

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen. Thank you for coming tonight to the first of what I hope becomes a new tradition in our community; an evening State of the Cities presentation, timed to make it possible for more non-Chamber-member citizens to attend. I would like to thank the Chamber for arranging this event, and acknowledge Western Oregon University President Rex Fuller and this University for hosting us tonight. It is nice to be making this presentation in Monmouth for the first time!

Over the nine years that I have served as its Mayor, the City of Monmouth has changed. We have grown, quickly at times, slowly at others, but always with a continued renaissance downtown. Western Oregon University's enrollment has grown significantly and WOU is now independently governed. Monmouth's government has done an amazing amount of work on its infrastructure over those nine years, with more on the horizon. When you are in the middle of an effort like this, it is sometimes hard to gain a sense of how the work you are doing is perceived by others.

There are many ways to measure the performance of city government. One might ask, "How does our tax burden compare with other cities, and are our citizens getting their money's worth? How are the city's finances? Are projects that benefit the public getting done? What do outside entities like bond rating agencies think of the city and how it is run?"

How is Monmouth doing? We decided to ask the only people whose opinion truly matters: our citizens. According to them, we are doing great. People love living here. They feel safe, they like the services Monmouth offers, and they feel that they are getting a great deal for the funds they are providing to the city. Interestingly, when our process also reached out to people who are NOT Monmouth citizens, such as visitors and from those who work here but live elsewhere, they were impressed with what we are doing as well.

Barney and Worth, the consultants who helped us with the Monmouth Engaged process, had a number of very telling comments about their experience here. Based on their work in other communities they had served, they noted the extremely high rate of participation on the part of Monmouth's residents. They also were amazed at how positively the citizens regard Monmouth's government. They commented that in most communities, specific dark clouds would be noted by participants; for example, high crime, or poor streets, or bad utility services. They heard next to no major negatives from the Monmouth citizens who participated.

I see all of that as validation of what we have been doing. What is the state of the City of Monmouth? According to the people who live here, Monmouth is doing very, very well.

I believe strongly that cities have some basic chores that are their primary duties, duties that must take precedence over all others. Plentiful clean water, good streets, effective policing, and critical public works like sewage treatment are core duties that cities of any size must provide for their citizenry. When those basics are addressed, cities can turn to amenities like parks, libraries, public gathering places and recreation programs.

Also on the list of expanded basics is some sort of economic development effort. Economic Development can take many guises. A city could choose to work to land an industrial expansion, or instead aim to help existing local businesses prosper. One very effective approach is the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main St. Program. Based on experiences in city after city across America, that program offers a simple piece of advice for any economic development effort; start with the infrastructure. So we did!

A full listing of all the infrastructure projects the City of Monmouth has completed during my time as Mayor is long, and truly amazing. I promise to only hit the highlights:

With a city's basic responsibilities in mind, and preparing infrastructure for growth as a guiding principle, over the last 9 years our Public Works department has completed an amazing set of improvements, all the while maintaining their usual sterling level of service. The major projects completed include:

- Dredging of the Sewage Lagoons, and the addition of aeration to them, has doubled capacity and extended their useful life, perhaps by decades.
- Building a new 2M gallon above ground storage tank, and performing critical long-term maintenance on our other tanks, and developing new water sources.
- Coming soon, we will see a major upgrade to the public works headquarters building and storage yard at the S-curves. Just a hint: we're going to have to change the sign!

Monmouth is one of a relative handful of Oregon cities that has its own power company. Not to be outdone by Public Works, Monmouth Power and Light has worked through a variety of projects of their own, with a major one on the horizon.

- The biggest and most obvious success was the construction of the new substation on the south edge of town, making Monmouth the only community in Polk Co. with a redundant power supply.
- its own energy efficiency program when Bonneville Power Administration cut back theirs. We also changed every street light in town to high-efficiency, long life LED fixtures. The result has been to minimize the purchase of more expensive Tier Two power, which has kept electric rates at about half of what those around us pay.
- And most exciting, MPL will soon have a new headquarters facility on the south edge of town near the new substation. This marks the second of the four building updates called for when we did our facilities review a few years ago, and clears the way at the S-curve site for the earlier noted restructuring of Public Works' office and yard facilities... the Public Works facility constitutes the third upgrade, by the way. Only one to go!

