

The “State” of our City

By Mayor Gene R. Mangum, 18 January 2008

I've never been big on traditions but there has been a precedent for government leaders to write an annual report on their area of responsibility. I passed on that tradition last year thinking it was no big necessity. Wrong choice! Wow, did I hear about it. So, as not to make the same mistake again, here it is for those of you who like lengthy reading.

Actually I am pleased to be able to write you about the “State” of our city. A city that I have come to love and respect over the 30 years that I have had the good fortune to live here. This is my home. You are my neighbors and my friends. I am honored to serve as your mayor and the only reason I hold my position is out of interest in trying to help you.

As a community we have many diverse interests and preferences. I'm confident that what you want for our city is no different than what I want for our city. One of the things you have to do as a mayor or councilman is you have to make decisions from among numerous options, and having to choose between them automatically means that someone will be disappointed. If that is you, I hope you will not be resentful and withdraw from participation for there is great need for maximum unity in our journey toward the future. As a group we hold the destiny of our city in our own hands. It is up to all of us, to shape and build it together.

I want to recognize my partners in governing. I am pleased to serve alongside my colleagues on the council. They are men who give tirelessly of their time, their brains, and their energy to accomplish the work of the city and in many cases, support for the region around us. They, along with our top city officers, are some of the finest people I have ever associated with.

All of them are talented and honorable administrators who share a love for this city and a dedication to serving you. Their's is not a job for the timid and it pleases me to know they have the courage and fortitude to stick with their core values, principles, and priorities in spite of the challenges, and challengers, that face them.

I recall reading some bright person's remark that “The most powerful you will ever become is when you make the right decision for the right reason regardless of the perceived consequences.” Since more than once I've seen your city leadership successfully face up to that challenge, I say again: I'm proud to serve alongside them. Springville is also made strong because of our many partners outside government. Our local chamber of commerce, our local churches, civic clubs, and many great business firms all combine to enhance the health and vibrancy of our community.

The Springville area Chamber of Commerce named Keith and Marva Davis as Citizens of the Year. Keith is a local hero; a veteran of Foreign Wars, having fought in the Battle of the Bulge. Keith and Marva have served as volunteers in so many civic organizations there is not space to list them all. Richard Holmes, one of a handful of certified gemologists, and owner of Duke's Jewelry earned the Business of the Year award. Other benefactors who prefer to remain anonymous have contributed so generously to the benefit of our city.

I read long lists of our youth who are earning scholastic honors. Our sports teams are not only winning, but they are winning in style, with sportsmanship, honor and integrity. All of these good folks are only representative of many thousands of others who have chosen to make Springville their home. As your civic leaders we honor all of you as the real strength of our community.

We have over two hundred dedicated city employees who do their best every day to provide top-quality services to the people of Springville. Many of their achievements will be referenced later in this report. I also recognize the great contribution of an active group of volunteer citizens and pay special tribute to our firemen and ambulance technicians who give freely of their energy and creativity to make our city all that it is. It's true! Springville is just chuck full of mighty good folks.

So what is the state of our city today? Where have we been? Where are we at? Where are we going? What are our needs for getting there?

THE PAST

With 15 to 20 new subdivisions going up last summer it was obvious that our city was growing at a record pace. Over 400 permits were issued for building with a total valuation of nearly 78 million dollars. Record use was established at every public facility from the golf course to the public utility desk. Our city library saw unprecedented growth. Over 10,000 children and adults attended key programs. Story time hours alone increased attendance by nearly 1,500 individuals. Thank goodness for those 91 library volunteers who contributed 656 hours of their time.

A good many of the tasks undertaken in 2007 could easily have gone un-noticed by the average citizen. Did you know that during the year city staff planted over one thousand new trees along city streets and parks? Are you aware that citizens gained acres of new green space and miles of new trails while elaborate concept plans were being created for parks yet to be developed? Hopefully you noticed that existing parks were kept more green, clean and attractive.

