

2017 STATE OF THE CITY OF MOUNT DORA

INTRODUCTION

Last year, the State of the City Message focused on how Mount Dora was preparing for the future. I would like to use this year's message to talk about some of the City's accomplishments during this past year and bring you up to date on what will be occurring over the next few years.

The current fiscal year got off to a robust start with Hurricane Matthew last October. I am proud to report the City Manager and staff handled the hurricane efficiently and were effective in keeping the electric on to the residents all over the City during the weather event. An emergency is not without expenses and we had our share. The City has applied for and will be receiving reimbursement from FEMA, which will help us defray a large portion of the unexpected costs associated with the storm.

Mount Dora is "Someplace Special" and the word is already out about our quaint little city. This puts Mount Dora in the center of some very exciting opportunities. It also places a large responsibility on the City Council to work together to lay the groundwork for success.

You may ask, "How does a City lay the groundwork for such anticipated growth?" Like most accomplishments, success comes from **'TEAMWORK'**. I am proud to say Mount Dora has one of the best teams of dedicated employees already working for its residents. Successful growth will depend on a combined effort of local officials, city staff and business owners who want to be a part of Mount Dora and who are willing to work together.

While the past year required some transitioning, the City had the pleasure of experiencing some new beginnings. The search process for a City Manager, conducted by the City Council, yielded a remarkable candidate from the City of Oviedo. Join me in welcoming City Manager, Robin R. Hayes. Robin relocated to Mount Dora along with her husband Irv. She is excited to be a part of the Mount Dora community. She is accessible, visible and ready to work. *By the way Robin and her Husband Irv will be new grandparents to a baby girl in a few months.*

Let's start highlighting some of the accomplishments of your City Council.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Under the leadership of your City Council, the Interim City Manager, prior to Robin R. Hayes being hired, contracted with Marilyn E. Crotty, Director of the John Scott Daily Institute of Government at the University of Central Florida (UCF), to facilitate a Strategic Planning Work Session. During the work session, conducted in July 2016, City Council developed a prioritized list of goals and objectives. Administrative Staff members were invited to attend. They were encouraged to participate in the process alongside of the Council Members throughout the daylong work session. Subsequent meetings were held to reaffirm and fine-tune the Goals and Objectives. Strategic Planning is an ongoing process, the contents will link the Budget with established Goals. The main thrust of the Strategic Plan results was to focus on the following goals:

Economic Development

Infrastructure

Growth Management

Fiscal Management

Public Safety

City staff will take those goals and create plans to carry out the policies of City Council. Between the staff plans and council policies, the goals can be implemented.

Your City Council has coalesced into a very effective decision making body. Attendance at Council meetings has increased resulting in excellent citizen participation. While City Council Members have healthy exchanges and some conversations can be vigorous at times, the tone of conversations is civil and directed towards accomplishing the ultimate goals of the City. Council Members realize how much can be accomplished by seeking input, listening to other points of view and making informed decisions.

POLICY

As an elected City Council, the electors have high expectations of their representatives. A major role for the elected officials is to set the policy by which in the City's business will be conducted. In an effort to make Mount Dora even more business friendly, the Council took action to expedite the permitting process through Planning and Development. An ordinance was amended to allow businesses such as the Epic Theater to break ground for their new State of the Art Theater between

Wal-Mart and Target. It is anticipated you will be going to the movies in Mount Dora by the end of this year or early 2018.

As Mayor, I conducted a series of meetings with business professionals and individuals to evaluate their experiences in Mount Dora. The result of those meetings was to provide information for the City Manager and Staff to review. A refreshed commitment was made to send a message to the business community that the City is open for business to assist all potential business owners in expediting their building plans through the permitting process. It is expected that a business will be able to open its doors in a timelier fashion and the city can start collecting ad-valorem taxes sooner. I can tell you for a fact, without a scientific study, that I have noticed a renewed optimism throughout the business community.

Your Council passed an “Equal Rights Ordinance”, in an effort to continue with a progressive attitude toward business and growth. This ordinance replaced the former “Human Relations Ordinance”. Please allow me to read the 1st paragraph of that ordinance.

