

State of the City 2022

Tonight, we present the State of the City as Roseburg prepares to mark its sesquicentennial -- it's our 150th anniversary as an incorporated city.

First, thank you to everyone for joining us: the Roseburg City Council, our City staff and most importantly, the residents of this great city.

I'd like to welcome our newest City Councilor, Shelley Briggs Loosley, who was appointed to fill the Ward 2 vacancy in June. I'd also like to thank our City staff for the hard work, talent and dedication they give Roseburg and its residents 365 days a year.

In 2022, we will celebrate 150 years as a city. First known as Deer Creek, Roseburg was incorporated on October 3, 1872, about 20 years after Aaron Rose and his family opened an inn near the confluence of Deer Creek and the South Umpqua River. A post office and school soon opened, and, in 1854, the county seat moved here.

The city grew as an agricultural empire and became a stagecoach stop between Portland and Sacramento. In 1872, Roseburg began an economic boom after becoming the southern terminus of the Oregon and California Railroad. Vast forests led to sawmills opening – including Roseburg Forest Products in 1936. Willie Nelson and Johnny Cash immortalized Roseburg in the song “Lumberjack.” We were dubbed the “Timber Capital of the Nation.”

The city has overcome adversity including the Great Flood of 1890; the 1959 truck blast that killed 14 people and leveled eight downtown blocks; the 1964 Christmas flood; the blizzard of '69 and “Snowmageddon” of 2019; and the 2015 Umpqua Community College shooting that left an instructor and eight students dead.

Three presidents have visited: Bill Clinton, Barack Obama and Rutherford B. Hayes, who arrived by stagecoach in 1880 and was escorted by General William Sherman, who rode shotgun to protect the president and first lady from stagecoach bandit “Black Bart” Bolles.

Today, Roseburg's still going strong. Visitors flock here for Graffiti Weekend, Music on the Half Shell, local wineries, Umpqua Dairy ice cream and Abby's Pizza. We've celebrated Halloween in the Neewollah parade for nearly 90 years. The city has a state-of-the-art Public Safety Center, our library opened in 2018 and we partner with the Cow Creek Tribe, who's long made Umpqua Valley their home.

Despite the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, Roseburg had a great year. Here are highlights:

- 2021 was another challenging year for staff, who stayed flexible and worked around pandemic-induced obstacles.
- The City made strides to address rising homelessness problems. The new Homeless Commission began exploring strategies and the City got \$1.5 million to establish a navigation center by this July. Staff and commission members are pursuing a location and nonprofit operator.
- Nonprofits and the City just opened a warming shelter for unhoused people during severe weather through March 31.
- Nearly 300 camps – allowed to stay put during COVID-19 restrictions -- have been removed from City properties.
- The City got \$5.2 million in American Rescue Plan Act money for pandemic response and fiscal recovery.
- Parking enforcement soon resumes downtown and in the Laurelwood area.
- Fire Marshal Monte Bryan was promoted to fire chief.
- The library completed Phase 2 renovations.

The City has accomplished much more. A year-end report will be available on the City website tomorrow. Here's a snapshot of the work undertaken last year:

Administration

The administration works with all departments to support direct services to residents, provides primary Council and employee support, accomplishes Council goal tasks and creates a safe, healthy work environment. City Manager Nikki Messenger, Assistant City Manager/City Recorder Amy Sowa, Human Resources Director John VanWinkle,

Communications Specialist Suzanne Hurt and Management Assistants Koree Tate and Autumn David work closely on these activities.

City Recorder

The City Recorder's office processed many business registrations, permits, licenses and public records requests while enhancing public involvement in virtual meetings through an improved Zoom platform. Collaborating with Community Development to address derelict properties, two foreclosed properties bought last year were sold, then improved or demolished and later returned to the market. Councilor Sheila Cox resigned and Shelley Briggs Loosley replaced her. The Council continued to meet virtually.

Human Resources

HR Director John VanWinkle spearheaded pandemic response -- interpreting rapidly changing state and federal laws and guidance, and creating policy to ensure City compliance. Safety measures to protect staff and the public include virtual meetings, restricted public access, masking and social-distancing requirements, and work-from-home options.

In 2021, 12 fulltime and two part-time seasonal employees were hired, six employees were promoted or transferred, and 17 left City jobs. The City earned its 20th annual League of Oregon Cities Safety Award. Employee safety training focused on COVID risks and hazard control.

