

Folsom, CA - State of the City

Delivered by Mayor Andy Morin January 2017

Good evening everyone. It is a sincere privilege as mayor to address you today and share our current State of the City. This is the fifth time I've presented the State of the City and for those that know me well, you understand it makes five times that I've had to abandon my casual clothing preference and dig deep into the closet to decide which of my few ties I was going to wear today.

My intent today is to bring you a succinct, 20 minutes or so update on what has made our city great, our year in review, and plans for the years ahead.

First, I love historical context. Folsom indeed has a colorful and cherished past. Caretakers of the preservation and appreciation of our history have fortunately been active for many decades, thanks to the Folsom Historical Society and Folsom History Museum.

This past year, Folsom celebrated the 160th anniversary of its founding and the 70th anniversary of its incorporation. Founded in 1856, we voted to incorporate in 1946. Always a fiercely independent community, the Folsom residents of that era envisioned the long term value of self-determined local control. Folsom became a general law incorporated city abiding by state legislative enactments. Since then we have had a City Council and City Manager. Just as importantly, but less visible in our history, was the 1990 public vote to adopt our independent governance charter in an effort to improve our council-manager form of government and further enhance local control opportunities. Because of these past efforts to build the very best in local government, Folsom is ideally positioned with a charter that proactively minimizes governance instability and with a solid structure of council-manager checks and balances, is resilient to crisis and most importantly encourages citizen participation. I feel confident and comforted knowing that the foundation of good government in place today will ensure Folsom's continued success beyond the great folks in our community today.

As a City Council Member since 2002, I have a deep appreciation for the work of our past councils. All of us serving you on our City Council today understand this and makes our mission simple, "Don't wreck the great work handed to us by past councils, and parlay that positive momentum into even brighter prospects for Folsom." Thank you to all of our past council members, and thank you to Steve Miklos since 1994, Kerri Howell since 1998, Ernie Sheldon since 2008, and Roger Gaylord, just recently elected to office, for your past and current service as Folsom Council Members. I would also like to thank Jeff Starsky, as Folsom's most recent past council member, for his service from 2000 to 2016. One additional note is to recognize the exceptional participation and time commitment council members spend representing Folsom on numerous regional boards, committees, and commissions.

Folsom works best with an efficient, professional city government, great schools and a vibrant business community. We currently benefit from all three and these interests actively support each other. Folsom consistently rates among the best cities for jobs, affordability, prosperity, growth and family friendliness. Our State of the City cannot be discussed without some recognition of our schools and business community. We have a vested interest in each other's success and we willingly assist each other's efforts as partners. I truly believe that when the schools, businesses and city government are operating with each other at peak efficiency, a self-reinforcing cycle of support and improvement develops. The total does become greater than the sum of its parts. Because of this, Folsom has been repeatedly recognized as one of the best places to work and live in California and the United States.

So before I get to a review of our directly city governed and operated functions, I need to recognize these vital parts of our community that are guided separately but supported vigorously by Folsom City Hall.

We know we can't have a great community without a variety of high quality schools. Our largest educational presence is our public Folsom Cordova Unified School District K-12 schools. This includes 9 elementary schools, 2 middle schools and 3 high schools. My thanks to the Folsom Cordova Unified School District board, Zak Ford, Ed Short, Chris Clark, JoAnne Reinking and Sarah Aquino, district superintendent Debbie Bettencourt, administrators, teachers, and parents who continue to contribute to these routinely highly ranked schools. The Measure G school construction bond that passed a few years ago is pouring millions of dollars in new and upgraded school facilities. Routine 2 x 2 meeting between the city and school district ensure our long standing mutual assistance and information exchange. Our joint use facilities agreement remains a model of cooperation in sharing resources to meet the demands of youth and adult recreation and education.

Folsom Lake College continues to grow and prosper serving thousands of college students every semester. The recently added athletic facilities compliment the class rooms, lecture halls and the Harris Center for the Arts creating a vibrant

educational and events center. Folsom is proud of this wonderful college campus. My thanks to the Los Rios Community College board, Folsom Lake College president and faculty for their careful stewardship of this fine institution of higher learning. Lastly related to schools is recognition of the many smaller private and charter school opportunities that complete the educational fabric in Folsom. There are many different educational needs in our community, and it is gratifying to acknowledge that most of those needs can be met here in town.

Another vital presence in Folsom's big picture view is business. This is jobs, services, economic development, and just as importantly, the generous philanthropy of time and money from these businesses in our community. Spearheading these efforts are the Folsom Chamber of Commerce, the Folsom Tourism Bureau, and the Folsom Economic Development Corporation. From our largest employers to a sole proprietor, businesses that are here know they have a strong advocate in these organizations, and businesses that are considering a Folsom location need to see and feel this effective partnership with the City of Folsom. The Folsom Economic Development Corporation, or FEDCorp, is great evidence of this with business, chamber, tourism, city, and school representation. My thanks to the many years of great organizational leadership by Joe Gagliardi, Folsom Chamber of Commerce CEO, and Mary Ann McAlea, Folsom Tourism Bureau Director.

