

State of the City 2020

Looking Back - A Review of 2019

As I reflect on the accomplishments achieved by our City this past year, I am reminded that we have completed many projects and are well on our way to completing many more. Although the Council and City Staff have worked hard together and have a lot of things to be proud of, the work goes on and we have new challenges ahead. Today I would like to present a short review of the year 2019 in and a short preview of 2020.

As I begin, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the passing of our beloved Mayor Sandy Larson this past year. Sandy was an inspirational leader who loved the City and seemed to be everywhere, involved in helping the citizens of Veneta. She set high standards for me to live up to, as I try to do my best, to be your Mayor.



Mayor Keith Weiss

Community Development

Now that West Broadway has been spruced up, and building on the success of the Farmers Market, the City has added a Pop-Up business area where local businesses can display their wares. Music has been provided and it has turned out to be a fun shopping experience where folks can

meet, have a drink, shop and listen to music.

Veneta Works

VenetaWorks is a collection of programs, events, and initiatives curated by the City of Veneta in partnership with Oregon RAIN (Regional Accelerator and Innovation Network),

and RDI (Rural Development Initiatives), aimed at promoting and supporting entrepreneur-based economic development.

Among its activities, the program brought experts to the community for a monthly topic-driven speaker series, launched an accelerator program to

help local businesses grow, and, helped area entrepreneurs find the resources they need. In its first year of its existence, 30 entrepreneurs took advantage of the VenetaWorks services to help launch or improve their businesses.

City Finances

The City, once again, received a clean opinion from the auditors on the FY 2018/2019 Financial Statements and Report. Primarily due to large capital projects the city-wide expenditures exceeded new revenue for the year. This necessitated the use of fund balance ("savings") in some funds; however, the use was included in the budget and the ending fund bal-

ance in most of the operating funds is still well above the established minimums.

We submitted the FY 2019/2020 adopted budget, in October, to the Government Financial Officer's Association Budget Award Program; however, we have not received any notification yet. If we do receive the award, it will be the 7th consecutive year.

Broadband

The City has worked all year to complete a plan to connect Veneta to Eugene's broadband fiber network. That would, when completed, provide more opportunity for internet service than what is currently available now.

It was hoped we would be able to connect by now. However, a challenge in obtaining the proper permits

needed to physically bring the fiber across a small area between Eugene and Veneta has led to delays. The City is working feverishly to work out the details and obtain the required permits. Once the fiber is connected, additional providers could offer less expensive alternatives for our internet needs.

Public Works

The Public Works Department has, as usual, kept the City running smoothly and looking great without much of the fanfare they deserve. In addition to their day to day duties, here are a few other larger projects that they have worked on this year:

100 YEAR STORM

In February the area was hit with one of the largest winter events in our area in recent memory. There were several days of snow and up to 20 inches blanketed the City. City Staff and the Public Works Department worked in concert to restore things to normal as soon as possible. Some residents were without power for several days. The City Hall was able to get back on line after 1 day. The Public Works Department worked round the clock to clear and plow City streets and got at least 1 lane open on most streets so residents could move about if needed.

JACK KELLEY LIFT STATION

A not so pleasant, but important subject is the movement of sewage from areas of our City to the City treatment plant. An area in the northeast part of the City needed to be completely reworked for that purpose. Pumps and piping were installed. As you recall, it seemed like the excavation between highway 126 and the shopping center seemed to go on forever. The project is now complete and there is a new state of the art pumping station on Jack Kelly Drive which is operating efficiently.

MULTI-USE POOL

After considerable efforts, funding was appropriated for the building of the City's Multi-Use pool, (better known as the Kiddie Pool). Construction was completed and we had a ribbon-cutting ceremony on June 15th. The new addition looks wonderful and has been used extensively. We now can provide a safe and inviting place for families with babies and toddlers to be introduced to the water and learn beginning water safety and swimming skills. It is an inviting place for family entertainment.

CITY PARK

A ribbon-cutting event for the major improvements to the City Park was also held on June 15th. State Senator Prozanski was in attendance. Wow, what an improvement. There are pathways for strolling, and benches to sit and enjoy the beautiful scenery. There is also new playground equipment for the youngsters. The beautiful landscaping makes it an inviting place for a picnic or just a place to spend some time with family or friends. Additional improvements are scheduled in the coming months. The local VFW Post 9447 has complimented the park with a very nice Veterans Memorial honoring those who have bravely served our country.

Veneta Homeless Advocacy Board (VHAB)

The City of Veneta recognizes the challenges facing the homeless community. Many are Veterans who helped defend our country. We continue to develop ways to help make their lives better and to provide a bridge back into a better way of life. The City has been meeting with the VHAB on a monthly basis to develop ways to improve the conditions of the people who are homeless in Veneta.

The City has passed ordinances which establish rules and regulations to make it possible for faith based organizations to provide transitional camping on their premises. It is hoped that very soon these opportunities will begin to help reduce the homeless population in our community. In addition to our efforts, the Love Project located at the Fern Ridge Service Center, has free groceries that are distributed to needy families, some of our faith based organizations in town are providing hot meals, and one such place operates a warming center for the homeless to get out of the weather on those very cold nights. Much still has to be done, but we are at least on a path to help.



