

As we come together tonight I am honored to be delivering this State of the City 2021. I want to express my sincere appreciation to the voters of our city who have placed their trust in me again as well as the members of our council, Adam Zaske and Dave Van Hove who were also elected last November. We, along with the rest of our council and staff, are dedicated making tough decisions that will continue to sustain and grow our city.

2020 was not an easy year for any of us. We started with high hopes for the new decade. We were visualizing a very progressive steady year with many projects and plans on our plate. I had adopted the turtle as our symbol for 2020 as “a turtle makes progress only when he sticks his neck out” which was a quote by American educator, scientist and diplomat James B Conant. My message from a year ago still stands: “Our city’s future continues to lie in our hands as we strive to build a better community, create opportunities, protect the heritage of those who served before us” and now: to recover and move forward from the effects of Covid 19. The extent of this pandemic was something no one could have anticipated or planned for. By working together we have weathered the storm. We will continue to follow mandated procedures until such a time that it is deemed safe to open fully again. Renville’s essential services and businesses and their employees put their health on the line every day to stay in operation. I thank each and every one who never gave up and never gave in. Thank you to our city staff as they too went above and beyond to keep everything working smoothly and continuously.

As the pandemic and all of its resulting changes to meetings, gatherings, and schedules took place, projects such as HealthPartners new clinic for Renville took a back seat to their other more critical issues. We look forward to this project moving ahead in 2021.

Our Public Buildings Project also was slowed down due to the many unforeseen changes. Again, I want to quote from my message a year ago, “For over 2 years, our administration, council, and committees have been preparing, researching and discussing the processes necessary for us to upgrade, update, and remodel our public buildings. Engaging our citizens in this process in 2020 will also take time but is a necessary step for our taxpayers to have input.” Now, in 2021, we will continue this path of procedure, process and engagement by our staff, council

and committee members to inform citizens with up to date accurate information. We look forward to this continued progress in our quest to improve, sustain and preserve the value of our city's assets.

Looking back at some of the accomplishments of 2020, we provided another successful Spring Clean-up Days for our citizens, we overcame a number of obstacles and selected a contractor for the RRFB/Crosswalk safety project at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SE and Hwy 212, we purchased new Public Works equipment such as a pickup truck, lawn mower and upgraded the pay loader through a lease agreement. We secured grants for blight clean up for the removal of a house at 449 NW 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and a structure at 402 W Park Avenue and finalized the sale of that property.

The Wellhead Protection Plan was also finalized and adopted securing the safety of the water supply for our city.

Our new City Logo on all the vehicles, equipment, and website now reflects our renewed energy to embrace who and where we are and our openness to grow and change.

Looking ahead at our objectives for 2021, they include: addressing our infrastructure and building needs, promoting more new housing in Renville Estates as well as to address other issues such as rental, blight and work force housing, the cleanup of city owned properties for redevelopment, focusing on new marketing strategies that will highlight our city and also to recruit new business into Renville and, as always, encouraging the beautification of our neighborhoods.

Even though our Community Improvement Alliance partnership meetings with RCW School and Renville Lions were suspended in April, we will reignite our involvement by encouraging individuals, organizations and businesses to participate in projects that will enhance the three communities of our school district. A side note here is that the main Renville School building is going to celebrate 100 years this year!

The EDA Business Survey executed in 2020 will serve as a guide to our goals as we focus our attention on what citizens considered important for our community.

We will start the codification process of updating our ordinances to reflect changes and clarifications needed to properly enforce each one. Our AdHoc Committee will be engaged in this project. Members will be selected soon to evaluate the language of each ordinance and make recommendations to the council.

These are just a few of our objectives for 2021. Hopefully no more surprise events like the pandemic of 2020.

One of the highlights for me this past year was getting to know a group of young mothers with families wanting to encourage upgrades to our 3 parks in Renville. They became what we now call our Park Moms. Organized by chance, the Pandemic forced us to meet outdoors in the North park where we enjoyed some beautiful weather as we tossed around ideas and dreams of improving the parks for kids of all ages and possibly making the North Park a destination for play dates. Realizing the cost of all new park equipment; a starting point became making a smaller investment of purchasing a large bench swing for each of the parks. Funding came from a Community Impact Grant from Renville County EDA/HRA, a donation from the Renville Lions Club and City park funds. The Park Moms will be partnering with the Lions Club to do some fundraising this summer to support a larger future play system. I look forward to the energy and enthusiasm these young families have to invest their ideas and support for our parks! Anyone else interested in our park project is more than welcome and should contact me or leave a message at City Hall.

I encourage this kind of human capital investment in other areas in Renville as well. Citizens can start by attending any of our council meetings either in person or virtually now to get to know our leaders and learn how our city government works. The best voices are informed voices. Our normal council meetings are the second and fourth Monday of each month at 6 o'clock pm. Our council meeting minutes are available upon request and also posted on our website.

As our city “opens” up it is our hope that local fun events will again take place this summer. By volunteering, participating, and engaging in the many activities planned for this year by various groups and organizations once the restrictions are lifted, citizens will be supporting efforts to create a more inclusive community. If 2020 taught us anything, it was the importance of that inclusion, connection, and helping each other. Let 2021 be better from what we all learned. We will continue to stay positive, and believe in our city and each other.

In closing I want to say thank you to Shane, all of our employees, council and committee members as well as our citizens for making the best of our circumstances. We know that by sticking our neck out like our turtle, slowly and surely we will achieve our goals. We will thrive and survive. Thank you!

Janette Wertish, Mayor