

## **State of the City 2019**

Happy Friday!

Thank you to the Independence Cinema for the use of today's venue, and the Chamber of Commerce for providing this opportunity to share with the community...and I offer a personal hearty welcome to our compatriots from Monmouth.

Independence is on a roll... because of good planning and diligent efforts by so many people. Our City has staff at all levels, from public works to city manager, focused on customer service and moving forward. We are blessed with council members and commission members all of whom are volunteers, whose passion and commitment have made great things happen. Thank you to all who make great things happen.

We're reaping the collective rewards from years of preparation, vision and just plain ol' hard work. Our charge is to keep planning and continue working so we can keep rolling, building on our momentum.

Jacob Riis once said:

Look at a stone cutter hammering away at his rock, perhaps a hundred times without as much as a crack showing in it. Yet at the hundred-and-first blow it will split in two, and I know it was not the last blow that did it, but all that had gone before.

I've said it before, but we've been working hard for a long time to make Independence a great, livable small town....and its working.

Some of our most long-sought community goals are posed to be achieved this year. These are exciting times in our community. Our revitalization efforts have created their own momentum.

"The Independence" hotel is on track for a June opening, and the developer is submitting plans for the apartments that will follow.

Young Development is preparing to break ground on Osprey Pointe, a 40,000 sq/ft mixed use building right behind BREW on C Street.

We're also putting the finishing touches on the new park on the lower, floodplain portion of the Independence landing property. Important to note.... The park was paid for entirely with grants.

It's amazing what can be accomplished when everyone is brought into a vision. We've been working toward this moment for twenty years and it's finally happening.

The community was involved in the earliest stages, setting this vision, and it helped us form all kinds of partnerships... to finally make it happen.

An independent economic analysis found that the new hotel and apartments will bring *\$6 million in new spending **annually*** to Independence..... Some people think we're pretty bold – they don't know Independence.

People understand the opportunity. Downtown and our businesses are vibrant and prospering.

I am pleased to see the long-neglected Taylor's building brought back to life (Jubilee)

As an Olympic Athlete, I learned long ago that if you're not moving ahead, you're falling behind. After receiving a national All America City Award, Independence has continued to be recognized for our accomplishments; we received the League of Oregon Cities Award for excellence last year. Just the latest of regional and national recognition for our revitalization efforts.

Cycle Oregon announced last week that they're bringing their all-women Joyride event to Riverview Park this June. That's 800-1,000 cyclists from throughout the west using Independence as a base for exploring Polk County. I know that our hospitality and quality of life will bring many of these folks back later on.

As always, Independence Station remains a mixed bag, but I'm hopeful that progress is being made.

The building was purchased a year ago by the man who developed Keizer Station. When asked about plans for the building, he said

"We're in the final stages of negotiation with an anchor tenant for the ground floor. We expect to submit plans in spring with the intent to restart construction this summer."

We've had a lot of success in the recent past, knocked off a lot of long-standing issues. Independence Station would definitely be one of the biggest.

Homelessness is an increasing problem throughout the state and we in Independence are not immune. There aren't any easy answers, but I'm proud that we are working with Polk County, Monmouth and Dallas to ensure there is a warming shelter available when the temperature drops below freezing. We need to do more, but this is a great first step.

A year ago, we celebrated Pacific Power's first smart meter deployment by declaring February 10<sup>th</sup> "Smart Rural" day. We are modeling how rural communities can embrace technology and innovation as well or even better than big cities.

(Pacific Power liked us so well, they put Shawn Irvine's picture on a bill board in the metro area.....Shawn will be available for autographs after today's speeches)

In the past year, we've developed partnerships, organized pilot projects, meetups, and worked to build an innovation ecosystem in the region. Just the other night over 60 people packed into Valkyrie for FailFest, an event to celebrate and learn from failures in business.

This work has not gone unnoticed. I'm thrilled to announce that the **Center on Rural Innovation** chose Independence as one of

only nine communities nationwide to participate in their Rural Innovation Initiative. With their help, we'll be planning and seeking funding for an innovation hub, focused on agricultural technologies, data analytics, and training our kids for the jobs of tomorrow.

MINET is at the heart of this innovation work. Both cities are still covering a portion of MINET's debt-that will ultimately be repaid, but that number is decreasing and I'm confident we are on a path to long term sustainability. This last year MINET was hired to operate a new fiber system being built in Dallas, providing a high-quality broadband service that has spurred interest in innovation there as well.

