



July 24, 2018

I was asked recently to be a speaker for two groups, the Southwest Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce and the Peachtree Corners Rotary Club. In preparing my remarks to those two groups outside our city, it occurred to me that the facts about Berkeley Lake are so positive that I should share them also with you; because there may be some things our own citizens do not know. Were you aware that our city has no debt at all, has had none since 2015, and barring some unforeseen catastrophe, will continue to have none? We operate in the black and still manage to put aside some money every year for possible future needs or difficulties. Perhaps even more unusual is the fact that for each of the last 7 years we have managed to lower your millage rate below the rollback rate.

What's a rollback rate? Cities can announce that they are lowering their millage rates even while collecting more taxes if the local property values and assessments have risen. The rollback rate keeps that process more transparent by identifying the exact millage rate at which the same total tax dollars would be collected as last year. So, it's very significant that for all these years we have lowered our millage rate below the rollback rate, and thus actually collected less total taxes each year. **The Council has recently voted for our new millage rate to be 2.005 mills which is 5.2% below the rollback rate, to produce an 11.63% reduction in total tax dollars collected.** All the while lowering property taxes, we have maintained our very low occupation taxes to help our businesses; and continued to collect no stormwater infrastructure fees at all, though the unincorporated county areas and the vast majority of other cities do. I am so proud of the way our city is being managed by our City Council and staff. It really is quite phenomenal. And, as always, our financial processes are overseen by our citizen Treasurer, Pam Williamson, and by the citizens on our Finance Committee. Thanks to them all.

**We had a great time on the Fourth of July,** as we always do. Thanks to all those who worked as volunteers and who participated in the festivities.



You have been really coming through with the **school supplies for needy kids** that I requested. My office is full of stuff and I’m about to make a run to deliver some. However, this year we need to double our efforts because we are also collecting for the Georgia Foster Care Foundation <http://www.fostercare.org> at the request of Cheryl Bridges who lives in Miramont. She’s trying to help kids who can’t currently live with their parents, and they truly need all the help they can get! If you haven’t brought any yet to City Hall, please bring as many school supplies as you possibly can, and we’ll divide your contributions between the foster kids and the Berkeley Lake Elementary kids. It feels good to start a needy kid off right in the new school year.

Niche.com has chosen **Berkeley Lake to be the 5<sup>th</sup> Best Place to Raise a Family in Georgia** for 2018. In evaluating crime, housing, etc. we were given and **overall A+ grade**. Not bad!!

**This month’s Hometown Hero is Jill Rice.** She has done a wonderful job leading the BLOSOMS as their president and is additionally always alert for ways to help the city and individuals in Berkeley Lake. She and Tracey Settlege (through their branch of Keller Williams Realty) serve the city by sponsoring the Yard of the Month contest and by providing the shredder truck and goodies for Earth Day, as well as food for our Hometown Heroes Drug Takeback Day in the fall. It’s fitting that Jill should be recognized herself as a Hometown Hero, and I’m pleased to do so. Jill likes “outdoors anything” and her characteristic enthusiasm and optimism are appreciated by all. “Relationships are everything” to Jill. “It’s not about money or recognition.” She loves our community because “it’s like being on vacation every day!” I think everyone who knows her would agree that it’s hard to be down while Jill’s around.



The Billy Jacks, who play '60s and '70s rock music, will perform at the next Sunday Kind of Groove **Concert on the shores of Berkeley Lake**. This concert, part of a series benefiting the Duluth Cluster Schools Foundation, will start at 6:00 PM on September 16

behind our Chapel. Tickets are available online at [www.freshtix.com/events/sundaygroove916](http://www.freshtix.com/events/sundaygroove916). If you prefer to purchase tickets by check, email [ak509@bellsouth.net](mailto:ak509@bellsouth.net) or call [\(770\) 368-2076](tel:7703682076).

When I was wandering around Cumberland Island recently I met a lady from Scotland who now lives down in Atlanta. She was a very interesting world traveler, who told me that I was lucky to live where I do because it’s close to McDaniel Farm Park, which she thinks is fabulous. Have you been? This Friday on July 27 from 8:00 PM to 9:30 PM you and your family can explore the trails around McDaniel Farm Park under a full moon. It’s the **Nature at Night Hike** and it’s free. Discover the world of nocturnal animals, constellations, and more as you journey under the night sky. Appropriate for ages 8 and older. Call (770) 814-4920 for more information. 3251 McDaniel Road, Duluth.

I have almost run over a little fawn twice in the last week. I think most of us have learned to be cautious on our streets and our deer seem to be also, but there’s at least one **Bumbling Bambi** out there now that is really clueless about cars. Please drive slowly and carefully.



**Congratulations to Tim and Jill Gorman, our Yard of the Month.** They have created the most amazing butterfly garden at their home in Miramont! Using all native species, they made a welcoming home for caterpillars and butterflies by planting both nectar and host plants. Jill starts her garden with seeds she readies for planting in the winter. Her yard is now exploding with blooms – zinnias, Mexican sunflower, purple coneflower, and many more. She has selected a wide variety of flowers and shrubs to attract the many varieties of butterflies. This garden has been featured in Butterfly Gardener magazine and is a Certified Monarch Garden.



Several of you contacted me after the last Mayor’s Message wherein I asked for citizens willing to share their opinions about the future direction of our city. Remember that we hold meetings with our “stakeholders” every few years to reconsider what we’ve accomplished and what needs doing. We meet with these community leaders and regular citizens to solicit their input and suggestions which are then incorporated by our City Council into a **Comprehensive Plan**. This is used to guide the city into the next few years. You may read our current Comprehensive Plan [here](#). We’re about to begin work on an update to:

- (1) measure the city's progress for the past 5 years,
- (2) determine if there are any significant changes that would affect the plan's current goals, and
- (3) set the next 5-year work program.

The official kick-off will be a public hearing during the September 20 City Council meeting. If you want to participate in the planning process, let me know or call Pat Chapman in City Hall. (770) 368-9484. We value your opinions and your time.

**This month’s Berkeley Lake business is JL Lighting**, a national supplier of commercial and industrial LED lights and lighting fixtures. They focus on all types of warehouse, industrial, and retail LED lighting solutions as well as those for the municipal and education sector. JL Lighting has sales and distribution in all 50 states but is proud to call Berkeley Lake its home. You can find them at 4505 Peachtree Industrial Boulevard, Suite D, or call (678) 608-2751.



*Spis D. Salter*