

State of the City 2024

Thank you to everyone joining us -- the City Council, City staff and, most importantly, residents of our beloved city - - as we present the State of the City in January 2024. I thank our City staff for their hard work and the talent, expertise and dedication they give Roseburg and its residents 365 days a year.

I also thank City Councilors and our City Commission members who generously volunteer their time. I welcome our newest City Councilor, Tom Michalek, and thank Councilor Andrea Zielinski, who served her first term as Council President after becoming only the second woman in Roseburg history chosen by her peers for that role. Welcome to new Council President David Mohr.

2023 was an exciting year to live in Roseburg. Important City projects were launched or completed and, with hopefully the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic solidly behind us, Roseburg experienced encouraging growth spurts in our retail, commercial and residential sectors. After the pandemic challenges we've all recently faced, let's remember we can support one another and strengthen this community by shopping locally and doing other business right here at home.

Clearly, a major issue facing Roseburg and every other Oregon city in the past year has been homelessness. We can't escape its impacts on our community, just like the homeless individuals themselves may sometimes feel they can't escape the cycle of homelessness.

But by working together for the good of our town and ALL its residents -- and putting aside our personal differences -- we have accomplished amazing things in the last 12 months. I know City staff care as much about these challenges as everyone else and they are working hard on solutions to help those wanting to be helped, as well as the entire community.

Here are highlights from the past year:

- The Gary Leif Navigation Center low-barrier group shelter opened following interior renovations;
- The Senior Center served as a warming and cooling center during severe weather;
- The City collaborated to form a medical college partnership with Umpqua Community College;
- Money from the American Rescue Plan Act and General Fund supported downtown garage janitorial and security services;
- Roseburg voters updated the City Charter for the first time in decades;
- Seasonal events from the Neewollah Parade to flower baskets and holiday lights brightened downtown with City support. It's worth noting that Neewollah is a Halloween tradition that began in Roseburg 90 years ago in 1933;
- Community Development continued working on an urban growth boundary swap proposal to add land suitable for residential development and encourage more housing construction;
- Community Development and ODOT launched a Design Concept Plan for Diamond Lake Boulevard, also known as Oregon Route 138 East;
- In June, the City welcomed a 10-person delegation from Kuki City, Japan, to celebrate a 30-year Sister City friendship;
- Three new murals were painted downtown;
- The Library marked five years of serving our community;
- Public Works' water system now has backup power to continue clean water delivery during extended outages;
- Parks won a nearly \$1 million grant to renovate outdoor tennis courts;
- The Fire Department hired the City's first female Fire Marshal and reclaimed a historic fire vehicle;
- The City hired 25 new employees -- about 15% of its workforce;
- The Homeless Liaison Officer posted hundreds of camp cleanup notices and also oversaw the cleanups on public property.

Administration Department

The Administration Department is home to the City Manager, City Recorder, Human Resources Director, Communications Specialist and two Management Assistants. The team provides a variety of services to residents, the Mayor, Council and other internal and external customers.

City Manager Nikki Messenger guides the management team in maintaining and improving City operations and pursuing and achieving Council goals.

Patty Hitt joined the management team as **City Recorder** in 2023. Her major responsibilities include City records retention, facilitating public bidding processes, preparing ordinances, public records requests, city elections and serving as the Homeless Commission staff liaison.

Human Resources Director John VanWinkle also serves as the City's Risk Manager and Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator. He deals directly with all insurance questions and ensures policies and contract language are in place to protect the organization and taxpayers' investment.

Communications Specialist Suzanne Hurt informs the public in a transparent, positive manner to build connections within the community. She provides residents with accurate information they can rely on – keeping people informed about the City's work and engaged in their hometown.

Administration worked to fulfill several Council goals this past year. After interior renovation of a 9,870-square-foot building, the City's first low-barrier group shelter opened as the second phase of the Gary Leif Navigation Center, providing stable, temporary shelter for up to 30 people, in addition to 10 pallet shelters already at that location. The center has provided case management and walk-in services since June 2022 and provides a kitchen, showers, laundry facilities and client storage. UCAN has done an outstanding job operating the center and making a true difference in the lives of the people they serve, as well as in the community. To date, operations have been funded by grants.

