

Mayor Myrtle W. Figueras

Water – the key to life. Water – An important element to the successful growth and prosperity of our region. Water – the center issue in the fight involving 20 plus years was partially addressed by the July 17 ruling of Judge Paul Magnuson on water withdrawals from Lake Lanier. As Mayor of this City and a resident, I have asked myself what now. I have asked my city council, what now. We have discussed this issue with our staff and legal team and have an answer for the question of “what now”?

Now is not the time to stand by with a wait and see attitude. Now is the time for leadership. I call on all elected officials within this region and county to place all political disputes and ideology's aside and become what we are supposed to be – true Statesmen. The City of Gainesville has been the leader in utilities for Gainesville-Hall County for decades. We are blessed by the vision of previous city leaders and our proximity to Lake Lanier. Our utility department and City is always referred to as leaders in the water business and as a model for much of the state. We did not get this reputation by sitting around. As your Mayor and on behalf of this Council, I am here to reassure our customers both within the City limits and in Hall County that we will continue to lead.

The city is initiating a two pronged approach to Judge Magnuson's ruling. First, we will continue our partnership with the other water providers to appeal the Judge's decision. The City has been in partnership with the other water providers since these court proceedings began. We have been a part of the decision making process with the City of Atlanta, the Governor, EPD and other metro water providers. We will maintain our presence in the decision-making process as we continue our alliance to make sure our voice is heard and our needs are represented.

Second, I am asking the City Council to approve a resolution which will authorize staff to immediately begin the design and construction of a water treatment plant at the Cedar Creek reservoir. In 2006, Hall County asked us to begin serving unincorporated Hall County with their water needs and our use and eventual ownership of the Cedar Creek reservoir was part of that agreement. By moving forward we can begin using water from the reservoir within three years in the unfortunate event that a settlement is not reached and Judge Magnuson's order goes into full effect. This is four years before Glades Farm will be able to begin drawing water in a best case scenario. The Cedar Creek reservoir will be designed so it can be easily expanded to accept water from other sources, such as unnamed future reservoirs or the Glades Farm Reservoir if the County so desires. This will allow us to use current distribution lines already in the ground and thereby reduce cost and duplication of services.

Again, I ask all of our local elected officials and local legislative delegation to support the city as we move forward to prepare for the future of this great city and continue as we position ourselves to still be a leader in water serving our customers in the City and in unincorporated Hall County.

I would now like to ask the PUD staff to review the resolution and the process of developing the water treatment plant at Cedar Creek.