

**State of the City: Mayor Gary Forner  
January 2019**

Council Members, City Staff, fellow citizens and guests, thank you for being here tonight.

A year ago this month, I was sworn in as the twenty-third Mayor of the City of Ilwaco. Over the past twelve months I have experienced many firsts and a great deal of satisfaction. My goals were simple: bring in new businesses to the city; save the Dupes building and have it function as a viable business; improve the appearance of First Avenue and Spruce Street intersection; and encourage visitors to stay and explore Ilwaco. I also was encouraging new construction and development. My most important goal was to manage the city resources, revenue, and employees in a manner that is prudent, wise, and expected of me by our citizens.

In my first day as Mayor, I was met with the City Hall staff sick with flu and short-staffed. I observed staff members working while sick or recovering from the flu, when they should have been home. I was impressed with their dedication and duty to the citizens of Ilwaco. I knew then and it has been reaffirmed many times, that I inherited an outstanding City Hall Staff.

City Treasurer, Holly Beller; City Clerk, Stephanie Davis; and Billing Clerk, Terri Staples are the city's front line troops. They are vital to the city's success and are the first city employees that the citizens normally meet or talk too. They deal with a wide range of problems, citizen emotions, government agencies, the-never-ending phone calls, and rats! Their professional demeanor and attitude has received the public's trust and appreciation. I have received comments from our citizens and other agencies of the joy of working with them.

In December, we waved good bye to our Billing Clerk Terri Staples, who retired after working 5 years with the city. I want to thank Terri for her work and her creative skills that helped City Hall function over those years.

In mid-December the city hired a new Billing Clerk, Samantha Baker. Samantha will be working full time and will add flexibility, avoid scheduling conflicts and reduce the work load on the Clerk and Treasurer. Her personality has already enlightened the city hall.

### **The Ilwaco City Council**

In January, I welcomed aboard three brand new council members; Kristin Mathison, Jared Oakes and Missy Bageant. Also, returning to the city council was Matt Lessnau. These four council members brought youth, energy, and enthusiasm to the council that has not been seen in years. The final council seat was filled by veteran council member Fred Marshall.

In July, Kenneth Sprague was appointed to the council to fill Fred Marshall's seat, after Fred resigned.

There is a learning curve that all council members must experience and I can tell you that these council members have been working hard. They do their homework, they ask appropriate questions and the citizens of Ilwaco should be pleased to have these council members that representing them.

## **A Report on the City's Departments**

I will take this opportunity to tell you about the accomplishments of the City's four departments; Public Works, the Water Department, the Waste Water Treatment Plant and the Fire Department.

### **Public Works**

One of my first actions as Mayor, was to immediately institute several measures to safeguard city property and to control fuel usage and the documentation of equipment usage. I also recommended a monthly expense tracking procedure and required the recording of safety procedures and meetings on a duty log.

In mid-February I filled the vacant Public Works position by hiring a former City of Long Beach employee, Mike Unruh, whose knowledge and experience has been a boon to the Ilwaco Public Works crew. Mike also has state certifications as a Water and Waste Water Plant Operator which will allow him to fill in at those plants when needed.

Under the leadership of the Public Works Supervisor, Scott Corsi, the Public Works crew has done more maintenance and improvement to the city infrastructure than has been done in the previous years. Their skills and budget saving ideas have impressed me and have saved the city thousands of dollars.

Here are some examples of their work accomplishments:

- This past summer over 6,517 feet of stormwater ditches were re-ditched to improve drainage throughout the city and the port. Approximately 50 culverts were flushed and cleared of debris. Public Works, also located a forgotten storm catch basin that was overgrown with sod and cleared numerous other neglected storm catch basins of grass, leaves, mud, and even a basketball.
- An emergency stormwater flooding issue on Cook's Hill had to be addressed to prevent further basement flooding and road damages. The PW crew re-ditched several ditches and re-directed storm water flow away from the threatened homes. These measures are only a temporary fix while the city's engineering firm develops new storm water plans for Cook's Hill.
- Public Works has also repaired numerous broken water lines throughout the city which prevents costly loss of water and revenue.
- Over 600 gallons of hazardous materials were removed from the city shop after being stored there for decades. Also, the City surplused scrap metals, old power tools and other unused equipment saving the City on insurance premiums and generated modest revenue.
- During the summer, Spring Street was graded and rocked to allow emergency vehicle access to Sahalee and residential access in the event that Loop 100 is blocked by landslides.

