turn lane to alleviate the congestion created by the more than 20,000 cars that transit this section daily. It will also add sidewalks to the north side of the street. This expansion includes a number of maneuvers and changes to the road anatomy itself.



### **1/ Relocation of power and transmission poles.**

*This photo shows both the pole and the island next to the Shell station that will be removed. It illustrates both the new width of Rockbridge and the necessity of relocating poles and transmission lines.*



### **2/ Installation of stormwater runoff capture system.**

*Shown here are 2 of the 19 “drop inlets” that connect with underground pipes to direct water flow down Rockbridge from Allgood east toward its bioremediation target. This is further enhanced by a 2° repaving of the road away from the downhill residential area. This change in angle shifts water flow toward the north side of Rockbridge.*



### **3/ Bioremediation.**

*Working with Commissioner Bradshaw, Councilperson Hall and I were able to have the overgrown bioretention area next to Dean’s Market cleared, returning it to operation. This will collect and percolate runoff collected from the 19 inlets along the north side of Rockbridge.*

## **STAFFING**

### **Report from acting Administrator Peggy Merris**

The staff at the City are talented people who are competent, capable and caring. In the past year they have been flexible in meeting challenge after challenge. With the retirement of City Administrator Valerie Caldwell, there was an opportunity to look at the talents and capacity of our staff. In 2021 Police Chief Green will be expanding her role in making community connections and has taken on additional responsibilities in leading and managing the development function, including working with our private sector contract staff who perform our permitting and inspection services. Chief Green will be working with Missye Varner who is now the Administrative Coordinator. Missye's responsibilities will include expanded roles in facilitating external functions such as applying for permits and business licenses and for internal functions including finance, personnel, the website and special projects. These changes are designed to allow the City Administrator more time to work on the community projects and goals established by the Mayor and Council as well responsibilities for organization and community-wide policies, systems and strategies.

### **SPLOST (Special Projects Local Option Sales Tax) Projects:**

Among the several transportation projects the City of Pine Lake listed in our SPLOST was the assessment and repair of Oak Drive. To that end, The City's contracted engineering firm, Clark, Patterson, Lee provided a proposal for assessment, construction plans and cost estimates, oversee bidding and award of construction contract and serve as project manager that was approved by City Council on February 9, 2021. Funding be a combination of SPLOST and LMIG funds have been accumulated to cover costs and the project is included in the 2021 budget.





