



## City of Monroe – 2022 State of the City Address Mayor Dan Sheets – February 15, 2022

Greetings Monroe Residents, Business Owners, Neighbors, and Friends,

As mayor, I welcome you to the first-ever City of Monroe, State of the City Address! I will take this opportunity to share the challenges and accomplishments of our City and City Council in my first year as your mayor.

It's hard to believe one year has already passed since our three newly elected City Councilors and myself were sworn in to serve the residents of Monroe. It has been quite a year! As a City Council, we've had a huge backlog of issues that needed immediate attention from hiring new City Staff at City Hall to addressing significant infrastructure issues. Some of the infrastructure issues alone have plagued the City for decades. As some of you may have heard me say, when it comes to our aging infrastructure, we can no longer afford to kick the can down the road as previous City Councils have in the past. We are now at the end of the road, there is no more road left, and we need solutions! It's a daunting task to find affordable, long-term solutions for our City but I can think of no better City Council to handle it than the one we have right now. Each City Councilor is a leader with unique knowledge, experience, and abilities that benefit our city in so many ways from accounting and human resources to information technology, project engineering and management, and owning/operating a business.

Our City Council is also incredibly fortunate to have a fantastic team working at the City of Monroe, including City Administrator Steve Martinenko, Public Works Lead Mark Murray, Administrative Specialist Jenny Foster, and Accounting Specialist Jonah Foust. Together, we have accomplished a great deal in 2021 by tackling the City's biggest issues from clean drinking water, immediate repairs to the water plant from deterred maintenance, and major infrastructure repairs and upgrades to reviewing law enforcement services in our community, economic development, promoting a strong sense of community, culture, and livability with local events, fiscal responsibility and transparency in our City's budget, transactions, and interactions, plus planning on Monroe's long-term outlook where our children and grandchildren have a great place to live, work, and play!

### **1. CLEAN DRINKING WATER**

The number one priority for the City of Monroe, the City Council, and myself is clean drinking water. The City of Monroe's drinking water has Disinfection by-Products (DBPs) or total trihalomethanes (TTHMs) and haloacetic acids (HAA5). These DBPs are the result of a reaction between the chlorine used for disinfecting and treating water with natural organic matter from the Long Tom River. The Long Tom River is the primary source of water for the City of Monroe. The DBP levels are well below any harm to the public. Oregon Health Authority (OHA) is closely monitoring the DBP issue, and the City of Monroe is working with OHA to remediate it.

In fact, Business Oregon awarded the City of Monroe a \$20,000 Sustainable Infrastructure Planning Projects (SIPP) Grant, in December 2021, which went into effect on January 2, 2022 to develop a workable and effective plan to assist in remediating the DBP issue. The SIPP grant funds will be used toward an engineering study, in 2022, which will identify solutions and costs to eliminate DBPs from the City's water distribution system. Possible solutions to the DBP issue may involve either a pre-filter at the water plant, a mixer in the City's reservoir or both. Once the engineering study is completed, the City has until April 2022 to create an actionable plan and present it to OHA. The City of Monroe has two years after OHA approves the clean drinking water plan to implement it.

## **2. IMMEDIATE REPAIRS TO WATER PLANT FROM DEFERRED MAINTENANCE**

Our next priority after clean drinking water is making \$300,000 in immediate repairs to the water plant. These repairs were identified by the City's Public Works Team after years of deferred maintenance previous City Councils allowed to occur. The City of Monroe will pay for these repairs from sales of surplus property in 2022.

## **3. INFRASTRUCTURE REPAIRS & UPGRADES FOR LONG-TERM GROWTH**

Along with the City's first two priorities, clean drinking water and immediate water plant repairs from deferred maintenance, the City Council, the City Administrator, and myself worked concurrently on additional priorities for the City. We reviewed the overall condition of City of Monroe's infrastructure. The City's entire water, wastewater, and storm water infrastructure is in dire need of repair and upgrades after decades of neglect. In addition, the 20-year-old water plant is complex, expensive to operate, out of date, and replacement parts are either no longer available or difficult to acquire. These infrastructure repairs and upgrades are required for Monroe's sustained, long-term growth.