In the transportation arena, we have completed three major projects, with two very significant projects coming our way over the next three years:

- Most critical to the safety of school age kids was the Talmadge Road curb and sidewalk project, which was done in conjunction with Polk Co.
- More visible was the S-curve reconstruction... half down, half to go!
- The Main St. streetscape project enhanced downtown and completed a project started in 2000.
- We were able to get ODOT's permission to add a crosswalk at Madrona St. and 99W; now, if we could only get the pedestrian triggered flashing lights to go with it!

One of Monmouth's realities is that our arterial streets are also state highways. Not owning these roads can be a curse, in that we have to follow ODOT's rules for those facilities. It can be a blessing as well, however, because ODOT maintains and occasionally improves those streets.

- In the summer of 2017, ODOT will reconstruct the second half of the Main St. S-curve, with work extending west to Hefley St., at the top of the hill on Main. This project will add curbs, sidewalks, planter strips, true bike lanes, storm drainage, and a center left turn lane.
- Postponed until the summer of 2018, but still headed our way, is a reconstruction of highway 99W through town, with sidewalks, planter strips where room is available, center turn pockets and more!

Last on my list of basic city services, though certainly not least, is Public Safety. Monmouth's Police force is top notch, and the city's very low crime rate shows that. Monmouth's citizens showed the pride they feel in their officers, and their understanding of how untenable the old Library building had become as a Station House, when they approved the bond to purchase and remodel what is now the new Monmouth Police Station. The capable, professional officers employed by the city are now working from a modern facility that enhances their ability to perform their duties, and that reflects the high standards that they constantly strive to meet.

Another important area of responsibility for cities is the maintenance of spaces in which citizens can mingle, recreate, and celebrate. 7 years ago, Monmouth adopted a new Parks Master Plan. This plan included 3 major projects, and noted an important hole in parks coverage. All four of those items, plus one extra project, are finished or are in the works:

- Monmouth's largest park, Madrona Park, has been improved, with walking trails, sports fields, an arboretum and a permanent bathroom.
- The fountain in Main St. Park has been replaced and transformed into a splash play park that draws children (and their parents) downtown all summer long.
- We will soon be opening the curtain on the Main St. Park Amphitheater!
- The long-underutilized Monmouth Recreational Park has been transformed by the creation of the Dog Park.
- Finally, the hole in our parks system coverage, in the southwest corner of town, may be filled with a new park on the same parcel that will hold the new MPL headquarters.

With all this activity, it would have been easy to have let existing parks slide, but instead we even added an amenity or two there, as well!

Earlier, I mentioned the Main St. Program and its suggestion that infrastructure development come first. As you have seen, in Monmouth, it has. Also on the Main St. Program's list of suggestions, however, is the creation of events designed to bring both local residents and visitors out to mingle and to visit local shops; the idea is to help existing business thrive by bringing customers in. Monmouth has embraced that idea with a series of downtown events:

- Music in the park has been rejuvenated, with crowds of 400+ on Wednesday nights in the summer, where crowds of under 100 used to be the norm.
- The city has created an enhanced July 4th celebration, with more vendors, food options and activities being added each year.
- City staff, working with the University's Music Department, has helped to enhance the opening night performance for the annual Mel Brown Jazz Camp.
- "Trick or Treat on Main St." is an event that brings hundreds of children to Main St. each October.

- The city has worked with WOU to transform the annual Tree Lighting into a true community event with the participation of downtown businesses and a parade of lights.

In addition to these Main St. focused events, the city has a wide variety of programs in other areas, all enhancing the quality of life in our community. Examples of these programs include:

- The Senior Center and the wide variety of classes and events held there. From pancake feeds to income tax preparation services to Wii bowling leagues, the Sr. Center tries to offer something for everyone.
- Offering activities ranging from a seed lending program to countless early reading programs for kids, from a wine tasting to an adult coloring book activity (really!), Monmouth's Library is upholding and enhancing its reputation as the community's living room.
- The walking tour of Monmouth's historic buildings has been updated and is available as a smart phone app.
- City staff has worked with Eagle Scout candidates on projects that have created long term value and enhancement of public spaces in town.

I have to mention just one last project, one that has gone unnoticed by most; over the past 9 years, the city has changed its financial software, not once, but twice. Both times the task involved moving decades of records from the old system to the new one. Each transition required tremendous staff effort to implement. Through each conversion, the city had to keep functioning and offering services to its customers and citizens while simultaneously converting to new software. In both cases, Finance Director Mark Dunmire invested an absolutely astounding amount of time and effort in making the transitions relatively painless (at least for everyone else), efficient, and effective. Mark's dedication to this city, as well as that of his staff, is deserving of special notice.

