

Dear Pine Plains,

I have personally never lived through a harder time in this country than the last 8 months. Fear and loss define it, and at the same time, I have watched so many people step up to the plate to help. We have two food pantries in town that have never been busier or more essential to our tiny microcosm of democracy: a place where old and young, poor and wealthy co-exist amicably with a shared love of this place. Those with the means to do so have never been more generous, those in need have never been more grateful, and our essential workers have never been more... well, essential. I think everyone is essential in Pine Plains, because diversity is the key to our survival. That is displayed every day by nature, and it has never been more obvious on the human side of things. We need each other. It does not matter what political beliefs you hold. And once again, I am grateful for the fact that I live in a small town, where it is possible to ask people to help a neighbor or wear a mask and know that folks will do what's right for the good of everyone because—hey!—they know everyone!

And if you're new to town, and you don't know anyone but your plumber, or you're sitting home alone fearful of what winter might bring, action is the best medicine: come to Town Hall and meet us, and volunteer for a committee. You will be vital in no time.

That sense of belonging and responsibility for others has been in play for a long time here in this isolated community. Town Board member Matt Zick and I were laughing about it last night on the phone: it's been easy to social-distance here because that's how we live anyway!

But there is always room for making things better. To that end, this week was filled with work on the 2021 Budget, the State-wide Police Reform, collating Broadband Survey results (get yours in!),

<http://bit.ly/PinePlainsBroadband>

and the beginning stages of the Zoning Review mandated by our 2019 Comprehensive Plan Update. Here are some items on the List of things to Implement: change to the requirement that an owner live in the accessory building they build on their property (e.g., a garage you turn into an apartment); zero-lot line construction; signage; setbacks, ingress and egress requirements; increased size of the Business/Residential area; clarification of 5-acre density zoning, and the introduction of Form-based codes to promote future development while protecting the rural small-town character of Pine Plains... There is a lot to do.

As winter approaches, our restaurants will be more and more stressed financially as outdoor dining comes to an end. Every one of them has done heroic work to both stay open and to serve the community. Please don't forget them, and please honor those other businesses that have stayed open all this time so that Pine Plainsians did not have to travel far to get what they need. Hire local, buy local, and you will be doing a lot for the town.

This week's featured citizen is Officer Tilly the Bloodhound, a finder of people. Trained in tracking and trailing, she is the partner of Officer Justin Bell of the State Troopers, and you can see her riding around in her office in the back of his SUV. The pair is often called to duty all over our region when someone becomes lost, or for investigations. Her nose is our gain.

Next week's Town Board Workshop on the 12th will be largely an executive session as we discuss the preliminary Budget, primarily salaries, as well as hold a client-attorney meeting to discuss some legal matters. On Thursday, the regular Town Board Meeting will continue those discussions in public

where appropriate. Daniel Goldhagen from the Commission on Human Rights will be there to talk about his work for the County. We will be back on Zoom/YouTube.

This weekend the weather looks fabulous once again. Although I will miss terribly our annual Ag Fair, I know it will come around again, and I take heart in that, and in the amazing colors of fall.

Stay colorful, Pine Plains!

Darrah Cloud

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