We're riding a wave of economic opportunity right now reaping the rewards of the careful planning and work that we've put in as a community over the past twenty years.

We can't rest on our laurels though. It's critical that we continue to plan and prepare for the future so that we don't lose sight of the community values and small-town quality of life that have guided us for so long.

I'm thrilled we are launching a Vision 2040 effort this year. It's been ten years since our last community wide vision and action plan process. Over a 1000 people participated last time. This makes for a strong COMMUNITY planning process. We've seen

firsthand how much you can accomplish when you get everyone engaged and participating.

Vision 2040 will be an effort to engage EVERYONE in the community, do a pulse check, adjust and build on our collective vision, and determine how we best keep Independence moving forward.

We also hope to use this planning process to forge closer relationships with our neighbors and community partners. I look forward to further developing our relationship with Monmouth and their new mayor. The School District also continues to be a critical partner as we grow, ensuring we remain a well-rounded community, with quality education for our kids.

The School district is doing their own planning work, forecasting future population growth, developing after school programming, and laying out career pathways in Career Technical Education fields. I'm happy that they see us as a partner and have invited us to participate in these efforts. We are stronger when we work together.

Vision 2040 isn't the only planning we'll be doing this year. The State has been updating its airport master plan for the Independence State Airport, and we have been supplementing it with a Targeted Industries Analysis to identify industrial users which might best utilize proximity to the airport.

We are in the middle of developing a master plan for **Sunset Meadows Park**, in the new housing development between 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> St in the southern part of town. The first open house was a huge success, drawing over 40 people. This park just got a boost as we were named one of three finalist communities for the Moda Center Assist Program. During the regular season Trail Blazers games, for every assist made on the court the Trail Blazers and Moda donate \$20 to building an all abilities playground in one of the three finalist communities. A popular online vote determines the winning community. We will need all of your help...more information will be coming soon..... so vote early, vote often, and tell your friends!

Independence has been growing fast, and we're dealing with the consequences of that growth. We recognize that traffic is increasing in parts of town, both from our own growth and what's happening throughout the region.

Later this year we will launch an update to our Transportation System Plan. Just like other cities in the Willamette Valley, we need to make sure our transportation system can get people where they want to go efficiently and safely. The plan will look at how to create more east west connections and review our System Development Charge methodology to make sure development pays for itself.

We are also working regionally to improve the efficiency and safety of highways that impact our community. There is a recognition regionally of the safety challenges at the Highway 51/22 Intersection. This dangerous intersection doesn't just affect

the people involved in the crash, it impacts our emergency responders, many of whom are volunteers. Bad intersections like this one also limit the economic development of our region. I'm proud we are working with other cities, Polk County, ODOT and Regional solutions to find a solution to this carnage.

I don't know all the answers – that's why we're reaching out to the community with all of these planning efforts. A well-organized engagement process helps us identify new ideas, potential partners, and generate the enthusiasm to get things done.

The projects underway now came out of the last ten years of community planning and engagement. Now is the time to engage and plan for the next decades. A vibrant community is always changing and evolving. These new planning efforts will extend our community vision and continue to provide a clear direction to guide our work. When we finish the work underway today, we'll already know the direction and the tasks for tomorrow.

I want to close with a personal note. Many of you know that I am a naturalized citizen of the United States. I wasn't born here. My Mom and Dad picked me up from an orphanage in Germany.

I take my citizenship seriously and was thrilled and honored to be part of a celebratory naturalization ceremony last week for mid-valley residents who are brand new US Citizens. Those who attended were all touched by the pride and optimism these new citizens exuded. The smiles on the kids, family and friends made me feel confident and positive about the future.



Our new citizens embody the optimism and sense of possibility that is part of our culture in Independence and that makes America the amazing, diverse, gifted country that it is.

In Independence, we are **inviting, inclusive, warm and friendly**. We all pull together to make our community and our country a better place. This resonates far beyond our little town, and people are voting with their feet.

What does this all mean?

Independence is moving forward, showing the way for other Oregon Communities, doing good things for our residents, our community, kids, businesses, those who are already here..... and those who have yet to arrive.

We have built on the work of those that came before us,..... and we work to leave a better community for those who will follow us.

I'm confident our best years are yet to come.

Thank you!