

January 18, 2024

Dear Community Partners,

As seamlessly and swiftly as one day becomes another we entered 2024. As the door to this New Year has opened widely, we can look down the corridor of the coming year with great expectations.

One of my January tasks is to give our community a report on the state of our city. Simply speaking, we are a blessed people. All of our bills are paid up to date; we are operating within our budget; our elected officials and city employees work well together, respect and help one another and form a great team; day to day projects are being successfully completed and maintained; major projects that will serve our community well are underway. The revitalization of downtown Bremen is exciting, and we are grateful for all the businesses that are making our downtown area home and alive and inviting. We anticipate the completion of The Hub late this year. As a fabulous family park it will bring even more opportunities for all of our community. We persist in our commitment to operate the city with efficiency, excellence, honesty and integrity. We will handle your tax dollars with care and respect, providing for you the highest level of city services at the most reasonable costs. We are committed to the concept of public servanthood.

In my casual reading lately I have read several articles describing the hallmarks of a great community. Collectively they have listed a quality school system, lack of urban congestion, a clean and attractive natural environment, a sense of personal safety, friendly people, generosity, shared history, shared identity, shared purpose and sense of community. In my opinion we fit well into these categories. Certainly these are goals as well, and as we each become intentional about contributing to each item in the list, we will become an even greater community. It is a privilege to be your mayor and to be a part of the great things that are Bremen.

As we take a look at the 2024 calendar we see that election season is just around the corner. On February 13th there will be a special election for the newly defined Georgia Senate District 30. All of Haralson County is included in District 30, and Haralson County is the only complete county in that district. The district includes all of Haralson, and portions of Carroll, Douglas and Paulding Counties. Senator Mike Dugan recently vacated the Georgia Senate seat to run for Georgia's 3rd District Congressional Seat thereby triggering this special election. In fact, when you receive this letter early voting will have already begun on January 22nd. It will continue through February 9th with the special election being held on February 13th. The only thing on this ballot will be this Georgia Senate seat. The following candidates have qualified: Renae Bell (R), Tim Bearden (R), Ashley Godwin (D), Amber Nixon (R), and Robert Smith (R). As with many special elections voter turnout is challenging. Because this is an election with very short notice voter turnout is indeed concerning.

Exercising our right to vote has never been more important than it is in 2024. Please make every effort to vote in this special election. It is very important to Haralson County, and to my knowledge Renae Bell and Tim Bearden are the only candidates with any ties to Haralson County. Please be an educated voter and vote. A run-off, if needed, shall be held on March 12, 2024. Please help spread the word.

There are a number of friends and families who have suffered seemingly unbearable loss and experienced deep grief during the last few years. As our people grieve our community grieves, and more recently as we have again experienced the loss of some of our young people, all of our hearts have broken. All grief journeys are alike, yet all grief journeys are different. It is sure, however, that in our grief journeys, we need each other. Hightower Funeral Home is providing an opportunity for help for anyone going through any grief process. A *GriefShare* Support Group will meet on Mondays, beginning February 5th, at 6:30 in the Triangle Building in front of Hightower Funeral Home. This will be a safe welcoming place where people understand the difficult emotions of grief. Through a 13-week cycle there will be a 30-minute video with opportunities for discussion on topics like loneliness, fear, anger, regrets and hope. *GriefShare* is a rich helpful resource for anyone navigating loss and grief. Donna Williams, a personal friend of mine who is well gifted and qualified to serve you, will facilitate the group. Call Hightower Funeral Home with any questions.

I am consistently amazed at the brevity of life. Even long hard seasons seem shorter when they are in hindsight. Every day I become more and more conscious that every second counts, and moments must not be wasted.

J.R.R. Tolkien is one of the more popular fiction writers of all time. Tolkien is best known as the author of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Tucked into his high fantasies of dwarves, elves, wizards and dragons are many notable quotes. One of the most noteworthy ones is “All we have to decide is what to do with the time given to us.”

Life is composed of a series of decisions. We make good choices and bad choices. In every circumstance in life there is an opportunity to make a right choice. Moment by moment there is a singular opportunity that will never come by again in quite the same way. One small decision today could have a major impact on tomorrow. Let us make good choices regarding the time that is given to us. As we choose light instead of darkness, love instead of hate, forgiveness rather than bitterness, truth instead of error and humility over pride, we can change our world.

May the fragrance of God’s peace cover our community and meet you where you are.
Sharon Sewell