That is just some of what the City of Monmouth has accomplished on behalf of its citizens over the past 9 years. I challenge you to find another city of our size in Oregon, the Northwest, or even nationwide that has completed the sheer number and scope of projects in the time frame that we have. So much for the notion that "Nothing ever changes in Monmouth."

The most amazing thing about this list of projects is that, with the exception of the new Police Station, they were accomplished without asking citizens for any more in taxes. We were even able to cut our electric rates, twice. Most important to Monmouth's citizens, we were able to accomplish all of this while still maintaining our consistently high levels of service. We have held to the bottom line closely; we want to be certain at all times that the services we offer are a good value to those who use them.

While these projects have been conceived and delivered in service to the citizens of Monmouth, they have had the very much intended side effect of making Monmouth ready for growth and economic development of all kinds. Whether attracting new housing projects, more commercial development, or even industrial projects, we have the infrastructure, utilities, amenities and public service to welcome any or all of these.

I began this address by mentioning Monmouth Engaged, the city's citizen engagement project. I would like to loop back to that topic for just a moment.

In addition to asking participants what they think about our city and how it is doing, we asked what things we should be working on going forward. Amongst the dozens of ideas that came forward, 4 rose

to the top. We took those four ideas, and have created four new semi-independent citizen focused and driven bodies to further develop them.

The most popular idea, the one getting the most support from participants, is that the city seek to work more closely with Western Oregon University. Over the past decade, the City and the University have cooperated on a number of projects. From student interns at the Senior Center, to Manager McClure helping facilitate a class on campus, the bottom-up relationship continues to thrive.

Going forward, I am hopeful that we will see still closer relations. I am of the firm opinion that this relationship will be well served by the appointment last year of Dr. Rex Fuller as President of the University. My encounters with President Fuller have shown me that he is someone who truly understands and believes what I have always said; we are much, much stronger together than we are apart. I look forward to seeing what the City/University Relations committee pursues as potential initiatives in this area.

A second area of emphasis to come from Monmouth Engaged is an effort to increase bicycle and pedestrian safety in the community, and to make those two forms of transportation ever more realistic alternatives to the automobile. City Council has wrestled before with how to repair our many deficient sidewalks, how to put sidewalks where they are currently missing, and how to encourage property owners to maintain the sidewalks on their property. I am optimistic that the new committee will offer creative solutions to these issues.

Sidewalks are only part of the issue, however. Safe cycling in town is another area of concern. I have long advocated for an identified, signed network of bicycle routes throughout Monmouth. One of the effects of this type of network is that the presence of cyclists becomes more predictable. Cyclists quickly learn where they should be, while cars use alternative, parallel routes. There is also a need for increased education of both cyclists and drivers. Cyclists need to learn to behave more like the vehicles the law considers them to be by using lights at night, staying off the sidewalks, and riding with traffic. Drivers must learn to be more watchful for, respectful of, and patient with cyclists. These steps will further our transformation into a truly bicycle friendly community.

The third new committee to come from the Monmouth Engaged process will busy itself with the recruitment of new businesses and restaurants to our community. I am, again, curious to see how this group approaches its charge. Finding the right entrepreneur and matching them with the right place in town will be a challenge, particularly when one considers our lack of available retail space. I predict that in the long run this committee will wind up functioning as something that I believe we need; a quasi-independent Economic Development Committee. As this committee becomes more acquainted with the process and procedures involved in recruiting business, I feel sure that it will find itself working far beyond just shops and restaurants.

The final committee to arise from Monmouth Engaged is the Public Gathering Spaces Committee. The final report of Monmouth Engaged urged cooperation between all four of the major entities in our community - the two cities, the school district and WOU - to work together to make a full range of spaces available for the public to use.

Exploring all the possible uses of Monmouth's new Amphitheater will likely be on this committee's list, as well as potential new uses for the Senior Center once its expansion is complete. I am optimistic that we will see Theater in the Park at some point, and I hope we can find a way to encourage the growth of

a music festival in our wider community. One final note on this committee; its membership includes Independence Council member Marilyn Morton! That should make cooperation between cities in this arena easier!

