

January 4, 2022

**Mayor's State of the City Address 2022:**

We have come to the end of another year. It is been an honor to represent Rock Springs as your Mayor and I look forward to the challenges ahead this next year. I commend our city employees, elected city officials and the many volunteers who serve on our boards, commissions and during all the events which take place throughout Rock Springs. These individuals have dedicated themselves to improving the quality of life for our citizens here in Rock Springs.

I thank our Health Care providers for their commitment in keeping our community safe during this pandemic and the many stressful hours they have worked on our behalf. I commend you all for your efforts and for putting yourselves in harm's way in order to control the spread of this virus.

I thank the many emergency responders of our community and I am proud of the many skilled professionals we have that work day after day, keeping our community safe and attending to those in need, your efforts are greatly appreciated.

I thank our veterans, past, present and future, for the sacrifices made on our behalf. I thank you all for your service and for protecting our freedoms here at home.

I would like to thank this City Council and Department Heads for your leadership and vision in building a better Rock Springs, it is a team effort that must continue.

I want to thank my wife and family for supporting me in this endeavor and the families of our City Councilors and Department Heads for the support they give us during the many hours we are away from family events.

Funding will continue to be an issue and we will take an aggressive approach to secure additional funding through the legislative process and search for available grants for worthwhile projects for our city. Overall, the state's economic conditions are somewhat depressing, yet we are seeing a leveling point and a slight uptick in the sales tax portion of revenues. As always, direct distribution from the State will be a topic we watch closely to ensure we do our best to secure a fair share of the distribution from the State and that we do not have a reduction in distribution.

Statewide unemployment is at 3.7% compared to 5.2% in 2021. It seems as if the statewide economy is holding steady yet with the many jobs lost in the coal and

natural gas fields, we can be assured that the revenues to our state will continue to decline. We do see some growth in wind and solar but we know that these jobs pay lower wages and will not replace jobs lost in the coal and natural gas sector.

That being said, it will be our plan to be as conservative as we can as we move into 2022. As mentioned, the State's General Fund and Budget Reserve Account have somewhat stabilized as oil prices are currently at \$77/barrel which is an increase from last year's \$63/barrel. This affects all sectors that support the industry and becomes a snowball effect once oil hits \$50/barrel as activity in the industry is reduced as we have seen with the loss of jobs in some of the large-scale oil & gas service companies located here in Rock Springs. We hope to see the Oil & Gas sector continue to improve. Those jobs in the coal sector will continue to decline as coal production is reduced and eventually halted as a goal of our nation's current administration. Trona remains strong and we see expansions taking place at a few of our trona plants which is positive. Diversification of our economy is a common goal of the entire nation and will continue to be our goal here in Sweetwater County.

We have the ability to secure businesses related to manufacturing to our county and with the many valuable minerals and resources that our county is fortunate to have, we can be successful if we work together to build the necessary infrastructure to see these opportunities become a reality such as the Middle Baxter Industrial Park project.

\$500 million will be distributed to the State of Wyoming through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). These funds have been made available to assist communities in recovery and transition from coal related jobs and loss of revenues over the last 2 years. The Governors Strike Team has established 10 goals of Wyoming in which these funds should be utilized and we will do our best to meet these goals and hopefully find opportunity here. As you all know, there are many cities, towns and counties battling for available funding from the state and federal governments and we will have to be creative and aggressively participate in the legislative process in order to achieve our goals here in Rock Springs and Sweetwater County and secure funding that will build projects that bring opportunity and success.

### **In regards to the State of the City of Rock Springs;**

The most recent disbursement for sales and use tax activity for November 2021 was \$1,439,935.38. This amount is 34% greater than what was received in January

of 2021. To date, this puts us 8% ahead of last year. We are currently 56% ahead of our projected sales tax for the fiscal year and we will continue to adjust as needed as we plan this year's budget. Our goal will be to continue working to improve the quality of life of our citizens and ensure our infrastructure is in good condition and well maintained in a fiscally responsible manner.

We have made positive changes in regards to how city departments function which have saved costs that are now being utilized to improve services to the community. We will continue to be accountable for taxpayers' dollars and transparent in all that we do. Our goal as elected officials is to constantly strive to improve the quality of life for our citizens and to do our best to find funding mechanisms beyond just the general funds available.

We have made great progress in securing funds to reconstruct the Bitter Creek and to eventually remove residents and businesses out of the flood plain through our downtown area and along the creek channel so development can take place, all while eventually creating a much more appealing creek channel with walking/bike paths which will eventually connect the east side of our town to the west side.

We have completed the Phase I portion of the First Security Bank building downtown which has been a goal for many years and a very high priority for our URA. We plan to submit the request for Phase II this March and I thank all those who have helped make this happen and the support of this city council and look forward to the day when the lights and heat are back on in this building and to see the many patrons partaking of all that this historic building will have to offer our community including the many new events which will take place in Bank Court as we continue to improve the quality of life for our citizens. It is always great to preserve our history and to bring these historic relics back to life!

### **In regards to infrastructure needs in Rock Springs;**

There are many infrastructure needs which need addressed. Through many discussions with Department Heads, this city council will choose critical infrastructure projects to be proposed to the tax-payers this next election through a Specific Purpose Tax proposition which is a valuable tool in raising revenues for critical projects which otherwise could not be funded through the general fund. The projects suggested by our Department Heads and City Councilors are valid and necessary projects that will improve the lives of our citizens. Please do your research, attend public meetings and ask questions to educate yourselves prior to

the upcoming election to clearly understand each of these projects, provide input as a taxpayer and decide the importance these projects have for the future of our city.

I look forward to the challenges ahead and to work side-by-side with this city council, our Department Heads, employees and other city/county/state and federal agencies in a pro-active manner to improve this city, remedy the problems and create a community that we can be proud of.

The State of the City is good, we are blessed to have dedicated people working towards the common good of our citizens. We are stable at the current time and hopefully as revenues continue to improve, our State of the City will continue to improve. A sign of improvement is our ability to move critical projects forward, maintain our staff and avoid any further budget cuts. If we are not moving forward, we are idle and stagnant which is not a place we want to be. Stagnation causes many problems including higher costs for delayed projects due to inflation of labor and material costs, replacement of equipment and aging infrastructure. We need to constantly be working towards improvements.

I thank you for your support and the support you have given to this city council this past year and wish you all a very healthy and happy new year.

At this time we will conduct the business of the city before us here today.

Sincerely,

Timothy A. Kaumo

Mayor, City of Rock Springs