

State of the City 2023

Thank you to everyone joining us -- the City Council, our City staff and, most importantly, the residents of this beautiful city -- as we present the State of the City in January 2023 and wrap up celebrations of Roseburg's 150th birthday. I welcome our newest City Councilors: David Mohr, Ruth Smith and Ellen Porter. I extend my sincere appreciation to City Councilors Bob Cotterell and Beverly Cole, who retired from the Council on December 31 after years of service to this community. I also thank our City staff for their hard work, talent and dedication they give Roseburg and its residents 365 days a year.

In 2022, we saluted Roseburg's sesquicentennial -- marking 150 years as an incorporated city on October 3rd. We spent that month celebrating with a birthday Party in the Park, a fun run and walk, time capsule burial, Blocktober Fest, and our first Neewollah Parade in three Halloweens. The party in Stewart Park included the Aaron Rose Tent, where artist Alpha Rich unveiled the restored, life-sized cutout of our city founder Aaron Rose, which is once again watching over City Hall. Stop by the lobby to see him.

On October 3rd, we held a time capsule ceremony in front of City Hall to bury a capsule made here in Roseburg by designer Paul Whitworth and metal fabricator Bryson Steele. Inside, we placed more than 170 items from the City, County, Tribe and diverse local organizations. The capsule will be dug up in 50 years for our Bicentennial. Thank you to everyone who contributed in some way. And thanks again to all those who served on the Roseburg 150 Planning Committee, including co-chairs Shelley Briggs Loosley and Sarah Holborow, and City employees Suzanne Hurt, Tracy Moser and Amy Sowa. At our last Council meeting of 2022, a new oil painting honoring Roseburg's 150th birthday was unveiled by artist Susan Applegate. I invite you to stop by City Hall to see this fantastic painting in the lobby and the time capsule sign outside.

Early in 2022, we began emerging from the two-year COVID-19 pandemic, which is plenty to celebrate. But that was just the start to a year in which we found new opportunities to gather together again – sometimes with neighbors we hadn't met before – and in a way that allowed us to experience and celebrate our differences and our devotion to our community.

Here are highlights from the past year:

- Phase 1 of the Gary Leif Navigation Center opened with 10 pallet shelters, showers, laundry facilities and case management services;
- Interior navigation center renovations began in November;
- In true community collaboration, the Senior Center has allowed its building to be used as an overnight warming shelter operated by Onward Roseburg's Kimetha Stallings and volunteers, and funded by donations, the City and UCAN;
- The City Charter Review Committee proposed the first charter updates in decades;
- The Roseburg Visitor Center opened;
- American Rescue Plan Act money is funding a year of janitorial and security services for the downtown garage;
- 934 camps were removed from City properties;
- Neewollah, flower baskets and holiday lights returned to downtown;
- Tyler Christopherson was promoted to fire chief and Dawn Easley was hired as public works director;
- Community Development added three online maps for floodplain documents, developable lands and historic resources;
- The Library's colorful new minivan expanded their community outreach.

Administration Department

The administration works with all departments to support direct services to residents; provides primary Council and employee support; accomplishes Council goal tasks; and creates a safe, healthy work environment. Working closely together on these activities are City Manager Nikki Messenger, Assistant City Manager and City Recorder Amy Sowa, Human Resources Director John VanWinkle, Finance Director Ron Harker, Communications Specialist Suzanne Hurt and Management Assistants Koree Tate and Autumn David. The City of Roseburg's mission statement is, "Committed to Continuous Improvement and Quality Customer Service." That takes dedication and hard work – and City staff, management and elected officials are committed to that mission.

City Recorder

In September, Assistant City Manager and City Recorder Amy Sowa was named '2022 Recorder of the Year' by the Oregon Association of Municipal Recordors because she's played a pivotal role in the City's efforts to tackle homelessness, one of the most challenging issues facing all communities. She also became staff liaison for the Council's

new Homeless Commission and its effort to find and buy property for the City's first low-barrier emergency shelter and recruit a nonprofit operator. As a result, one of the City's major accomplishments last year was opening Phase 1 of the Gary Leif Navigation Center – an emergency shelter with wraparound services.

Human Resources

Human Resources Director John VanWinkle and Management Assistant Autumn David tackled a high volume of recruitments, interviews and appointments of new employees who have filled positions left by retirements, promotions and people moving on to other opportunities. The union contract with the International Association of Firefighters was ratified and contract negotiations with the Roseburg Police Employees Association have begun. HR continued leading pandemic response by interpreting rapidly changing state and federal laws and guidance as COVID restrictions lifted.

