

**From:** Maurice Jones  
**Sent:** Monday, June 01, 2020 5:40 PM  
**To:** Town Email Users  
**Subject:** Town Manager Message

Hello Everyone,

Last Friday afternoon, I was putting the finishing touches on my weekly COVID related update when I realized I just couldn't. I couldn't send out another email as though COVID and its impact on our world, as horrific as it has been, was the most critical issue we faced at the moment. Although it remains a significant health risk and we must be diligent in stopping the spread of the coronavirus, the last week has proven there is another, long-standing, issue challenging our country that we must acknowledge and be ready to address. The death of George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer, coupled with the recent senseless murder of Ahmaud Arbery by two men in Georgia are heartbreaking reminders of the suffering people of color, especially African-Americans, have had to endure since the creation of our nation.

During the last week we have witnessed the anguish and fear and anger of a people too often ignored, and historically oppressed and discriminated against. For many of us, seeing Mr. Floyd struggle to breathe under the knee of that officer was just one more tragic reminder of the inequities in this country and the utter disregard for our lives by some in a position of authority. Our bodies ached and we shed tears of frustration and sadness as Mr. Floyd cried out for help and mercy and even his deceased "mama", as he slowly passed away. No one rescued him. The indifference demonstrated by the three officers who watched this brutality, and did nothing to stop it, was telling. It showed a lack of humanity and callousness.

Our shared grief has resulted in both peaceful and violent protest in our nation. A number of our cities, that were already suffering a heavy burden due to COVID, are now in flames and falling into further despair. The right to protest - to peacefully stand up for a movement and shout down the injustice of individual leaders and immoral systems - is woven into the fabric of our national identity. We desperately need the opportunity to peacefully call attention to the racism that still exists in the United States - with an emphasis on peaceful. Although I understand the anger that has welled up in people, we must not let that anger lead to more violence in our communities. It must be a constructive, and for some uncomfortable, dialogue that leads to real action. Action - that's where we come in.

I'm proud to work for an organization that is committed to addressing the inequalities of our world. We have made a commitment to embrace and celebrate the diversity of our employees and our community. We offer programs and initiatives that assist all who reside in Chapel Hill. From affordable and public housing to low cost parks and recreation activities to fare free transit. We take time to honor the legacy of Civil Rights leaders like the Chapel Hill Nine and the Women in the Movement. We provide well-paying jobs with strong benefits to a talented and diverse workforce.

We initiate programs like the Criminal Justice Debt Fund to assist those who have paid their debt to society, yet struggle to survive due to the near crippling debt society has leveled on them for their previous mistakes. We offer up counselors in our Police Department to provide assistance to people in crisis. We recruit top flight police officers and train them to be "Guardians of the Hill". They work to build bridges, not fences, in our community. They are known for conducting themselves with great professionalism and compassionate care for the people they protect. They are in this line of work for the right reasons - to help people and to keep them as safe as possible. They are also angered and saddened by the actions that led to Mr. Floyd's death.

Despite everything we do as an organization, there is still much work to be done. Too many of our residents are suffering economic hardships as the result of systems that were stacked against them. Institutional racism has had real effects on our residents of color. We must remain persistent in our efforts to lift up the most vulnerable in our community and to truly offer them equal opportunity for success for them and their families. We must double our efforts to make everyone feel safe in knowing their children will not be in harm's way for simply jogging through our

shared community or while shopping or dining ... or while doing any of the other everyday activities that all of us should be able to do without fear for our safety and well-being.

When it is safe to physically do so we will continue the diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-discrimination work we started last year. We will bring folks together to discuss our personal stories and our professional commitment to address inequities. We will continue to work toward treating all people with the respect they expect and deserve.

We are all struggling with the events of 2020. It is perfectly natural to feel upset and anxious about the great challenges of our society. Always remember if you feel you need some extra help and support we have options for you to consider. We all need to find ways to express ourselves, even when we feel we're at a loss for words for the pain and sorrow in our world today. If you need to talk with someone about your emotional well-being please call 1-800-326-3864 or visit [bhsonline.com](http://bhsonline.com).

I'm exceptionally proud to work with all of you. We have a great staff who provide excellent services. We've said from the beginning of the COVID pandemic that we are all in this together. The same could be said for the way we fight racism and discrimination. Each of us can contribute to the dismantling of this evil that continues to plague our nation.

As always thanks for your dedication to our good work.

All the Best,  
Maurice

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