

# *State of the City 2017*

## **Jerry Behney**

Thank you Jerry Behney for your years of service on the council.

## **New Councilors.**

To member of the City Council. I thank you for your willingness and yes daring to serve our community. As a Councilor, you must be willing to publicly state your opinion and either support or deny policies that guide our city. We all must recognize that we actually lose some of our rights when taking office. As an elected official, speaking with other councilors outside of public meetings, and conflicts of interest, must be carefully considered.

This body represents many diverse opinions. We must take it to heart that we are here to represent our community, not just our personal opinions. It is our responsibility to discuss all viable options before making a decision. Open dialogue creates the opportunity to gather information which helps strengthen, and clarify the reasons for our decisions. The only way to get answers is to ask questions. During my appointed tenure of 2016, I made minor changes in our meeting process to encourage open dialogue. This will continue to be a priority for me.

## **The year of 2016**

For the first time in ten years Coburg has a budget without a negative balance in our General fund.

The importance of this issue is significant in so many ways: many of you may remember 3 years ago, councilors, budget committee members and staff had to make some very tough decisions. A financial crisis that had been created by decisions and actions of people that were no longer here. We agonized over which staff members we had to lay off, and how to deal with payroll shortages in our budget. We laid off a police officer, and all personnel took a salary deduction so the City of Coburg could stay within its budget resources. This lesson must never be forgotten!

I personally believe, some tough questions and follow up by the City Councilor's many years prior to this would have saved us so much stress and anxiety. I hope we never have to make painful decisions like that again.

## **In addition to the election of the Mayor and Councilors, two other election issues:**

Marijuana dispensary ban was upheld by voters.

Fuel tax increase failed. Street repairs will continue to backlog.

**Ice storm: Cooperation** between City of Coburg Public Works, Police and the Coburg Rural Fire District went very well. A debrief shared some lessons learned and showed some weaknesses that will be addressed. But overall participants were very happy with the inter-agency cooperation. I want to thank our Public Works and police staff for their long hard hours of work during this storm. Thanks also to the Chief and the volunteers of the Coburg Fire District.

**Public Records keeping.** We have implemented a more definitive recording of public meetings, with minutes that contain the important elements of the discussion that created the outcome.

Too much energy has been spent checking historic records to find clarity on important decisions made years earlier only to find our records lacking in that clarity. Accountability is very important to public decision making. Staff has put emphasis on more detail and clarity of information with a focus on the question "what will this say to somebody 10 years from now?"

## **What's in store for us in 2017**

**Community communication:** opportunities for citizen participation through committees, commissions, and the visioning process, as well as Main Street, town hall meetings, and coburg conversations. Other sources of information are the newsletter, a new web page, mailers in our utility bills and attendance at council meetings.

My intent is to strengthen the knowledge of our committee and commission members. **To create strong team work with staff and committees/commission, and other volunteers.** We shall Encourage more interaction with the council.

Coburg faces many changes with growth and new priorities of our community. Challenges include new homes and families which require more infrastructure and services from the city.

Community safety is a personal concern for me. 3 years ago, we eliminated our 3<sup>rd</sup> police officer due to budget issues. The Chief and Officer Lee have covered our safety concerns with a small dedicated group of top quality reservists that donate their time to help keep us safe. I believe it is time to replace that 3<sup>rd</sup> officer.

We have been on a "no spend" diet for 10 years. This has the positive result of ending our deficit in our general fund. The negatives are substantial: little to no investment in many parts of infrastructure and equipment. An example is the equipment and vehicles that our public works and police departments work with. Constant breakdowns of old equipment is costing us dollars and precious staff hours.

### **Main Street, Chamber of Commerce**

Main Street Oregon is spear-headed by our Chamber of Commerce. This program and the community visioning have an overlapping mission to gather information from the community in the beginning. Afterwards, the Chamber and the Main Street program will focus on economic development and historic preservation of our downtown commercial area.

### **Community Visioning**

Visioning: in it's simplest form this is an effort to get input from our community, to encourage our neighbors to tell us what they want from our government. This information is important to this Council for goal setting which steers where we will focus our staff and financial efforts. We must encourage citizens to participate so we can learn what is wanted by our community.

**What makes Coburg special is it's people.** I hope we can continue to maintain the small town atmosphere. A caring community where neighbors help one another and provide the support which makes people want to put down roots, and pass this tradition of community along to future generations.

2017 will be an eventful year with many changes. I thank all who have stepped forward and given their time and energy to make Coburg a wonderful place to live. I look forward to seeing new and familiar faces as we take on the challenges of 2017 with our usual friendliness and Coburg Pride.