



WORKING TOGETHER FOR A SUCCESSFUL MOUNT DORA

STATE OF THE CITY
2018
BY
NICK GIRONE, MAYOR

It is my distinct honor and privilege to announce the State of the City is EXCELLENT.

This past year brought us our City Manager, Robin Hayes. Robin has proven to be an integral part of the well-being of our City.

During my time on Council, I always stressed transparency, accountability and communication. All of those areas have shown marked improvements from previous years. We need to stay vigilant to make sure we deliver to the residents, the best city government possible.

City Council members have stepped up to the plate and are working together to make things happen for their constituents. The Council has good, honest debates on issues affecting the city, which leads them to a “common ground” decision.

The City Council along with the City Manager had many accomplishments this past year. The staff is an integral part of what happens in our City Government. They are a knowledgeable, dedicated group of individuals who love this city and want it to be successful.

I listed some of the Council’s accomplishments this past year.

- **Pilot Shuttle Program and Downtown Parking**
- **Economic Development and Infrastructure Needs**
- **North East Community Development Agency (NE-CRA)**
- **Emergency Services**
- **The Wekiva Parkway**

Pilot Shuttle Program and Downtown Parking – the City Council and the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) advisory committee adopted a pilot program to help improve parking in the downtown business district. This program has been a success and widely used for special events and projects. The primary focus is to have visitors utilize remote parking areas. The shuttle service, operated by volunteers, will take visitors to the Downtown Business District. This program is becoming a fixture in the Downtown thanks to advertising and the

availability of remote parking areas Thursday through Sunday. City Council also adopted a plan to start 4 hour parking limits in certain areas of downtown. The objective of this program is to encourage parking in remote areas, along with the use of the shuttle program. The restricted parking times will also encourage business owners and employees to use remote parking and to take advantage of the shuttles. Additional information about this parking program is on the City's website.

Economic Development and Infrastructure Needs – The number one and two goals of the Strategic Plan adopted by the City Council, *economic development* and *infrastructure needs*, were reaffirmed this past year as top priorities. The public works department will be creating a circular loop for reclaimed water to the Lakes of Mount Dora and connecting the Country Club of Mount Dora's water supply in a way that will minimize outages or delays to these developments. The City has extended the reclaimed and potable water services to the Wolf Branch Innovation District along with the fiber optic service for future growth. City Council has engaged Dr. Richard Levey, an economic development

consultant, to seek out and coordinate new business growth around the City. There is a strong emphasis on planned controlled growth while, at the same time, maintaining the quaintness and charm of Downtown Mount Dora. There will be some announcements concerning new business this year. Previously, Dr. Levey coordinated efforts with the Duke Energy Certification Program for approximately 200 acres within the Wolf Branch Innovation District. This certification, along with the study completed by McCallum/Sweeney, will act as a catalyst for future growth. That plan is also available on the City's website.

North East Community Development Agency (NE-CRA) - City Council, also serves as the North East Community Redevelopment Agency Board, and recently adopted the Grandview Business District Master Plan. This master plan sets the area up for development opportunities with potential businesses to enhance the Grandview Street area of the North East with new business ventures for local residents, and to link downtown with the North East. Since adoption of this master plan, the city received and approved a residential Planned Unit Development. It will be located on the north side of

Grandview Street near Pine Avenue. This plan will construct approximately 135 houses, with a beautifully designed promenade for walking and leisure activities.

Emergency Services - Last year, City Council worked with Fitch and Associates, expert consultants in the development of studies relating to emergency services. Their mission was to look into current and future needs for our fire and medical service facility placements and our personnel needs. Fitch consultants made several suggestions during a presentation to City Council. Their presentation indicates what the City should do to improve response times. Fitch consultants assisted the City Manager with the selection of a Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief. Fitch and Associates are continuing to work with the Fire Department in their effort to become accredited. Accreditation is an extremely difficult process to accomplish, but our fire and emergency service employees are specialists and they will achieve accreditation. The Fitch Report is available on the city's website.

