



EDITORIAL

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MAYOR'S MONTHLY MINUTES FOR MARCH 2018 "OPERATION QUALITY OF LIFE: Keeping Douglas Shining Brightly"

The phrase, "Always Shining Bright", continues to provide City of Douglas Officials with an unmeasurable commitment to our citizens and business community as we strive for excellence. The Mayor's Monthly Minutes is a little lengthy this month, but I could not wait to share the great news about all the exciting projects happening in our great City.

The City of Douglas prides itself as being a pro-active and forward-thinking community. Over the past 40 to 50 years, our City's buildings and facilities have been very functional; however, we are at a point in time to reevaluate the functionality of our facilities and delivery of city services. Commissioner Taylor, Commissioner Pearson, Commissioner McNeill, Commissioner Moore, Commissioner Gowen, Mayor Pro Tem Durham, and I are determined to meet and exceed the expectations of our constituents to keep the City of Douglas "Always Shining Bright." I am humbled and grateful to serve with this commission. In over two years, the Commission has worked together and we've had less than ten votes that were not unanimous; therefore, the overwhelming majority of our votes have been unanimous. Why is a functional government important? The Mayor's Monthly Minutes reflect the effects of a functional government, a focused city manager, and a dedicated staff

with an unwavering commitment to improve the quality of life for every citizen. I will be discussing numerous initiatives to improve our facilities, service deliveries, and improving the quality of life of the citizens of Douglas.

Over the next few months, the City of Douglas will increase our focus on the visual appearance of the City. In the past, an old car in a yard was over looked by the City; an overgrown and unkept vacant lot was over looked by the City; an abandoned or fire damaged building was over looked by the City. In order to stay true to our citizens and our commitment to a city that is "Always Shining Bright", the City can no longer over look junk cars, abandoned buildings, fire damaged buildings, or unkept vacant lots. Our quality of life projects begin with one very simple question; how does the City of Douglas look to our citizens, visitors, and business community?

When someone enters our city, we don't want their first visual impression to be old junk cars, litter, or dilapidated buildings. Our quality of life initiative began over two years ago and focused on cleaning up around personal and business properties coupled with neighborhood initiatives to clean up our City. This clean-up initiative has faced numerous challenges. The City Marshal's Office and Douglas Police Department have been enforcing penalties such as fines for citizens who violate the quality of life code ordinances. These ordinances cover a range of violations such as litter, overgrowth of grass, inoperable cars, and dilapidated structures. The role of the City Marshal's office is to take legal action against property owners who have dilapidated property or have an overgrowth of weeds. We want our citizens to be proactive and take a vested interest to keep Douglas clean, thus avoiding potential ordinance violations and fines. I am confident the citizens of Douglas want our city to be beautiful and clean and will support the City's initiative to clean up our City.

The City is committed to a clean city. The City has two programs to assist with the "Clean up the City" initiative, when we need to clean out the backyard, side of the house, and garage. For some time now, the City has been offering residential "Junk Drop Off" days. Once a month, citizens have the opportunity to bring large junk items to the "Junk Drop Off"

site, which is the City Pole Yard, and have the junk items disposed of properly without any charge. The City also offers a program of curbside disposal for brown and white goods. What are brown and white goods? Brown goods are light electronic consumer durables such as TVs, radios, digital media players, and computers. White goods are air conditioners, refrigerators, and stoves. Citizens may call Public Works (389-3450) and schedule pick up, once a week, of brown and white goods that are located at the curbside of property. Several years ago, the City launched the "See Something, Say Something" campaign. This is a way for citizens to not only anonymously report crime tips, but to also report pot holes, unsightly property, and hazards by calling 3-1-1 or 384-3302.

In the upcoming months, I will be asking the Commission to grant myself and Commissioner McNeill the opportunity to meet with the owners of rental property within the City of Douglas. Unkept yards, junk cars, high utility bills, electric disconnects, and crime rates are normally highest in rental property communities. The number one priority of the City of Douglas is public safety. We must decide how to address the concerns and problematic situations presented by the rental property communities. Before crafting or suggesting legislation to address the aforementioned concerns, Commissioner McNeill and I will have a conversation to express our concerns and listen to the concerns of the rental property owners. Hopefully, we will determine ways to address the issues and craft an ordinance to govern rental properties.

The City is accountable and committed to our role in keeping Douglas clean and litter free. Public works employees are working together with G.D.O.T., to make site improvements throughout the City by mowing and weed-eating grass, cleaning out ditches, and repairing storm water structures. We offer opportunities for civic and service groups to be more involved in improving quality of life. In April, we will have the MLK, Jr. Service Project and the Great American Cleanup to help keep Douglas areas clean and pleasing to the eyes. The MLK, Jr. Service Project was originally scheduled for January but was

cancelled due to inclement weather. We need more volunteers to assist. If you are interested in more details and would like to participate, please call 393-4796.

