Good morning.  
  
Thank you for joining me today for an update on the state of the City of Roseville. And thanks to the Builders Association of the Twin Cities for hosting our monthly Roseville Business Council meetings – including this one – after our first several years of meeting in the community space at Affinity Plus Credit Union.

As in recent years, the news continues to be largely good in Roseville.

We in our local government here in Roseville are acutely aware, and see examples every day, that the very healthy state in which we find ourselves as a community has a little bit to do with what we in local government do, but also a whole lot to do with what is done day in and day out by the people who live, work, own businesses, volunteer, and care about each other here in Roseville.  
  
I know I say that every year – in fact I’ll admit I lifted that line almost verbatim from last year’s speech – but we really do see examples of it all the time. We all do. And I believe that is why we are all so invested in this place we call home.  
  
Now, a little bit about what we as a City government have been doing this last year, and what is planned coming up:  
  
Remaining consistent with past practice, I continue to organize this annual accounting based on community aspirations that have been aggregated from our last community visioning effort. Those aspirations are:  
  
We in Roseville aspire to be a community that is:

* Welcoming, inclusive, and respectful
* Safe and law-abiding
* Economically prosperous, with a stable and broad tax base
* Secure in our diverse and quality housing and neighborhoods
* Environmentally responsible, with well-maintained natural assets
* Physically and mentally active and healthy
* Well connected through transportation and technology infrastructure and
* Engaged in our community’s success as citizens, neighbors, volunteers, leaders, and businesspeople

Welcoming, Inclusive, and Respectful

As we survey the world around us, in so many respects this aspiration seems especially challenged right now. Yet at this local level, we also have the greatest opportunity to lead by our example of how to meet each other where we live, and get to know each other and understand each other, and find ways to work together for our common interests.  
  
As a City government, we continued the Imagine Roseville dialogs on race and government in 2017, with discussions about the intersection of immigration policy and local law enforcement, as well as a town hall with Police Chief Rick Mathwig and Lt. Erika Scheider.

As a result of the immigration policy discussion, the city council affirmed police department policy to not inquire about immigration status unless necessary to the case, and put in place a requirement for a council vote to change that policy. Local law enforcement officials, including our own Chief, understand that for everyone in a community to be safe, everyone in the community must feel that it is safe to call the police, as a witness or a victim of crime.  
  
Shortly after affirming the Police Department policy on immigration status, the council also adopted a broad policy statement on inclusion. The statement promotes respectful conduct, equitable service, and diversity. It condemns discrimination and pledges the City government to fairness and unbiased treatment of all.  
  
A key city council priority in 2017 and 2018 is Inclusive Community and Governance. Two tasks included under that priority are continuing the Imagine Roseville community conversation process and also City staff participation in the GARE program (Government Alliance for Racial Equity).   
  
The city council has tasked our Human Rights, Inclusion, and Engagement commission with reviewing the Imagine Roseville efforts to date, and recommending any changes to the process going forward.  
  
GARE in Minnesota is a partnership of the League of Minnesota Cities and two national organizations called Race Forward and the Haas Institute for a Fair & Inclusive Society, and is part of a nationwide effort of folks in local government to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all. Fourteen Roseville City staff representing most departments and pay grades have already begun participating in the GARE program this year, and we look forward to the recommendations that come out of those efforts.

One recent and very personal example of the City’s efforts to make Roseville a welcoming place was the Fire Department’s response to a local family whose mother was hospitalized just days before Christmas. The mother was as a result unable to get Christmas presents for her three daughters, ages 3, 4, and 7. The department tried but was unable to obtain help from local charity organizations on such short notice. Undaunted, the firefighters connected with a generous local resident, and contributed their own funds and time to buy and wrap presents for the kids and provide a holiday meal for the family.

We are humbled and heartened by this example of caring and generosity that goes beyond just doing the job.

Safe and Law-Abiding

Acts like that, and countless others large and small on an almost daily basis, lead us in Roseville to be truly grateful for the men and women of great professionalism and character that make up our police and fire departments. Both departments are continuing to evolve to meet new challenges.  
  