Our entry sign on the highway brings us full circle. These signs were the first Urban Renewal project our District authorized, and they went in early in my tenure as Mayor. I will go full circle again by noting something I first called out in my initial State of the City address; In addition to being a wonderful place to work, live and play, Monmouth has four great advantages over many small cities; cheap electricity, a U.S. highway, Gigabit internet, and this wonderful four-year University. Monmouth is a special place, and will remain so as it grows into the future.

So what comes next? I have described a series of initiatives that are currently in the works, from the amphitheater to the Senior Center expansion, from highway projects to new departmental headquarters. Those items will keep us busy for a while.

The budget committee met last night to take a preliminary look at the upcoming budget, and is in the process of offering staff direction on where budget reductions might be targeted. Having January Budget Committee meetings, by the way, is an innovation enacted by council just a few years ago. There was a sense that the budgeting process consisted of citizens and council simply rubber stamping the staff's budget, a budget crafted with no citizen input. That is something else that is different here; now citizens and elected officials have an opportunity to weigh in on budget priorities early in the process. The result is a budget that more closely aligns with council goals and citizen desires.

As the budget process unfolds, I plan on pushing hard for an item critical to this city's future. It is time to begin the process of seeking an expansion of our Urban Growth Boundary. Community Development Director Mark Fancey has done the preliminary work of creating a Housing Needs Analysis. It shows that we are especially deficient in land designated for multifamily development. The reality is, however, that at Monmouth's last UGB expansion, land was designated for single family neighborhoods that will, in all likelihood, never be made available for development. I am hopeful that the Department of Land Conservation and Development will recognize this issue and allow us to add some land designated for single family development as well.

I have listed the things we have done, the things we are doing, and some of the things we hope to do. I want to make it clear that we couldn't have done any of this without the support and hard work of our citizen boards and commissions, and in general the broad support of our citizens. I want to thank all the volunteers that make this city run. You are often invisible to the citizenry at large, but we on council know how critical your efforts are to the functioning of this city. Staff does an incredible job with the resources at hand, but couldn't do much of what it does without the help of volunteers. Again, thank you.

I also want to thank all the individuals who have stepped up to serve as City Councilors. Despite an almost total turn-over in membership since I was first elected, the Monmouth City Council has continued to function at an extremely high level. We have a wide range of ages and experiences, philosophies and personalities, and while the details of council's vision and long-term agenda have shifted with changes in membership, the bottom line has not; there has been an unwavering desire to make Monmouth an ever better place to live, to give citizens value for their tax dollars, and to be careful stewards of the city's future. I want to thank all those who have chosen to serve on council, for their dedication both to this city and to their positions as community leaders.

I decided to run for Mayor 9 years ago in part because I was tired of hearing from a certain element in our nation that government is, in effect, inherently evil. One only need look to the Malheur Wildlife Refuge for an example of what I am referring to. I hold a more optimistic view, that we are our government, and we get the government we are willing to work to attain. Government isn't evil, it is necessary. It is all of us pulling together to make life better for, well..... all of us. Government does things that individuals and private business aren't likely to do, and at a cost to citizens that is frequently lower than when those same functions are privatized. Government makes mistakes. Government isn't perfect. But good government, carefully run, can do amazing things for the people it serves.

I have insisted that we always be honest and straightforward with Monmouth's citizens. I feel that attempting to sugarcoat or spin difficult issues only leads to disillusioned and disappointed citizens in the long run; the spin eventually runs down, and the sugar coating dissolves. I believe that this more direct approach is part of what has led to Monmouth's highly successful interaction with its citizens. When we describe an issue or explain a problem, Monmouth's citizens know that we are being honest in what we are saying. They may disagree with us, they may wish for another outcome, but they know that they are getting truthful information about the issues.

At the end of the day, that makes moving difficult issues forward both easier and more satisfying to all involved; there are no doubts about hidden agendas or unstated outcomes. I just wish government at the upper levels of our state and nation could do more of that, and less waving of the cape for the "base". I believe we would be considerably better off for the effort.

I apologize for my shift to the philosophical, but I feel it is important to touch from time to time on "why are we here?" In the case of city governance, we are here to make our community a better place, a more complete place, a place that people are proud to call home.

The state of the city of Monmouth, as measured by our citizens, our progress and our goals, is strong, and growing stronger every year.

Thank you for your kind attention. I would like to finish by acknowledging the help of Monmouth staff in rounding up images for my presentation, and the Mayor's Personal I.T. Department, also known as my son Ian, for help in its preparation.

That's All Folks!