

2016 State of the City Address

Mayor Ted Eyre

Good evening, Murray City council members, residents, staff and friends. Once again I am grateful for the opportunity to stand before you and to represent so many people whose combined efforts make up the State of our City. Our city employees, residents, business owners, volunteers and those who come here to recreate, work and shop all contribute to the heart beat that makes this city the unique community that it is. I hope that our founding fathers would be proud of the way we have continued to build on the foundation they laid, and to honor their ideals of independence, self-sufficiency and service to others.

Just a few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to witness the oath of office ceremony for three of our city council members. I congratulate them and look forward to the exciting developments we will be working on together in the coming years. We are so fortunate, as a city, to have such a council that represents the interests of this city with dedication, independent thinking and integrity.

As the words of the oath of office were read and repeated by each councilman, I was deeply impressed and reminded what each of us, who are elected officials, swear to do. There was a phrase that particularly struck me. Even as local officials, we swear to support, obey and defend the Constitution of the United States.

I remember having to memorize its preamble while in junior high school and thought of its application to us as someone who publicly promises to uphold it. As public servants, we do our best: to establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

The rest of the Constitution lays out how a government should be formed and we are so fortunate to be one of the few cities in Utah to follow this pattern of the separation of branches of government and to respect the distinct delineation and responsibilities of each.

What a privilege it is to live in this great country and we have a sworn duty to do all we can to insure the promises contained in the Constitution to the residents of Murray, Utah.

The tenants of the Constitution are not just important parts of our federal and state government, but play a key role in the everyday services that are provided to our city residents. Our departments all have duties that focus on meeting the needs of our citizens. Each year they prepare a report outlining the work they have accomplished in the previous 12 months. I have selected some of the points explaining ways they have worked to include the values of the Constitution in their service.

I would like to divide our departments into three categories:

- First, those that provide for our day-to-day internal services;
- Second, our public safety and support groups; and
- Third, our utility services and quality of life areas.

We are fortunate to have a great Human Resource team working hard on employee issues, internal policies, healthcare options and hiring new people. Last year they received and processed 542 applications for employment for 20 full-time positions and hired almost 185 part-time people, many who work seasonally. Five long-standing policies were updated, including the city Travel and Bereavement Leave policies.

The Legal Department spends time supporting both the council and the administration on a wide variety of issues. They coordinate our Risk Management Program, which has been very effective in improving safety, costs and limiting liability. The land-use focus has been extensive this year with working to purchase the Murray Theater, coordinating with JR Miller Enterprises on the downtown redevelopment project and other RDA related efforts. They have also handled about 13,000 criminal cases this year, with only 70 appeals to District Court.

The primary objective of our Finance Department is to provide accurate and timely financial information to citizens, the council and administration. This helps them create a sustainable budget and to make informed decisions. The budget process is key to funding projects and activities in all of our various departments. The Finance

Department also handles our sales and property tax funds, works to pay off bonds and helped implement our new payroll and financial software. All of these efforts have led to the city's triple-A bond rating and a clean audit for the second year in a row. The valuable input we receive from them helps us make responsible, reasonable decisions, to keep taxes under control and services funded.

With all of the innovations in technology, we are fortunate to have a great IT staff and GIS personnel. They have been instrumental in selecting, installing and training on our new city software which will allow us to serve our residents more efficiently. With their help, we have been able to enhance our services, such as offering passports, with over 2,100 processed this year.

We cannot speak of technology without mentioning UTOPIA and UIA. In last year's State of the City address, I made the following statement, "I believe that in subsequent State of the City addresses, the UTOPIA question will be in the positive column." I am glad to report on a recap of their 2015 review which stated: "Combined operating 'break even' has now been reached. No operational assessments have been sent to the cities and we do not anticipate having to send them in the future."

Public safety is one of the most valued services to all of us – especially when we need help!

This past year we were able to hire three police officers to replace those positions which have not been filled since the recession. Murray police are visible throughout the city and all are equipped with computers and body cameras. Eight officers were trained as Crisis Intervention officers to help those with mental health issues. We are also fortunate to have dedicated personnel who serve as victim advocates who help in a wide variety of challenging situations. The Murray Police Swat Team has successfully reduced the risk of injury or loss of life to citizens, officers and suspects. They provide many demonstrations and training exercises to teach personal safety awareness along with active shooter exercises. We continue to provide the D.A.R.E. program and had 778 graduates in 2015. Code enforcement officers and Neighborhood Watch programs support our goal to have clean, safe and protected neighborhoods to call home.

The Murray Justice Court is part of our public safety triangle allowing us to handle a large, local caseload for issues in our city. The court is making a huge effort to become paperless and their staff is doing a remarkable job during this transition. They are an important sector for community safety and do a great job dealing with cases in a timely manner.

The Fire Department responded to 600 more calls than last year with almost 6,200 emergency responses. Almost 5,000 of those were for medical needs. We were able to purchase a new bariatric ambulance this year. More than 250 people were CPR trained by our fire staff. Four drills were conducted to practice skills for various types of emergencies this year. Their staff participates with the county-wide Urban Search & Rescue Task Force 5, requiring intensive training to help in major disasters.

Providing a high quality of life has long been a principle goal of leaders in Murray. That is one reason we provide so many of our own services. Along with the daily expectations of good roads, safe water and our power needs, we also have the opportunity to make life better by offering wonderful recreation opportunities, a library and beautiful parks.

For example, the Murray Library was one of only seven Utah libraries to achieve a "Quality" certification from the state of Utah. This designation was based on performance measures in library visits, circulation of materials, program attendance, local operating expenditure, turnover rate, library programs in community settings, the library website and literacy programs. The library also completed a Radio Frequency Identification project this year that provides state-of-the-art material handling and circulation to library users.

