



December 10, 2015

Our City Council has in years past allowed nonprofit community spirited organizations (the Chapel and homeowner associations) to put **signs** within our rights-of-way for a brief notice of upcoming meetings. However, our Sign Ordinance was changed in 2012 to eliminate any content-based regulations and prohibit private signs on public property. Only *official signs*, such as traffic signs, are allowed in the street rights-of-way. The US Supreme Court has recently ruled, in the case of Reed versus City of Gilbert, reinforcing the position disallowing any discrimination based on the content of signs. This case involved a city doing exactly what we had done - trying to support nonprofit community oriented activities; and the court voted unanimously 9 to 0 against it. I am advised by our city attorney that the Supreme Court almost never votes 9 to 0 on anything; and that we really need to get with the program. Accordingly, our City Marshall is now more diligently enforcing our ordinance against private signs in the city rights-of-way. The Chapel and HOAs can put small signs off the right-of-way on residential properties if they are at least 10 feet back from the edge of the pavement, as long as the property owner gives their permission. Signs on commercial properties have more restrictions and may require sign permits.

Thanks to all those who contributed to **our fall food drive** for Norcross Co-operative Ministry last month and especially to Julie Huntington and her daughter Anna for coordinating the collection in our city. Our city gathered 213 bags of food and \$300 for the Ministry to buy other items that they need the most for their shelves. People are still bringing food to my office at City Hall which I'm taking to the Co-op as it comes in. They really need coats and blankets now so you can bring those as well if you have any you're not using. I know that the BLOSOMS have done a great job collecting similar necessities for our local elementary school which gets things to kids in need, and the Chapel is collecting for the Norcross Co-op this Sunday. Berkeley Lake is amazingly generous and never more so than at this time of the year. I hope this outpouring of kindness makes your days "merry and bright!"



Speaking of merry and bright: the Windsor Realty ladies are coordinating a **holiday light contest** again this year in our city. We really do have a fabulous light show around here and it’s very kind of them to encourage and organize this recognition of the best displays. If you want to nominate your house or a neighbor’s, contact Jill Rice, Tracy Settlege, or Ginny Nevins. They’ll make sure the judges don’t miss you when they’re cruising around. The contest rules and more information are on Nextdoor.



I am sorry it has taken so long to get the **paving** in our city completed. You will recall from my last Mayor’s Message that we signed up for the higher quality work of milling down the old pavement to correct any problems rather than just pouring asphalt over them. Unfortunately that takes longer, but the weeks we had of rain set them back, and then one of the paving company’s major pieces of equipment broke down. Now, as temperatures drop, they’ve had to accommodate those considerations as all paving companies do, but as I write this I do hope the end is in sight, not only for our city paving but for the county’s work that we asked for on South Berkeley Lake Road across Peachtree Industrial Boulevard. As of Wednesday, morning it is no longer blocked there for sewer construction which will really help our city businesses now that it’s completed and will no longer be an inconvenience for everyone else. Please hang in there with our paving project which I hope will be finished soon.



I want to share with you some very important work that one of our neighbors is doing. **Tom Merkel who lives in Miramont leads the IMPACT! Group which is at the forefront of fighting to end homelessness among our veterans and their family members.** According to the U.S. Department of Housing Development, almost 50,000 veterans are homeless on any given night. In Gwinnett County and the immediate surrounding area, that number (when family members are included) is approximately 3,000. Tom, his colleagues, and their supporters transform lives and strengthen communities by providing quality housing solutions, counseling, and financial literacy training. Year to date in 2015, they have taken 16 homeless veterans and family members (59 total individuals) and provided them with stable housing. This is a “Hand Up” program, not a “Hand Out”. Those that they help are required to have “skin in the game” financially and holistically. This outstanding mission truly needs the financial support of our own community. Please consider honoring a veteran you know, or any vet and send a donation to The IMPACT! Group’s “Impact For Vets” program. www.theimpactgroup.org. Help them help those who have given so much for our country.

Protecting Your Home and Staying Safe during the Holidays – *This information was provided to me by one of the liaisons to our police to share with you. It’s good advice.*

Did you know the day after Christmas anyone can walk or drive down your street, and tell a lot about what you received for Christmas? After Christmas gifts are opened, many people take the boxes that the television, MacBook Pro, Xbox One, and other expensive gifts came in and place them curbside for the trash company to pick up. That innocent habit is the perfect way to spark the interest of an intruder by advertising that you have many new and sellable valuables within your home.

Please consider the following tips to help minimize the risk of your home being a target:

1. Invest in an alarm system, and have flood lights installed around the front and rear of your home.
2. Pay attention to your surroundings while you are out shopping. Do you keep seeing the same person in all of the stores you are visiting? Has the same car been following you, since you left the shopping plaza?
3. Avoid leaving Christmas trees with real or fake presents in front of an open view window at night time.
4. Once presents are opened, try and break the boxes down inside of the home or closed garage before placing them in the trash can. If possible dispose of the boxes somewhere else such as a recycling center. Avoid leaving boxes at the curb for people to see.
5. Communicate with your neighbors. Be each other’s eyes and ears.
6. Make and keep an inventory of anything and everything you own. Include the brand, model and serial numbers in your inventory list.
7. Report any suspicious activity to the Gwinnett County Police Department immediately by dialing the non-emergency number at (770) 513-5700 or by dialing 911 if you believe the situation is an emergency.

Those are just a few tips to help protect your home and property. Share them with friends and family. For any additional information you can contact Officer Trent Greene, #1471, at trent.greene@gwinnettcountry.com. In the meantime, drive safely and have a happy holiday season!

Finally, my usual reminder to **support our Berkeley Lake businesses**. Here’s another one to consider:

CrossFit PPG - 4505 Peachtree Industrial Blvd, (770) 696-6774. Here’s a fun way to improve health and fitness with top trainers within a supportive community at a convenient Berkeley Lake location. CrossFit classes are offered on weekdays at 6:30 and 8:30 a.m. and at 4:30, 5:30 and 6:30 p.m. and on Saturday mornings at 8:00 and 9:00 a.m. Bootcamp classes are also offered throughout the week. See the full schedule and how to get a free tour, introduction and three free sessions at www.CrossFitPPG.com

Happy Hanukah, Merry Christmas, and blessings to all of you in the coming new year!

