Equity and Inclusion Task Force - Become a part of the solution

The City's new citizen-run Equity and Inclusion Task Force has been charged with engaging every segment of the Manassas community in an open and honest discussion of race, racism and diversity and they are ready to listen to you.

The Task Force, which grew out of last June's City Council Resolution that affirmed the City's commitment to the principles of diversity, inclusion, and equity in the wake of George Floyd's death, is launching virtual listening sessions to begin the discussion. Members of the Task Force hope that residents will answer a short survey, sign up for Zoom listening sessions, and/or leave voice or video messages that will help to explore barriers that members of the community may have experienced when accessing government services related to criminal justice, educational attainment, employment, healthcare, and/or housing.

The Task Force needs data, history and stories to fulfill their charge from the City Council. The stories are particularly important, because, in the end, it is people’s real lives that we hope will change for the better as we seek to understand and undo systems that created historical and current inequities. Community members who attend a listening survey, answer a short online survey, or leave voice or video messages, will help tell us about the tangible impacts that inequities in our community have had on our fellow citizens and can point us toward possible paths that will create a more equitable future.

Like many in the community, Mayor Michelle Davis-Younger and fellow City Council members were saddened by the death of Mr. George Floyd and wanted to affirm their commitment to the creation of a community that reflects the values of diversity, inclusion and equity for all.

“The action that the City Council took in June recognized not only that Mr. Floyd's death should never have occurred, nor the deaths of too many others, but also that we should never tolerate racism in any form,” Davis-Younger, the City’s first African American Mayor said. “It is not in the culture of this community to tolerate such injustice to any human.”

The Task Force is made up of 31 residents who represent not just the racial diversity of the community, but also diversity in terms of physical abilities, gender and sexual orientation. The Task Force has spent the last couple of months organizing and learning about each other and their community.

“The Task Force is willing, able and indeed anxious, to begin engaging with our community and hear stories and experiences,” Chairman George Odom explained. “Personal stories tell us about the tangible impacts that inequities in our community have had on our fellow citizens and can point us toward possible paths that will create a more equitable future.”

Once the Task Force gathers information in its initial listening sessions, it will consider identifying barriers that keep members of our community from fully participating in the City's economic and community vitality. It has also been charged with proposing concrete solutions and paths of action to City Council that may promote racial reconciliation, economic justice and equity. To assist the Task Force, the City has engaged the consultant firm Training & Development Strategies, LLC and in parallel with the work of the Task Force, has joined the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE).

Community members can play a real role in making our City more inclusive as recommendations from the listening sessions could change policies.

“Local governments are uniquely situated to examine and transform policies and practices towards equity for their communities,” explained City Manager William Patrick Pate.

Task Force members will lead the first listening sessions, but community groups, neighborhoods and religious organizations will also be invited to host a listening session within their communities.

Visit www.manassasva.gov/equity for more information, including how to register for a listening session, take the survey, or submit comments.
A Moment with the Mayor

The City of Manassas’ Historic Downtown is always lit up around the holidays like Christmas town, but this year, in honor of all of our heroes, we are keeping these beautiful lights on for several extra months – Lights on for Heroes. So many of you have done so much during this pandemic and we want to thank each of you in our own City of Manassas way. Thank you to all of our hero nurses, doctors, firefighters, EMS, police, City staff, volunteers, vaccinators and the list could go on.

While speaking of lights, this month, I want to highlight two of our brightest. Two of our outstanding Manassas City Public School students, Malea Amako-Boateng and Raphael Ouao. I hope you will read about these two shining stars.

**Melea Amako-Boateng** is in fourth grade and has been a student at Haydon Elementary School since Kindergarten. She has been in our dual language immersion program since its inception. Melea is an avid reader. She reads various books such as graphic novels, nonfiction, picture and chapter books from the school library. She continually participates in her English and Spanish classes and shows excellent knowledge and confidence in both languages. Melea is a proud Haydon Hawk!

**Raphael Ouao** is a 2nd grade student at Weems Elementary. Before COVID-19, Raphael would walk into Weems and greet all adults with a smile and Good Morning. He is intelligent, hardworking, responsible, and a wonderful student. His teacher stated that he logs into Zoom sessions on time, participates in class discussions, volunteers to answer questions, shares his ideas, and completes his assignments. Raphael is a student that you will continually hear about as he moves through the Manassas City School system.