Communications

Communications Specialist Suzanne Hurt has given communication support to all departments and boosted community engagement and the City's reputation through event planning, professional communication materials management, media relations, research, writing, photography and best communication practices. She helped plan and manage events to celebrate Roseburg's 150th birthday and the Gary Leif Navigation Center's opening. She produces a quarterly City Connection e-newsletter and accurate, engaging press releases, website updates and social media posts to inform residents about City activities, decisions and accomplishments. That's led to a substantial rise in newsletter subscribers and social media followers. Please [sign up for the City Connection](#) on the City's website.

Finance/IT/Municipal Court

The City weathered the pandemic's economic storm well, thanks to a Finance Department led by Ron Harker. Moody's continues to rate the city as Aa3 -- so our credit is high-quality and very low-risk. Local firm Systech is providing IT services and assessing the City's IT infrastructure to find ways to cut cost while strengthening our systems. Municipal Court is managing a high case load caused by a COVID backlog. The Annual Comprehensive Financial Report – or “audit” – once again earned national recognition. For the 29th year in a row, the City won an award for “Excellence in Financial Reporting” from the Government Finance Officers Association for the Fiscal Year 2021 audit. For the seventh year, the City earned the Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting for a pared-down audit summary. We are very proud of these accomplishments. You can check out both reports on the [Roseburg Finance Department's webpages](#).

Library

The library, led by Kris Wiley, reopened to the public in early February and, by March, expanded services to be open 32 hours a week, Tuesday through Saturday. The library sponsored a number of events throughout the year, such as a Chicana Literature series, author discussions and a traveling exhibit called “Oregon Voices.” The library is supported by 3.5 full time-equivalent staff members; 16 volunteers, who provided more than 1,000 hours of service; and Friends of the Roseburg Public Library volunteers, who run book sales, advocate for the library and oversee the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program. About 1,400 of our area's youngest learners benefitted from that program, which mails a free, new, age-appropriate book each month to registered children from birth to fifth birthdays. You can sign your child up through the [library's webpage](#).

Community Development

The Community Development Department, led by Stuart Cowie, processed about 340 site review applications, resulting in 304 County building permits, with 185 of those commercial. Completed developments include Cascade Community Credit Union's expansion, a 31,000-square-foot Aviva Health facility, a new First Interstate Bank, Grocery Outlet's relocation, a U.S. Market and Space Age Fuel station, several downtown businesses including Urban Pizza, and three restaurants: MOD Pizza, In-N-Out Burger and Chipotle. Under construction are Douglas Electric Cooperative's headquarters; a 9,000-square-foot commercial building to house a physical therapist, office and salon on Diamond Lake Boulevard; a pizza and salad shop across from the high school; a gas station and convenience store to replace Anderson Market and Deli on Harvard; Ash Spring's 105 apartments and Sunshine Park Apartment's 144 affordable units.

Most of the Urban Growth Boundary swap application draft was completed. Other efforts aiding livability and affordability included downtown parking changes, a bike routes plan, and recertifying our participation in FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program. The department partnered with CCD Business Development Corporation to bring \$1 million in COVID-19 emergency small business grants to businesses, supported the Economic Development Commission awarding 10 tourism grants totaling nearly \$50,000, and collaborated with Anvil Northwest on the Experience Roseburg campaign. The Roseburg

Visitor Center opened at 555 Kane Street in April and three new murals were painted downtown. Code enforcement responded to more than 250 nuisance-abatement complaints and resolved about half. By November, 934 camps and 161 tons of garbage had been removed from 21 spots on public property – mostly parks. The department has hired two planners to replace staff recruited by others.

Public Works/Parks and Recreation

Public Works staff, led by Brice Perkins and now Dawn Easley, work hard to ensure your drinking water is safe; streets, storm-drainage facilities and airport are maintained; and parks are safe, clean and green. Staff maintain public infrastructure such as landscaping, turf, park and airport facilities, city-owned buildings, the water treatment plant, pavement, signs, and pump stations and reservoirs. They remove graffiti and leaves, clean storm drains, sweep streets, and install and repair water mains and connections. Major projects included repaving Northeast Stephens Street between Garden Valley Boulevard and Deer Creek, installing 2,850 feet of new 24-inch transmission main to replace an 88-year-old water line, lining 365 feet of 48-inch storm drain pipe to extend its useful life, replacing the park maintenance shop roof, rebuilding Mosher Avenue railroad crossing and slurry seals to extend streets' useful lives.

