



MAYOR'S MONTHLY EDITORIAL

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MAYOR'S MONTHLY MINUTES – OCTOBER 2018 "P.O.T.S. AND P.A.N.S."

Thinking outside of the box is sometimes the key to moving a city forward. I often have to look outside of my zone to come up with new ideas and solutions to help Douglas remain a progressive city – a city that everyone should be proud of. I know recently there has been some tension in our city meetings, but, I believe that is due to the fact that no one is always going to agree on the same thing. I may like it, another commissioner may love it, while another commissioner may feel strongly against it...but in the end, it is up to us to discuss, educate ourselves, and come up with a solution that will benefit all. Where am I heading with this? I'll tell you...P.O.T.S. and P.A.N.S.! As the Mayor of the great city of Douglas, I know we have to work together to be a **P**art **O**f **T**he **S**olution and whether you agree or not, **P**eople **A**re **N**ecessary for **S**olutions! Everyone should always want to be a part of the solution.

I want to start this month's minutes with an update on the projects that we have been working this year. We are about to begin construction on projects like this city has never seen before! Four projects – completion of the City Municipal Services facility, 1st phase of the Sports Complex, construction of the Miracle Field along with pool improvements, and construction of the Douglas Municipal Center will begin in December 2018 or early January 2019. Prior to the Douglas Municipal Center project, you will see all city offices move out of City Hall and in other areas of Douglas. It may be a little inconvenient, however, I ask that you please be patient with our progress as we complete these projects.

One thing I failed to mention last month when I discussed the utility rates, we have eliminated summer and winter electric rates – electric customers now have a single rate throughout the year. I know you have read about the new Utility Hawk program. If you are not signed up, get signed up! This program is fantastic – it allows you to monitor your water, gas, and electric usage. Our commercial customers have not been able to take full advantage of the program, however, that is about to change! The program had some glitches with commercial estimated billing, but, those issues are now resolved and in the very near future, commercial customers should be able to take complete advantage of UtilityHawk. "My Usage" we will be rolling out soon and it will allow customers to "pay as you go".

If you did not make it to the South Georgia BBQ & Outdoor Festival – you missed a great chance to meet people outside of our community who think Douglas is one of the best places in Georgia. I already knew that, but, to hear people brag about how nice we are, how nice we treat people and how we go out of the way to accommodate visitors, it makes me even more proud to be the Mayor Douglas. And our city employees really did a great job-everyone involved made sure that visitors experienced Douglas at its best!

There is nothing more that I love than a clean city! As a community, we have to work to get these dilapidated structures, junk cars, and overgrown lots under control.

Starting in October and running through December 2018, the City will offer TWO junk drop off days for citizens to take advantage of free disposal of non-hazardous items, large household items, mattresses, and more! Citizens can call the Public Works Department (912-389-3450) and schedule curbside pickup of large items. Landlords and construction teams should use the county landfill – not our curbside for their debris! If you have participated in Junk Drop Off day, continue to cleanup around our homes and businesses. I want you to take FULL advantage and participate each time it is offered. The dates for the remainder of the year will be October 6, October 20, November 3, November 17, December 1, and December 15, 2018, from 8:30am – 12noon, at the City Pole Yard. This is FREE to Douglas citizens and a fantastic initiative to show that we want to keep our neighborhoods “always shining bright”!

In the upcoming months, citizens can expect to see our Code Enforcement division out patrolling and enforcing more of our local ordinances. I want to encourage citizens to read up on our ordinances and to stay refreshed with what is allowed and not allowed inside the city limits. We have to enforce these ordinances and knowing key ordinances can help save you from unwanted penalties, fines, and court costs.

Code Enforcement is working on updating the Occupational Tax Certificate (business license.) Georgia law requires the City of Douglas to verify and receive documentation that the businesses have the appropriate state licenses for conducting their business. This requires staff to audit the occupational tax certificate database with in-house utility records and with the State of Georgia Dept. of Revenue.

Code Enforcement Office is also working with the Fire Department to ensure the correct occupancy and limit is posted within each business. Looking into 2019, churches will be required to register with the Code Enforcement office at no cost to the church. Proper inspections of churches will help ensure the safety of church members.

I’ve had some questions about nuisance abatement cases. Currently, there are fifteen open code enforcement abatement cases. Two additional abatement cases have went to court and the city is in the process to demolish the structures.

Let’s all “Team Up, To Clean Up Douglas!” and keep Douglas Shining Brightly!

I like to see our employees give back to the community. On October 6, 2018, at 10am, our firemen will be participating in a “Firefighters Fun Walk” to raise funds for the Boys and Girls Club. These firemen will be in full turnout gear that weighs about 65lbs, and marching on South Peterson Avenue from Fire Station 1 (located on Gordon Street) to Fire Station 3 (located beside Williams Institutional Foods. Come out and support our firemen as they walk for a great cause!

October is a month full of special days that our customers should participate in at City Hall. Every Friday is Customer Appreciation Day and customers can stop by and enjoy popcorn and water. Customers can also register for a chance to win \$100 discount on their utility bill, smoke alarms, and fire extinguishers. Fire Prevention Week is October 7-13, 2018 and Douglas Fire Department will be out strong educating our children and promoting the theme this year – “Look, Listen, Learn: Be Aware Fire Can Happen Anywhere.” This is a very important lesson to teach kids – fire can happen anywhere, anytime, and to anyone. Our Natural Gas Department is offering citizens the opportunity to have their pilot light lit at no cost – that saves natural gas customers \$10.00! And let’s not leave out our Electric Department and all they do for our community to keep the lights on! Public Power Week is October 7-13, 2018, and the Electric Department will show its gratitude to its employees.

I cannot say enough about the members of the Mayor’s Youth Council. We had four members recognized by their peers at the Coffee High School Homecoming Game. Asia Denning (MYC Jr. Mayor), Avery Hurst (MYC Jr. Finance Officer) and Ziannia Odom (MYC Ward 4 Jr. Commissioner) were on the Coffee High School homecoming court and Ms. Odom was crowned Homecoming Queen! Irian Tatum (MYC Jr. City Attorney) was recognized as a senior on the football team! We have an amazing council and I am looking forward to seeing these young people go far in life.

I will close this month by saying that I want to see “**F.U.N.**” (Future Understanding is Necessary) represent our community. I want each citizen to be able to see past differences and come to an agreeable conclusion when there is discussion about our city or new ideas. Be positive when you see opportunities that are offered to citizens. How our city looks and appears to business prospects and visitors passing through, can have an effect on Douglas’ future. We have to be futuristic in our thinking when it is about our community’s needs and concerns – it is up to us to keep Douglas Always Shining Bright.