

I'm thrilled to see so many gathered here this evening to hear the State of the City Address. I hope that you take this time to mingle with your neighbors, check out the information displayed around the room, enjoy the refreshments generously provided by Buzz Oates Construction and our new neighbor Bear Paw, and get inspired for the role you can have in the future of this fine City.

When I spoke to you at my first State of the City Address last year, I made it clear that the City would make communications a top priority. I believe even more so now than I did back then how important it is to show you how we are spending your tax dollars, and to include the public in policymaking. Team Fernley and I are working to do just that for you this evening.

It's been 23 years since incorporation now, and the City's grown from a small rural town with a population of 8,000 to over 25,000 residents today. This growth proved Fernley to be a magnet for people and businesses who want to put down new roots and thrive. I'd like to thank all former Mayors Stix, Cutler, Goodman, Edgington and past Councilmembers for assisting Fernley to get to the place that it is today.

And I need to express my sincere gratitude to all the City of Fernley staff, former and current, who have been diligently working to execute the priorities and goals of our City Council.

A crucial priority of your City Council is to review, discuss, approve and adopt policies that will improve the quality of life for all residents. The Council decides where to allocate tax dollars, to get you the best City services for the least cost. Last May, the Council approved a \$48 million budget which provides for ongoing operations in the General Fund, Water Enterprise Fund, Sewer Enterprise Fund, plus capital improvement projects.

I am pleased to report that the City received a Clean Audit Opinion for the City's FY 2023, with no findings. And for the 12<sup>th</sup> year in a row our Finance Department received the (GFOA) award for excellence in financial reporting. These audits and awards demonstrate how seriously the City of Fernley takes its handling of the public's money. I am so proud of the City's performance of this critical obligation to protect and manage these public funds.

And I'm pleased to welcome the new City Treasurer to Team Fernley, Robert Carson. With this welcome new addition, I am proud to say that City Hall is now fully staffed!

With the tremendous work ahead, the City needs all hands on deck to plan and execute the frenzy of future projects coming our way. Just last year our industrious Planning Department received and managed 54 planning applications! With just two planners and a planning clerk, the Planning Department brought in \$410,000 in revenue.

Today's decisions determine tomorrow's opportunities for Fernley. How we balance growth will define what the City looks like in 2040 and beyond. I am proud of their efforts to get input from all the members of our community the way they did just last month when they hosted an Open House at the Senior Center to discuss the North Fernley and Southwest Fernley area plans.

We will have many more Open Houses and opportunities for giving input on the future of Fernley projects, so stay tuned and be ready to engage with us. We hope to see you there!

Last year the Building Department processed 1,064 permits. These permits involve reviewing building plans and completing all the inspections necessary to make sure that all the buildings going up are safe and sound for the long term, for a total of 13,528 building inspections.

The strong interest from developers for building more industrial, commercial, and housing developments promises to keep our five-member team in the Building Department very busy!

As you know, growth often comes with growing pains, and this is evident in our City's Code Enforcement program which provides for the health and safety of our citizens. In 2023, your Code Enforcement team received and investigated 526 citizen complaints (up from 450 citizen complaints in 2022), which resulted in tagging 119 vehicles, and towing 51 vehicles off our City streets.

I need your help and the help of your neighbors to improve this program. When every resident takes pride in their home, their property, and the community – we all get a win, and we won't have to expend so many resources on asking people to do their part to comply with the City's codes.

Code Enforcement hosted two junk car workshops and produced Bill 333, a general ordinance amending title 16 chapter 1 which updated regulations for the storage of vehicles and added tougher penalties for non-compliance. Your participation makes a difference!

The Engineering Team does wonderful work designing and managing projects for our City, though mostly behind the scenes. 2023 was no exception, and I will mention some of the most impactful projects:

The Cottonwood Lane reconstruction project was completed in August. This included the full rehabilitation of the road, a new waterline for certain portions and the addition of a new sidewalk on the north side. The project cost came in over \$5 million dollars, which I hope you will appreciate the value of as you cruise over this very smooth stretch of pavement!

The Engineering team is also working on a major Surface Water Conveyance Project, which is a strategic priority of the City Council to protect and expand the capacity and quality of the municipal water supply. This project has three phases.

The first phase was to design and construct an outtake structure, a pipeline, and a pumphouse to bring water from the Truckee Canal to the water plant.

Phase 2 of the project is the design and construction of an additional treated water reservoir.

Phase 3 of the project will be to design and build the systems needed at the water treatment plant in order to treat and serve surface water taken from the canal.