With these infrastructure issues seriously impacting Monroe's future growth, I started talking with our local legislators including Benton County Commissioner Xan Augerot about potential funding options. Eventually this led me to a conversation with Congressman Peter DeFazio's District Director, Dan Whelan. From there, City Administrator Martinenko and I spoke with a number of individuals representing Oregon's 4<sup>th</sup> Congressional District Congressman Peter DeFazio, Oregon House District 23 Representative Anna Scharf, U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, the Governor's Office, Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Oregon's Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and Business Oregon. On April 3, 2021, both City Administrator Martinenko and I participated in a roundtable discussion with Congressman DeFazio hosted by the League of Oregon Cities. It was an excellent opportunity to speak with the Congressman about the City of Monroe's 100-year-old infrastructure. This meeting was followed up with a presentation by City Administrator Martinenko to the Oregon Legislature's House Water Committee on May 20, 2021.

Despite all these informative meetings and presentations, we didn't have enough attention on this issue from our state and federal legislators. In a bold move, I emailed all our local, county, state, and federal legislators about Monroe's infrastructure issues. I did receive responses. This was followed up by an invitation from the City of Monroe and the Rural Engagement Project to attend an event on September 8, 2021 at Monroe's City Park where legislators could tour Monroe's water plant and receive first-hand knowledge of our City's water infrastructure challenges. Thank you to Oregon House District 23 Rep. Anna Scharf and our Benton County Commissioners for personally attending this event! After the tour and during the Rural Engagement Project presentation by Kelie McWilliams, the USDA offered a workable financial solution to the City of Monroe. In 2022, the City is expected to finalize an approximate \$8.4 million finance package with the USDA, which includes 75 percent in grants (with no matching funds required by the City of Monroe) and the use of the City's System Development Charges (SDCs) for the remaining 25 percent. Once the finance package is approved, the City will create an actionable plan to make these long, overdue infrastructure repairs and upgrades.

## **4. PUBLIC SAFETY**

Another priority for our City is to ensure our law enforcement remains responsive to our community's needs so that both residents and visitors feel welcome and safe. In July 2021, the City Council reviewed the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) for contracted law enforcement services between the City of Monroe and the Junction City Police Department (JCPD). In addition, the Benton County Sheriff's Office (BCSO) submitted their proposal for law enforcement services. The City Council discussed the options available to our community in three public meetings. Both the BCSO and the JCPD formally presented their proposals to the City Council. The City Council read and heard testimony from community residents then discussed our community's law enforcement goals which included: community policing, a consistent law enforcement presence, responsiveness, communication, and consistent reporting. Prior to this review and discussion, the City Council also learned the BCSO received funding to reopen Monroe's BCSO Substation. If the BCSO was selected to be Monroe's new contracted law enforcement services, this was good news as it would provide the BCSO Deputies with a greater law enforcement presence in our community. In August 2021, the City Council voted to move forward and sign a new law enforcement IGA with the Benton County Sheriff's Office.

## **5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The next priority for Monroe is economic development, which ties directly into the City's infrastructure repairs and upgrades. Repairing our infrastructure can help repair our economy. Without these much-needed repairs and upgrades, the City of Monroe will reach capacity on the current water and wastewater systems and will be unable to deliver additional services to attract new businesses, residents, and grow the local economy. While the City Council, City Administrator, and I work on clean drinking water, immediate repairs to the water plant, and long-term infrastructure repairs, we also concurrently work on an economic development plan. For assistance with creating our plan, I submitted a grant application for funds to hire an expert in economic development. On July 1, 2021, the City of Monroe was awarded a \$10,000 grant from Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments (OCWCOG) to create the City's first economic development plan. I strongly believe the City of Monroe needs a plan to help us identify our economic development goals and outline how to accomplish those goals. Also, our plan will help us focus on strategies to support existing businesses, attract new businesses, and ensure Monroe emerges from the pandemic stronger and more resilient than ever before. Lastly, our plan will play an important role in our community by driving job creation, business retention and expansion, increased tax revenue, and improved quality of life.