Additional property was purchased to expand our canyon parks. Several new pavilions were installed and more are scheduled. A new playground was also created at the Civic Center and it quickly became a very popular high use area. New playground equipment was installed at Jolley's Ranch, and this winter an entire new winter recreation

opportunity was put into place there. My visits there have brought many a “thank you” from the crowd in attendance. The credit goes to a great recreation staff

For years our recreation staff worked out of an office at the high school. When the school needed the space we remodeled the old art shop and it is now the community services office, housing management for buildings, grounds, recreation, parks, cemeteries and facility management. A portable office was also moved next to the Civic Center to allow more office space for those working there

New gates and some decorative fencing were installed at the Cemetery, while the Senior Citizens center received a new climate control system and an exercise room.

Ambulance crews responded to 931 calls in 2007. Two ambulances were out at the same time on 58 occurrences and there were 11 times that three ambulances were out at the same time. With only two emergency technicians on duty we find ourselves facing the dilemma of how to fully provide emergency services.

Our waste disposal plant, probably the oldest in the county, nearly reached its maximum processing capability and new plans were made to upgrade and expand this critical facility. City crews monitoring electrical and water requirements got us through a high demand year without a hiccup.

Our golf course received national acclaim with a 4 ½ star rating and yet it maintains a very modest fee schedule. There is not a better model for an art museum anywhere in the country than what we have right here at home, and can you believe it is free of charge?.

The good folks in our public works department processed over 1,700 citizen service requests last year. That’s nearly seven calls a day for services that were not booked into their expected work load. Hopefully you understand why some of your requests could not be answered immediately.

Public works staff spent countless hours and thousands of dollars to comply with Utah State requirements to control storm water flow. The four million dollar pipe line down 400 South was one of the largest culinary water projects ever initiated by Springville City. That major job was accompanied with a number of other expensive and extensive piping projects for both water and sewer. A half million dollars was spent to install additional piping and valves to correct pressure deficiencies in various city locations and 1 ½ million was spent to install pumps large enough to return sewer waste from the far west fields back up hill to the existing treatment plant.

Some expensive road work was done and some very expensive work obviously remains. Our intent was to let the effect of that big dig on 400 South settle before the street was resurfaced. Now resurfacing is questionable due to a cost estimate exceeding one million dollars. Everything has become terribly expensive.

One nice thing in 2007 was that our city had no significant claims filed against us. Credit goes to each of the city departments for doing an excellent job in minimizing the City's liability exposure by working in a productive, safe and responsible manner.

A long term dispute over property lines had drug on for a number of years between the U.S. Forest Service and Kelly's Grove residents. Numerous legal transactions were finalized by the city to the benefit of those residents.

Anti graffiti efforts have reduced gang graffiti more than 60% while reductions in crime of all sorts has also been steadily reduced. A police tip line (491-5598) was made operational and residents are encouraged to help our police department stop crime.

THE PRESENT

Where are we today? Our last independent audit report gives Springville high marks for accurate financial reporting and conservative management. Our balance sheets are strong and our city is well structured to continue meeting the additional growth expected in 2008.

Like many of us, much of our city is reaching old age and with old age comes different challenges. Our infrastructure, our streets, pipes, and buildings all need more attention than they did when the city was younger. While the "outer" appearance may look pretty good overall, we know that unless we take care of what the citizens don't see, that what they do see will soon be affected adversely

Plans are on the horizon for a new civic building for our police, courts and administrative departments. A new fire station will be built downtown and a new substation will be constructed near 400 South and Canyon road. Citizen groups continue working with city staff members to study concepts and probabilities for a new library and city recreation center.

Infrastructure replacement and repair needs are rapidly being analyzed and accomplished. A two year program was just completed that located and mapped every pipe line in the city along with the location of all control valves. Blue prints long lost for lack of a filing system, critical information previously recorded nowhere but in someone's mind; it was a system that worked just fine.....until we started to grow and the need changed. Now, for the first time ever, that critical information is permanently recorded and available at the push of a button.

In regards to our civic pride, it does come with a price tag. But not nearly the price paid in the long run by allowing deterioration, obsolescence, criminal activities and negative attitudes to take over. It would be nice if we could find a way to eliminate all the problems of crime, drugs, graffiti, weeds, trash, and unkempt properties. City officials have done a good job in controlling and even reducing much of the problem, but if there

is a permanent solution it is within individual homes and neighborhoods. Most of our society must govern their own actions and their own circumstances. There is no way there could ever be enough police officers or other paid workers if the total responsibility is left up to them.

