



CITY OF ELY

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State of the City Address by Mayor Nathan Robertson given during the March 13, 2025, City Council Meeting

Honorable Council Members, City Citizens, and Staff; I'm honored to be invited to give this report on the state of the City of Ely.

Much has happened in the past six years since I took office. I am honored to have served with eleven different City Council members over that time. I appreciate the leadership and insight from all of them. In that time City finances have been stabilized, and audits have been exemplary; thanks to input from staff and foresight from the City Council, whose ultimate responsibility the purse string are. The City has increased tax revenues without having to increase taxes and has implemented programs for rainy day savings. The Council has also been supportive of City Staff using these funds to update our equipment fleet, increase wages for City employees, and improve and work to implement grant programs that support businesses and property owners.

I'm pleased to report that due in part to workplace improvements and initiatives to support employees, open positions when they occur have been quickly filled. We know that in this current job market, well-qualified job seekers have many options for employment, and we are grateful for those that have chosen and continue to choose to work for the City of Ely.

In an effort to accomplish infrastructure improvements and upgrades that would outstrip the City's budget, the City has sought and been approved for \$13.5 million in federal funds. These funds have been allocated to projects such as equipment to support EMS and Fire staff, water/sewer infrastructure, street improvements, and assisting law enforcement. While changes in the new administration have slowed the progress of some of these grants, I'd like to assure the Council that staff has been working tirelessly to stay up to date with each of these projects and have worked closely with our congressional offices to ensure that these projects continue forward.

Many of these projects and improvements have been in the works for years. We certainly stand on the shoulders of elected officials and City employees that have come before us. Due to the foresight of the City Council from some ten plus years ago the City was able to start saving for the sewer and water infrastructure improvements that will need to be made in conjunction with the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) Main Street project. This will total some \$5,000,000 worth of work that the City will be able to pay for with funds saved for this purpose.

I am proud to note these accomplishments and successes, however it does bring to mind a quote I read this week from former Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg that "...the law is never finished." Government, similarly, can always be made more efficient, more effective and in so doing better at encouraging and enabling development. In our quest for improvement, I would encourage the Council to be committed to governance that treats all our citizens in a fair and equal manner, governance that invites and encourages growth but stays true to our unique identity as a community.

An area I would encourage this new Council to take notice of is the City of Ely business license system. Our current system has been in place for a number of years (decades I believe), and to say it is complicated would be putting it mildly. Our community needs a simpler, clearer system that maintains appropriate oversight and enforces public safety without unduly hindering businesses. In the coming months I will be working with staff to identify possible changes and will be bringing forward suggestions for the Council to discuss and consider; throughout the process I welcome suggestions and input. This will be a heavy lift, but I wholeheartedly believe it will pay dividends to make the licensing process easier for our business community.

In conjunction with the improvements that our downtown area will be receiving I would also like to impress upon the Council the need for the City to continue working towards the renovation and improvements to Broadbent Park and City Hall. The City cannot have the shabbiest property in our improved downtown. I applaud how far we have come in the planning and improvement process, and I thank White Pine County for their continued work with the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) program to keep our grant for the Broadbent Park renovation going. We have some years, and much work left to do to get across the finish line. In the coming months I will share updates about where we are in seeking funding for these projects and suggestions on further directions we can take. Again, I would value any input and welcome the Council joining me in commitment to these objectives.

As we look at making the public dollars go as far as they can and being as efficient and effective as we can, I would like to reaffirm my commitment to having a fully operational and service-oriented City government. The byline that "we'd like government run like a business" makes a good headline and in many ways makes good sense. We certainly would like elected officials to be as careful with public monies as we assume they are with theirs. We'd like our annual budget planned and based on sound fiscal principles, but unlike businesses, the government's purpose is not to make money. The government's purpose is to provide services and protect the public interest. I am committed to ensuring that the City of Ely continues to provide the services that the citizens pay for and that we improve the quality of those services. To be able to respond to the needs and requests of our citizens should be the City's continual goal.

In closing I would like to again thank City Staff for their tireless and professional work that they do day in and day out on behalf of the City and I would like to thank the Council for inviting me to make this report and for the work they do on behalf of the City. Thank you.