

## **Lisa Vierling**

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*"Know Christ-Know Peace/No Christ-No Peace"*

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## 1. Rev. Frank Thomas

Good evening Mr. Mayor and Council, I am submitting my comments this evening to address something recently shared by Mr. Demko before his unexpected and surprising resignation as City Manager. I believe it has been less than a month that he informed Council of several initiatives under review for possible implementation. He stated that these initiatives were being pursued to “advance and foster diversity and inclusion in the City’s work force, operations, and services”.

I specifically would like to focus on one initiative that would budget for adding a new Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Specialist position to the city staff. Having served as an Equal Opportunity Advisor in the army and one of few African-Americans at the Director level at Wake Forest University, I know how critically important it is to have such a person in the organization. Not only would this person serve as a “watch dog” for employees’ rights, but they would also provide needed feedback to City leadership (Council, the Manager, HR Director, etc). Although Mr. Demko is no longer serving the citizens of High Point, I believe it would add to his legacy if you did everything in your power to see that his initiatives come to pass.

Too many in High Point have felt unheard and underrepresented for far too long. And you have an opportunity to show the entire City that its leaders care about all those who live and work here. I believe if you do not move this crucial initiative forward, you will be sending the message that Mr. Demko’s pursuits were in vain. If we are to be a diverse city, we must have diverse policies and procedures in the City’s work force, operations, and services provided.

So, as you consider the upcoming budget. Please do not use COVID-19 or a (potential) shortfall as an excuse not to “rise to the occasion” and speak up for the voiceless. They have been silenced for far too long.