

2015 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Preparing this address is always a welcome reality check. It's important to look at what we've accomplished in the past year (or years!), how we're doing with ongoing projects and what needs done in our near to long-range future. It's particularly important to share this information with the Woodburn community. Yes, sometimes we have to react to sudden tragedies or years-long economic struggles. But we do have goals, we do have a vision and we keep getting things done.

This is the 13th year that fixing the Woodburn interchange has been a major topic of my address. I am delighted that I will not need to say anything about it in my 14th address. It will be finished, on budget and a year ahead of schedule this summer. Both ODOT and K&E Excavating, the general contractor for the project, deserve applause for their efficiency, creativity and general professionalism as they have directed our project to completion. So does our own public works staff, who have coordinated city projects with the ODOT project and offered flexibility by doing some key things that ODOT could not. I would also like to thank the businesses in the interchange area and residents of Senior Estates and West Woodburn for your patience. We will all share the benefits of a completed project, but you shared more of the pain than the rest of us.

The interchange project shows how many levels of government and private enterprise are needed to get something big done. We received some dedicated federal funding for planning and the park and ride, thanks to our former and current Congressional delegation, as well as some federal highway dollars. About half of the funding came from the Jobs and Transportation Act of 2009 — thank you, Senator Peter Courtney and Representative Betty Komp! Let's not forget that Woodburn is committed to pay \$8 million by the end of the project, and the primary source of that money is development fees. And let's not forget that the project was actually brought to us by the efforts of hundreds of people working for ODOT, K&E and the subcontractors. Bravo to all of them!

It has been exciting to watch the actual interchange transform. It has also been amazing to see the development and redevelopment that has come along with it. Seeing the new KFC, Columbia State Bank and the two new developments on the former car dealership sites emerge has been exciting, and so is knowing that other projects are forthcoming. The interchange project was not just a road project or a source of short-term construction jobs. It is an economic development project whose positive effects will ripple through our community for many years to come.

If you drive from say, City Hall, and head west on Newberg Highway, you will view \$80 million of public investment. After you cross the overpass, look to your left and you will see Winco and Do It Best, whose operations pay millions of dollars toward City, county, fire district and school district services. After that ... you see Soul's Harbor Church and 130 acres of prime industrial land that is in limbo because of Oregon's broken land use system.

Unfortunately, I expect to be talking about the UGB expansion in my 14th State of the City address, although I'd like to hope I'll be talking about some forward progress. A few weeks ago we included a fact sheet that I shared with the members of the Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) at their November meeting in our weekly E-Blast, since we thought the general public would be interested in it as well. I'd like to make a few points from that fact sheet. First, we began the process of expanding our urban growth boundary in 1997 and had that boundary approved by LCDC in 2007. That decision was appealed to the Oregon Court of Appeals, who said nothing about the content of our proposal but said LCDC didn't explain its decision well enough. LCDC approved our expansion again in 2011, the

decision was appealed again, and again the Court of Appeals said nothing about the content of our proposal, but only that the commission did not explain itself well enough. I want to make it clear that if there was something in our actual proposal that the Court of Appeals said we couldn't do or had to do a different way, we would have followed their direction.

The parties appealing our proposal contend that we included too much industrial land. Very conveniently, about 130 acres too much. While we have never received a formal settlement offer, we have been told that the appeals would go away if we took the property west of the freeway off the table. We are unwilling to do so for a number of reasons, but the condensed version is because this is the only 100 acre or more industrial site within 5 minutes of I-5 between the Columbia River and the Salem city limits. It is valuable, it is desirable and it would have been developed years ago in 49 other states. Now that the highway improvements are almost done, it is shovel ready. The other 300 acres in our proposal need several million dollars' worth of investment to reach that point.

We have expressed our frustration to both of our legislators, representatives from the Governor's Office and the director of DLCD, Oregon's land use agency. We were offered the option of mediating our situation, and agreed to do so last July, but have so far made almost no progress in getting to the table. So, this fall we made the decision to hire a lobbyist to either help advance us to the negotiating table or advance a legislative solution to our problem.

As of this address (January 21), we remain committed to a mediated solution if we can get to the table in a reasonable time. However, we recognize both that mediation sometimes fails, and that even if it succeeds, land use is so complicated that you need legislation to clean it up, as happened with Washington County. A would-be developer asked Legislative Counsel to draft a bill ratifying Woodburn's urban growth boundary, as approved twice. That has been done, and it has been introduced as HB 2649 by Representative Komp. As you might imagine, I expect to have a great deal more to say about this topic in the coming days and weeks!

Last year, for the first time in several years, I was able to say that the City's financial position is stable, and that we might be able to make some modest service improvements in the 2014-15 budget. I'm pleased to say that we were able to add a few extra library hours and two police officer positions to this year's budget. I'm also happy to say that improving property values and some of the new construction that has taken place recently have led to some pleasantly unexpected tax revenues that we want to find good use for. We have some unmet needs from years where we were barely getting by. Woodburn's elected body and our staff will talk about these before the budget process gets too far under way.

The Woodburn City Council has a tradition of meeting and setting goals for the coming two years a few weeks after newly-elected members are sworn in. This year, we are going to expand our agenda to talk about goals that may be three, five even 10 years down the road. There are things that may be impossible to accomplish in one budget cycle or one election cycle, but need to be done to meet the needs of a growing community. We hope to not only identify longer-range goals, but to break them down so we can take steps toward accomplishing them and measuring our progress along the way. It's exciting to work with a group of forward-thinking elected officials who want to think bigger than we have at some times in the past. It is also exciting to have the financial ability to back up some of our dreams.

When I talk about the State of the City, I spend most of my time talking about City of Woodburn projects and initiatives. Part of the job of Mayor is letting citizens know what their local government is up to. But,

of course, Woodburn is more than a local government organization. We are a community. We have had our challenges in recent years, but we have supported each other and accomplished some amazing things in the meantime. We are a resilient and hard-working community. I see a great future for us in 2015.