You may have noticed our improvement activities at Green Valley Park. We are excited to open the All-Abilities Playground once the pour-in rubber tile is installed. The playground structures look great! Did you see the new pickle ball court there too! Pickleball anyone?

To keep our sewer system out of sight and smell we must keep investing there as well! We invested \$1,800,000 to upsize and upgrade two different lift stations, the Farm District Lift Station and the West Lift Station. More homes and more growth creates traffic congestion below ground as much as on the streets though you might not often think about it!

Last year the City invested \$1.3 million into its pavement maintenance program with two projects that included drainage improvements and slurry seal in the Sage Ranch subdivision, and slurry seal on select streets around Farm Lane. Roads aren't cheap!

This year's road projects are already well under way! We will reconstruct Shadow Lane from 95A to Farm District Road; and rebuild streets in Villa Park! The estimated cost of each project is \$6 million and \$3 million respectively.

The exciting and high-profile Main Street Beautification project will build a plaza and community gathering space at the Historic Fernley Depot and site of the future Community Response and Resource Center. The best part, the City leveraged \$40,000 of your tax dollars to get \$495,000 in Federal grants awarded to pay for this project. We are always on the lookout for grant money to stretch your tax dollars. The beautification project will likely come in 2025.

The City's largest Department of Public Works actually contains 10 divisions. These hard-working staff are always at the ready, 24/7, to respond to all kinds of calls from snow removal to flooding, water line breaks and vandalism. So now let me tell you about what the Public Works team has achieved:

The Water Distribution team served up 1 billion, 379 million, 524 thousand, 900 gallons of water. Additionally, 24 Fire Hydrants were repaired or replaced of the 1,112 hydrants we have around town to put out fires and keep you safe.

Getting water out of the ground is just the start. In order to deliver quality drinking water, it goes to the Water Treatment Plant where 1 billion, 280 million, 806 thousand gallons get treated and put into the delivery system.

The workload on the Fleet Division increased from 811 work orders in 2022 to 1,100 work orders last year. I will be looking at how the city can improve its fleet management with newer vehicles in future years.

Speaking of new vehicles, I'm pleased to announce that we got a new street sweeper in 2023 for the Streets Division. Let's recognize the Streets Division for all the little everyday projects they do all over the city like asphalt patching, clearing storm drains and retention ponds, snow and ice removal and traffic signal and sign operations. These daily projects make a big difference!

The Wastewater Division Work does a great job keeping out of sight, sound and especially smell! They keep everything that you wash or flush down the drain moving to the city's

wastewater treatment plant, so you don't have to deal with it. That amounted to 559 million, 363 thousand gallons of sewage effluent last year. They really know .... Stuff!

The Fernley Cemetery crew continued to install base for the roadways and worked with plot owners to install curbing around their burial plots to enhance the facility. Construction of a new gazebo at the Fernley Cemetery was completed in 2023.

The Parks Division is making strides in their efforts to continue to improve the Green Valley Dog Park. Staff also continued to improve turf areas, horseshoe pits, and playground facilities in all of our City parks. I am really proud of our three full-time and three seasonal employees who take care of our ten municipal and fourteen total parks.

Beyond the management of development, operations and maintenance; City Council adopted a priority of promoting a High Quality of Life in Fernley. The Fernley Convention and Tourism Authority is one way we are doing this.

Established in 2011, the Fernley CTA distributes funds to organizations in the community that have plans for events that will promote tourism in Fernley. As seed money, these grants will foster successful special events bringing more people to Fernley to shop at local businesses, eat at local restaurants, all while bringing arts and culture to town so we all have more festivals to enjoy here with our friends and family.

Last grant cycle, nearly \$62,000 was distributed to twelve events. A great success story from the Fernley CTA program is the Fernley Aces event "Music, Murals, and Margaritas", now in its third year! Let's continue to make Fernley a place where people don't just commute for work but stay to play!

In December, the City Council and I met with staff to discuss the City's Strategic Priorities and what we can do to provide the best level of government services for the least cost. We identified several opportunities for improvement, including improving equity for the share of costs that come from development that YOU should not have to pay for. For this reason, the City Council has directed staff to prepare a plan to adopt development impact fees, so growth pays its fair share.

Fernley's future success requires bold and decisive actions that will allow the City to secure the resources it needs to take upon itself the full scope of self-governance for the eventual operation of public safety services including police, emergency response and fire protection.