Communications

Since joining administration in May, Communications Specialist Suzanne Hurt has given communication support to all departments and bolstered community engagement and the City's reputation by informing residents about City activities, programs, decisions and accomplishments through accurate, engaging press releases; a polished City Connection e-newsletter with a new photo contest; media relations; website updates and social media posts. She assists Police and Fire with communications and oversees twice-weekly tapings with a local TV station. In 2021, 115 press releases were posted -- more than twice the year before. Our social media presence grew with high-quality, timely, relevant posts. We had 976 Facebook posts - reaching tens of thousands of people each month, such as September, when posts reached more than 241,000 people.

Finance/IT/Municipal Court

The City has weathered the pandemic's economic storm well, thanks to a Finance Department led by Ron Harker. Moody's continues to rate the city as Aa3 -- so our credit is high quality and very low risk. The Annual Comprehensive Financial Report the "audit" -- once again earned national recognition. The department expanded utility billing to include pay-by-phone and e-billing, and established Municipal Court online payments. Finance mounted critical COVID-19 responses by launching a payment plan option for outstanding water bills; tracking COVID impacts on City revenues, financial conditions and payroll; and tracking federal COVID-relief funds.

The IT division's major support of continued operations during COVID included:

- Supporting employees' remote work and ensuring network security and stability;
- Establishing backup wireless communications between City Hall and the Public Safety Center;
- Replacing security cameras and digital video recorders at City Hall and the Public Works shop;
- Hardening security on the City's wireless infrastructure and upgrading City phones and server operating systems.

Library

The library, led by Kris Wiley, completed Phase 2 renovations while high local COVID cases kept the building off-limits to the public for eight months. The grant-funded renovation managed by Public Works brought new seating, tables and a mural. The meeting room was transformed with new carpet, paint, lighting and audiovisual equipment. Staff provided weekly drive-up service for nearly 3,100 vehicle visits and implemented grant-funded projects such as an expanded kids' Summer Reading Program. Temporary employees assembled 3,000 grab-and-go craft kits to be given out through drive-up service and elsewhere. An Oregon Community Foundation grant bought a 2021 Toyota minivan, branded vehicle wrap and more.

Community Development

The Community Development Department, led by Stuart Cowie, processed 324 Site Review applications and 254 are moving forward, with commercial development valued at nearly \$44 million and residential development at nearly \$10 million -- including 30 new houses. Substantial new developments include an 8,000-square-foot building on Harvard that's now home

to Mountain Mike's Pizza. The Gecko RV & Boat Storage buildings on Pomona Street also are done. In the Diamond Lake Urban Renewal District, Deer Creek Village's 68 affordable apartments and Oak Springs' 89 apartments are complete. An Urban Growth Boundary swap application is expected to be completed this winter and submitted to City, county and state entities, which are all likely to hold public hearings. A RARE AmeriCorps participant began assisting on the project, whose goal is to provide more suitable property for residential development.

Code enforcement achieved 76% efficiency by resolving 84 of 110 nuisance-abatement complaints. From mid-July through November, about 300 camps illegally located on public property and 61 tons of garbage have been removed from 12 locations, including Gaddis Park, Templin Beach and Fowler Street Bridge. Before July, clean-ups could only involve cleaning around camps due to COVID-19 restrictions and campers not being required to move. By December, the City had spent nearly \$50,000 for county work crews, dumpsters and dump fees.

Public Works/Parks and Recreation

Public Works staff, led by Brice Perkins, work hard daily to ensure your drinking water is safe, your streets and storm-drainage facilities are maintained, and your parks and open spaces are safe, clean and green. Staff maintain public infrastructure such as landscaping, turf, park and airport facilities, city-owned buildings, the water treatment plant, pavement, signs, and pump stations and reservoirs. They remove graffiti and leaves, clean storm drains, sweep streets, and install and repair water mains and connections – handling 5,733 work orders last year and producing more than 1.7 billion gallons of clean drinking water. Engineering reviewed 232 site development applications -- a 158% increase over 2020 -- and 36 single-family home applications.

Beulah Park was renovated thanks largely to Engineering Technician Rick Castle, who stretched a \$158,000 Oregon Parks and Recreation Department grant farther by designing the project and managing City employees and contractors. The park reopened with updated ADA-accessible play equipment, sidewalks, access paths, landscaping, shade trees and a resurfaced basketball court. Castle was honored as an “everyday hero” by the American Public Works Association. Recently, Recreation Coordinator Val Ligon replaced Kris Ammerman as parks and recreation program manager.

Water utility projects totaling more than \$7 million included the West Avenue Transmission Main, the Washington Avenue bore crossing, and work on the water treatment plant's backup power supply. The City also removed Mt. Nebo obstructions that were preventing instrument-approach airport landings on cloudy nights and installed new runway lights and wind cones. The City expects to win approval for a special nighttime approach procedure this spring.

