State of the City Address
Mayor Dave Stram
January 13, 2014

One year ago I took office as your newly elected Mayor. I ran on the campaign of, "Rebuilding Creswell." A year later, how have we done?

When I said my aim was "rebuilding" Creswell, I had three things in mind: rebuilding the Council as an effective leadership team, rebuilding the confidence of the citizens in their city government, and rebuilding the image of Creswell as "the friendly city." How have we done?

Regarding the City Council, I am very proud of what it accomplished in 2013. In January Council Committees were appointed, Charges were given, and the Council got to work. In April work sessions were held on guiding values and goals. In November we began a vision process. In December we hired a new City Administrator.

Tonight our newest Councilor has been sworn in, and I am excited to have Holly Campbell on board. Every member of this Council plays a valuable role; together we represent a wide spectrum of our population. We are a young council, young in terms of length of service; we are a learning council, later this month we will receive additional training. We have not arrived, but we are well on the way to becoming an effective leadership team serving you.

In 2013, my aim was to rebuild your confidence in city government. Are you more confident today than you were 12 months ago? Do you feel better about the leadership provided by this Council? Do we listen? Do we respond to your concerns? Do we treat you with respect when you have a question or a need? Are Councilors accessible to you? Am I accessible to you? Are we honest and forthcoming with City business? These are the kinds of things that build confidence in our leaders.

How are we doing? In my conversations around town with many of you, I've sensed that the answer is, "Better." Confidence is being restored in our city government. That's a good thing!

Finally, when I spoke about "rebuilding" Creswell I meant the image of Creswell as "the friendly city". Early in 2013 I heard reports that people as far away as Portland had heard about Creswell, and what they heard wasn't good. We hired a consultant in April to work with the Council and Staff and he was of great assistance to us. Later in the year we had lunch in Eugene and he said that the image of Creswell around the State was changing. He offered his congratulations for our progress, and said he would be glad to come back to Creswell anytime and work with us again!

In helping to rebuild our image, I want to express my appreciation to Scott and Jeanne Olson and the Creswell Chronicle staff. The image that Creswell projects is in large part what the media presents. Have you been reading the Chronicle this year? Have you noticed: its pages are filled with news of what's happening in Creswell - Community events, school functions, local sports teams, church news, the great snow, business advertisements, a full page of activity listings in the Town Crier, and pictures - pictures - pictures. Creswell, "the friendly city" - it's happening again!

In last year's address I said that the State of the City was ***good . . . with challenges.*** We had the challenge of the audits, water and sewer rates, an overdue City Administrator's performance review, and a three-quarters-of-a-million-dollar lawsuit at the airport. It was quite a list of **challenges**!

Tonight I am pleased to report that our 2013 audit is finished! The auditor had planned to be here and bring a report; unfortunately, the auditor is sick and we will have to wait on the report. But it's done!

Tonight I am pleased to announce that a water rate study is soon to be completed, that a settlement agreement ending

our lawsuit at the airport has been signed, and that our new City Administrator, who will start on February 1st, is here in attendance with her husband. Let me introduce to you our new administrator - Michelle Amberg, who is here with her husband, Don.

Last year I spent many hours interacting with staff at City Hall. I toured the water and sewer treatment plants, visited with members of the public works department, spent time at the airport learning about its operations, and sat down with our police Sergeant to discuss concerns. I am pleased to report that we have an excellent Staff. Our Staff cares about Creswell. Most of them live here. This is their home too.

Could I make a suggestion: when you see our workers out-and-about, stop and say, "Thank you"? When you come to City Hall to pay your water bill or get information, say "Thank you." A simple "Thank you" goes a long way to encourage our Staff, and couldn't we all use a bit more encouragement?

Now we begin a New Year. What is the State of our City? I believe it is ***very good . . . with BIG DECISIONS ahead.***

A third deputy was added to our police force in 2013 in response to a spike in burglaries and a great outcry from our citizens. Funding for this third deputy came from the contingency fund. In 2014 we will need to decide whether to keep a third deputy and, if so, how to fund this position. It brings up the larger question of policing in Creswell - how should we go about it? Should we continue with Lane County Sheriff? Should we form a separate law enforcement district to include both city and school district residents? Should we partner with another city to create a new kind of policing unit? There are a number of options; we can be creative. It is a **Big Decision**.