“It is a matter of concern to the city council to protect and safeguard the right and opportunity of all individuals to be free from all forms of discrimination, including discrimination based on age, race, color, religion, national origin, disability, marital status, familial status, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity and expression; and that the city council's purpose in enacting this chapter is to promote the public health and welfare of all individuals who live in, visit, and work in the City of Mount Dora; and that it is important to ensure that all individuals within the city have equal access to employment, housing, and public accommodations.”

On a side note, companies that help recruit and relocate businesses from out of state, say that this type of ordinance is very helpful as a selling tool to clients.

Mount Dora earned the title of “Someplace Special “not because we placed a sign at the City gateways; but because of its people and

businesses. Your City Council is listening to the citizens, who are on the top of the organizational chart in the city, and we are willing to act on your issues whenever we can.

CONTRACTS AND AGREEMENTS

Routinely, contracts and agreements are presented to City Council for approval. The current fiscal year has been no exception. From contracts and agreements associated with the construction of the Wekiva Parkway, to contracts and agreements allowing for mutual aid between Mount Dora and other jurisdictions, the City Council has been readily available to keep the City moving forward through the approval process. The City Attorney is instrumental in reviewing and approving all of the contracts and agreements prior to them reaching the City Council for approval and the signature of the Mayor.

WEKIVA PARKWAY/INNOVATION DISTRICT

The City Council hosted Mary Brooks from the Expressway Authority on several occasions, to provide updates pertaining to construction of the Wekiva Parkway. The Wekiva Parkway project was slated for completion toward the end of 2019, but it was moved up by the State with a new completion date of early 2018.

That move by the State put into motion, a commitment to put together Annexation plans that will allow the Wolf Branch Innovation District to be incorporated within the City Limits while allowing Developers and current property owners to take advantage of City services.

The Innovation District, which is part of the Joint Planning Area agreement with Lake County, covers approximately 1,300 acres East of Round Lake Road with route 46 dividing the District.

With construction of the Wekiva Parkway, City officials have responded to a growing number of requests from various parties who are interested in becoming a part of the future development. In an effort to be proactive with the future property owners and to have the ability to provide services to the JPA area, the City Council agreed with the City Manager's plan to waive annexation fees on a temporary basis.

The City Manager engaged consultants to present various Marketing and Branding Plans to the City Council. A consulting firm will soon be hired to assist the City in maintaining its forward momentum. The consultant's job will be to work with the City in reaching out to the Developers, Investors and Property Managers that already have a list of Companies interested in relocating. The Wekiva Parkway will making living and/or working in Mount Dora an easy commute. It will also be inviting to businesses who wish to be in the Innovation District, thus creating a more thriving economy where growth and more jobs will be available to local citizens.

Some of our residents have voiced concerns that the Downtown will lose its character and charm. My message remains the same as last year, "Maintaining the quaintness and charm that the founders of Mount Dora envisioned is not debatable. Without a flourishing downtown and a solid business foundation, our city would become just another place with a major highway running through its boundaries." Everything being proposed and anticipated will in no way harm the image of our Someplace Special. Employees and consultants for the City know the importance to maintain our quaint charm, while still having the ability to propose enhancements. Our downtown has evolved over the years and will continue to do so in the future.

I personally support the concept that a portion of the CRA funds should be used to maintain our Charm through the implementation of a revolving fund that can be reserved through the CRA and used by businesses and residents within the CRA District. This fund will have flexible payback schedules that can be used to replenish the fund.

CURRENT/FUTURE PROJECTS

Trees are an important characteristic and part of Mount Dora. We are a Tree City. The City hired an Arborist to conduct a full inventory of trees throughout the City. With aging trees, it is the desire and intent of the City to make sure the tree canopy does not suffer.

The City Council was successful in working with Lake County to have Fifth Avenue and Donnelly Street repaved and striped. This fixed the damaged areas of pavement in that area, which was aesthetically unpleasant for some time.

The City Council has engaged Redevelopment Associates, LLC, (RMA) to conduct the Grandview Business District Market Analysis. As of this writing, RMA has produced a concept plan to help coordinate all of strategies that will eventually link the Grandview Street Business District with the downtown business area through cultural events, eateries, historical landmarks and other special events.

The City budgeted and contracted to have the Palm Island Boardwalk completed. This project has been long overdue and its completion will enhance the beauty and safety of one of the most used and environmentally sensitive areas in Mount Dora.