The Fire Department has completed the first phase of converting its staffing to full time firefighters, while being supported by part-time paid-on-call firefighters as they transition out through attrition

The department has taken a more proactive role in the past years in fire safety inspections of local businesses and multi-family housing, using on-shift staff.  
  
For 2018 and beyond, the department is also taking on hotel inspections and multi-family licensing inspections that were previously done by the State and by our community development building inspectors. This change will free up building inspectors to better address new construction and remodeling inspections, while not losing the key public safety aspect of providing for safe lodging and housing in the community.  
  
Recently, at the request of the fire department, the city council enacted an ordinance to require sprinklers in a greater percentage of building remodels than before, which will improve fire safety for more people than ever in the community.  
  
Change is taking place in the police department as well.  
  
Long-time police Lieutenant Lorne Rosand recently retired, at a ceremony I was pleased to attend, and others have stepped up to accept new roles and responsibilities in the department.  
  
2017 saw the department put in place policy guidelines and try out and decide upon technology for body cams for all officers. Use of the cameras will be implemented in 2018 in an effort to provide better records for use in cases as well as greater confidence in the accountability and transparency of our policing efforts.

In addition to implementing body cams, another priority for the police department has been to have all sworn personnel receive 40 hours of Crisis Intervention Training, which includes things such as decision-making and de-escalation approaches. About half of the officers have completed the training so far, and the department is on target to complete that effort in 2018.

One result already realized from this increased training is a number of notable instances of effective de-escalation in the past year, leading to safe outcomes for all involved.

In continuing efforts to have a police force that more appropriately reflects the diversity of the community it serves, the RPD is maintaining the policy of seeking community service officer (CSO) candidates who can speak more than one language – and preferably languages identified as being spoken at home in the local school districts.  
  
As most of us are aware, the scourge of the opioid addiction crisis is a national public safety and public health issue that unfortunately affects us here at home, too.   
  
Roseville first responders, like others around the country, have been saving lives by administering emergency drugs like Narcan to overdose victims in all-too-frequent numbers. The Narcan that has been available to first responders in Roseville over the last 2 years was provided initially via State grant funds, and more recently through the generosity of the supporters of the Roseville Police Foundation.  
  
We are grateful to have that life-saving medical solution, but more must be done by way of prevention before people get to the point of overdosing. Of course, much of that work has to be done at policy levels above local government, but where we can, we try to be part of the solution as well

For instance, starting in 2015, in order to keep unused medications from becoming someone’s pathway into addiction, and to protect our waters from contamination, the police and fire departments have made available medication disposal bags for relatively small amounts of left-over pills, capsules, and skin patches. The bags are very easy to use and can be placed in the trash once sealed.   
  
The bags are available at the Roseville police and fire department offices during business hours. For larger quantities, the Ramsey County Sheriff’s department also collects unused medications at sites at their St. Paul headquarters, their Arden Hills substation, and the North St. Paul city hall

A nice local effort to promote public safety is the Lights On program, through which the police department can give out vouchers for headlight, turn signal, or similar repairs to motorists rather than tickets. The idea was begun by auto repair businesses outside of Roseville, but was taken up enthusiastically by some of our own local businesses. The reasoning behind the program is to try to prevent vehicle equipment issues from becoming a recurring entrance into a cycle of tickets, unpaid tickets, warrants, and criminal records that can be very challenging for folks of limited means to exit.  
  
One final effort in the area of public safety, but also environmental stewardship, was the targeted deer herd reduction in early 2017 using bait stations and USDA sharp-shooters. About 20 deer were taken in that effort, and currently, per city policy, a deer count is underway to measure the impacts of the herd reduction and determine next steps, which should be communicated to the city council and the public this spring.

Economically Prosperous

Just recently, I along with City staff visited a local medical technology business as part of our Business Retention and Expansion program in conjunction with the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce. It was quite gratifying to hear repeatedly how much the company wanted to stay in Roseville. Location in Roseville was important to their future growth and success.  
  
