



LAGRANGE
GEORGIA

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 21, 2020

LaGrange Mayor Leading Newly Formed GMA Equity and Inclusion Commission, Ambassador Andrew Young Delivers Keynote at Inaugural Meeting

Atlanta, Ga. August 21, 2020 – The Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) hosted the first meeting of its Equity & Inclusion Commission on Tuesday, August 20th. Ambassador Andrew Young delivered a virtual keynote address to the 26-member commission (listed below), which is chaired by LaGrange Mayor and GMA First Vice President Jim Thornton and Augusta Mayor Hardie Davis.



LaGrange Mayor Jim Thornton

In his welcome, Davis reminded his fellow Commission members that, “the role of the GMA Equity and Inclusion Commission is to recommend actions that bear witness to the principles of justice, equality and fairness, develop a long-term plan of action to address institutional and systemic racism, and equip city leaders to listen thoughtfully and dialogue constructively with the residents they serve,” he said.

GMA Executive Director Larry Hanson reminded Commission members of the importance of listening deeply, uniting widely, and acting boldly in order to bring justice to the complex systems that shape and influence today’s society. These systems are included in (but not limited to) some of the commission’s focus areas of training and education, state legislation, public safety reform and employment. The Commission will also address, propose and implement solutions for additional impediments to equity including housing, medical access, food disparities and development.

“Today GMA begins its journey to address the ugly legacy of systemic racism and inequality,” said Vince Williams, Union City mayor and GMA president in his remarks to the Commission. “This is a big step, a courageous step and the right step for our cities and the state of Georgia, and our association is uniquely positioned to tackle these issues and serve as a catalyst for lasting change,” he said.

“Solving problems starts with a conversation,” said Commission Co-chair and LaGrange Mayor Jim Thornton, GMA first vice president, as he urged transparency and set the tone of the commission’s time together. “Let’s have an open, honest, and truthful conversation. Let’s practice that virtue that we know as empathy, where we try to place ourselves in someone else’s position and see the world through their eyes.”

“What cities have to do is find a way to create places of peace, places where people get along with each other regardless of their color of skin and how rich or poor they are,” said Ambassador Young during his address. “Places where the law is respected and where education and health are cared for.”

Ambassador Young closed with a message of hope for the Commission and by quoting Georgia music icon, Otis Redding, “Take your time,” he said. “When you have problems, try a little tenderness. When things are going wrong, all it takes is a little respect to go a long way. If we work together as brothers and sisters, we will succeed.”

The commission was created in early June when the GMA officers, led by Dublin Mayor Phil Best, GMA immediate past president, GMA President Vince Williams, sent a statement to the membership that expressed the association’s strong opposition to racism, violence and acts of injustice, inequity and inequality that was occurring across the nation.

With the support of a 12-member GMA staff team, a mid-term report will be issued to the Board of Directors in January 2021, and a final report will be presented to the Board and membership at the 2021 Annual Convention. It is anticipated that the Commission will meet monthly through June 2021.

In addition to launching the Commission, GMA hosted a statewide town hall, “[Cities United: The Road to Equity & Inclusion](#)” with Georgia Public Broadcasting and created a valuable online [Equity & Inclusion Toolkit](#) for all city officials.

GMA Equity & Inclusion Commission Members

Jim Thornton, Mayor, LaGrange (Co-chair)

Hardie Davis, Mayor, Augusta (Co-chair)

Linda Blechinger, Mayor, Auburn
Michelle Cooper Kelly, Mayor Pro Tem, Marietta
Carmen Chubb, Mayor's Chief of Staff, Atlanta
Patti Garrett, Mayor, Decatur
Andrea Gibby, Mayor, Young Harris
Tyree Goodlett, Councilmember, Dalton
Keith Turman, Mayor Pro Tem, Royston
Bianca Motley Broom, Mayor, College Park
Liz Ordiales, Mayor,
Hiawassee
Al Thurman, Mayor, Powder Springs
Amir R. Farokhi, Councilmember, Atlanta
Anthony Ford, Mayor, Stockbridge
Kelly Girtz, Mayor, Athens-Clarke County
Cornell Harvey, Mayor, Brunswick
Lisa Clarke Hill, Mayor Pro Tem, Moultrie
Doug Hollberg, Mayor, Griffin
Isaiah Hugley, City Manager, Columbus
Michael-Angelo James, Mayor, Waycross
Cam Jordan, Deputy Administrator, Fitzgerald
John Reid, Mayor, Eatonton
Matt Seale, Mayor, Ocilla
Julie Smith, Mayor, Tifton
Dr. Clemontine Washington, Mayor Pro Tem, Midway
Mike Young, Mayor, McRae-Helena

About the Georgia Municipal Association: Based in Atlanta, GMA is a voluntary, non-profit organization that provides legislative advocacy, educational, employee benefit and consulting services to all of Georgia's 538 cities. GMA anticipates and influences the forces shaping Georgia's cities and provides leadership, tools and services that assist municipal governments in becoming more innovative, effective and responsive. Created in 1933, the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA)

is the only state organization that represents municipal governments in Georgia. For more information, visit www.gacities.com.

Media Contact: Kelli Bennett, Georgia Municipal Associations Director of Communications, kbennett@gacities.com or (678) 686-6242

Katie Mercer Van Schoor, City of LaGrange Marketing/Communications Manager kvanschoor@lagrange.ga.gov or (706) 883-2055

To keep up with the latest news involving the City of LaGrange, go to www.lagrange.ga.gov or follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/lagrangegov, Twitter at [@lagrangegov](https://twitter.com/lagrangegov), & Instagram at instagram.com/cityoflagrange.

###