LAW ENFORCEMENT

The City endeavors to provide a safe and secure place for its citizens to reside. We currently contract with the Lane County Sheriff's Office to assign to the City 4 full time deputies and a ½ time Sergeant. The cost to the City is substantial; however, the sense of security in our community is invaluable.

Discussions are underway to explore funding options to assist the Fern Ridge School District to be able to hire a full time School Resource Officer. School districts who currently support a Resource Officer report glowing results, and, of course, our children are our most precious asset.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

Since 2014 the City of Veneta has been supporting the formation of a Neighborhood Watch program. In addition, there is an engaged group of concerned citizens that have organized to provide volunteer patrolling in our City. The Neighborhood Watch program helping neighbors watch out for each other, citizens organizing patrols to observe and report, and our local deputies all help make our City safer.



CODE ENFORCEMENT

In response from our citizens, the City is planning to put more of a priority in enforcing the City codes that are in effect. The City will be looking at issues such as, but not limited to, animal control, abandoned vehicles and vehicles parked on front yards and as a reminder, RV's need a permit to park on the street. In addition, the City has recently followed the lead of other cities across the nation in passing an ordinance requiring owner's registration of abandoned, vacant, or distressed properties. This was done to urge property owners to keep their properties maintained and productive.

Events

As in previous years the City has participated in many special events. In March the traditional Easter Egg Hunt was a big hit with the children of the City, with close to 400 in attendance.

On August 6th residents celebrated National Night Out at the recently refurbished City Park. Officers from the Lane County Sheriff's Office and Firefighters from Lane Fire Authority, as well as volunteers from our own neighborhood watch group were present to interact with all. City Staff personnel were on hand to pass out information on emergency preparedness. There were free hamburgers and drinks provided by the Alliance Church.

The Harvest Festival seems to get bigger and better every year. Some highlights included the fun chili cook-off competition, the beer garden, the many vender booths, good eats, music and lots of fun things for the kiddies. This year also included the "Veneta Bicycle Show". There were awards for each age group in each bicycle category. Fun was had by all. The City would like to thank the Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce, the Fern Ridge Kiwanis, the Park Board and Mid Lane Cares for their efforts in organizing these events.

The annual Light Parade in December just seems to get better each year. There were approximately 40 floats. Santa Claus was leading the parade riding on the big red fire truck.

Looking Forward to 2020

2020 CENSUS

Because it is so important for all of us, I have been asked by the Lane Council of Governments, to remind you of the importance of the upcoming 2020 census. Some of the important points why Lane County should strive for a complete count are:

- Distribution of more than \$675 billion annually in federal funds back to tribal, state and local governments.
- Redistricting of state legislative districts.
- Forecasting future transportation needs for all segments of the population.
- Determining areas eligible for housing assistance and rehabilitation loans.
- Assisting local government in planning and implementing programs, services, and emergency response.
- Designating facilities for people with disabilities, the elderly and children.
- Providing important information to use in future planning efforts.
- The State of Oregon could gain a U.S. House of Representatives seat.

As you can see, it is very important to our community, so, please respond to the census.

2020 ELECTION

One more very important event happens this year, the 2020 General Election. I would like to ask any eligible person who is not registered to vote, to do so, and to vote by Election Day, November 3rd, 2020.

Visions / Goals for 2020

VISIONS

My vision for the City of Veneta in 2020 is to continue the level of excellence that the City currently enjoys. The City is growing and we will continue to respond to the community's needs. As we go into 2020, Grocery Outlet has begun construction and is set to open this year. Also, Dollar General has made initial inquiries about putting a new store in our City.

Community and Economic Development will continue to be a priority to keep Veneta a wonderful place to live and play. This year we will complete a Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan to guide the next decade of livability. A short Parks & Recreation community survey is still available online at the City's website until Friday January 31st. I encourage you to go online and have a say in what our parks and outdoor recreation future could look like.

GOALS

Goals the City Council have in place for 2020 include finishing the work listed on the 2019-2020 Council work plan. Completing the Middle Mile fiber project to improve the opportunity for better internet speeds at a competitive cost is included. We look to improve public safety in conversation with the Fern Ridge School District and through our own efforts to keep our neighborhoods clean and safe. All the while we are developing an annual budget this spring that serves citizens' needs and maintains healthy ending fund balances.

CHANGE

In October, our longtime City Administrator, Ric Ingham announced his intention to retire. Ric has helped shape this City for the past 16 years. His dedication to the City has brought much progress to the community. He has always kept the best interests of the residents in mind when making decisions. He will be missed by all, especially by me, as he has been my friend and mentor. We take this time to thank him and wish him well with his future.

After a lengthy search and interview process, Matthew Michel has been hired as the new Veneta City Administrator. Matt is an attorney and former general manager for Lane Electric Cooperative. The City will be in good hands.

STATE OF THE CITY

As we enter into a new decade full of hope, it is with great pride that I hereby profess that the State of the City of Veneta, is EXCELLENT!