Creswellians have been concerned about the rates we pay for water and sewer services. Last year we addressed this

matter and made two decisions: the first decision was made in July, which was to NOT raise the rates. Our city has a resolution that automatically raises water and sewer rates by ½ of 1% every July. Last July the Council decided NOT to automatically increase the rates. Then we made a second decision, which was to have a water rate study done. We needed an outside perspective of where we are and what our future needs will be in order to ensure that rates are set where they should be.

The water rate study will be completed shortly. It may indicate that we can lower our rates. We would all like that. Hurray! Or it may indicate that we need to raise the rates to cover current loans and be prepared for future needs. We would NOT like that, but it is a possibility.

I pledge that when we get the results of this study, you will hear what we hear - you will get the information we get - and then together we will make this **Big Decision** about what we pay for water and sewer.

Other **Big Decisions** have to do with the **Cobalt** building - how do we make it available for use year round, **Garden Lake Park** - how do we improve the water quality so you can go fishing there, the **Airport** - how can it pay for itself rather than continue needing City funds to keep it solvent, the City's C**omprehensive Plan** that addresses future housing needs, economic development, and necessary infrastructure for a twenty-year period of time - our Comprehensive Plan is over 30 years old, how can we get it done?

These are all ***big decisions,*** but the really BIG one in 2014 is . . . **What do we want Creswell to be in 40 years?**

I was attending the annual Oregon Mayor's Association conference last summer when one of the mayor's said, "Mayors of Oregon, it is our job to help our cities plan 40 years down the road. Somebody else did it 40 years ago for you. Now it's your turn to do it for the next generation." Frankly I was stunned! Forty years is a long time. I'm not

sure I'll be around in forty years. But those words etched themselves in my mind. Yes, somebody in Creswell made plans forty years ago, and now it's our turn.

A couple of months ago our Council had a work session in which we began to paint a picture of what Creswell will look like, forty years from now. In the coming months you will be asked to dip your brush in the colors and help paint the picture of Creswell, 2054.

As a community we must plan for the *future*, while being aware of the needs of our neighbors *today*. And right now, many of our neighbors are in need of a grocery store. Ray's has announced their departure from Creswell and as I speak the doors are locked, the lights are off, and there are no cucumbers in the produce department. We have never been without a full-service grocer in the 32 years I have lived here. We have a problem.

A month ago six of your community leaders met to talk about our problem. Last week the group grew to fifteen and we spent an hour asking questions and looking for answers. We have reached two decisions: first, we will continue meeting and searching for a solution, and second, we will host a **community forum on February 20, Thursday evening at 7 p.m. at the Creswell High School Commons**. At that meeting we will ask you to tell us what kind of grocery store will best serve the needs of our citizens? I am asking each of you to circle that date on your calendar and be in attendance.

This is not just a City Council problem or a Chamber of Commerce problem - this is our problem, and we must face it together. And we will. And we are! For the time being, each of us needs to be aware of the needs of others, neighbors, the elderly, people who don't drive, and step up to assist them in getting to a grocery store. Let's do that. Let's be a community that cares in a crisis.

Tonight is the last City Council meeting with our interim City Administrator, Mr. Larry Patterson. Next month

Michelle Amberg will be seated over there. Let me tell you that Larry has done a phenomenal job for Creswell! Larry, thank you for stepping in and being such a great help to us these past 5 months!

Recently our family went to see "The Hobbit: Desolation of Smaug". We love the Lord of The Rings, the stories of Bilbo Baggins and Frodo, Gandalf and Samwise Gamgee and the rest of the cast as they journey toward Mt. Doom and their goal: to destroy the one ring. It's the ***great adventure***, the ***fellowship*** that is formed along the way, and the many ***unexpected surprises*** that mesmerize us and bring us back to the theatre year after year!

In like fashion, we in Creswell are set upon a ***great adventure*** with a goal in mind: to create a special place where every person of every age, every creed and every color is valued, cared for, and made safe. If we are to reach our goal a ***fellowship*** must be formed, because we will need each other. And along the way there will be ***unexpected surprises!***

In 2014 I invite all of you to join me, and your Council . . . as the adventure continues!