In general I see our city on the move, and I sense a rising spirit across our entire community. We still remain basically free from thugs, drunks, and nightclub trash. We can still feel safe walking the streets and trails, and we can enjoy a visit to a clean park with out some crazy boom box bimbo driving us out. Crime of all types, including graffiti and other vandalism rates are down. Beautification projects are being launched.

I see progress in the new housing developments. New roads and bridges will eliminate the danger and inconvenience of railroad crossings. There are new business corridors being established that will one day fill with businesses of all kinds. The reward is great for those who can look past the construction phase of today and visualize how vibrant and beautiful it will be tomorrow.

Although population growth has been strong, our lack of economic growth is a huge disappointment and has implications for the city's future financial health if not corrected. Although constantly growing, our sales tax figures need an additional good shot in the arm. We know that business development will ultimately occur but to have it here today would give us much more flexibility and assurance as we deal with the cost of the serious issues of our rapidly aging infrastructure.

Long term financing for enlargement of the city waste disposal plant and associated pipe lines is being initiated by your council members.

Now let's take a look at where we are going in the future.

THE FUTURE

We do have a plan. Our goals and objectives are smart, specific, measurable, and attainable, results oriented, and time determinate. We face the future with determination, hope, confidence, and a relentless drive to succeed.

We must admit that our population boom will defray efforts to maintain our small town atmosphere. One doesn't have to drive very far in town to note that our main traffic corridors are already overcrowded. Things have changed and will continue to change.

Our vision of the future will require us to grow our tax base. While seeking to increase retail business we need to better nurture our existing business community. Some extra effort to better partner with our local chamber of commerce would bring us a dynamic partner for progress.

I look for progress and positive change in existing neighborhoods and traditional city celebrations. This will depend in large part on the commitment and determination of civic minded volunteers. Their efforts would add a tremendous boost to what can be done to beautify our city and to provide a stimulus to programs that would not be possible without citizen involvement. Please watch for our announcement of the many ways you can volunteer to help vitalize our community.

The central corridor into our community, 400 South, will soon become a three mile long construction zone lasting 12 to 24 months. With this street being not only our main artery but the only street that virtually connects our east and west sides, the anticipated impact on our citizens will be significant. Just as significant will be the ultimate change. While current residents will likely remember waiting at the train crossing but enjoying the pleasant scenic farm land, future residents will marvel at the new five lane roadway lined with homes, apartments, restaurants, and retail establishments of all kinds.

Our community departments are well poised and structured to maintain control of all these changes. There are connecting roads for those partially completed subdivisions along with the many more that are planned to come. There are parks and green belts and jogging trails for family enjoyment. Planning those new developments and all the infrastructure they will require is like putting together all the pieces of a giant puzzle. It is all well planned. It will all come together. And it will be beautiful.

Utah County had the highest growth rate in the state last year. We expect to see a modest drop in new home construction during 2008. Perhaps a little time to catch our breath will be good for all of us.

Building growth is not the only factor that will affect our future. Our future will also require solution to our current search for a long term power contract for our city. We consider this a critical need within the next five years and we are deeply into the hunt, but thus far without success. A nationwide shortage of electrical generation capacity is driving costs up and availability down.

Coal generating plants offer the only possible source for power close to today's cost and they are under tremendous pressure to close due to emission control problems. As this trend continues we expect to see higher energy costs as shortages and expansion costs force prices upward.

The prices of cement and asphalt have skyrocketed over the past two years and if that trend continues it could have great impact on new construction as well as maintenance projects.

A lot of unanswered questions remain but time has a way of solving many problems and answering many questions. We have planned for the expected and remain flexible for the unexpected. We are confident the critical needs of the future will be met but we prefer to not work alone. Please join with us in 2008. We seek after your ideas, your suggestions, your volunteer efforts, and your continued support for those of us more

directly involved. Together we will make Springville an even greater place to live, work and play.

I hope it is a great year for each of you personally. Many thanks.

Gene R. Mangum, Mayor