One last added amendment to my assertion of vital collaboration of separate but interdependent service missions in Folsom, is the medical service role in public safety. The timeliness and quality of first response and subsequent medical services is always included in community rating metrics, from a 911 call to our police department communications center, to police and fire response to emergency room nurse and physician triage, to hospital stays and finally to general medical care. We benefit from having these exceptionally high quality services in Folsom. Mercy Hospital/Dignity Health and Kaiser medical services, with plans for future Kaiser Hospital, are a vital community presence that we do not take for granted.

So with that brief initial mention of our city police and fire services, I am going to use that as the ideal segue to discuss our city government services.

As a full service city government operation, our component of the Folsom quality of life mission and our great local economy is to deliver a strong backbone of municipal services. We are a team of approximately 425 employees dedicated to high standards of service throughout all our city departments. Led by our City Manager of the past five years, Evert Palmer brings a personable mix of sophistication and integrity that is respected locally and regionally. Evert is always the first to compliment the fine work of all our city employees. Many of our employees have been recognized for exceptional accomplishments by their peers in their fields of expertise. I wish I had the time to recognize every one of our city employees, but I do want to recognize some of our senior staff who manage the day to day business of our city government: Assistant City Manager Elaine Anderson, Jim Francis, Robert Goss, Cindy Renaud, Dan Haverty, Steve Wang, Christa Freemantle, Marcus Yasutake, David Miller, David Nugen, Lori Easterwood and Christine Brainerd.

We keep our neighborhoods safe with exceptional police and fire response and investigation. We build and maintain an award winning network of trails and parks including our popular zoo. We operate our own water, sewer, solid waste and transit divisions with stable utility rates that have not risen in a number of years and do not include a utility user tax. We operate one of the busiest libraries in the region without a separate library tax. Equally important we service thousands of requests for information and services individually from residents and businesses.

Sound finances are the bedrock of any agency which strives to operate with greatest efficiency. If our financial house is not in order, our best laid city operation and maintenance plans can fall short. We as a council and staff are diligent stewards of your tax and utility bill money. We return this money to you in the form of the greatest amount of service, maintenance, and capital expenditure a highly efficient agency can deliver.

We continue the recent trend of increases in property tax, sales tax, vehicle tax and hotel tax. While this is great news, our budget approach remains conservative and cautious. Our unrestricted fund balance after falling to a low of \$4M six years ago is now above \$11.5M. This is the first time since 2007 that we are above our reserve policy of 15% of general fund annual expenditures in reserve. Some might advocate building reserves even greater than our current levels, but there is a balance to savings versus community investment. As our City Manager likes say, we are building a community, not a balance sheet. So, in summary, our finances are stable and credit rating is high as our Department of Management and Budget guides over \$150 million in annual expenditures with clarity and transparency. Our annual spending plans continue to balance expenditures across all of our departments on a percentage basis very similar to spending plans for the past 50 years.

This past year we replaced 11 police vehicles, 1 fire engine, 2 ambulances, 1 vector truck, 3 solid waste trucks and added 3 hybrid vehicles to our general use vehicle pool. These were all paid with cash and no financing. We expect this prudent pace of fleet replacement to continue during the next year on a pay as you go basis with no financing.

Earlier I briefly touched on the importance of the Folsom police and fire departments in our big picture public safety network of service. We spend about

\$35 million a year in these departments making sure they remain staffed with the very best, and equipped with the very latest to serve our residents and businesses. Initiating most police and fire emergency response, our own 911 call center answered almost 98% of the hundreds of thousands of calls fielded within 10 seconds or less.

Our police department is led by Chief Cynthia Renaud. Chief Renaud was just recently elected 4th Vice-President to the International Association of Chiefs of Police. She will ultimately ascend to the presidency of this organization representing over 27,000 law enforcement professionals and 100 countries. Reorganizations within our police department continue to fine tune service to meet investigation and enforcement demands. Our police department continues to meet the increased challenges of laws that continue to reduce criminal penalties. Folsom police are respected by our community and because of their high level of training and personal compassion, are embraced by all.

Our four fire stations remain bustling operations providing first response rescues and medical services. We are in the process of hiring a new fire chief and new firefighter/paramedics after numerous end of the year retirements. The Fire Department's paramedics are now using 11 newly acquired cardiac monitors. These monitors will show the heart rhythm to the attending paramedic, as well as send the same heart rhythm images to the doctor at the emergency room, so they may be better prepared when we arrive. If a shock to help restore a heartbeat is needed or the patient's heart needs pacing, they will perform that procedure. These versatile units monitor oxygen levels in the blood to ensure interventions are most effective. This \$400,000 medical response upgrade represents yet another investment in our public safety capabilities.

Our Citizens Assisting Public Safety or CAPS volunteers continue to grow and augment our police and fire services with thousands of service hours. This is just one area where we see such a strong spirit of volunteerism in Folsom.

