

Whoever wins Nov. 6, let's move Oak Grove forward

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Hello from the desk of Traci Cunningham, the executive director of Oak Grove Tourism Commission and Valor Hall. I thought I would share my thoughts and views on this election now that we are on the final lap.

I have been the Tourism Executive Director for 14 years. I have seen elections come and go and I must say this one in particular has been very eye opening and quite frankly, unnerving.

I have a deep love and appreciation for this little city. That is why I work so hard to get it recognized year after year. My passion for Oak Grove is what drives me to do what I do. My number one goal is to promote and market Oak Grove as a visitor's destination and create a defined economic impact.

Fourteen years ago, there was only a small walking trail in Oak Grove called the War Memorial Walking Trail. This was not good enough for the commissioners of Oak Grove Tourism, they wanted to do more for Oak Grove and had a vision for this city. The board and myself came together with many concepts and designs and I am so proud of what it has become.

The walking trail is now home to the Viceroy Amphitheater, Valor Hall Conference & Event Center, butterfly garden, the 1890s one-room schoolhouse, 18-hole disc golf course and our ever so popular international and regional award-winning festivals.

All of these were just a dream once but have come to life and are bringing more visitors in than ever.

With the elections quickly approaching, I am sure I am not the only one saying "thank God this is almost over." I too have seen the ugly that this political season has brought out. I have heard the name bashing and mudslinging. But I have also seen a lot of good come out of it. Our community is energized and restless, ready to make changes. Businesses are remodeling and even moving to upgraded buildings while still staying in our city. Yes, some businesses are leaving, but there are so many new businesses coming in as well. Our police department is growing. And I know that many of you share my excitement in the possibility of a horse track coming in and calling us home.

I, like you, am anxiously awaiting our decision on who our next city officials will be. As always, I look forward to working closely with all elected officials, so that we can build Oak Grove up and turn it into a city that visitors, residents, and soldiers alike can be proud of.

Even if all city official positions were to stay the same, I believe this election season has brought very good and valid points into public view and change will come about. All of the candidates from the mayoral to city council have had great ideas and aspirations.

I know that elections can be daunting to everyone, but I also know that they are necessary, and I believe that only greatness is to come. I want to wish every candidate good luck in this endeavor and the journey that is to come. Keep on the straight and narrow because ultimately, we will all win. Best of luck to all.

(TRACI CUNNINGHAM is the executive director of Oak Grove Tourism Commission and Valor Hall.)