

2019 State of the City---January 28, 2019

The weather outside might be cold and blustery but here inside city hall it is balmy and sunny as we look ahead into the new year. Our weather radar indicates a positive warm front approaching as our new Public Building Task Force went right to work at their first meeting on January 24th. Committee members received needed information for analyzing options and possible solutions for building improvements for our police and fire departments, public works, and community center. I look forward to working with this committee as we bring to the council recommendations that will benefit our great city and our future. Our radar also shows continued growth to our tax base in 2019.

Balancing business retention with new development is a blend of experience and common sense combined with a vision for the future. An added bonus for our EDA committee in 2018 was a contract for service with Redwood Area Development Corporation (known as RADC) represented by Julie Rath. Several business visits were conducted to share concerns, analyze needs, and discuss future potential opportunities. A Revolving Loan Program was started in 2018 to assist businesses with up to \$3,000 for their projects. Building a network of company and organization contacts as well as exploration of grant opportunities was another benefit of contracting with RADC. Due to Julie's retirement from RADC we have secured a contract for service with her directly for 2019. ***The Historical Walking Tour*** of downtown Renville was one of Julie's project's when she was the Main Street Coordinator for Renville back in the 90's. This previously printed history booklet featuring downtown buildings has been updated and is now available on our city website. Many of the businesses featured in ***The Historical Walking Tour*** are no longer in existence. Existing businesses of today can place in their storefront window a QR code that is scanned with an app on someone's smartphone and then linked to our website where the history of that building is shared. This modern technology will be appealing to the younger generation and allows us to share that history again! Memorabilia of the old businesses can be found in the Renville Museum. Our museum is in need of a new director, reorganization, and additional new members to revive interest in our history. We are looking to find a special person who is willing to be a part of preserving and showcasing Renville's rich history and engaging the next generation to continue that tradition.

Our ancestors are part of Renville's history as well. The Renville Library provides a comfortable setting for the Renville County Genealogical Society. Through efforts of new members and reorganization of the Society researchers and history buffs alike will continue to enjoy the convenience of researching family history right here in Renville. The genealogical society and our museum are real assets for our town as it brings visitors and researchers along the 212 Yellowstone Trail.

Collaboration between the City, RCW School and the Lion's Club also promotes economic development. Starting with an initial meeting in late 2018 that opened the door to sharing information, goals, and ideas for the betterment of the Renville area, this committee will explore opportunities to work together in 2019. A shared commitment for the safety of pedestrians at the intersection of Hwy 212 and 3rd street began with the Lion's fund raising efforts to help share in the City's cost for a Pedestrian Flashing Beacon and with RCW committing to participate in a Safe Routes to School Program.

The Community Center hosted a Career Expo in April 2018 for RCW and other area schools. Students gathered to learn about local businesses and career opportunities. Encouraging students to consider staying in the area after graduation or returning after college is critical to the sustainability of our region. We look forward to hosting the Career Expo again in 2019 as a successful way of promoting future economic development for rural Minnesota. Bringing young families back to the Renville area is important for our economic growth.

Providing housing for that possible migration of families is important as well. Collaboration effects between the City and North Star Homes of Redwood Falls to build a model home in Renville Estates is a start. This turnkey, move in ready home will be what we envision to be one of several more in the future. New signage near Renville Estates directs potential buyers to the building lots for sale. Other housing plans for Renville include continuing with our efforts to establish a Rental Housing Ordinance, a regulation intended to "clean up the City by creating better quality rental housing and property that is safe and affordable" as stated in the vision of the Ad Hoc committee reviewing the draft ordinance.

Economic development for any city includes keeping streets, parks, and infrastructure in good repair and looking for ways to improve services to its residents. Storm water issues experienced during heavy rains are being

addressed with city engineers for better solutions. Promoting our “Clean Up Day” in spring is a great way allow residents a way to clear out those unsightly areas of their property and keep Renville beautiful.

As a community we are thankful for the partnerships of police, fire, ambulance, city council and volunteers who participated in our first National Night Out last August. Equipment was on display for viewing by members of the community who were also able to enjoy food, fun and games demonstrating that working together makes for a safer community. We are the eyes of our neighborhoods. We look forward to an even bigger event in 2019.

Revitalizing Renville and many other volunteers continue to promote and support community involvement through events and projects such as Sugar Beet Days, hanging flower baskets on Main Street, improvements to Memorial Park, Spooktacular, Christmas decorations on the light poles, and Christmas tree lighting events. The efforts of many are what make Renville special.

We will work hard in the coming months to promote Renville as a community on the move! We look forward to 2019 being a progressive year for all of Renville.

Thank you to city employees, our council and all the organizations of Renville for all your dedication and service to the community. You are very much appreciated. It is an honor to be your mayor.