



Carl J. Florea
Office of the Mayor
City of Leavenworth

June 5, 2020

Community Members,

Well, it looks like my letters addressing the issue of racism in America stirred up quite the hornet's nest! Not just the first one, where I used the analogy of the pandemic to speak of what our country is facing in regards to racism, but even in my second one where I tried to clarify my thoughts a bit. If you were offended by these letters, please understand that was not their intention. For all of you who have praised my statements, thank you. These letters did offer opportunity for some constructive discussions with some in our community, and I hope there will be more. Each week I hold a mid-week Q&A time where area residents can join a Zoom meeting and ask questions or share concerns. A week ago, there was a couple of people. This week we had 70 join in. The only problem with that is that it was difficult to see everyone and manage who was speaking. Only a few got a chance to speak, which was also a drawback. Perhaps some will come back next week if they wanted to speak but did not get the chance. I really appreciated the fact that everyone kept it very calm and civil. And as you would expect in any community, opinions were varied as to whether the mayor should even speak on such controversial topics. That is the beauty of community. We are not homogenous – in color, in beliefs, in attitudes. Does that mean we avoid those differences? Or do we learn to share them, and even celebrate them? You don't really have a true community without them. So, let's be real!

Let me state again. The issue is too important for us to ignore, or to pretend it doesn't impact us here in our small town. More dialogue, and more opportunities to learn and grow would be a great outcome. To grow is a personal choice and we live in a free country where we can choose to reflect or not and to agree to disagree. We have some wonderful resources here in our community. Pastor Alex Schmidt, the former pastor of Faith Lutheran, has been conducting workshops dealing with this topic for a number of years around the northwest. Here is a link to those "Building Bridges" workshops. <https://sites.google.com/view/buildingbridges> An informal group of residents has put together a solidarity march through the neighborhoods of Leavenworth this evening (Friday).

It still appears that these letters are confusing for some. Let me state again, these are PERSONAL letters. I am NOT speaking FOR the community in any way, but rather TO the community. They are written by an elected official, (me), to those who elected me. They are NOT an official statement of city policy nor do they convey anything more than my shared reflections. They are my attempt to be more open, and more communicative. Most of my letters have, up until now, related to the struggles and realities we have been dealing with around COVID-19. But they have not all been just about facts. They have varied in content. Some have focused on information. Some have focused on encouragement. Some have related personal stories. It has been a variety. But the one thing they have had in common is this: they are the personal writings (some would say ramblings) of your mayor, nothing more, nothing less.

Two things I will do moving forward. From now on, we will move these letters from our COVID-19 page on the City's website to a folder in the mayor's page of the website to make clear that these are from the mayor. Also, while this had always been true, these letters are distributed only to those who would like to receive them. We keep a separate email address group for these messages. Anyone can opt out of these messages if they would like. You can choose not to receive these and still receive any of the other official city notices, etc. So, please, if these do not interest you, simply choose not to read them. While most of them will be reflections on what is going on in our little neck of the woods, some of them will continue to share my thoughts on what is going on in the greater society we still call home.

I realize that being a mayor gives me access that others do not have. That is the nature of the political beast we have. It is true for every mayor, governor or president. They get a unique opportunity to share their thoughts that is not so readily available to others. I also understand that not all will agree with me. I am fine with that and I respect differences of opinion. And I am also fine with people challenging me, disagreeing with me, arguing with me and getting mad with me. I am not hiding behind these letters. I am holding weekly opportunities for the community to question, challenge, discuss, dialogue. That is what communication is about. I am not going to stop communicating honestly and openly. Communication is too important. And since it is me that is doing the communicating, it is going to reflect who I am. When you communicate back, you are expressing who you are. That is healthy.

Let's try to keep talking to each other. Stay safe!



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