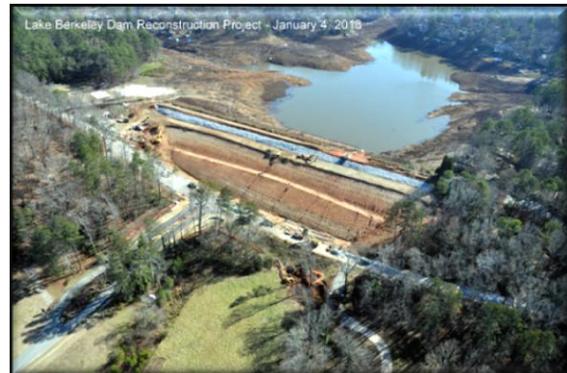




January 14, 2013

For some years now our city has really struggled to meet some unusual challenges and to accomplish some major goals that we set for ourselves. I have felt for some time that we were running as fast as we could just to keep up in that frantic pace, and that when things settled somewhat we should make time to take stock before we moved on. I have shared with the council, staff, city treasurer, and planning and zoning commissioners my desire for their time and attention now to join in some thoughtful reflection and careful consideration of where we've been and where we'd like to go. They have agreed to spend a Saturday with me brainstorming together on January 26, and I'd like you as citizens to have some input on topics to be discussed there. I have been calling this a "visioning session" in my own mind because I hope for something larger than the ordinary long range planning. Beyond the natural beauty and our unusual resources, I continue to believe that Berkeley Lake's greatest resource is its people. Please give some thought over the next week as to what you like about our city and in what ways you'd like to see it develop or change. If you send a concern or problem, please also send specific suggestions that you consider to be realistic. Be mindful that there is a cost for everything; and if you send a wish for something, consider whether you'd also be willing to pay for it in your taxes. Santa Claus has recently come and gone! You may send your ideas to mayor@berkeley-lake.com and please put "**vision for our city**" in the subject line. I need to hear from you by **Monday, January 21** if you have thoughts to share. You may want to review our previous comprehensive planning process [on the city website](#). There you will find a link to the plan that was adopted in 2009 to extend toward 2030. Many thanks for your consideration.

We've had some bad weather recently that has set us back on the **dam repair** by several weeks. We met last Thursday on site with our engineers and contractors to review the damage done by recent rains. Tom Woosley, head of Georgia Safe Dams Program, was also there to study the situation. Unfortunately all the rains we've had came at a critical time when the dam was almost finished, washing a good bit of our construction down into the toe ditch. This has to be cleaned out and reconstructed before we can staple the centipede sod down. You can see in this picture some of the erosion ruts that were created. These must be carefully repaired. You can also see that the water is coming back into the lake. It's now about 10% full from essentially empty before. The watershed for our lake is only about 700 acres so this process will take some time; and I'm very grateful that Mr. Woosley allowed us to begin it. The deep part will fill quickly, but half the total volume of the lake is in the last 10 feet because that is such a broad area. The shallow part will fill much more slowly. We have finally gotten AT&T out to repair the cable that I mentioned last time as necessary before we could reopen the road. As I write this, they are working on that but it's not fin-



ished. Although we had hoped to reopen the road earlier than originally planned, I regret that it seems unlikely at this point.

The Georgia Municipal Association is holding a **writing contest for 6th graders** with a \$250 prize. The essay topic is **"If I were Mayor, I Would..."** and the limit is 350 words. I would love to hear from any of our 6th graders and have left applications for this contest in City Hall.