Our government has made major investments to improve the appearance, functionality, and ease of access to our public facilities. The city has eight projects that are scheduled to be constructed in phases: construction of the Public Utilities building, relocation of purchasing building and pole yard, relocation of the public works building, and public works & public utilities road paving at the Municipal Services Complex. City Hall will soon undergo renovations and add-ons. The Recreation Department will have three projects taking place – construction of the Sports Complex, construction of the Miracle Field, and City pool improvements. These projects are our way to improve our day-to-day operations and add value to the quality of life of our citizens while also assuming one of the largest building projects our city has ever undertaken.

Our plans are to phase in \$13.6 million in capital improvement projects. One of the new projects, the City of Douglas Municipal Services Complex, will house several departments that are currently located at different locations throughout the city. Service departments that will be re-located to the complex include vehicle maintenance, public works, parks maintenance, building maintenance, public utilities, and the purchasing warehouse. Providing facilities and grounds that are large enough to house all these departments will create a facility which will provide greater centralized operations and more efficiency for these departments. Our vehicle maintenance department has already moved to the facility.

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efficiency for these departments. The City is relocating the heavy equipment and mounds of material by City Hall to the Municipal Complex. Our vehicle maintenance department has already moved to the facility.

A second project will involve modern renovations to City Hall, which will become the Douglas Municipal Center. City Hall was originally constructed in 1959 and renovated in 1979. In 1959 and 1979, the demands for electrical, computer, and handicap accessible needs were not as great as what they are today. We will transition from a City Hall to the City Center concept. To better serve citizens and our community, the improvements that will be made to City Hall will improve electrical needs, technology needs, customer flow, and allow the new Douglas Municipal Center to offer citizens a "one stop" service location for residential and business customers. Features of the Douglas Municipal Center will include a new entrance that will face Madison Avenue and a plaza for citizens and visitors to enjoy.

As Mayor, if it's one thing that truly excites me, it is the investment we make into developing programs for our youth. Our children are the greatest ambassadors for the City of Douglas and Coffee County. I would like to personally congratulate the Coffee High Trojan football, basketball, and wrestling teams, Citizens Christian Academy's basketball teams, Recreation Department Youth teams and numerous other youth programs for their great success. The Coffee High Navy JROTC program continues to be a beacon of hope and inspiration for the future of the City of Douglas and Coffee County. Of course, our Parks and Recreation Department has hundreds and hundreds of youth participating in every sport. My heart is always filled with excitement when I see a child in a Parks and Recreation uniform. I am grateful to our young adults representing our community.

Children are our future, and when given the opportunity, we should improve their quality of life in Douglas and Coffee County. It is time to stop saying "our children are our future", as a slogan – our slogan should now be "committed to our children, by investing in our children". A measure of importance is determined by the amount of time and resources you are willing to commit to an issue. I truly believe the Sport Complex will be the

signature project. Our citizens overwhelmingly voted for the S.P.L.O.S.T. The City and County are working hand in hand to design the Sports Complex. The proposed sports complex will be funded through S.P.L.O.S.T. funds and will consist of several construction phases. The City and County are committed to our children and that's why we have agreed to fund the Sports Complex as a joint venture. Our children need to stay active and become productive members of the community. At the present time, parents who have multiple children, playing multiple sports, are hustling back and forth between fields at Municipal Park, Unity Park, and Davis Wade Park. We determined a need for a sports complex for youth and adults of Douglas and Coffee County, one that would offer parents a chance to have all their children located within one area.

In the first phase of the Sports Complex construction, we look to build a road to connect access to the facilities located in the park. More additions to the first phase of this project, will include a round-a-bout and three fields for youth flag and tackle football. These additions will adjoin with Coffee High School athletic facilities which are already in place. Phase two of the Sports Complex project will consist of a redesign/development of a new entrance to the complex. A parking lot will be established that will be shared jointly by Parks and Recreation and the high school. The Greenway Trail, that was once railroad tracks, will be extended to the Sports Complex as a walking and running trail to improve the health of our citizens.

Renovations at one of Douglas' oldest parks, Davis-Wade Park, will be another phase of improvements. I am excited about this phase of improvements since it will include the construction of the Miracle Field. We need to provide recreational facilities for all our children including our special needs children with disabilities. These kids need somewhere to play sports safely and feel engaged as citizens of this community. The Miracle Field will be a baseball field and playground for special needs children and adults in the Douglas community and surrounding communities.

Our swimming pool will be updated to a more modern facility. We will also improve the pool area by tearing down the current pool building/constructing a new pool building, renovating and improving our pool, and expanding the splash pad to better support our swim team and swim customers.

It is our responsibility as leaders of our city to look for ways to cut costs while improving our city. With these projects, the city will be able to fund all these projects with no debt. We will use fund balances, S.P.L.O.S.T. funds, and county/school board contributions. Ultimately, we all have a part to play in keeping our community safe, open for business, and beautified in such a way that we attract visitors and appeal to those passing through. Let's do our part in keeping our community safe and shining bright by improving quality of life now. Join me, as well as other leaders and citizens in our community, as we support clean up initiatives and special projects that will pave Douglas' way into the future for generations that will come after us. Hopefully, those later generations will applaud our efforts and follow in our footsteps to continue to improve life in Douglas. "Always Shining Bright" is not only a phrase, it is a commitment to our citizens, children, business community, and future citizens.