With March, being Women’s History Month, I have to express my gratitude for all women who have sacrificed and stood the test of time to make a difference in this country. Without you, I and many others could not be where we are today. I am looking forward to helping many more women make history in the future.

Trash & Recycling Notes

**Courtesy Truck Rentals Begin April 1**

The City offers a “Courtesy Truck” to rent for those times when City residents have large amounts of household trash, yard waste, or construction debris for disposal. These (7’x 16’ x 2’) trucks are parked by City staff for an afternoon or a weekend, collected on the morning of the next business day and taken to the Manassas Transfer Station for the all-inclusive fee of one hundred fifty dollars ($150.) Visit www.manassasva.gov/trash for more information.

**Have Your Say on the future of Trash & Recycling in the City of Manassas**

On Monday, March 22, there is a public hearing as part of the consultation for the new Solid Waste Management Plan. Contribute your thoughts and ideas on trash and recycling as goals and objectives are set for the next 20 years. The Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) is a document that helps the City of Manassas develop methods to manage the trash and recycling program.

Planning for the future means looking at what has been done so far and thinking about how the community will grow and what new technologies may be available to help improve recycling and reduce the amount of trash going to landfill. Please take a moment to review the Draft Solid Waste Management Plan and give your feedback. The information that we receive will help us improve trash and recycling services for the City of Manassas. Visit www.manassasva.gov/trash for more information.

**Other locations to drop off recycling?**

There are public recycling dumpsters located at:

- 8500 Public Works Drive to the right of the main Public Works building in the small parking lot.
- 9412 Main Street in the parking area behind Crossroads Tabletop Tavern.
- 9201 Center Street behind the Harris Pavilion.

- 8305 Quarry Road to the left of the weigh scale as you enter the Manassas Transfer Station. This is open to the public during regular business hours.

**Watch your small pets**

Between February and March, the City’s Animal Control warns that it is coyote mating season. This means that male coyotes become more aggressive and may pose a risk to small dogs and cats. Please keep an eye on your furry friends so that they stay safe.
You may have noticed that the lights in Historic Downtown have been on a little longer than usual this winter. This is because the downtown businesses and Historic Manassas, Inc. wanted to promote “Lights for Heroes.” Just as we have seen the many “heroes” in health care, food supply, grocery stores, and public service continue to be a beacon of hope by providing services during the pandemic, the downtown lights are meant to reflect light and hope in recognition of these sacrifices to keep things going during the past year.

This is just one of several new positive things that you will see as we move into spring. One of the new services that is now available in the City is a Branch Library at 10104 Dumfries Road in the Wellington Station shopping center. This library, which is offering curbside pickup at the time I am writing this, will allow you access to a wealth of library materials throughout the system and will bring direct library services into the City limits for the first time. It is in a convenient location with plenty of parking and the library staff have said they are excited to bring new programs to this community. Bringing a library to the City has been a long-term goal for City Council and we hope that you will take advantage of it.

If you have been following the progress on our public safety facilities you will see that Fire and Rescue Station #21 at 10306 Dumfries Road is nearing completion and soon will be providing services to the community from this station. In addition to allowing better response times to many calls for service, this station will also provide better working conditions for the Fire and Rescue staff along with opportunities to enhance their skills with some built in training features. Be on the lookout for notice as to when the Station will be operational and open for the public to tour this new facility.

Likewise, the new Public Safety Facility at 9608 Grant Ave. is under construction. Soon you will see the structure begin to rise on this site as they move towards a projected 2022 opening. This facility will house the Police Department, the Fire and Rescue Headquarters, Emergency Management and some of our Information Technology staff. City Council has offered the existing Police facility to the Manassas City Public Schools to be renovated as their administration building as it is adjacent to Osbourn High School and Baldwin Elementary and Intermediate School.

These projects, along with the improvements to Grant Avenue and the new housing proposed for construction in this area, will mean significant change in this corridor for this area of the City as has been contemplated in the citizen driven 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Other projects, such as the purchase and stabilization of Annaburg Manor and the surrounding park, the completion of the Jennie Dean memorial and plans to upgrade the Manassas Museum, will provide new amenities for the community as we prepare to celebrate our 150th anniversary in 2023.