Let's talk about other significant activities from the past year. Like the Bureau of Reclamation project with the Truckee Canal Irrigation District to line the canal. I don't have to tell you of the terrible impact this project has had on Fernley. The City has been fighting this project every step of the way, and we continue to fight in court to protect the City from any further negative impacts in the future

The City continues to work with the Bureau of Land Management on the 2014 Lands Bill to convey 18 parcels comprising 7,600 acres to the City. This has been a long and tedious process. But we are taking note of how to expedite the process of the next Lands Bill in 2024 allotting

another 12,000 acres that we are hoping will pass with the assistance of our Congressman Mark Amodei.

Construction of the Community Response and Resource Center will begin in just a couple of months! This first phase will include a new home for our Boys & Girls Club, Community Meeting Rooms, Outdoor Event Space, Convention Space, a Commercial Kitchen, Classroom Space for Workforce Development, and a Teen Lounge and Hangout. Future phases will add an early childhood learning center and a gymnasium. We are actively working now to raise funds for these later parts of the project.

I know many people in town are excited about the Nevada Pacific Parkway extension to US-50, so I'd like to give you a brief update. The project is currently in the design and permitting phase with the Federal Highway Administration, and our partners Mark IV and NDOT. A public hearing was held earlier this month to begin the NEPA review process. We hope that construction will begin in 2026. Everyone is eager to move this forward as fast as possible.

As your Mayor, I commit to working on all projects, large and small, that will serve to create a more livable community that you can be proud of. But I can't do it alone. I need your help. By working together in partnerships with our businesses, civic organization and community volunteers we can collaborate to further the priorities and goals of Fernley.

The City enjoys healthy relationships with the USDA Rural Partners Network, The Western Nevada Development District, NDOT, Northern Nevada Development Authority, EDAWN, Western Nevada College, and the North Lyon County Fire Protection District on many projects and initiatives that affect our community.

Now I invite you and ask you to consider what can you do this year for our City? This is a call to action. You might engage with your neighbors to start a Neighborhood Watch group. Or you might join one of these great service organizations to get involved with: the Fernley Community Foundation, the Chamber of Commerce, the Fernley Aces, the Main Street Fernley group, the Fernley High School boosters, the Fernley 4<sup>th</sup> of July Committee, or the Jr High and High School rodeo committee among others.

I welcome you to set up your own committee – for whatever need you see is not being met. You will want to coordinate with the Chamber of Commerce to learn more about the different types of committees that are already active.

This is your City – what do you want it to be like? Why not get involved and help bring solutions forward and become the change you want to see in Fernley?

You know, since becoming Mayor, I've found it is a privilege to hear about all the concerns that people have about living or working in Fernley. Most of them are legitimate concerns that I am happy to help solve. And some of them are problems that are beyond the City's direct control or power to fix, like the roundabout!

But where there's a will, there is a way to get something done. There will always be something troubling for the City that needs addressing; like 23 years ago it was the absence of traffic running through town. And today it's about the problems of congestion from traffic running through town! As your Mayor, I am committed to building a better Fernley so that all the work we do today won't make problems for us to have to solve in the future.

But I need your help! I'd like to suggest to you that instead of asking what Fernley can do for you, I'm asking you what can you do for Fernley now? The future of Fernley depends on each and every resident's participation.

There are so many ways for you to get involved and make a meaningful contribution to the future of Fernley. Start by looking at the display there of all the wonderful non-profits operating in this City. Familiarize yourselves with their causes, choose which are most dear to you, and lend a hand! There are so many civic organizations that make a huge difference every day and you may not even be aware of them. Each one of them is open and invites you to join and get involved. There is so much more to do for Fernley beyond the reach of the City government, or the members already in these groups. They need help! They want your help!

Here's an immediate opportunity for you to get involved! Next month the City is hosting the Fernley Citizens and Leadership Academy. Come learn how the City is run and how to be a more effective citizen leader.

Finally, I want to extend a challenge to everyone here tonight, and every citizen in town, to commit to doing something to serve the City of Fernley community this year! I would like everyone to sign a pledge that you will join and become a contributing member of at least one Fernley civic organization this year. Everyone who does so and demonstrates their commitment beyond tonight's enthusiasm and is found to be a member of one of these organizations before the end of this year, will be recognized with a Mayor's Commendation at my next State of the City address! I'm doing this because I believe in Fernley, and I believe in you.

As your Mayor and Chief Executive, I will continue to lead our community and I am excited about the future of the City of Fernley. Together we can make Fernley the City that we hope and dream for it to be, a quality community to meet our needs, those of our children, and future generations to come! Thank you and goodnight!

