



CITY OF ELY

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Honorable Council Members, citizens and staff and distinguished guests. I am honored to deliver to you this State of the City report per NRS 266. These reports are important to the transparency and accountability of a local government to its citizens and neighbors.

One of the top concerns city residents and elected officials have when looking into the state of affairs of their city are the finances. Is the city solvent? Are my tax dollars being used responsibly? The City of Ely's annual budget is not the largest out of the 19 cities in the State. In fact, I suspect we're in the bottom five as far as budget size. This being the case it is that much more critical that the City of Ely guard every penny and scrutinize every expenditure to ensure that our citizens are provided with the services that every resident has the right to expect while planning and looking towards the future.

When I took office nearly three years ago the first annual audit turned up state compliance problems as well as other issues; that same year the City had appointed a new City Clerk and a new City Treasurer, both with many years of experience in working on behalf of the City of Ely and her people. In the past three years the staff, together with close work from the City Council, have dramatically turned the audit results around, resolving all State compliance issues and correcting process errors and material weaknesses. City departments routinely end the fiscal year within or under budget. Department heads take an active role in the budgeting process, lending their on-the-ground experience and departmental expertise to make sure the City's annual budgeting process is realistic and effective. Their participation has been essential to the success of tightening up the City's finances. With the help of staff and leadership the City has been able to maintain a healthy ending fund balance in the general fund even through the uncertainty of COVID. This fiscal year the City is projecting an ending fund balance of nearly \$1,000,000. This, in short, means your City is spending responsibly and making sure it saves for a rainy day and future needs while still taking care of City services.

I would not be here talking about these successes without the hard work of our department officials and City employees. Like most organizations over the past couple years, we've had a fair amount of turnover for various reasons: Changes in the labor market, pandemic stresses, etc... I am proud and appreciative of each of our employees whether they've been with the City for years or only a short time. Your City employees are routinely working late into the night repairing critical infrastructure, plowing snow on a holiday while their family celebrates at home, rushing out of bed to attend an accident or to fight a fire, attending to your complaints and concerns in our offices and numberless other tasks that keep the City running. During the onset of COVID when little was known about what the future might hold, City

employees took a substantial pay cut in order to make sure the City was financially prepared for the feared but unknown. I'm pleased to report that the pay cut was only temporary and that we've been able to make that up to the employees and more with funds from the American Rescue Plan Act. When many workers were sent home to work in safety, the City employees stayed on the job, often putting themselves in harms way to care for the sick and injured of our community and to make sure that critical infrastructure and processes of government kept functioning.

In addition to being responsible with the finances of the City, City leadership has been proactive in assisting where possible during these pandemic years. COVID has been with us for a significant portion of the last three years. It has caused disruptions to our lives, families, and community in ways we could not have imagined. I applaud the Council's proactive measures to assist our community through these trying times. In the past three years the City of Ely has issued thirteen low interest business loans from the City's Redevelopment Fund and Revolving Loan Fund. Thirty-five grants have been issued to businesses that the State had ordered closed as non-essential. In all, nearly \$450,000 was distributed to the Ely business community from various sources.

Additionally, funds that were distributed by the Federal Government have been employed assisting local non-profits such as our local Ministerial Association food bank which also helps to put on the community holiday dinners, the CACHE program to feed local children, the Boys and Girls Club, Magic Carpet Preschool, and others.

The City has been able to update many of the tools our Fire Department and EMS staff use as well as to make sure they are stocked with needed supplies. Additional funds have been made available to our essential Volunteer Fire Department to be used as they see fit for equipment, training, and member support. The City Fire Department could not function without the selfless service to our community by the members of the Ely Volunteer Fire Department.

Federal funds have also been used to update the City's website and online services, as well as for the use of Zoom for City Council and other meetings. In the near future these funds will also be used to update the City's communications and online connectivity infrastructure, bringing the City's tools and processes on par with current technologies.

In the coming months and years, we plan to employ these federal dollars on tourism endeavors as well as water/sewer improvements, bringing better broadband to our area and other worthy community initiatives.

Realizing that our annual budget would be insufficient for all our City's needed improvement, the City of Ely continues to work with our lobbying firm and the Nevada League of Cities, as well as our State and Federal representatives to secure outside funding for projects such as park improvements, infrastructure updates and repairs, Broadband improvements, housing availability, the completion of the State's highway and storm drain project, and many other projects and programs to invest in the facilities and economy of our area.