So, even though we have faced a full year of a global pandemic, which has changed our lives in many ways, we have also continued to move forward, making improvements to our community that will pay dividends for future generations of heroes. That is also a beacon of light and a legacy worth leaving.

Stay safe and healthy,
W. Patrick Pate
**City of Manassas Happenings**

Find these events and more in the City of Manassas, Virginia. For more information go to www.visitmanassas.org.

**Winter Farmer’s Market** - Saturdays, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. - The Winter Farmer’s Market will be held under the Harris Pavilion this year.

Now - May 23, 2021 - Manassas Museum Exhibit: The Power of Play - The toys in this exhibit may be familiar or foreign, but the joy of time spent playing is something we can all remember fondly. The vintage toys on display are from the Museum’s collection and from private collectors. The exhibit is free during the Museum’s open hours.

Now - March 27, 2021 - Rene Dickerson: A Retrospective Art Exhibit - Viewing by appointment: jexum@virginiaartfactory.org - the cumulative work of nationally acclaimed artist René Dickerson

March 5-31 - Manassas Museum Exhibit: Artistic Expression - The eighth annual Osbourn High School art exhibit will feature the works of students at Osbourn High School.

March 6 at 7:30 p.m. – Manassas Symphony Orchestra: Amadeus!

March 8, 9, 10, 11, 15 at 10:30 a.m. – Watercolor Loose & Expressive Online – Beautiful Flowers

March 12 - 14 - Manassas Ballet - Peter and the Wolf and More

March 13 & 20 from 1 to 4 p.m. – Mood Painting Workshop @ ARTfactory

March 28 at 10 a.m. through Apr. 3 at 5 p.m. - Hop Around Downtown - Hop around from store to store for sweet surprises! For each purchase from a participating merchant, customers can select an egg from the merchant’s basket and win a prize. Three of the eggs will contain Grand Prizes!

March 29 & Apr. 1 from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. – Spring Break Workshop – Anime Character Design @ ARTfactory

March 31 at 3 p.m. - Stories of Preservation & Progress - Join us each month for this series of talks that showcase local and regional history. Visit @cityofmanassasleisure on Facebook to watch this virtual program.

April 3, 8 a.m. - noon - Household Hazardous Waste and eWaste Drop Off Day - 8305 Quarry Road

May 1, 8 a.m. - noon - Household Hazardous Waste and eWaste Drop Off Day with Shredding at the Manassas Transfer Station - 8305 Quarry Road

**Free Chlorine Burn**

Drinking water is an important part of public health. The City of Manassas treats drinking water with chloramine to keep it safe as it travels from the water treatment plant to your tap. Over time bacteria that are harmless to humans accumulate in the water system.

To combat this buildup, the water plant briefly switches from treating with chloramine to free chlorine. Free chlorine is a stronger, faster-acting disinfectant that clears out the system.

This annual switch in drinking water treatment is known as the Chlorine Burn.

The Burn starts in late March and lasts until late June. During this process, you may notice that your tap water smells and taste like chlorine; however, this is completely safe. This routine maintenance procedure will ensure only the highest quality water will reach your tap.

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**City of Manassas and Manassas Public Schools**

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<tr>
<th>City of Manassas Council</th>
<th>City of Manassas School Board</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mayor Michelle Davis-Younger</td>
<td>Chairman Sanford S. Williams 571-535-6364</td>
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<tr>
<td>571-206-8433</td>
<td>Christina S. Brooks 703-241-0918</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vice Mayor</td>
<td>Tim Demeria 703-895-4856</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pamela J. Sebesky</td>
<td>Carl Hollingsworth Jr. 703-789-2224</td>
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<tr>
<td>571-330-5514</td>
<td>Suzanne W. Seaberg 703-869-1171</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theresa Coates Ellis</td>
<td>Lisa A. Stevens 571-535-0652</td>
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<td>571-247-6729</td>
<td>Robyn Williams 571-535-7510</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Farajollahi</td>
<td>Tom Osina 703-209-6320</td>
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<td>703-304-3984</td>
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To contact the City of Manassas Connection newsletter, email pprince@manassasva.gov