I understand that many of you are having **trouble receiving your mail**. I talked with the USPS route supervisor who, I'm told, is the one to deal with this. I have shared your concerns and been told that they've consolidated routes so that carriers deliver now to 600 families where they used to serve only 400. I do hope the lady who committed to make our service better in future can do so. If you continue to have problems, you may email her at albeza.enriquez@usps.com

We have completed the annexation of **Hermitage Plantation** to our city and welcome them all to Berkeley Lake. We have already fielded a concern from some of our new citizens who have never liked the **roundabout** on North Berkeley Lake Road and would like the county to remove it. Since it was not built big enough to function adequately as a roundabout, it's never been what we hoped for from the beginning and the city has no objection to its removal. I have contacted the head of Gwinnett DOT and he has agreed to come out and assess the situation. He expressed two reasonable concerns which I'll share with you. He doesn't want to spend a lot of tax dollars unless it's absolutely necessary; and he doesn't want to remove it and then hear later from folks who are mad that it got removed. If you have an opinion on this either way, let me or the Gwinnett DOT know. I know from talking with County Commission Chair Charlotte Nash that the county is working with a very tight budget. Since 2008 they have experienced a full 25% decline in the property tax digest and they expect an additional drop of 1.9% in 2013. This will be somewhat better than the 7-8% drop experienced in 2012, but it has certainly had a significant impact on cities as well. Some cities (like the county) are having to increase millage rates just to collect even less in property taxes. Fortunately the annexations we have completed have allowed Berkeley Lake to absorb the loss in our property values and even to lower our millage rates in spite of them. It is my hope that we'll be able to lower them even further this year.



Thanks to all who contributed to our collected pile of **toys for kids at Christmastime**. Here are some of them at City Hall with Bryan Stuart in Santa outfit. The guiding force behind this effort (who tried to stay out of the limelight) was Lou Mitchum of Lakeshore Drive. Here is a picture Bryan took of Lou buying some of the bags of toys he contributed and having a big time being an elf. I understand from Sally Rolader that Hermitage Plantation did a great job in their neighborhood collecting toys and funds for the needy as well. We certainly live among very generous people.



Some of you remember **Warren Coleman** who loved and served this community well as city council member and mayor. He and his wife Ada Maye moved to Ellijay some years ago and then Ada Maye passed away. Warren died December 3 at the age of 92. They are both remembered with appreciation here by many.

The city has successfully renegotiated a new interest rate of 2.05% on our greenspace **bonds** which will save \$158,634.28 over the course of the next 8 years, at which time we expect to retire them completely. Additionally, we have begun to buy back the bonds we issued for dam repair. With the FEMA money coming in we've repaid \$725,000.00 and will continue until they're all gone. Our fiscal situation is very sound.



Our local scouts have been busy beautifying our city. As part of their Eagle Scout projects **Max Musser** (left) created the pocket park on Lakeshore Drive and **Ben Kucera** finished the project (right) he's been working on at Henderson Nature Sanctuary near Bay Way Circle. Ben's troop also delivered over 60 Christmas trees to the boat ramp for use as fish habitat in the returning lake. Eagles are flying high in Berkeley Lake and I hope you will find a way to thank these outstanding young men and the adults who contribute their time to work with them. That includes



not only their parents and scout leaders, but also Susan Hanson who chairs our Berkeley Lake Conservancy.

The new city of **Peachtree Corners** held a reception recently to celebrate the opening of its city hall. Mayor pro tem Rebecca Spitler, Council Member Bob Smith, and I attended to offer our congratulations. There are still some difficulties being resolved between our cities that we hope to settle in a neighborly manner. We've been getting calls from some of our businesses who have been incorrectly receiving business license bills from Peachtree Corners and they are much higher than ours would be. One businessman who came in recently had received a bill for about \$5000 and ours was \$400. Our staff and theirs are working to correct these errors.

I hope we will all continue to **support our Berkeley Lake businesses**. Here is one you may not know about:

[Isra Surface Vision, Inc., 770.449.7776](http://www.isra-surface-vision.com), — (Brian Heil, President) is a world leader in Intelligent Vision Inspection Systems. The Berkeley Lake location serves as the North American headquarters where 40 people are employed providing machine vision solutions for factory automation.

Happy New Year everybody! I hope it will be a great one for Berkeley Lake and for each of your families.



Lisa D. Alter