

I have invited Rob Zotti, President of our City Council, to join me today as I deliver this speech. Councilor Zotti has a long history of serving our city and is welcome to interject should I misspeak, leave out something of import, or to share his thoughts on where we stand as a community. I appreciate his taking time to be present and his willingness to be an active partner in our responsibility to serve our city.

I want to acknowledge the members of our city council, county commission, and state legislature who are joining us today. I am grateful for their partnership and interest in the state of our city. Additionally, I appreciate the business and community members joining us and the Rock Springs Chamber of Commerce for arranging this opportunity. Our community relies on the cooperation and collaboration between Federal, state, and local partners working together with the citizens and industries of our city and county. Your presence here speaks to your commitment to being engaged with our government and more importantly to the future of our city.

We can't look to the future without understanding our past. Over the last 135 years, our city has grown, floundered, exploded, and shrunk. We have come together to support each other and been at each other's throats. We have never been weak. We have grown together and contributed disproportionately to the success of our great State of Wyoming. Founded to extract coal and feed the Union Pacific railroad in its mandate to unite our nation, we have always been a community of doers, unafraid to put in the work needed to succeed. Those opportunities that caused our city to grow despite the challenging environment brought people from every corner of the Earth together to create our Home of 56 Nationalities. We are rightfully proud of who we are and rest easy in the knowledge that adversity and challenges are old hat to us and are just a different way of saying opportunity.

Our resiliency is an asset whose importance cannot be overstated. With the war on our mineral and energy production industries, we are facing an existential threat that will test our ability as a community to innovate. As our community is tested by these monumental changes, so is our city government.

The test of effective city government is not simply in our city's survival, it rests in strengthening our city and improving people's lives.

We cannot fall into the trap of allowing bust or boom, crisis or ease, or the latest challenge to define who we are. We must embrace the circumstances as they are, adapt, and find the opportunities. I am glad to report there are many if we are brave enough to accept them.

There is a lot to celebrate with the work being done by your city staff and council. Our current revenue picture is strong. Sales & Use taxes are up, and we are ahead of our budget projection. We are working with a grant consultant to secure funds to improve our gateways and city streets. We are developing relationships with new commodity extraction companies. We continue to partner with our state legislators to advocate for our city and county. We are working with our county partners as well as our community partners to build a collaborative system where we can maximize the efficient use of tax dollars to deliver high quality services in the most cost-effective manner including a hard look at our scope of service.

Looking to our challenges. We are facing an aging infrastructure. Over the years, with our revenue fluctuations, past mayors and councils have rightly opted to prioritize employees over maintenance when funds were tight. We are reaching a place where that deferment is no longer feasible. The increased sales tax rides piggybacked on increased costs – not only for government but for our local businesses and residents. The increased revenues we have been receiving are not revenues we can count on continuing. Nevertheless, we must create a plan to address those long-term costs, while taking care of our employees and providing exemplary service to our citizens.

I wish the answer to our challenges was as simple as electing a mayor who will get things done or having a council that will make hard choices. These issues are extremely complex and will require all of us to work together towards common goals. There will be

people who don't agree with those goals. There will be people who will not take the time to learn about why those goals were selected. Timidity in the face of challenge will always lead to failure. We need every leader in our city, our county, and our state to be a partner in facing these challenges and taking decisive steps to ensure we set the standard for 21st Century economic and community development. I know we can come together to make the hard choices that will strengthen our city and our community. We must not allow the complexity of our economic environment to dishearten us or turn us away from the innovation that we are so very capable of achieving.

For my first year in the office of Mayor, I have two goals.

1. We will grow our partnerships and our collaboration:
 - a. With our governmental partners at the state, our county, the City of Green River, and the 17 additional towns and communities that make up our county.
 - b. With our agency partners like the Sweetwater Economic Development Coalition, Sweetwater Events Complex, the Urban Renewal Association, Sweetwater Tourism, and many others.
 - c. With our community partners like Sweetwater County School District #1, Western Wyoming Community College, Memorial Hospital of Sweetwater County, and Aspen Medical Center.
 - d. With our business and industry partners large and small.
 - e. And most importantly, with the residents of the City of Rock Springs.
2. We will institute a tool to go beyond communication to conversation with the citizens of our city.
 - a. A tool to communicate priorities.
 - b. To receive feedback.
 - c. To report progress on specific goals set by my office and your city council.

Your city council held a retreat February 11 to discuss how we can move our city forward. I wish you all had been in that room with me. Our council is committed to

growth and to serving you, their constituents. They are passionate about our city and in their service to you. They are equally committed to working together with my office and with our partners to ensure when our test is graded we will have done everything possible to strengthen our city and improve people's lives.

We are our best selves and our best version of community when we support each other, help each other grow, and move together towards a common goal. All of us have supported and been supported in turn. Please take five seconds to think of how this community has supported you. Take another five to think about what this community means to you.

We hear a lot about the Code of the West conflated with the notion of rugged individualism. My people came to Wyoming over 150 years ago. I was weaned on stories of survival in the days when the West was wild. I can tell you with no reservation, the Code of the West is about coming together to work, to support, and to thrive as neighbors. When I look at Rock Springs, I am confident that spirit survives and our city will continue to turn challenges into opportunities.