I want to thank Public Works Supervisor Scott Corsi and Utility Workers Brian Brooks and Mike Unruh for their hard work improving the infrastructure of the city.

## **The Indian Creek Water Treatment Plant**

The Water Treatment Plant Supervisor Rick Gray and Water Operator Austin Benson rebuilt the Indian Creek Reservoir Intake. With assistance of the Public Works Crew the intake was relocated to a new depth and will now produce water that is cleaner, free of suspended particles, less dis-colored and save on chemicals throughout the year.

## **The Waste Water Plant**

Waste Water Plant Operator Tim Pfeifer and Utility Operator Jimmie Fero began an energy saving program 2018 that will save the City and citizens hundreds of thousand dollars over the next ten years. Here are a few of the Waste Water Plant accomplishments:

- New Programmable Logic Computers and drives were installed for controlling the Influent and Single Batch Reactors and blower controls. These new additions provided a two-fold benefit; energy efficiency and better process control.
- The twenty year old #3 Influent Actuator was an eye opening experience, since it was no longer supported and required the unit to be re-manufactured after it failed.
- The implementation of a good Preventive Maintenance Plan for solids removal and headworks processing, will help keep a good clean and healthy environment in the SBR's and improves land application treatment.

## **The Ilwaco Volunteer Fire Department**

The Ilwaco Volunteer Fire Department under Fire Chief Tom Williams responded to 30 fires and 198 EMS calls in 2018, including mutual fire responses to Long Beach. The department also provide manpower to several city events, which included the Peninsula Poverty Triathlon, the Black Lake Fishing Derby, the Ilwaco Loyalty Kids Parade, and the Long Beaches Loyalty Parade. They also provided EMS support for the Fire Cracker 5K and Thunder Over The Bay Fireworks. The department is well known for its Halloween Open House and this year passed out candy, finger lights, and Play Dough to over 700 Trick or Treaters.

Two of Ilwaco Volunteer Fire Fighters, Eli Sheaffer and Tyler Reynolds successfully completed their state certification as Fire Fighter 1. This training complies with NFPA standards and is required training for all entry fire fighters. In October, Eli and Tyler received the Ilwaco's Fire Fighter of the Year Award from the Don R. Grable, Post 48, of the American Legion.

Ilwaco Volunteers have also completed 1,574 hours of fire training and 112 hours of EMS required re-certification training in 2018.

## **Other City Accomplishments and Projects in 2018**

- This month the Sahalee water and sewer line project will be completed. The project has been in the planning stage since 2006 and includes installing new sewer grinder pumps, water lines and

sewer lines, additional fire hydrants, repaving portions of the roads and installing auxiliary infrastructure.

- The Lake View Drive water booster pump was re-engineered to increase fire flow to meet NFPA standards, as the prior flows did not supply adequate water flow and water pressure for fire protection.
- The speed limit on US 101, at the northern City Limits, was reduced from 45 mile per hour to 35 miles per hour and was extended south to near Lakeview Drive and Black Lake. The reduction in speed limit will provide a safer egress on to the highway and reduce traffic accidents by Black Lake.
- The City of Ilwaco established a No Fee Business License on all businesses that have a yearly income of under two thousand dollars.

### **Up Coming 2019 Projects**

- The Whealdon Road Waterline Realignment Project is scheduled to begin in early spring or summer. This project will replace two 10 inch asbestos cement waterlines with a new 16 inch PVC line. Two seismic valve will also be installed on the 16 inch line to prevent water loss in the event of an earthquake. Also, included in this project is widening and improvement of Whealdon Road, a new booster station and refurbishing of the 500,000 gallon steel reservoir built in 1995.
- The City Park Renovation Dedication will occur this spring or in early summer.
- The Baker Bay Stormwater Infiltration Project along Howerton Way, at the Port of Ilwaco, will start this year. This no-cost project will filter and treat stormwater run-off from the port before the water enters Baker Bay.
- The City plans to begin timber harvesting at the Indian Creek Reservoir this year. The funds from the timber harvest will be used to purchase additional timber rights and property from Weyerhaeuser who currently owns some of the land and timber rights within the water shed.
- In Vandalia, the Washington State Department of Transportation's Pavement Test Project will pave Ortelius Lane this coming spring or summer. The project will test three types of experimental pavements for use on roads that are moderately traveled and will be a financially cheaper alternative. This project will not cost the citizens of Ilwaco a cent and will greatly improve Ortelius Lane.