This year over 2,000 hours of volunteer service was provided in our city parks by groups and individuals. From high school teams, to scouts and business groups, it is amazing to have so many willing to help keep our parks in top shape. Eight successful Movies in the Park were held with an average of 600 attending. The Park Center had over 300,000 visitors attend in 2015. Swimming lessons were provided to over 2,750 participants.

The Murray arts and history programs involved about 2,300 artists and 37,000 patrons in 178 productions and projects.

The Heritage Center continues to offer a vast array of programming opportunities with over 76,000 of our senior residents enjoying their services.

We appreciate the work of our Administrative and Development Services Department along with the coordination they provide with NeighborWorks to rehabilitate housing in our city, making beautiful refurbished homes available to residents. This year, for the first time since they have been in Murray, they were able to build a home from the ground up.

The ADS Department also completed the RFP and selection process for updating the General Plan. They have spent many hours gathering citizen input and working with the five focus groups. This department also helped with property purchases so we can build new pickleball courts in Murray Park in the near future.

Changes have been made at Murray Parkway Golf Course, under the new management there. The leagues are very popular and the dedicated staff, along with new equipment, are continuing to improve the quality of this facility. However, we are concerned about the outdated, problematic irrigation system which we are in the process of saving funds to replace in the near future.

The utilities provided by Murray City are often the envy of other entities in the valley.

Murray City Power Department has focused their efforts in keeping the system reliability at levels our residents and businesses expect. The number of unplanned outages was down from last year and we continue to have over a 99 percent “power on” rating. Average response time by our crews during an outage was 14 minutes. Our Forestry Division took out, trimmed and removed branches from over 1,300 trees and planted over 100 new trees. Their efforts help to keep the reliability at a high percentage.

Our Street Division completed over 55 slurry seals on streets, crack-sealed four major areas, provided road overlays on 14 streets and finished two major road rebuilding projects. They filled almost 2,000 potholes, replaced over 600 signs, provided snow removal, traffic control, 44 miles of street painting and offered 335 free loads of wood chips to our residents.

The entire cemetery was remapped with GIS technology resulting in the location of new lots that will soon be available for purchase. A process is currently underway to determine how residents can purchase these lots. A new irrigation system was completed along with curbs and gutters being replaced or refinished.

Once again our Water Division Rebate Program for removing old fixtures was successful in replacing 59 fixtures last year. The department received national recognition for their efforts in water conservation as they received the EPA WaterSense Partner of the Year Award at a ceremony in Las Vegas. They are also working to build a new pump house at McGhie Springs this year. Our Waste Water Division cleaned over 150 miles of sewer pipe, inspected 22 miles of our system with TV cameras and surveyed 5 miles of storm drains.

Businesses are also a vitally important element in offering products and services close to home for our residents. We are excited about the new Dillard's at Fashion Place Mall. In addition to the new Macy's store, they will be also be adding more than 53,000 square feet of new stores between the footprint of Macy's and the existing mall.

Medical facilities also continue to recognize the advantage of locating here as evidenced with a new 78,000 square foot building being added to the TOSH campus.

To highlight all the wonderful aspects of our community, we have undertaken the opportunity to produce a short video explaining the advantages of living and doing business in Murray City. It will be a great resource to help those wishing to locate here or understand our city better. I would like to thank Tim Tingey and Jennifer Heaps for their efforts on this project. I will present it to you now. **(Please see Video Presentation – Murray, a City Without Equal)**

Wow, wasn't that great?

However, in addressing the State of our City, I'd be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the contribution that our residents make. Our residents are not only the heart of the city – their strength is what makes Murray very unique. They are the reason why we do what we do and why our departments strive for excellence in their jobs.

I'd like to highlight just a few individuals who are exceptional role models in our community. They are to be commended for their business ethics, their community service and dedication to our city.

Jim Hendrickson (*ask Jim to stand*) – Jim is 92 years young. His list of accomplishments is outstanding. In Murray City, he will always be remembered for his desire to beautify the city. We have received the Tree City, USA Award for 38 consecutive years, longer than any other city in the state. Jim has been a major part of this program and he has served on the Murray Shade Tree and Beautification Commission since its inception in 1980. Thank you, Jim, for your countless years of dedication to our city.

Bill and Susan Wright (*ask the Wrights to stand*) – I cannot mention Bill and Susan's names without thinking of the dance programs they have championed, from the ballroom dances they host weekly to the wonderful ballet productions. This adds a rich cultural feature to our city. They also own and operate several successful businesses in our downtown area. They are highly respected in the Murray business community for their abilities to see a niche and fulfill it. The Wrights have preserved many of the historic features of our city. We honor them for their business ethics, for their artistic talents they share with others and for helping preserve the historic elements of our city for our younger generations to enjoy for decades to come. Thank you, Bill and Susan.

Police Officer Taylor Blauer (*ask Taylor to stand*) – Taylor has been a Murray City patrol officer for just one year. He graduated from Utah State University and currently serves as a 2nd lieutenant in the Utah National Guard. When he was hired as a police officer, he was in training with the guard. But, we were so impressed with him, we waited for three months for him to finish his guard training for him to begin his employment. Taylor and his wife moved to Murray after he was hired so they could live in the city where he served. He is a conscientious officer and takes pride in his position.

We recognize him for not only being one of the younger and newer residents in our city, but for the example he is of the future employees that serve as great role models as they serve their community and their nation. Thank you, Officer Blauer.

In conclusion, as you have seen and heard, it is the people – the combination of employees and residents who truly make up the State of our City. Because of them, our future is extremely bright.