

State of the City

May 21, 2009

Presented by Mayor Van Orman

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the City of Liberty Lake. I am happy to present you with the State of the City Address. This afternoon I am going to share with you last year's accomplishments and map out plans for success in 2009 and beyond.

At this time I want to introduce the members of the Liberty Lake City Council in attendance as well as those that were unable to attend.

Council Member Susan Schuler

Council Member Neal Olander

Council Member Dave Crump

Council Member Odin Langford

Council Member Judi Owens

Council Member Ryan Romney

Council Member Patrick Jenkins

I would also like to acknowledge other audience members including: Eldonna Shaw of the Greater Spokane Chamber of Commerce, Nancy Homes of Avista and Ian Robertson of the HUB.

Thank you for joining us in this state of the art regional sports facility. The businesses have had an opportunity to display their services, please take the time to get to know their business. I would also like to acknowledge our caterer; Liberty Lake's own Hay J's located on Mission and Harvard Road.

Have you ever crossed a bridge but realized that your journey is just beginning. I found that out during the bike to work week. I dusted off my bike last week which has been in the shed collecting dust over the last several years. They say biking can easily be picked up after a long absence, well that may be true for most. Most of the vehicles stayed in the other lane as I made my way on the road wobbling to and fro. They say the path before you is paved with uncertainties, trials, triumphs and achievements. Somewhere beyond the horizon is your future. I will need much more practice and a new seat for my bike may be in order.

When thinking about the uncertainties, trials and triumphs, our nation's current economic challenges came to mind. Some economists have said this is the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. Many people are concerned about whether they'll have a job, can pay the bills, and/or whether their business will prosper and understandably so. I want everyone to know that I am committed, and the City Council is committed, to help do what we can to address these challenges. Liberty Lake has experienced some effects due to the slowing economy but the City is better positioned than many other cities to weather this storm. This strength is critical as we ease out of the recession and boost our local economy. I am optimistic and believe Liberty Lake is well positioned to address these challenges, as well as find new opportunities to strengthen our community.

The City took active steps to address the economic situation by making necessary budget adjustments to ensure a healthy ending balance for 2008. Through this process the City was also able to maintain current service levels and protect its fiscal flexibility and security. The City finished the year with over \$4 million in cash and deposits and \$525,000 in conservative securities investments. At the end of 2008 the Restricted Reserve Fund totaled over \$1.1 million, which can only be used for unusual or emergent conditions.

During the 2009 budget process we took a conservative stance recognizing the current and future economic climate. We anticipated a decline in sales tax revenue and home sales in 2009. The 2009 budget reflects a conservative approach to meeting the service needs of the residents in Liberty Lake and focuses on doing more with less. City Council and staff recognize the ethical and fiduciary responsibility to the residents of Liberty Lake to carefully account for public funds, wisely manage municipal finances and plan adequate funding for services and facilities desired and needed by the public.

Through new construction and improvements adding \$43 million to the City's valuation in 2008, we have been able to keep our property taxes low. The levy rate reduced from \$1.58 to \$1.51 per \$1,000 assessed value. I would like to point out that this includes our municipal library as well. So we are actually providing services to our residents on \$1.01 per \$1,000 assessed value. We are keeping our budget trim and looking for creative ways to enhance the community.

Despite the economists' predictions, the City of Liberty Lake is prospering. We have worked hard over the last year to implement cost cutting measures.

We have set conservation measures to save energy, water and waste. The City has replaced all of the incandescent light bulbs with energy efficient ones. The City has also installed moisture meters in our new parks for water conservation.

A comprehensive approach was taken with every department looking at updating our policies and fee schedules. Most had not been updated since the City's incorporation in 2001.

City staff has conducted an extensive inventory to see what ways we could maintain what we currently have without having to purchase new items. Our City's computers have been upgraded when possible and standardized so we can communicate easily without having to purchase new ones. This has gained us two to three years of use.

Currently pavement management plans for our roads and pathways are being created by our City Engineer so we can keep up with maintenance costs for streets, lights and pathways instead of seeing them deteriorate, which would result in sky rocketing costs for the citizens, sometimes as much as eight times to rebuild, rather than if we maintain them every year.

At a time when other cities are seeing businesses move out, we are seeing existing businesses expand and new businesses move in to Liberty Lake. The City welcomed many new businesses to Liberty Lake and coordinated with the business and development community to add 175,000 square feet of new commercial, office and retail space and a dozen tenant improvements.