Wekiva Parkway - State Road 453 extension exiting on Mount Dora's eastern boundary at State Road 46 and Round Lake Road will have a dramatic financial impact on Mount Dora's economy and future growth. It also places a strong burden of responsibility on City Council to maintain the quaintness and charm of our downtown. Dr. Levey refers to this dilemma as the Old City and the New City. In 1981, a movie was produced in Mount Dora by the name of Honkey Tonk Freeway. It was about a small Florida City by the name of Ticlaw wanting to have its own exit off a new freeway to boost its economy. Fast forward to 2018 and the real Mount Dora now has its own exit.

Having an exit off a major highway is a big thing! This exit will have a significant financial impact on the city because of the way it links Mount Dora to Orange County, Seminole County and eventually connects to Interstate 4 from both counties. This helps put over 500,000 higher education students within 100 miles and another 1.5 million people within 45 miles of Mount Dora. Other construction projects scheduled in the near future will improve drive times on State Road 46 to the east and provide a connection that is more efficient to Seminole County. Future State Road 44 improvements out of Mount Dora and

Eustis will create a better and safer route to Volusia County. As I said before, what we do on Mount Dora's east side will affect a large region, which includes three counties, numerous municipalities, with combined resources and common needs.

Mount Dora cannot and should not take a "let us do it alone approach". Mount Dora's plan for future economic growth, with assistance from consultants and lobbyists, must first address the needs of Mount Dora while at the same time taking into consideration the larger picture of regionalization.

Your City Council has been very busy this year approving projects, resolutions and ordinances that will enhance our image as '*Someplace Special*' these include:

- ***Roads***
- ***Trails***
- ***Parking***
- ***Innovation District***
- ***Need for Hotels***
- ***Development of the Golden Triangle linking the Three Cities***

Roads – as mentioned earlier, with the finalization of Wekiva Parkway, there will be ongoing major road construction, some of which is already underway.

1. State Road 46 is currently being reconstructed from Sanford to US Highway 441 in Mount Dora as a 6-lane road.
2. US Highway 441 will become a 6-lane highway from State Road 46 to Donnelly Street.
3. US Highway 441 overpass at State Road 46 is currently being lowered and a flyover will be built to take southbound US Highway 441 traffic east on State Road 46.
4. The five-way intersection at State Road 19, Old Highway 441 and Eudora Road will become a roundabout to increase safety of pedestrians and vehicles.
5. Opening ceremonies for the much-anticipated Wekiva Parkway to Round Lake Road and State Road 46 happened on March 31, 2018. This opening had much fanfare, as this interchange will give the City a much quicker route to Apopka and other points to the south and east including the Orlando International Airport, Disney World and other attractions.

Trails

1. The old railroad tracks heading east out of Mount Dora will become part of the Coast-to-Coast Connector Trail that stretches 250 miles from St. Petersburg to Titusville, known as the Wekiva Trail. There will be a terminus at 3rd Avenue and Tremain Street. Part of this project will be the renovation of the historical trestle bridge in Mount Dora and the renovation of the railroad overpass on 441.
2. There is discussion of a joint project between the Cities of Mount Dora and Tavares, which would connect the Wekiva Trail to the west side of Mount Dora along the railroad tracks to Tavares. A bike/walking trail will beautify the railroad line and connect the two cities.

Parking – Always an issue.

1. In addition to the Shuttle program, the City Council has initiated 4-hour parking limitations in the downtown core to encourage business owners and employees to use satellite parking. The shuttle service will transport them to businesses and restaurants in the downtown area that will leave parking available for our visitors. Details of the program are available on the City's website.

2. Discussions are ongoing with property owners and churches to expand some of their parking areas for future shuttle parking.
3. Implementation of a valet service to outlying parking areas is also in the works.
4. Another possibility, often talked about, is the expansion of the current downtown garage that would also provide parking for the terminus of the future Wekiva Trail.