Preliminary discussions have been started to establish a partnership with Lake County and Tavares to beautify the Old 441 roadway from

Route 19 at the Eudora Road area. This will most likely include possible linkage to the forthcoming bike trail. That bike trail, which is part of the Intercoastal System of trails will have a terminus at 3rd and Tremain. With the end of service of the Orange Blossom Cannonball, our city manager is engaged in talks that will include other transportation style partnerships that will enhance the visual and culinary experiences of the tourist and bicyclist.

In the near future, Lake County will be starting work on a roundabout at the intersection of Old 441, Route 19 and Eudora Road. This project can be the catalyst that will spearhead future development of the Golden Triangle on both sides of the railroad tracks in that area. This is one of the most traveled gateways into the City and we are anticipating renewed interest in its overall function. This roundabout will become a future link pin for Tavares, Eustis and Mount Dora.

Parking is still an issue. However, the City Manager, Robin Hayes, instituted a pilot shuttle program to transport visitors from designated parking areas to the events in the Downtown area. Following the first event where the shuttles were used, a total of 167 surveys were submitted, with 96% of their comments were extremely positive. This program has been a roaring success. As the City comes closer to the end of our major event season, a report on the future of this program will be submitted by the City Manager to the City Council. With the launching of this program, I would be remiss not to mention and thank the many generous volunteers who have worked so hard to make this program a success. While it would be impossible for me to name all of you who have volunteered, please know how much your service to this community is appreciated. As a token of our appreciation, staff is putting together a volunteer recognition dinner that will be held in April. Additional information will be forthcoming with details.

Every week The City is forging new partnerships for parking opportunities with local property owners that will result in mutual benefit to all concerned. The time has come to stop talking about parking and do something about it. With guidance from the City Manager, City Council will soon begin the budget process. During that process, I am hopeful that a commitment will be made by Council to fund a parking garage in the near future.

The City is conducting workshops to determine when and where a new Public Works Facility including other City Services will be located and what it will look like. We are also pursuing partnerships with other agencies to have a stake in the new facility. Partnerships will help to reduce the costs to the taxpayers. I am hopeful that a commitment for funding for this much needed project can finally be made during the budget process.

Our Council Members are the most energetic people I ever met. They have been encouraging and unleashing the full capability of our Staff. Mount Dora is blessed with a highly competent staff, guided by an equally enthusiastic and energetic City Manager. Fortunately, our council members are receptive to new progressive ideas. Ideas that can bring planned economic growth to the City. Growth that will be a welcomed blessing to the City in terms of revenue. Revenue that will provide for a continued and expanding quality of life for the residents. Down the road, when we might have to ask the citizens for the money to plan and fund the growth, the management team will present a cost benefit analysis that will show the financial stability that will reap the benefits of proper planning.

CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude with some quotes from our Department Heads on how all of this future growth will be affecting their departments.

- “The Municipal Clerk is one of the two oldest of public servants in local government. She (or he) is a direct link between residents and their community lending support to elected officials and organizational professionals and being accessible to citizens. The City Clerk plays an important role as historian of the community through the keeping of all official records. Contacting the City Clerk’s Office is a great place to begin when you need something from your government and you don’t know where to turn. You will experience diligent, patient and caring service and your City Clerk will work hard to provide whatever assistance you may need.”
- **Gwen Keough-Johns, MMC City Clerk**
- “The September 30, 2015 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) was submitted to the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) for consideration regarding the receiving the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting. Upon review of the City’s submittal, the City of Mount Dora was awarded this prestigious award for the twenty-second consecutive year. The award recognizes the readability, efficiency of an organized CAFR as well as satisfy both generally accepted accounting principles and applicable legal requirements. The entire Finance Department works very hard throughout the year to assist in the production of this report.”
- **Mike Sheppard, Finance Director**
- “During the past year, the Fire Dept. has been able to put Lieutenants on duty at each Fire Station. We have also arranged our staffing to create Engine crews with 3 personnel. These changes greatly improve our effectiveness. We are looking forward to the arrival of our new fire engines in the coming months as we continue to reach out to our community with free Hands-Only CPR classes. We see all of this as “Our Family helping Your Family.”
- **Tim Griner, Acting Fire Chief**
- “The City’s Human Resources Department functions as a supportive business partner with all City departments, providing a wide variety of manpower related needs. Our purpose is to align HR strategies with individual department and City Council goals and objectives that will benefit the City and its citizens. In doing so, we will strive to maintain a professional and competent work force by attracting, motivating, and retaining the right people for the right jobs.”