Our robust business community is a vital part of Liberty Lake. We have approximately 300 businesses located within the City of Liberty Lake and we are still growing. As the Mayor of Liberty Lake, I am committed to providing the economic opportunities that will continue to strengthen Liberty Lake's business services. Our local retail, corporate, health and industrial entities give Liberty Lake residents a variety of employment opportunities. In addition, retail revenue represents the largest source of revenue to the City making the business community a very important component of the City's financial well being.

In looking for ways to stimulate the local economy, I started the "Buy Local Campaign" with a twist, grocery stores throughout the region are cutting down on the use of plastic bags and will soon be asking you...."Your bag or ours?", so the City of Liberty Lake along with local businesses are delivering Reusable Tote Bags to 2,500 homes throughout 2009, educating residents why buying local will keep our community strong, keep your neighbors working and provide for the many services we all enjoy such as public safety, parks and maintaining our streets and pathways. So the next time you are shopping online, ask yourself, is buying online really worth it? Is it providing you services within your own community?

Our community is known for its beauty, quality of life and master planned community.

- We have received the Tree City Award for the sixth straight year.

- We have been recognized nationally as a bicycle friendly community with over 26 miles of pathways throughout the community.
- We increased stewardship of the environment by becoming a no idle zone city and helping to preserve our waterways with the implementation of phosphorus free dishwashing detergent.
- Our attention to signage codes has allowed the breathtaking hillsides to be the first thing everyone sees.
- Our comprehensive plan has set aside 30 acres per 1,000 population as open space within the community.

In 2008, we increased city transparency.

- Communication with our residents improved, unveiling our new website complete with access to resolutions, ordinances and up to date news.
- The Liberty Link newsletter received a face lift including introducing new development projects and establishing a question and answer section.
- We set up weekly meetings with the media to keep them up to date of the happenings within the city.
- We enhanced the accessibility of City financial information to the public by updating the City's webpage, including the development of new quarterly financial reports.

It was also a year of fulfilling long awaited projects.

We installed the radar reader board by the elementary school, giving us a reminder to slow down and keep a watchful eye out for our children.

A state of the art traffic signal was installed at the corner of Molter and Appleway, moving traffic along with scanners that trigger the green light for an easy flow of traffic.

Rocky Hill Park Phase 1 was completed with the generous donation of property by Greenstone and Bill and Judy Williams. Within this first phase soccer fields, a basketball court and a parking lot were added with play equipment to be installed later this year once the grass takes hold.

Along with the land donation as part of the match, Phase two of Rocky Hill Park has been approved for funding by the Washington State Legislature in the amount of \$503,500. The bill is awaiting the Governor's signature. With approval of these grant dollars, it is anticipated construction of the second phase will begin this year. The second phase of Rocky Hill Park will include restrooms, two tennis courts, a community garden, amphitheatre, playground, soccer fields and picnic areas.

In 2008, Half Moon Park was constructed as the first of many parks that will be located throughout the River District. Several community events were hosted at Half Moon Park, bringing the residents together.

The City's first public art was unveiled at the round-a-bout in the River District. The Rock Cairns tell a story and will be a landmark within the City for generations.

After a failing bond issue for a Community Center/Library, Plan B was unveiled. The Public Safety/Library facility was purchased in full in 2008 for \$1.9 million and renovated for \$675,000, saving taxpayers approximately \$2 million in interest payments. I would like to thank Chief Asmus for his conservative approach in regards to the renovations of the building. Chief Asmus, his wife Carol and our police officers did most of the painting themselves. The Public Safety workspace components and office furniture were found on Craig's List for a fraction of the price. The workout equipment was donated by the officers. For everyone that attended, last week's grand opening was truly an event!

Our Library Director, Pamela Mogen saw a vision out of a warehouse with hoses dangling from the ceiling and stark concrete walls that steered the construction to a beautiful, state of the art municipal library. Bernardo Wills Architect helped to turn that vision into a reality. The stored books were finally out of storage and put up on refurbished shelving found in another city. The library staff was ready and eager to welcome the community. The new library accommodates everything from the easy chairs to relax and read, to the meeting place that has been filled since the time it has opened. It is no wonder that our patronage has doubled in the past month!

The 27,000 square foot facility provides many benefits to the community.

- The facility provides a permanent home for our growing Police Department. The space was a perfect fit for our officers with minimal renovations needed.
- The Municipal Library now has three times the amount of space it had been before to better serve library patrons and continue to meet the City's established level of service of .41 square feet per City resident. The library provides the community with meeting rooms, book clubs, game nights, and for some, a night out complete with a trip anywhere your imagination will take you.
- The new facility also freed up much needed space within the current city hall to accommodate for planning, recreation, public works and administration functions of the city.