City officials also maintained efforts to find a property, operator and funding for a supervised urban campground to offer those sleeping on public property a safe alternative plus assistance to transitional shelter and stable housing. The City began enforcing new "time, place and manner" regulations for sleeping overnight on City property. The City continues to support community partners' efforts to provide warming and cooling centers and was thrilled when UCAN entered a warming center agreement with St. Joseph Catholic Church in late November.

Work on the Southern Oregon Medical Workforce Center leapt forward when the Council approved an intergovernmental agreement with the college. Thank you to Kelly Morgan and the team for their vision to reach this point where we're ready to work with academic partners to bring high-quality bachelor's and master's healthcare education to our area. Thank you to UCC President Rachel Pokrandt and her team for taking the ball from here!

Community Development Department

Community Development Director Stuart Cowie had a busy year, hiring five out of seven staff. It is quite an accomplishment that Stu and Department Technician Chrissy Matthews navigated that level of departmental change. Staff processed 350 site review applications, 252 building permits, 32 land use applications and 55 pre-application meetings.

Finished construction includes WinCo, Sunshine Park Apartments' 144 affordable units, Douglas Electric Cooperative's headquarters, Anderson Market and Gulf gas station, a new Peterbilt parts and service center, and a 9,000-square-foot commercial building on Diamond Lake Boulevard. Under construction are a new Nickabob's Meat Market on Harvard Avenue, Ash Springs' 105 apartments and Thyme Subdivision's 14 townhouses.

Public input starts early this year after an urban growth boundary swap application was submitted to the state in October. Other livability efforts include the 138 East design plan underway, a newly adopted Bike Routes Plan and earning five-year recertification from FEMA's flood insurance program and community rating system. The department and NeighborWorks Umpqua won a \$500,000 grant for repair projects by 30 low- and moderate-income homeowners.

By December, the City had responded to 174 private property nuisance-abatement complaints and six derelict residential buildings. Also, 850 camp cleanups at 23 locations removed 126 tons of garbage from parks and public rights of way, costing almost \$63,000.

Finance/IT/Municipal Court

For the 30th year in a row, the Finance Department led by **Director Ron Harker** earned the Government Finance Officers Association Award for “Excellence in Financial Reporting” for the 2022 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report and the award for “Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting” for the eighth year. Other highlights included maintaining the City’s credit rating as Aa3 with Moody’s, which means our credit remains high quality and very low risk; finalizing the 2022-23 Annual Comprehensive and Popular financial reports; and developing the 2023/24 City budget. He also oversees an IT services contract. Municipal Court adopted video arraignment at **Judge Jason Mahan’s** recommendation – increasing efficiency and court staff safety while minimizing courtroom disruptions from violent outbursts. Judge Mahan works with community partners including ADAPT to connect defendants with helpful services.

Library

Roseburg Public Library, led by **Director Kris Wiley**, celebrated five years with a community event held Saturday, Jan. 6. Last year’s statistical highlights included:

- 100,000 checkouts;
- 225 programs with 6,850 attendees;
- 5,700 cardholders;
- 6,000 public computer sessions;
- 3,600 items bought for the physical collection;
- 1,000 meeting-room bookings.

The Summer Reading Program – the library’s largest annual project – engaged 412 youths, a 19% increase. Children’s material circulation increased by 12%, youth library cards issued grew by 25%, and the library gave away 2,100 new books to kids.

The Library will move forward with a technology plan for its Ford Room and a library use survey this year.

Public Works Department

Public Works staff, led by **Director 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.

The Parks Division won a \$750,000 grant to renovate Stewart Park’s aging outdoor tennis courts and add dedicated outdoor pickleball courts. Two damaged sections of the popular Umpqua River Trail were replaced and wayfinding signs were installed throughout the multiuse path system.

Roseburg's water system is now equipped with backup power at the Winchester Water Treatment Plant, Reservoir Hill storage facility and five pump stations critical to maintaining the City's ability to deliver clean water to about 98% of customers during extended power outages. Project planning began in 2019 after the storm dubbed “Snowmageddon.” In 2023, the water plant treated 1.6 billion gallons of water -- an average 4.38 million gallons daily. The Oregon Health Authority again found Roseburg's drinking water system meets the highest standards, thanks to outstanding performance and commitment from the Water Division staff.

