

Good evening, Fellow Citizens of Ashland, and welcome to our short program outlining and celebrating some of our civic accomplishments during this past year. When I say “our accomplishments”, I truly mean that in the most expansive use of the term...it is all of us working together in good faith to achieve this essential civic work.

First off, here are four items that our city of Ashland is not going to do in 2020.

1. We are not going to log Lithia Park to make way for the new Japanese-style Garden.
2. We are not going into bankruptcy
3. We are not going to launch a deer sterilization program even though that might be a popular sentiment
4. And...we are not going to build a 3-story, glass and brick city hall monument glorifying the current city council.

**What did we do in 2019? Here are some highlights.....**

### **Our City Council**

- Conducted 42 Business Meetings and Study Sessions;
- Passed 19 ordinances and 28 resolutions.

### **Our Community Development Department**

- assisted over 4,500 walk-in customers;
- issued 1,050 building permits;
- performed comprehensive plan reviews on 283 projects;
- conducted over 4,000 project inspections.

### **Housing Program:**

- Awarded and distributed \$134,000 in Social Service grants to local non-profit organizations providing services to Ashland’s low-income residents;
- Awarded \$150,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds:
  - To provide health and safety upgrades to homes occupied by seniors and peoples with disabilities;
  - To provide emergency rent, utility or security deposit assistance to low income residents at risk of homelessness;
  - \$55K was allocated to OHRA, for their their 7 night winter shelter project

### **Planning Division**

- Updated the Housing Element of the Ashland Comprehensive Plan which was last updated over 30 years ago.
- The Trails Master Plan Update (TMP) was completed by the Parks Commission, reviewed by the Planning Commission and is now before the CC.

In 2019, these significant construction projects were either completed or well underway:

- Philips Corner, a 33-unit housing complex located at North Mountain and East Main Streets;
- a new 15-unit apartment project at Siskiyou Boulevard and Park Street;
- the first 12-unit cottage housing development in the City located on Laurel Street;
- and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's employee and actor housing and offices in downtown Ashland.

#### **Our Public Works Department**

- Completed work on the Hersey Street Rehabilitation project on time and under budget;
- Completed construction of the Park Estates and Terrace Street water pump stations;
- Constructed a new and safe ADA sidewalk adjacent to the Plaza;
- Completed the Airport Master Plan;
- Completed the Water Master Plan Update;
- Continued general system maintenance and improvements for all Public Works Divisions: Airport, City Facilities and Buildings, Fleet, Storm Drains, City Streets, Wastewater, and Water Treatment.

#### **Our Electric Department**

- offered stellar service maintaining a Service Reliability Index of 99.997%, an industry hallmark,
- installed new conduit and vaults all along Hersey Street to accommodate future growth and resiliency plans;

#### **Our Ashland Fire & Rescue Department**

- responded to over 4,100 emergency calls last year, transporting over 2,000 patients to local hospitals;
- Our **Wildfire Division** just added five more years to our Ashland Forest Resiliency partnership agreement with the U.S. Forest Service, Lomakatsi, and The Nature Conservancy;
- The **Firewise Communities** preparedness program grew to 35 neighborhoods this year. Ashland has the distinction of organizing the most Firewise neighborhoods in the entire state.

#### **Our Police Department**

- Handled 32,540 calls for service an increase of over 3800 calls from 2018 (an almost 12% increase);
- Directly involved more officers in saving lives via CPR and other medical intervention methods in 2019 than in the previous several years combined;
- Handled over 3,500 criminal investigation cases;

## **Administration**

- Facilitated four study sessions and seven regular meetings for the Citizens' Budget Committee, helping the City Council understand and approve the 2019/2021 Biennial Budget;
- Our IT Division replaced a phone system that was over twenty years old with a fully digital and network integrated system;
- Our Utility Billing Division completed a challenging transition to a new software system.

Our **City Recorder's office** created a section called "Council Meeting Outcomes" on the City website to help update citizens on what actions were taken at the Council meetings

## **Our Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission**

- Developed the Lithia Park Master Plan with strong engagement from the community.
- Approved the redesign/rebuilding of the Japanese-style Garden with work beginning in 2020;
- Completed fuel reduction on 94 acres city-wide: Siskiyou Mountain Park, Westwood Park, Hald-Strawberry Park, and on the Lithia Park hillside;
- The Parks Commission and City Council approved a revenue bond to build a new pool at the existing site in Hunter Park; and
- The revitalized Senior Services Division extended their reach to the community through engagement with partners and business sponsors.

**Finally, in 2019, Ashland celebrated 50 years of friendship with its Sister City, Guanajuato, Mexico. A big thank you to the Ashland Chamber of Commerce, the Amigo Club, Southern Oregon University, and the City of Guanajuato for making the celebration happen.**

And now to Mayor Stromberg for the State of the City Address.....