Wolf Branch Innovation District

1. As mentioned earlier, the city recently received a certification from Duke Energy through their Site Readiness Assessment Program for 265 acres of the Wolf Branch Innovation District. We received an “A” for development. This certification will bring attention to the other 1,100 acres of the Wolf Branch Innovation District. Dr. Richard Levey, Economic Development Consultant, is working hard to attract the businesses conducive to this site. Such as:

- Life Sciences
- High Tech/R&D
- Advanced Manufacturing

- Corporate Headquarters
- Business Services
- Higher Education – College has property

2. Since the city has a Joint Planning Agreement (JPA) with Lake County, the Council has been preparing for a number of annexations for the acreage near the Wolf Branch Innovation District. The Council recently waived the annexation fees for property owners who wish to take advantage of our city services.
3. The Wolf Branch Innovation District will become a driver for the economic growth to the region to our east and south.
4. The Wolf Branch Innovation District has prompted the expansion of the city's water, sewer and fiber optics to that area. The infrastructure necessary for the Wolf Branch Innovation District has resulted in agreements with the City of Apopka for shared services.
5. A land donation to Lake Sumter State College of 20 acres will help the college plan for a branch campus. A satellite

campus in the Wolf Branch Innovation District will serve as a driving force for future business growth in the region.

Need for Hotels

Mount Dora is a destination city. This means visitors come here to stay awhile and spend their money. We need rooms to keep them here overnight or longer. We are in the tourism business and we need more overnight accommodations so guests can spend an extra day and enjoy the many attractions Mount Dora offers. The visitor who drives a distance to visit Mount Dora will be more willing to make the trip if lodging is available.

Development of the Golden Triangle linking the Three Cities

1. This area, that connects Eustis, Tavares and Mount Dora, is in need of and ready for some new things to be happening. As mentioned before, a new roundabout is coming to the Golden Triangle area in a few years. The City of Mount Dora needs to be ready for future growth and investors that will surely be coming that area as a result. The City Manager has suggested, on several occasions, that the City should seriously consider making this area a Community

Redevelopment Area (CRA). There have also been an increase in other interested parties to redevelop the area. Regardless, the Golden Triangle will be an area of focus between the cities of Tavares, Eustis and Mount Dora. What we do here will expand the concept of regional partnerships.

What's Coming

Mount Dora is a very busy little city with a lot on its plate. We definitely are not sitting still. The City of Mount Dora has a lot to look forward to in the future:

- We will need to make decisions regarding the streetscape on Baker, Alexander and Donnelly to complete the look and utility needs of downtown.
- We will need to address the needs of a growing community with planning and construction of proper facilities to house employees in a more efficient manner.
- We will need to consider parking structures while improving existing lots for shuttling our many visitors to their destinations.

- We will be making decisions on our water, sewer, electric services, public works and other city services, since Mount Dora is a 'full-service' city.
- We will continue to face the many challenges by our State Government that constantly tries to eliminate the constitutional Home Rule of our City. We need to remain diligent to fight their efforts.
- We need to reassemble the Envision Committee to review the initial plan and list the accomplished projects. To help set the priorities for those in progress. This new committee will also be creating an opportunity for some new ideas to come forward based on our current needs.
- We need to continue our commitment with the Lake-Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization. I currently serve as the Chair-Elect and with God's help will continue to serve as its Chairman in 2019. Mount Dora is the common factor in a Regional effort for the Transportation corridors in East Lake County.

- We need to plan for a long-term commitment for our fire services in light of the future growth in our East side of the City.
- We need to strengthen our efforts to link the Northeast Historical and Business Areas with our downtown.

Your City Council can accomplish these tasks because they communicate and analyze the many issues that face our city. They do it with respect for each other's positions and devote the necessary time to handle the many issues we face and reach thoughtful decisions. **We can do it** because we are blessed with the best group of employees any city can ask for. **We can do it** because we have a Leadership team lead by our City Manager, Robin Hayes. We have numerous residents attending the City Council meetings, which are now Live Streamed to a growing number of viewers each month. Live Streaming improvements are on the horizon for better viewing.

As you can tell by my remarks, that all of our signs around the city stating our City is '*Someplace Special*' are more than just a logo, **it is a 'BELIEF'**. A belief that includes:

- A City with a Quality of Life
- A City with a Quality of Place
- A City with a Lakefront
- A City full of Trails and Activities
- A City with lots of Festivals.

I want to thank all of the residents of this great City who allow me to serve as the Mayor of the best city in the State of Florida, and a thank you to my fellow council members who assist me in making the Residents of Mount Dora number one on our organizational chart.

May God bless Mount Dora, the State of Florida and our great United States of America.