### **Improving the City's Storm Readiness**

This year the city will begin a feasibility study on whether the old rectangular reservoir on Whealdon Road could be developed in a Natural Disaster Supply Storage Facility. This 2,100 square foot structure could provide the needed space to store vital supplies in case of a major storms or the Cascadia Subduction quake event. Hopefully with assistance of the Red Cross, Pacific County Emergence Management and the State Department Emergency Management we can turn this structure into a storage center.

Some of you may remember the storm of 2007, when the peninsula spent almost a week without electricity, roads were blocked, and houses damaged by falling trees. Imagine how it will feel going weeks without power, no heat, no 911, no fuel for your vehicles or for the generator that keeps the food from spoiling in the refrigerator. And heaven help us, no internet. These natural events will continue to happen and we live in a region that can be subjected to periods of time where outside help and supplies cannot arrive. The City of Ilwaco, as well as the peninsula, needs a facility, such as the one that I am proposing, that will store supplies and by utilizing an already existing structure, re-purposing it to a supply center, the cost would be manageable.

### **City Growth and Development**

I see continued growth, both in commercial and residential development in Ilwaco. The city and the county is experiencing economic improvement. The need for high speed fiber is vital to Ilwaco's future and business opportunities. Without high speed fiber new businesses will settle elsewhere and current businesses will lag in their ability to keep up with and use new apps and technologies. I will continue my support and back this needed technology and getting it to every business and home in Ilwaco.

### **The Environment and Fisheries**

Ilwaco is a unique city, nestled among the wooded hills of Cape Disappointment, caressed by the waters of the Columbia River, fed by the Pacific Ocean's abundance of marine life, and lulled to sleep by the crashing waves upon the distant sandy shores. Here we, the lucky few, reside in nature's embrace and its majestic allure.

Ilwaco's economy is driven by the ocean and river fisheries, as it has been for hundred and fifty years. But these fisheries are being threatened by ocean acidity and global warming. Acidic rain is changing the environment and threatening the salmon and crab that our fisherman depend on. Yes, even with the 50 inches or more of rain that we receive a year, it is acidic! A recent study conducted by the Ilwaco Waste Water Plant has detected acid in our rain. Combine this with increasing global temperatures and the warm stream run off. We are now seeing the salmon fry that our fishermen rely on dying in those streams and this threatens Ilwaco's fishing community. What would Ilwaco be like without the fish and crabs or the processing plants, the fishing boats, and a deep navigation channel that makes our port viable?

### **What can we do?**

I am asking this Council, the Planning Commission and the citizens of Ilwaco to help make Ilwaco a Resilient City and to contribute to improving the environment.

This will mean changing our building codes on both commercial and residential construction to be environmental sound and encourage the use of solar panels on city owned buildings and private homes throughout the city. We need to encourage the use of permeable roads and sidewalk surfaces to control and treat stormwater run-off. The city should also encourage the planting of trees and other plants to curb greenhouse gases.

Also, we may need to designate our low elevation areas, such as Vandalia, the areas along Baker Bay and the Wallicut River, as areas threatened and subject to sea level rise. Some changes in these areas may be as simple as raising the elevation of new construction two or three feet above the hundred year

flood level or denying new construction. Other hard decisions will take time, require research, and study. But we shouldn't procrastinate too long.

The City of Ilwaco must take the lead and strongly encourage citizen participation. Our elected leaders need to keep the pressure on state officials to push for sound environmental practices and reasonable funding grants to help preserve the environment.

Without it, Ilwaco could end up being an island surround on all sides by water, devoid of a fishing fleet and processing facilities. This may not happen in your lifetime, but with the high probability it will happen in your child's lifetime and surely your grandchild's lifetime.

I remember my Dutch relatives using a phrase that is just as vogue today as it was in the 1960's. **"Truth is lost when there is too much debating"**. As a society, we have debated the global warming pros and cons and listened to the denier's falsification and their refusal to believe. The truth is knocking on our door and we will regret not starting to save this environment sooner. It is time for all of us to do something to help save the environment. I personally do not want to be remembered as "That Mayor" who did nothing, failed to lead, and turned his back on his fellow citizen's future and the environment.

Thank you.