Our City's first Winter Fest was a huge success. The tree lighting ceremony had a huge turnout of approximately 300 to enjoy the local choirs, chestnuts roasting over an open

fire and horse drawn carriage rides. For those that ventured out in the first few days, we saw the community brightly decorated. Then the snow came.

After a few feet of snow, the decorations were blanketed but the community once again stepped up to the plate. Countless snow angel stories graced the front pages of the SPLASH telling of neighbors helping each other with their sidewalks and driveways. The beauty of the snow was unbelievable and the area children were only too happy to take advantage of the snow days, building countless snow forts complete with neighborhood snow ball fights.

We had the best roads in the county, remember the days before incorporation? This was the one motivating force of becoming a city....services! Road and maintenance crews our hats are off to you!

What community updates can I give for 2009?

- In May we had a groundbreaking for our new skate park. The City received approximately \$100,000 in grants and donations to help build the skate park. With the leadership of Pat Dockery and the volunteerism of the Liberty Lake 5-0 Skate Park committee after 6 long years, our skate park should be complete within 45 days located in Pavillion Park. The grand opening is set for July 4th!
- Pavillion Park recently received a face lift with improvements made to the baseball field. It was renamed "Rookie Field" giving the teams a chance to feel they are playing in the World Series. Thanks to the perseverance of Jennifer Tomlinson and the many volunteers from East Side Little League it has been transformed into a great baseball field.
- After this year, a gateway into Liberty Lake will be established with signage on Country Vista and additional wayfinding signage throughout the City is proposed. Planters overflowing with flowers will welcome you into the community.
- The groundwork infrastructure will begin in the River District area for another master planned development to be created over the next twenty years. This area will be transit oriented, utilizing bike trails, parks and open spaces to bring the community together.
- The development of Hawkstone on the east side of the city on Appleway will enhance the community with a variety of housing options through newly constructed or permitted senior, multi family, work force, townhome and detached single family residential, as well as a mixed use downtown and parks. This will establish a pedestrian oriented live, work and play master planned area.

- Through the City's exterior lighting standards, we are looking at reducing light pollution so the starry nights will still have that alluring appeal within the community.
- Parks Planning will take place throughout this summer with workshops and public testimony to get input from the community.
- We have a tremendous amount of recreational opportunities and are continually getting more with the Chill Day camp, events happening within the community, partnering with other jurisdictions to offer white water rafting, free trips to the CDA casino, dancing lessons etc.

Many of those recreational activities are taking place in this beautiful regional sports facility called the HUB. The next time you plan an event, I urge you to utilize this wonderful facility! It has ten volleyball courts, five basketball courts, three dance studios upstairs and full concession stand. Think of your next 50's dance, community Halloween party or a little competition between businesses to show off your three on three teams.

Each municipality in the Spokane Region is partnering together to find ways to serve their communities better. Services are being evaluated and consolidated where cost savings make sense (for example changing to SCRAPS for animal control). Cities are annexing in the urban areas to be able to better serve residents, leaving the county to focus on the region wide services like court systems, jails, etc. We are focusing on joint planning areas and evaluating standards for a sustainable region. Our region is known for the best medical hospital care, educational opportunities in the University District, and recreational opportunities just out your back door. Our community is known for its high tech companies and outstanding quality of life.

I want to leave you with one challenge. When we talk about a need within the community, let's each of us become the solution. It is easy to state that everyone should make a difference in their community.

- Check on your neighbors, form those neighborhood watches (only you know what is out of place)
- Become self reliant in an emergency and follow the recommendations for a three to five day supply for disaster preparedness. We live in God's Country but we have seen ice storm, valley fire, huge snow drifts and the H1N1flu. We need to be prepared.
- Join a volunteer organization and get to know others in the community. The best reward for any of us is to serve others. Terrific friendships are gained from working alongside another during events that happen within this community.

- We all imagine someone will step up to the plate, anyone can do it. Will you be that someone? I challenge each of you to knock the ball out of the ball park! Together we can and have moved mountains.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each of our city's employees for their positive attitude and hard work they have demonstrated.

I would also like to thank our City Council for your willingness to work with me and each other to move Liberty Lake forward. If we can strive to continue this focus and cooperation, we will serve the citizens of Liberty Lake well.

Most of all, I want to thank the citizens of Liberty Lake. I have enjoyed serving you over the past year and a half and look forward to serving you in the future, as we continue to make Liberty Lake a magnificent place to live, work, and play.