Roseburg's water system will soon be equipped with backup power at the water treatment plant and seven pump stations critical to maintaining the City's ability to produce and deliver clean water during extended power outages. The system will help provide water to about 98% of all water customers. At Roseburg Regional Airport, grant-funded design work is underway to extend the taxiway and install backup power so runway and taxiway lighting, navigational aids and fuel will operate in an extended outage. With the pandemic lifting, our parks once again hosted recreational activities such as Movies, Zumba and Yoga in the Park; Land of Umpqua Geocache hunt; and Women's Just for Fun Golf – plus a Great Easter Bunny Hunt and Great Pumpkin Roundup for kids. Parks and Streets crews also helped with weekly camp cleanups led by Police and Community Development. Public Works also hired 10 new employees to replace those who retired or moved on to other opportunities.

Fire Department

The Fire Department saw positive transition with promotions, retirements and new hires, and continued providing the highest level of service to residents – protecting life and property and serving with integrity, respect and professionalism. Assistant Fire Chief Tyler Christopherson was promoted to Chief in November after Fire Chief Monte Bryan retired. Tyler has served 16 years in the department and is leading a search for an assistant chief. Personnel responded to 7,250 service calls, from structure fires with major property loss to vehicle accidents, hazardous material incidents and medical aid calls. That's a 15% increase over 2021. Fire-prevention efforts by Fire Marshal Brian Jewell and his team included more than 250 plan reviews, 218 business registration applications and inspections, and 17 significant fire investigations.

Technology updates included installing digital dashboards at all three fire stations and administrative offices to improve communication and information-sharing. Training included more than 5,500 hours of fire, EMS, rescue and hazardous materials education with a wildland-urban interface focus. Firefighters gained valuable experience by training on three privately owned structures before demolition. The 2022 highlight was initiating Roseburg's newest fire engine into service at Fire Station 2 with the department's first traditional "push-in" ceremony.

Police Department

Our Police faced another extremely busy year -- responding to more than 37,000 calls for service and taking nearly 6,000 reports. At the same time, they're experiencing difficulty maintaining staffing levels for sworn officers -- like most forces in the U.S. We're excited to share that four Roseburg officers were recognized at the Oregon Peace Officers Association awards ceremony in September. Officers Dawson Batsch and Brandon Halter got Lifesaving with Valor awards for saving a woman from drowning in the South Umpqua River. Corporal Patrick Moore and Officer Austin Potter got Medal of Honor awards for preventing a man from burning down the house with his parents inside.

Oregon Senate Bill 48 made it very difficult to jail low-level, non-violent offenders. Ballot Measure 110 decriminalized small or "user" amounts of hard drugs. So we're seeing a drastic increase in drug use while it's much harder to jail people. Police usually arrest offenders and take them to jail to ensure immediate consequences and prevent continued problems. Due to the bill and ballot measure, our officers are sometimes limited to issuing citations.

Police continue partnering with Adapt on the Mobile Crisis Team, which responded to more than 1,400 mental health crisis calls by October and diverted many people from jail or the ER. Officers keep trying to connect unhoused people with resources and relatives. Police partner with Community Development, Public Works and Parks on camp cleanups.

Investigations by our detectives -- part of the Douglas County Major Crimes team -- included three probes of outside-agency, officer-involved shootings. Grand juries found all three to be justified. Detectives also investigated a shooting by a man who was later convicted; a homicide for which another man was arrested; and many child abuse and sexual assault cases, leading to several arrests and convictions. K9 Axel retired at age 9 after more than 300 deployments and 92 captures. K9 Trapper found 19.5 pounds of methamphetamine, half a pound of heroin, 3.4 pounds of fentanyl, 6.6 ounces of cocaine and \$128,000 in drug money before being permanently assigned to the Douglas Interagency Narcotics Team last month.

Those were highlights from the last year. Here's what's expected in 2023:

1. The renovated Gary Leif Navigation Center is anticipated to open in spring with 30 beds and continued case management and walk-in services to help more people transition to stable housing;
2. The Homeless Commission and City have begun an effort to set up a supervised urban campground for the homeless;
3. After the City got a \$5 million state grant, staff will keep supporting Umpqua Valley Development Corporation's progress on opening a medical college to address rising healthcare professional shortages and boost our economy;
4. Public hearings and community meetings will be held as the City applies to the City Council and County Commissioners for an Urban Growth Boundary Swap for more land where housing could be built;
5. The Council will soon consider referring a ballot measure on City Charter updates to voters in a May special election;
6. Public Works will complete standby power projects at the Water Treatment Plant and Roseburg Regional Airport;
7. Parks staff are pursuing grants to renovate the outdoor tennis courts and improve Sunshine Park trails;
8. The library will expand Summer Reading programs for all ages.

As we start 2023, we can look back on a year that brought our community together to celebrate the history and growing diversity of our beloved city, as well as look forward to the new year when we will keep working together to be the best small town in Oregon.