

# State of the City Address

Corvallis, Oregon

The Honorable Mayor Charles C. Tomlinson

Presented to the Corvallis City Council and the People of Corvallis

At The Rotary Club of Greater Corvallis

January 2010

Welcome to the 2010 State of the City Address. It is an honor to report last year's activity and outline a framework for this year's direction.

The *Corvallis 2020 Vision Statement* serves as our roadmap for the future development of our community. This State of the City follows the seven sections of the Vision Statement, which is available on the City's website. Each section contains a Report Card and a 2010 Agenda.

Corvallis is an extraordinary place to live, work and play. Celebrate Corvallis reminded me again that the 'special sauce' of Corvallis is people who care about their community and who care about each other. This is not to say that we do not have our different opinions but we share a common ground of this place and our future. I want to recognize Dr. Mark Rampton who is in Haiti attending to an overwhelming number of injured people.

## Central City

### **The Report Card**

To my great disappointment, citizens did not support the Urban Renewal District on the May, 2009 ballot. A future request is possible, maybe when the successes of Albany and Lebanon are more apparent to Corvallis voters. The Lebanon Urban Renewal District is providing funding for collaboration between Lebanon and Linn Benton Community College for an Automotive Research Technology Center and the Albany Urban Renewal District is making a significant difference in downtown revitalization efforts. A bright spot this past year was our downtown's inclusion in the Oregon Main Street Program.

### **2010 Agenda**

The Downtown Commission has a Downtown Strategic Plan to implement and continues its work. They are a diverse and talented group that will provide support and guidance for our downtown. The Downtown Corvallis Association has significant support as it works with the City to invigorate economic and cultural activities in downtown. I urge you to attend Science Pub Corvallis, a collaboration between Oregon State University, the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry and the Downtown Corvallis Association. So far, Maria and I have learned how to make cheese and beer and stay married for another forty-two years.

### Cultural Enrichment and Recreation

#### **The Report Card**

The City Council adopted a goal to create an Arts and Culture Commission. Advocates for this commission want to link cultural activities with economic vitality. The Whiteside Theater Foundation received three major grants this year from cultural and historic preservation organizations.

#### **2010 Agenda**

The City Council expects to create the Commission this year. Many people have expressed interest in the Commission and I look forward to the appointment process once the Council has completed its work. I wish the Whiteside Theater Foundation well on its fund-raising goals and revitalization of this historic landmark.

### Economic Vitality

#### **The Report Card**

Last year's State of the City contained comments about our local economic development organizations and structure; I continue to think these comments are timely and relevant. With that said, the Prosperity That Fits Steering Committee continued to implement the community's Prosperity That Fits Plan. The President held a Jobs Forum late in the year and I moderated local forums; thanks to Kathleen Hutchinson for helping facilitate these forums. Representatives of Business Oregon, Cushman and Wakefield and Hewlett Packard continue to work together to find tenants for HP buildings and I want to acknowledge the governor's support of these efforts. On a regional level, Mayors and County Commissions of the cities and counties along the Route 34 corridor began meeting to determine if they want to form a coordinated regional economic development organization. Our Enterprise Zone attracted new business development.

#### **2010 Agenda**

The Council is considering an Enterprise Zone expansion this year. The zone should be expanded to include the Hewlett Packard campus and the Sunset Research Park as these two areas, in addition to the South Corvallis area,

gives our economic development efforts significant options for business retention and recruitment. The Route 34 Corridor Economic Development project will continue to be developed but this effort is not trivial. I will work to augment the HP Marketing Team with members of the CH2M Hill Site Selection and Economic Development practice. Oregon State University and Linn Benton Community College should also become part of the marketing team to bring their talents to the effort. These marketing partners will be successful in identifying new tenants to occupy these spaces. Several City Councilors are beginning a review of city economic development policies with the goal of investigating the Council's role in economic development.

### Education and Human Services

#### **The Report Card**

Significant stimulus funds were used by the school district to retain teachers and staff during the past school year. The pre-K to 20 education system and Benton County continue to be impacted by the state budget downturn. I want to recognize Benton County Commissioner Jay Dixon and the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness Task Force for completing their work.

#### **2010 Agenda**

Benton County was awarded a significant grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to focus on childhood health issues in south Corvallis. The City of Corvallis and others will collaborate on this effort. Our two organizations have much work to do over the next four years. There are significant benefits from engaging in this Healthy Kids/Healthy Community initiative. Oregon State University continues to be successful in attracting Federal research dollars to campus and increasing student enrollment. The University's focus on healthy people, a healthy economy and a healthy planet is shorthand for the *City's 2020 Vision Statement*. I am pleased that this congruency exists and I expect it will serve as a springboard for future initiatives.

### Governing and Civic Involvement

#### **The Report Card**

The number of people willing to serve on City Boards and Commissions has risen over the past year. I am on Facebook and Twitter, attempting to reach a broader group of constituents through virtual Council Corners. The Governor's Revenue Restructuring Task Force presented their recommendations to the governor and legislature and to my dismay; the state legislature enacted none of the recommendations of the Task Force.

#### **2010 Agenda**

The City's most significant challenge will be to manage its future budgets. The Council and staff are working closely together to keep our operating

budget in balance but rising costs and constrained property tax growth will continue. The Budget Commission heard last evening that the City faces budget challenges as a result of structural changes in our financial environment. Lack of development, appeals of large value properties, declining Franchise Fees and a decrease in Medicare reimbursement rates contribute to flat revenue growth. Government costs continue to increase, driven by higher medical insurance and labor agreement costs. Our PERS rate is projected to increase as well. The Budget Commission will be asked to consider budget reductions to all departments in the next fiscal year.

How will Measure 66 and 67 fare next week? I surely do not know. Whether the tax measures succeed or fail, the state legislature and governor must deal with budget, tax and employee expense reform. The legislature continues to add to local government's budget burden through local preemptions, unfunded mandates and labor-related legislation that drive our costs higher. The legislature is considering changing the Business Energy Tax Program that provides significant funding for the Corvallis Transit Service. The legislature must not sweep up the city's share of state revenue sharing monies to balance the state budget. State budgets, and local government budgets, are not sustainable and systemic change is required to resolve these issues.

### Protecting Our Environment

#### **The Report Card**

The City Council completed a Community Energy Strategy and a review of current Council energy policies in the built environment and transportation. The strategy focuses on energy efficiency, energy conservation and local energy generation using measurable goals and outcomes. The Council also adopted a goal to work with partners to identify restoration of riparian and wetland habitat. The Corvallis Sustainability Coalition has incredible high levels of energy that will set Corvallis on a trajectory toward a more sustainable community.

#### **2010 Agenda**

The Corvallis Sustainability Coalition continues Plan implementation activities this year. The activities range from Community Diversity to Waste Water reduction. This implementation will proceed on two parallel tracks as it did last year: the Council's public policy discussion and the Coalition's focus on grassroots efforts to accomplish action items.

### Where People Live

#### **The Report Card**

City staff continues to work on rental issues and Willamette Neighborhood Housing Services completed more affordable housing units in 2009. What has been disturbing last year is the high level of foreclosures in Benton and

Linn County caused by the financial crisis. Willamette Neighborhood Housing Services offers mortgage foreclosure counseling.

**2010 Agenda**

The Council is interested in investigating the South Corvallis Town Center to determine if there are barriers to the development of a grocery store in south Corvallis.

Conclusion

Community leadership, from the economic, environmental and social sectors, is vital our communities future success. I urge all of you to participate. Lead where you can and in a role that benefits all.