Fire Department

The Fire Department underwent significant changes, from retirements and promotions to navigating ongoing challenges from COVID and local wildfires, which included mutual aid assistance to the Green District wildland fire and assisting with the Glide's Jack fire. Yet the department continued providing the highest level of service possible to residents. Fire Marshal Brian Jewell and two new firefighters were hired.

Fire personnel responded to 6,228 calls for service, from structure fires with major property loss to lift assists and medical aid calls -- many involving COVID patients. That's a 6.7% increase over 2020. The department responded to 109 fire calls, nearly 3,900 EMS calls and more than 2,000 other calls, including several dozen false alarms. Seventeen significant fire investigations were performed.

Training included using two commercial structures before demolition. The department acquired two new hazardous materials emergency response vehicles, a new fire engine, a brush vehicle and 34 air tanks. Backup generators were installed at Stations 2 and 3. Take a look at the online year-end report for more statistics.

Police Department

Police usually arrest offenders and take them to jail to ensure immediate consequences and/or prevent continued problems. Due to COVID, our officers are limited to mostly issuing citations. That's as discouraging to officers as it is to our community.

Yet by Dec. 7, Police had taken 5,933 police reports and responded to 36,976 calls for service -- over 6,000 more calls than that time last year. Sgt. Doug Walton was awarded two Medals of Honor after the then-off-duty officer tackled the suspect in the Budget 16 Motel shooting that killed a man and injured two women. Walton likely saved more lives by thwarting a

rampage. Officers Dawson Batsch and Brandon Halter were honored for rescuing a drowning woman from the South Umpqua River.

Detectives investigated major crimes, including:

- The Budget 16 Motel shooting;
- Tracking and capturing two multiple-bank robbery suspects;
- Many child abuse and sexual assault cases, leading to many convictions.

Police and Fire assisted with Roseburg High School's graduation parade, a ceremonial National Guard march, and 9-11 ceremony at Mercy Medical Center, a courthouse Peace Officer Memorial, the Veterans Day Parade, Christmas tree lighting and Salvation Army's Angel Tree gift-giving. Police also took part in a Dress-a-Child event and Shop with a Cop.

Court rulings and federal or state COVID guidelines kept Police from addressing illegal camping on public property until July – frustrating and discouraging officers and residents. The officer assigned to parks and downtown gave a resource pamphlet to every camper possible found on City property and brought a social worker to connect the unhoused to services. ADAPT won another three-year grant to continue the Mobile Crisis Team with Police. The team responded to more than 590 calls and diverted many people from jail or the ER. Officers continue trying to connect unhoused people with resources and relatives. Police and Community Development continue to partner on ongoing camp cleanups.

K9 teams helped capture 42 suspects, leading to many felony and misdemeanor charges and uncovering evidence. The dog and detective assigned to the Douglas Interagency Narcotics Team found 46.65 pounds of methamphetamine, 222 grams of heroin and 1,000 grams of cocaine, and seized more than \$33,000 in drug transaction cash and property.

Those were the highlights of the work that happened in Roseburg over the last year. Staff continue doing their best despite COVID exposures, quarantines and changing workplace policies and procedures.

Here's what's expected in 2022:

- The City will soon start planning how we will celebrate our 150th anniversary and we encourage residents to join the events
- The navigation center will open by July and later, a camp location -- both run by nonprofits. The Homeless Commission is working to complete these tasks as soon as possible;
- Staff has applied for a \$10 million grant for major Stewart Park improvements, which would include new basketball, sand volleyball and pickleball courts; turf, lighting and spectator seating for the soccer and softball fields; and new and resurfaced outdoor tennis courts with better lighting, concessions, restrooms and spectator seating;
- Staff and the Council will determine how to use \$5.2 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding, which can be used to address COVID-19 pandemic impacts through assistance to households, small businesses, nonprofits or industries such as tourism and hospitality; recouping lost revenue to provide government services; or investing in water, sewer or broadband infrastructure;
- ODOT should begin designing the rehabilitation of the South Umpqua River's Stewart Park Drive or "Green" Bridge to make structural repairs, replace the wooden sidewalk and paint the bridge – which won't happen for several years;
- The City is working with a consultant on a designated bike routes system, to expand and better-connect bike routes and increase other bicycling infrastructure;
- 249 affordable and market-rate apartments and 14 townhouses are under construction. Grading soon begins for 40 townhouses. Also underway are a 31,000-square-foot Aviva Health facility, Cascade Community Credit Union expansion, relocated Grocery Outlet, a new First Interstate Bank and Douglas Electric Cooperative headquarters' reconstruction.

This city has overcome adversity before – and we **will** come out stronger after the pandemic. Let's stay positive and keep working together to make Roseburg the best small town in Oregon!