Our parks experienced increased vandalism and trash. Parks and Streets staff joined Police and Community Development on 850 camp cleanups.

Looking ahead, the department expects to complete the Roseburg Regional Airport Standby Generator Project, upgrade airport fencing and security, and begin construction of a taxiway extension. The department will update the City’s Five-Year Capital Improvement plan and begin the Water System Master Plan update.

Fire Department

The Fire Department experienced significant personnel changes with promotions, retirements and new hires. Emergency incident response continued to grow, yet the department remained steadfast in its mission to provide exceptional customer service.

The department hit a milestone by hiring its first female Fire Marshal, Cheryl Flick. Six internal promotions brought new personnel to the roles of Assistant Fire Chief, Administrative Battalion Chief, Battalion Chief, Lieutenant and two Driver/Engineers. Three new firefighters joined in July.

Calls for emergency incident response rose 3.35% over 2022. Personnel responded to 7,610 emergency incidents. Fire prevention efforts included 475 commercial business inspections, 215 business registration site inspections, 323 construction site reviews and 14 significant fire investigations in Roseburg, plus three nearby.

In the fall, personnel were elated when a 1934 antique fire engine previously owned by the City was donated back. The donor's son -- a local firefighter -- suggested returning the vehicle. Staff dedicated time to perform a minor tune-up before driving the antique engine in the Douglas County Veterans Day Parade and transporting Santa to the community's annual tree lighting ceremony. Fire personnel look forward to showcasing the vehicle at future events and parades.

Police Department

Police faced another extremely busy year -- responding to more than 40,000 calls for service and taking more than 6,500 reports. Community Service Officers handled about 1,600 of those calls. At the same time, RPD is experiencing difficulty maintaining staffing levels for Officers -- like most forces throughout the country.

Cpl. Patrick Moore retired after working with RPD nearly 30 years, and Master Officer Daniel Knott retired after 26 years.

The community continues to be impacted by recent state legislation. Oregon Senate Bill 48 changed the pretrial release system to require release without bail of those who commit certain crimes. House Bill 2645 decriminalized small or "user" amounts of fentanyl. Ballot Measure 110 decriminalized "user" amounts of drugs such as methamphetamine and heroin. This legislation makes it extremely challenging to combat low-level crimes seriously impacting our community. Our Officers take suspected criminals to jail, but suspects for "non-violent" crimes such as theft, car theft, trespass, burglary, non-domestic violent assault, arson and unlawful purchase of a firearm are often quickly released. However, our Officers strive to make the most impact within the confines of these legal restraints.

Police continue partnering with Adapt on the Mobile Crisis Team, which responded to 1,439 mental health crisis calls by October and diverted many people from jail or the ER.

The Homeless Liaison Officer remains extremely busy. Police continued collaborating with Community Development's Compliance Officer, Public Works and Parks on weekly camp cleanups. In 2023, 850 camps were posted for cleanup, and 120 prohibited camping citations were issued since enforcing new Time/Place/Manner regulations began in August.

Looking Ahead to 2024

Here's what's expected in 2024:

- Medical College: Continue playing an important role by supporting UCC in its effort to advance the Southern Oregon Medical Workforce Center project.

- Urban Campground: Maintain efforts with the Homeless Commission to locate property, an operator and funding for a supervised urban campground.
- Warming Center: Support UCAN's new partnership with St. Joseph Catholic Church to provide an overnight warming center this winter and possibly long-term.
- Downtown Parking: Continue collaborating with Council to improve the parking program.
- Council Goals: Keep collaborating with Council on priorities the staff and Council hope to accomplish together.
- Police: Hire at least eight sworn Police Officers and a Community Service Officer.
- Brown Park: Apply for a grant to renovate Brown Park with an accessible playground.
- Tennis and Pickleball Courts: Design a renovation project and request construction bids for grant-funded outdoor tennis and pickleball courts.

The future is bright for our cherished city. Dedicated staff and elected leaders will continue the hard work that leads to continuous improvement. We will collaborate with our community partners to advance projects important to our residents. We will listen, learn and adapt to the challenges we face together as we continue to make Roseburg the best small town in Oregon.