I firmly believe that for the City to be successful we need to cultivate good working relationships with other entities in our community as well as with the State and Federal government. In the past three years I am pleased to report on the close and cooperative relationship that the City of Ely has been able to maintain with White Pine County. The City and County have, and continue to, cooperate closely on a

number of shared departments and endeavors. The City of Ely has been able to provide Fire and Emergency Medical Services to areas of the County in support of the County's own volunteer Fire/EMS organizations. The City of Ely has had a successful arrangement for many years for police protection with the White Pine County Sheriff's Office. The City of Ely has been able to provide the County with building inspection services and Animal Control services. For a number of years the City and County Road Departments have been able to pool resources, together with help from the Regional Transportation Commission, to jointly complete larger projects in the City of Ely and in White Pine County. The City and County have been able to successfully work together these past three years on tax agreements, a joint election agreement, the joint Regional Planning Commission, utility agreements, grant submissions and many other items large and small; their willingness to sit down with the City of Ely and adjust and tweak these arrangements as needed has made these shared services successful and have benefited taxpayers across the City and County as a whole with better services as well as cost savings.

As outlined in a statement made a few months ago, I am pleased that the City of Ely was able to donate property that the new White Pine County Justice Center now sits on, thereby enabling them to secure needed funding. Consolidating the location for all court services in our area, municipal, justice, juvenile and district, I believe will be a great convenience for the people of Ely and White Pine County for years to come. I have been up to the new facilities for our municipal court and am very impressed with the new location. I have been even more impressed at the job our municipal court and staff have been doing. Conducting court proceedings during this pandemic has truly been no easy task. Working with our City Attorney, the municipal court has been able to clear case backlogs and resolve the matters brought before it in a respectful and efficient manner. We are fortunate to have such professional and dedicated public servants working in our municipal court.

To assist our hard working City staff in doing the best work they can with the limited help and resources at their disposal, it is vitally important that we provide them with the best tools possible.

Our building department has been making great strides in employing new plan review software and taking more of the review process digital.

I previously mentioned the updated tools and materials we have been providing to our Fire/EMS department.

Animal Control, our department of one dedicated employee, will finally be getting the appropriate licensing and tracking software to help make the animal licensing process more automatic with the aim of getting better widespread compliance with the animal licensing requirements. The new software should be fully implemented by this spring.

Our engineering department has been collecting infrastructure system data using seasonal help to be able to implement a City-wide GIS system that will assist the City in everything from zoning issues to knowing which water line to replace and when. These tools will assist the City now and in the future in making spending decisions based on the best data and facts, ensuring that your tax dollars are spent efficiently and effectively.

A few months ago, a detailed article went out regarding the work being done to improve City streets. The pooling of local resources between the City of Ely, White Pine County and the Regional Transportation Commission has led to the completion of more street maintenance and repair projects

completed in past few years then probably all of the last ten years combined: Needed equipment has been purchased; new surfacing methods have been tested and implemented; and grants have been applied for and put to work such as the work that has been taking place in Murry Canyon. While there are many more streets to repair, and of course mother nature is always assisting us in creating more potholes, rest assured that your road department will be out repairing potholes and performing those repairs as soon as weather allows.

In regard to your water and sewer infrastructure, in just this past year I am pleased to report that the City has been able to effect nearly \$1.2 million in system improvements thanks to the savings of past City administrations and in conjunction with the highway improvement work that was done by NDOT. Some parts of the City of Ely's water system can be traced back one hundred years or more and there is no shortage of improvements and updates that need to be made, but we are making progress.

Government can be slow, and change can be slow. When you put the two together sometimes the pace can be glacial. However, I am confident that the City of Ely is moving forward and in the right direction. We continue to audit and evaluate every process the City has. The City has disposed of idle and empty property for the development of housing, and I hope we can dispose of more. In a move that should have happened long ago, the City of Ely leased the City Corrals to an organization with the expertise and drive to really improve that community asset. I'd like to say to the White Pine Corral Association that the City corrals have never looked better. The City was also able to lease the old armory building to the State for use by the Nevada Highway Patrol, turning a decaying, unused building into a rent paying property.

I would further like to applaud the Council for their efforts in adjusting, fixing, and cleaning up the City Code over the last three years. They've corrected omissions in the fire code, tightened and clarified the process for dealing with nuisance properties, fixed organizational charts, updated policy manuals, and many other items almost too numerous to list. They've also been looking down the road to take care of items such as short term rentals, ideas to help our redevelopment areas, and generally how to provide for the continued success of Nevada's 6th oldest city. As I've read about problems in other communities around the west that are experiencing growth and losing the battle for their identity and the peace and satisfaction of their residents, I believe the old adage still rings true that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Change and growth will come, but planning for it will make sure that Ely retains those attributes that its citizens love her for. Deciding ahead of time what we want our City to look like ten, twenty or fifty years from now will ensure that with growth Ely will not lose her identity.

I believe I speak for the Council, as well as myself, that these last three years have been challenging and while we have come a long way in a short time, there is still much to be done. I am excited for what is on the horizon for our City. I am proud and honored to be serving with these Council members, City Officials and City Staff and am proud of their accomplishments over the past three years. I look forward to continuing our work and encourage the input and participation of my fellow City residents in these projects and the processes of government. Strong Cities make strong States, and strong States make a strong America. Thank you for this opportunity to report on the State of the City of Ely and God bless.