

State of the City 2015

I would like to address the overall performance of our City as reported by the Staff; their accomplishments, their challenges and their goals.

Staff reports that the City of Talent has a sound financial program. According to our financial team, Talent's reserves and contingency funds are approximately \$1.7 million, or about 16% of our \$11 million budget for fiscal year 2014-2015. Historically, contingency funds are kept available for emergencies and Talent's reserve funds have been set aside for future projects. There is also a 10% unappropriated ending fund balance. During this fiscal cycle, the General Fund was increased by 4% in contingency funds and the inappropriated fund balance increased to 25%. Whereas many cities operate on a year-to-year basis, Talent has operated on a longer range cycle. The City of Talent has chosen not to function on a paycheck-to-paycheck lifestyle. Staff will continue to recommend, increasing our reserves while trying to hold the line on costs to our citizens.

The City's debt service remains very manageable at 4% of the total budget. The majority of this debt is in the water fund generated by the original bonds that were issued. The financial department reports that this debt is self-supporting. It should be stated that Talent has not raised water rates in over 7 years, while during that same 7 year period, the Medford Water Commission has raised the rates on water supplied to Talent, five times. Talent's valiant effort to hold down rates for its citizens as we incurred ongoing increases from the Medford Water Commission is no longer sustainable; and so the Talent City Council must consider this significant challenge to our financial management, as we evaluate the rate increases in order to create a balance to Talent's water utility fund.

Staff also developed and streamlined our utility billing systems, to allow for online and direct payments to make it even easier for citizens to manage their utility payments, while discussions began to formulate a better billing policy, which will further ease the process for everyone.

In addition to the financial and administrative management of Talent, the City provides many essential operational services such as Public Works, who over sees water utilities, street maintenance and storm sewers. The Talent Police Department provides public safety and police protection, while Parks and Community Development address our recreational needs and quality of life.

Talent's Public Works Department has taken on many new responsibilities. All of our new radio controlled property water meters have been installed bringing our total installed to almost 2000 units. This will save countless man hours for reading meters and provide greater accuracy. We have long estimated a positive net return on investment that will result in better cost containment. We have updated Talent's master water meter, in an effort to maintain greater accuracy. Roughly 267,666,000 gallons passed through this meter last year. That is an average of 22,305,000 gallons per month, 744,000 gallons per day, 31,000 per hour, and 517 gallons per minute. Accuracy to the minute, is very important. And, like in

a Jacques Cousteau adventure, we had under water divers come in to inspect and clean all of our water storage tanks in order to ensure the stability and longevity of our water storage facilities.

The Public Works crew performed regular improvement routines for roads; such as crack sealing to prolong the life of road surfaces, safety upgrades to Rapp Road and crosswalks on Lithia at E. Nerton as well as Wagner near Ray's Foods.

Talent Public Works creatively converted the utility truck that Avista so generously donated to the City, into a winter street sand truck to improve traffic safety on those hazardous black ice days.

Talent will continue to install new water lines, connection, and overlay City streets such as Front, First, and Foss Streets. We must be up to the F's in the alphabet.

Included in the Public Works wheel house is the maintenance of our open space. As Talent Parks grow with the adoption of Old Bridge Village Park, the new long-term lease for Lynn Newbry Park, and the addition of two new mini-parks, Park improvements continue with the inclusion of a new regulation-style sand volleyball court, and a doggy play exercise tunnel at Bark Park. There are new signs in every park, as well as the installation of a new sprinkler system in Wagner Park and a drinking fountain in Kamerin Springs Park. Parks has cleared brush and added benches. There are now more trash receptacles than ever before. Talent parks are at an amazing level for a City of our size and in light of all that, Public Works realized \$40,000 year over year savings during the first six months as a result of management changes.

Talent's Police Department, led by Police Chief Mike Moran, wrote over 1500 citations this past year, over 1/5 of those were for speeding within the City limits as well as 52 DUII arrests, also made within the City. The Police Department of 8 officers handled 80 attempted suicide calls, 344 suspicious person calls, served 232 warrants, contacted 200 disorderly persons, responded to 222 animal calls and 244 domestic violence cases. While that may sound foreboding, total crime statistics show a decrease of 8% over the past 2 years in Talent. We will continue to monitor these figures, as one goal of the City Council has been to reduce crime. These results have in part been made possible by Talent Police Department volunteers, who have logged in over 283 hours. On behalf of staff, council and the citizenry of Talent, I offer the volunteers a sincere thank you for your great dedication to our community. Talent's goal is to have our citizens feel safe in their homes, on our streets, and in our parks.

The Talent Community Development Department, has been efforting to refine our online Accela building permit software, to allow better tracking of permits both for home and business owners, as well as the Jackson County Inspectors. We have had one new commercial structure built from ground up that was the first, of an increase of total building permits in 2014. As we consider expansion in our Urban Growth Boundary, possible

annexed lands and growth within the City limits, we are looking to improve our buildable inventory for Talent development.

One of the challenges the Talent Community Development Department faces, is the streamlining of our City Ordinances. There are literally thousands of older ordinances and resolutions, that need to be reviewed and updated to be made more readily available to our citizens. Recently, we updated over seven different ordinances to make one very comprehensive and much easier to read Water Utility Ordinance. Using that effort as an example, there can be no doubt that this monumental task, is a great need for the City of Talent.

On the technology side of things, City manager Tom Corrigan reports that as the world becomes almost eerily dependent on electronic infrastructure, Talent has had to constantly assess and upgrade its software and hardware systems. For example; Talent's SCADA system informs our staff how much water is flowing; if there is a pump malfunction or if there is a major break. It is based on a sophisticated yet aging out computer system, and therefore management has prioritized updating that system in the new fiscal year. Also, Talent has had to improve its firewall security, to protect the City's information and that of Talent's citizens. It seems every day someone is "hacking" in somewhere else in the world as Talent continuously monitors innovation, in order to maintain adequate security. Talent has outlined a Disaster Recovery Program for our water system and City Hall. Talent now has explicit procedures for employee computer access, as part of the hiring and separation processes. Talent is implementing an e-waste recycling program, as they upgrade these older CPU's, copiers, phones, etc., because staff cares about the environment.

As champions of quality of life, Talent's success in obtaining a \$1.5 million federal grant for the new Community Center will come to fruition, as construction is slated to be complete in late summer 2015. Talent will also turn its attentions and efforts to the long awaited upgrades to newly named Town Hall, previously known as the Community Center. We look forward to bringing back some of the historical quality of this 116 year old gem, while retrofitting some much needed amenities.

Talent's greatest strength, is its people. In addition to the amazing Staff, there are many very involved, dedicated volunteers. They show up, they clean up, they get their Park on, they apply artistic touches and they celebrate. Volunteers are the back bone of trail development, trees and bees, art and music events, parades, races and more. They are guardians of our environment and of our future. Volunteers vitalize our downtown and create recreational opportunity for our children. They have as much to do with the State of our City, as any one great effort in Talent. They are humble and full of heart. Our community owes a profound thank you, to every single person who has joined the effort to make Talent our wonderful home.

As we look forward to the promises of 2015, Talent will continue to expand its festivals and celebrations, building on the successes of this past year, where Talent not only relished in a record-breaking Harvest Festival but then enjoyed two more great events, the Chamber of Commerce's Southern Oregon Grape Fair and the super fun, Day of the Dead Race.

These are great times in Talent which we all can celebrate. As we face more work ahead, we do so with a spirit of joyful enthusiasm. Talent cares. Talent endeavors. Talent thrives.