The City is keenly aware that our existing businesses are our future businesses if we can at all help them to stay and grow here

The BRE program has identified local businesses that have growth plans or space needs or workforce or production capacity needs, and in many (but unfortunately not all) cases City staff have been able to connect those businesses to resources or possible sites. Those connections could never have been made, however, without the BRE outreach.  
  
Workforce needs continue to be a prime area of concern – especially for local health, tech, and trades businesses, where worker shortages already exist and are projected into the future. Certainly, the City cannot solve that problem by itself, but we can help to bring together resources that can make a difference – including from both the Roseville and Mounds View school districts, both our local chambers of commerce, and the County, among others.

In addition to the local business visits, the City, through its Economic Development Authority (EDA) has put in place a new web site called Grow Roseville (growroseville.com). The site is a one-stop resource for site selectors looking to locate or relocate a business. The site contains information on local work force and demographics, as well as quality of life and also City and other resources for businesses. The Grow Roseville web site resulted from a contract with a Minnesota based company and has been receiving strong reviews from our competition in other cities!

To put some numbers to the anecdotal information, the City issued more than 3800 building permits in 2017 with a valuation exceeding $75 million. That includes more than $12 million in residential permits, $31 million in new commercial construction, and over $32 million in commercial remodeling or alterations

Secure in our Diverse Housing and Neighborhoods

On the subject of permit statistics, 2017 saw the issuance of over 20 new residential home permits in Roseville.   
  
Additionally, and key to diversity of housing, a few new projects are being built as townhomes or homes on small lots for those who are not looking for a yard to take care of. That is a type of housing in short supply in Roseville. As part of the City’s Comprehensive Plan update, the city council has identified a number of properties that will be guided in the future for those housing types

Another site that was rezoned in 2017 was the old armory site on North McCarrons in southeast Roseville. That site is now guided for single family homes, and has a new owner. That owner is putting together plans and financing for a single family development which may also include a variety of home sizes and types.  
  
A big focus for the City in the last two years has been the joint development with Maplewood and St. Paul of a vision for the Rice and Larpenteur area of all three cities. The exciting news is that the vision draft is now complete after all the community input. The plan will be presented to all three communities and Ramsey County leadership in the coming months, and it includes many opportunities for near and long term projects of varying sizes to revitalize the area. Very important to successful implementation of the vision will be continued engagement of the local residents and businesses, as well as continued commitment and progress by all three cities and the county toward that implementation.  
  
As part of the City’s ongoing commitment to a quality home for all renters in Roseville, our multi-family licensing and inspection program continues into its fourth year. The big change, as mentioned earlier, is the fire department taking on the inspections for this program.  
  
As Roseville continues our existing programs like the Neighborhood Enhancement Program of residential and commercial nuisance code enforcement, it is worthy of mention that the City, through the EDA, has contracted with a new entity (the Center for Energy and Environment) to administer our housing rehabilitation loan and advisory programs. The CEE offers other programs that Roseville residents and businesses can take advantage of as well for energy efficiency and other types of improvements

Environmentally Responsible, with Well-Maintained Natural Assets

The City continues to reinvest in our water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure, as well as our natural environment. Each year, more and more water and sewer lines are replaced or re-lined. This year, the City is refurbishing our water booster pumping station, improving its reliability and energy efficiency.  
  
Plans are in the works to construct the City’s second innovative stormwater re-use system in Evergreen Park, which will be much like the installation at Villa Park in recent years

Storm water runoff can be stored for later use in irrigation, and also treated before it enters the stormwater system.  
  
The parks & recreation natural resources program continues to thrive on volunteer work and leadership after having really blossomed during the Park Renewal Program. An addition in 2018 will be a $354,000 DNR grant-funded habitat restoration effort that goes beyond the previous invasive species remediation and other habitat work.  
  
One additional area of focus in the coming year will be to revisit a possible solar installation on the city hall campus.