Our park and trail amenities continue to grow. This year, completion of Economy Family Park, the Folsom Zoo barn, the Lake Natoma access trail, and the Johnny Cash trail are expected. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has been an instrumental partner in assisting with trail right of way on its property for the Johnny Cash Trail project. We appreciate our long cooperative history working together with Folsom State Prison and California State Prison Sacramento. By the way, about one year from now, January 13, 2018, will mark the 50th anniversary of Johnny Cash's legendary concerts at Folsom Prison. The Folsom Public Library continues to be one of the most utilized libraries in the state. The "turnover rate" of the library collection (the average number of times each item in the collection checks out each year) is 6.29—third highest in the state, and more than double the California and nationwide average. The last fiscal year saw a 38% increase in eBook checkouts. Programming attendance was up 19% in the last fiscal year and approximately 33,381 people attended 820 programs at the library. The Folsom community is also extremely supportive of its library, donating 5,950 volunteer hours in the last fiscal year. Volunteers help shelve books, help patrons in the 3D Printing Lab, provide after school tutoring, and more.

We continue to aggressively invest in our water and sewer infrastructure. The past year over \$9 million was spent maintaining and upgrading water and sewer infrastructure. We maintain one of the lowest sewer spills per connection in the state. We used 25% less water in 2016 than our 2013 benchmark year. This is significant because without facing the exceptional pressure of a critically dry year, conservation continues in Folsom as a healthy sustainable habit and our businesses and residents need to be thanked for those efforts. We continue to work hard to preserve and protect our 34,000 acre-feet of annual water supply rights. This can get challenging with seemingly endless state water shortages threatening to make the temporary dry year reductions of water rights permanent.

Our growth area south of Highway 50 represents 3,600 acres carefully planned development that includes 1,000 acres of preserved open space. This controlled growth is being meticulously managed and depending on the variability of market conditions, will take many years to complete. By way of comparison, our last major annexation was the similarly sized 3,600 acres that included what are now Broadstone, the Parkway, and Empire Ranch. That was in 1984 and it is just now getting close to build out.

Businesses or projects that opened last year or plan to open this year include: Fairfield Inn and Suites, Mikuni, Sprouts, Lazy Dog Restaurant, Barnes and Noble, Lifetime Fitness, Superior Self-Storage, The Commons at Prairie City, Pique Apartments, Cornerstone Dental Center, Dick's Sporting Goods, and Nordstrom's Rack. We continue carefully monitor and assist all of our business districts. On Sutter Street, we expect one of the first buildings in the railroad block near the parking structure to begin construction this year. The Palladio Mall and nearby office and retail space continue to gradually fill.

The Folsom Dam spillway project is just finishing up and projected to be operational within the year. This is the largest public works project in Folsom since the Folsom Dam construction in the 1950s. The US Bureau of Reclamation and the US Army Corps of Engineers worked extremely hard to make sure impacts to Folsom and the Folsom Lake Crossing were minimized. This new spillway will not only provide better downstream flood control, but also a slight increase in allowable early springtime storage to help water supplies.

About two years ago, work started on the first general plan update since 1988. Our general plan is the foundational land use document for the City of Folsom and includes goals, policies, and programs, on a wide range of topics. This new general plan will respond to the trends of today, as well as those that may affect the city in the future. A preliminary public review draft was presented at the last council meeting, and I encourage input from anyone interested in this update to attend future public planning sessions.

We continue to enjoy many city-sponsored and privately sponsored community events that bring international notoriety, like the hosting of the Stage 6 time trial for the Amgen Tour of California road bike race this past May. Folsom Live, the California International Marathon, the Folsom Blues Half Marathon, Folsom Pro Rodeo, Run with Nature, Veterans Day Parade, and the Easter Egg Hunt, are just a few of our traditional happenings around town that are smoothly executed with the assistance of great organizations and volunteers.

One of the newest events is our Community Service Day, conducted annually on the 3rd Saturday in September. This past September brought together 2,500 volunteers tackling 40 service projects citywide. In addition, over 100,000 pounds of food was collected for the beneficiaries of the great Twin Lakes Food Bank. Please plan to join the effort this coming September.

With an improving economy and some growth, we have all noticed traffic through and around town is increasing. In some ways we are the victims of our own success with the promotion of retail commerce from throughout the region. The widening of Green Valley to the El Dorado county line is planned to begin this year, as well as other signal additions and timing improvements. Beginning the development of construction timelines for an initial phase of a new freeway interchange is also a goal this year. We are certainly a number of years away from a new freeway interchange to relieve our current interchange congestion, but the pursuit of this relief is an increasing priority.

So as I conclude today, I have a few final thoughts. My thanks to my wife Kathy and family for their unconditional support of my time spent dedicated to City Council obligations. Please take the time to thank all of our city employees providing the great service we enjoy today. Relax, don't let the hyper speed of the modern news cycle and its social media amplification create needless anxiety. May your choices reflect your hopes and not your fears. And finally, as I always like to say, stay informed, stay involved, and stay in Folsom.