



City of Takoma Park

## City Manager Comments

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**June 30, 2021**

Thank You!

Thank you for the kind words and remembrances. This is special.

I came to work for Takoma Park in 1993 when I was 34. I jumped into a hard first month that started off by alerting residents about rats that might come into their yards as the Sligo Creek Hiker-Biker Trail was being constructed. I had to laugh about recent emails about rats that might be associated with Montgomery College construction. While many things are different now than in 1993, some things don't change!

There are many things I am proud of regarding my work – and the work of us all as a team – in Takoma Park. Thank you for the Resolution that mentions many of these. I didn't do them alone and I was always happier when it was a team effort, particularly on a cutting-edge project or when responding to an emergency.

It was interesting reading the Resolution online last night – how to cover 27 years of work? There is no way to include everything! But two other projects are close to my heart that I'd like to mention: the playground for the Pinecrest Neighborhood and the safe sidewalks along Flower Avenue. I'm so happy to have seen both completed.

Tonight, I cannot begin to name each staff member, community member or elected official who I have learned from and deeply valued working with. I do have a few people I must acknowledge, however.

Since I've been with the City, I've worked with four Mayors. Ed Sharp was a to-the-point get-

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it-done person who I worked with for my first four years.

Then I worked a decade with Kathy Porter. We have some memories! We did joint lobbying in Montgomery County and Annapolis and we worked on many projects together. I remember her calling me on a weekend at home to say that the hospital had decided to move, and working with her on how to respond to that.

We spent hours driving together to MML conferences or meetings. Our talks at those times meant a lot to me as she is a private person. I learned a lot from her regarding the unwritten responsibilities of a Mayor – the sacrifices needed to pull out a legislative win, how to be gracious when things are not going your way, or to wear a napkin as a bib when eating dinner before making a speech. Kathy Porter was a terrific leader who personally sacrificed a great deal to be a good Mayor of the City of Takoma Park.

For the next eight years, Bruce Williams carried on the important role that Mayors have of connecting with other leaders across the State and the region. The City of Takoma Park – and I – benefitted from these relationships. Bruce’s work at COG was particularly notable and again the City and I benefitted from that work.

And then, since 2015, Kate Stewart.

From an operational perspective, Kate Stewart has been an excellent Mayor. She puts a great deal of thought and time into assisting the Council to work together, respecting the views and roles of each Councilmember. That work has allowed this Council to get so much done in so many areas. It means a lot of work for staff, but it is also more rewarding for staff as we see the Council set priorities and then truly advance them.

I will not go into the issues we’ve faced in the last few years in the nation or in Takoma Park. I appreciated Kate Stewart’s strength of character during this time, choosing to do what she

felt was the right thing to do, even though it was often the harder choice at that moment. But, also, during that time, both she and I faced some personal tragedies, and I appreciated her outreach to me as I lost my mother and then husband, even as so much else was going on.

I am honored to have been able to work with Mayor Stewart and the previous three mayors. And I am honored to have been able to work with the many Councilmembers over the years. Thank you to the current Councilmembers: Peter Kovar, Cindy Dyballa, Kacy Kostiuk, Terry Seamens, Jarrett Smith and Talisha Searcy. This is a very good Council. I have enjoyed getting to know them individually, hear how they care about their Wards, and hear their thoughts about how to best advance the Council Priorities. Incoming City Manager Jamal Fox will have an excellent Council with which to work.

Of staff, a number of people stand out. I'd love to talk about everyone, but I'll only mention a few. I've learned from each City Manager with whom I've worked, particularly Barb Matthews and Brian Kenner.

Daryl Braithwaite. Daryl and I go way back and we have been through so much together. She keeps things running in the field; I was the fixture on the admin side. We went through many City Managers and Councils. Daryl and I call on each other when we just need to get things done and decisions made.

Jessie Carpenter. I have relied on Jessie. She knows more than anyone else in the City about processes and community sensitivities. Her innate common sense cuts through the confusion. She has been a wonderful partner on Council agenda prep all these years. That doesn't sound like a big deal, but it is!

Finance Director Susan Cheung followed Yovonda Brooks in keeping the City's financial

procedures at the highest level, even as the City wants to do so much with so little money. The multiple GFOA awards for the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report and the Budget speak for themselves, but Susan is also a nice person who I trust completely.

Jason and Jessica. I have valued my two Deputy City Managers, Jason Damweber and Jessica Clarke, so very highly. They called me out when I was not doing something they thought I should be doing – that is their job, but it is hard to challenge your boss. They have been the steady hand when I am dealing with emergencies or controversies. Jason was awesome and Jessica is awesome. Takoma Park has been very, very fortunate to have their service. Jessica will be an excellent Acting City Manager in July and has a stellar career ahead of her in city management.

Tony DeVaul. Chief DeVaul has been a great friend since he joined the City of Takoma Park. Both of us work with matters that are, at times, highly confidential or rapidly changing. I completely trust him to do the right thing and to give the right advice in the most difficult of circumstances. Tony and I text frequently, but when Tony calls me, I know it's serious. This past year has been so hard. I value Tony's good leadership of our excellent Police Department. Let me repeat that – our excellent Police Department. And I enjoyed our lunch breaks through the pandemic as a chance to talk about our day and our families.

I won't mention others by name, but the staff of Takoma Park is so special. The Senior Leadership Team is an amazing group of highly-skilled professionals: creative, fun, hard-working, putting the community and race equity first. Any jurisdiction across the nation of any size would want these people to lead their organization.

I have loved:

- the friendly hug of a Public Works guy smelling of cut grass
- joining the Library staff for their holiday potluck
- commiserating about March Madness brackets in the hallway

- stopping by to watch a children's Recreation Department activity
- making bets with CityTV staff on how late the Council meeting will run, and
- sharing the relief and sense of accomplishment with others when the proposed budget document is done.

Finally, I have appreciated the love and support of my family. They have had to live with me through my crazy work schedule, the emergencies, the stress. My family gave me the mental breaks I needed. My husband made me laugh every day. Besides providing me the opportunity to focus on other things, my family was there for me. My husband stood by me when I put in for the much riskier City Manager position even as his cancer was advancing. My mom was so proud when I became City Manager and she also was a great counselor. My son Langston's whole life has been with me as a City of Takoma Park employee. His insight and questions have frequently helped me focus on the right way through a problem. My brother Martin and my niece Andrea have helped me at critical times. And all of my many relatives of my and my husband's family have brought a special dimension to my life. I look forward to being able to spend more time with all of them.

I am honored to have been able to be part of the Takoma Park family for over 27 years. I won't be a stranger, but when you see me, it will be just me, not "City Manager Ludlow."

Thank you for this tonight – it's been wonderful.