Physically & Mentally Active and Healthy

Roseville continues to benefit from the efforts of community driven health initiatives such as the Roseville Alzheimer’s & Dementia group and the Roseville Community Health Awareness Team (CHAT). These entities are not City programs, although City staff provides insight and support. Both programs provide educational offerings on relevant subject matter primarily for our aging population. Additionally, and excitingly, the folks at CHAT are working with NewTRAX, a suburban Ramsey County transportation company, to pilot a circulator bus loop in the coming months, with the hope of developing a permanent service much like one that is in operation in White Bear Lake

Of course, healthy and active lifestyles continue to rely on park amenities. In 2017, the City worked closely with local residents to plan two new parks that will be constructed in 2018 – one at County Road B and Cleveland, and the other on Marion Street just north of Larpenteur in southeast Roseville.  
  
Another key public asset related to active living is the Cedarholm Community Building at the golf course, which is under construction and planned for completion in June of this year.

Not only will the building serve as the clubhouse for the golf course, but it will be a flexible rental event space to complement our Skating Center and smaller park buildings.  
  
Through a combination of Park Renewal funding and County funding, several pathway and sidewalk connections were started in 2017, with some slated for completion in 2018, comprising 1.8 miles in total. These are largely short connections to fill gaps in the existing system and, importantly, to link people in high density housing to transit routes.

Well-Connected

While the City continues our annual street rehabilitation program, completing several miles each year, we are focusing on improving the funding of that program, so that it may continue without assessments to adjoining property owners, as has been the case since the program was endowed and begun 20-some years ago.   
  
Each year for the past 3 years, and continuing forward, the City is adding a couple hundred thousand dollars to our tax levy to shore up the original endowment as interest earnings and State road aid both decrease while costs increase

As this aspiration states, we aspire to be connected through technological infrastructure as well as roads.   
  
For the last several years the City has partnered with the school districts, neighboring communities, and the county library to complete City owned fiber connections between various facilities and city hall. In 2017, fiber links were added to the CTV facilities in western Roseville and to school sites north of city hall. These connections allow the provision of IT services to and for these public entities by the City without dependence on costly private fiber connections.  
  
Somewhat related to that is the recent completion of a 10-year cable franchise renewal with Comcast to serve local cable TV and internet customers. As a part of the agreement, Comcast provides data services at a negotiated rate in order to keep a couple of cities connected to Roseville IT services who are not yet on the City’s fiber network.

Engaged in our Community’s Success

We as leaders in the community know the importance of the people here being engaged. Without that, communities – especially first ring suburbs – can decline precipitously.  
  
Over the last year we have seen many examples of our engaged community:  
  
Roseville’s commitment to the use of volunteers has continued to grow since we established a Volunteer Coordinator position at the City a few years ago

The natural resources volunteers I previously mentioned are just a part of that. In 2017, more than 1500 people volunteered in various capacities for the City – including over 250 new volunteers – contributing over 4000 hours of valuable service to the community.

Our local businesses are engaged through efforts like the Lights On program that I mentioned, and the Roseville Police Foundation, as well as our various park support organizations and event sponsorships.  
  
Our residents have been engaged in discussions about how to make a difference related to race in our community through the City’s Imagine Roseville programs, as well as programs and efforts of other groups and entities.

Continuing a long tradition, the planning for the two new parks on Cleveland and on Marion involved extensive neighborhood outreach, including new techniques to engage the immigrant community around the Marion site.  
  
The Rice and Larpenteur vision effort involved – and will continue to involve – a great deal of resident and business engagement and support in three adjoining cities.  
  
Roseville’s Comprehensive Plan update that will be adopted later this year has involved a variety of input from the community – especially targeted on-purpose to neighborhoods surrounding sites whose uses are proposed to change in the future. (Something that we admittedly learned we could do better after the last Comprehensive Plan update 10 years ago.)  
  
While our city newsletter continues to be a primary source of information about City government activities, platforms like social media and NextDoor.com are growing as means to connect not only with the City but also with each other in the community.  
  
And non-governmental groups such as Do Good Roseville are quite engaged in local issues and important local conversations.

Closing Thoughts

I think I can speak for my fellow elected officials in Roseville, as well as City staff, in saying that, while we will always have challenges to face – some great and others small – we have much to be thankful for and proud of as we continue to face those challenges and celebrate our successes together.  
  
As a result, the state of Roseville is indeed strong, with great promise for the future.  
  
Thank you very much.