“Our City’s future growth will bring with it an increase in demand for more diversified services. The Human Resources Department will provide guidance and support in recruiting the appropriate talent to meet our needs. Creating bench strength in each department and division by way of additional training and education will be critical to successful succession planning.”

– **Ken Bloom, Human Resources Director**

- “With the 429 extension coming to Mount Dora in the very near future, we will see significant growth which will bring more demands for all types of services including demands on our Library. Our new neighbors and citizens will find a vibrant, bustling and creative library staffed with talented and customer service oriented employees and volunteers. Our Library is known for its creative mix of programming for all ages, services, meeting spaces and materials. The Library campus includes not only the Library itself but also a beautiful butterfly garden; a historic farmhouse turned meeting space, and an outdoor learning pavilion (the Lunsford Learning Pavilion). While the new growth will bring challenges, the Library is well positioned and welcomes the coming challenges and opportunities.”

– **Stephanie Haines, Library Director**

- “Special events in the city have a bright future with outside events at the parks, to the community building productions, growing yearly. Mount Dora is known as “The Festival City”, and for good reason, we produce 30 events a year, which are all open to the public and another 52 and above in the community building. The largest contributor to the quality of life in Mount Dora, Parks and Recreation and Special Events has had a large economic impact of approximately \$55,124,815 to the community. We look forward to meeting the challenges that are ahead of us and stand ready to add more to the reasons why we are known as ‘*Someplace Special*’.”

– **Roy Hughes, Director of Parks and Recreation**

- “As summarized in the mission statement of the Mount Dora Comprehensive Plan 2032...“*the long-range vision of the City of Mount Dora is to create a diverse, vibrant, and sustainable community featuring a thriving downtown in conjunction with a more accessible and inviting lakefront, while respecting its historic character and small town charm, and serving as a unique regional and local destination for both residents and visitors.*” Mount Dora is at a good position in terms of growth opportunities with the construction of the Wekiva Parkway and other future roadway improvements. The charm, character, and history of Mount Dora will set the stage for a livable, workable, and playable thriving community.”

- **Vince Sandersfeld, Interim Planning and Development Director**

“The policing philosophy of the Mount Dora Police Department is the Community Oriented Policing philosophy. This is a collaboration between the Police Department and the Community they serve. The community and the Police Department address issues jointly and come up with a solution that is in the best interest of the community. The Police Department continues its outreach programs through the schools and other programs where the youth of this community participate. As the community braces for change, the Police Department has implemented their five-year strategic plan that will help the growing pains through good planning. One of these strategies is to embrace technology, which will help the officer’s work more efficiently, including new records management software, and body cameras. This is just another example of the Police Department working to make the community and the officers safer.”

– **John O’Grady, Police Chief**

“The Public Works Department is working diligently to provide utilities into the Joint Planning Area which includes the Wolf Branch Innovation District east of the current City Limits to support future economic opportunities for Mount Dora. Recently, the City Council approved a new rate structures for the Water, Sewer and Electric that insures that our citizens are offered competitive rates while keeping our utilities financially viable”.

– **John Peters, Public Services Director**

We are definitely living in exciting times. Our ship is coming in and we cannot let it sail off without us.

Thank you and God Bless Mount Dora!

Special Thank You

I want to thank the following persons who helped in making this presentation possible.

To Misty Elder and Gwen Johns for their editing and slide making skills and for their time in coaching me with the timing. Thanks so much.

To Parks and Rec and especially Kenny Hutzler for his work in setting up this room and providing the equipment to put this on tonight. Thanks Kenny, Thanks Roy.

To Robin Hayes for allowing her staff to participate in this presentation.
Thank You

To all of the Directors who submitted quotes for the slides.

A big thank everyone here for coming out tonight.

I want to give a Huge Thank You to a very special person who is the Executive Director at Lake Receptions and who never hesitated when asked to assist with the refreshments and food for tonight, a very big Thank You to Cathy Hoechst.

This presentation will be edited so it can be produced in a pamphlet format and placed on the City's Website for distribution over the next couple of weeks.

I will now open the program up for questions. You can direct your questions to any Council Person