In October 2021, the newly formed Economic Development Committee (EDC) which is comprised of 12 Monroe area business owners met to discuss ideas, challenges, and how to tie Monroe's 2020 Comprehensive Plan, Oregon Main Street Program, and the Riverside District Master Plan into Monroe's first economic development plan. In November 2021, the City Council approved using a portion of the \$10,000 grant funds awarded to the City by the OCWCOG to hire Mary Bosch with Marketek, Inc., as an economic development expert, to assist the EDC and City of Monroe with creating our plan. The EDC anticipates the economic development plan will be completed by May 2022.

Although we are working on an economic development plan, as I type, we are already seeing economic development budding in Monroe. In January 2022, with City Council approval, I signed a 100-year lease with Benton County for the use of their property located between Monroe Cemetery Road and Ash Street, to the north and south, and Highway 99W and the former Southern Pacific Railroad right-of-way, to the east and west. The City of Monroe will budget funds in fiscal year 2022-2023 to surface some of this property and use it for pop-up events such as Monroe Farmer's Market and other events supporting our local small businesses plus additional parking for bigger, city-wide events including the Monroe Festival. In addition, the Planning Commission is working on rezoning Commercial Street from 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> Street to attract business as well as standardizing the City of Monroe's land use codes for future developments.

## **6. COMMUNITY, CULTURE & LIVABILITY**

Another priority for our City is promoting a strong sense of community and quality of life. In 2021, we were happy to bring the community safely together with events for our families. At the September 11th City Park Reopening Celebration, we honored our local first responders, military personnel, veterans, and those we lost 20 years ago with the terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center, Pentagon, and skies over Pennsylvania. We also gathered for the first Halloween Spooktacular at Monroe City Hall handing out candy to all our local trick-or-treaters! In addition, we saw the return of the Holiday Gathering at the Library and the Monroe Light Parade bringing everyone together to watch and enjoy all the holiday floats and welcoming Santa to the City of Monroe.

A big "THANK YOU" goes out to the Monroe Rural Fire Protection District and Chief Rick Smith for organizing the Monroe Light Parade! Also, THANK YOU to Lori & Craig Pelkey with the Monroe Community Library, Erin Ritch with the Monroe Community Library Legacy Fund, and City of Monroe volunteers Jenny Foster, Dallas Davis, and their kids for handing out candy, glowsticks, popcorn, hot cocoa, and hot apple cider. It was a great night to usher in the holiday season!

Also, I want to say "THANK YOU" to our talented City of Monroe Staff including Jenny, Jonah, Mark, and Steve along with the City of Monroe's Community Engagement Subcommittee. All of these events brought us together as a community during the pandemic! Thank you to everyone who came out to these events to support our community and celebrate our neighborly culture! It's events like these and more events planned in 2022, including the Monroe Festival and Movies at the Park, that make Monroe a great place to live!

## 7. FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY & TRANSPARENCY

There is no question, the year 2020, was a controversial year for the previous City Council. It was the primary reason why I ran for Mayor. When the new City Councilors and I were sworn in, fiscal responsibility and transparency were and continued to be one of our top priorities. After everything that happened in 2020, I wanted to safeguard the City's reputation as a fiscally responsible government that is accountable to the citizens of Monroe. It would take three months for Accounting Specialist Foust and City Administrator Martinenko to establish a budget that uses accounting software instead of manual entry spreadsheets to balance the entire City budget. Along with a balanced budget, the City's budget for fiscal year 2021-2022 was restructured for easier reporting and transparency. Now, anyone can look at the City of Monroe's budget, and understand how much money is allocated to each City fund.

In addition to fiscal responsibility, transparency is critical, to ensure our residents know what is going on with their local government. From the very first day, we maximized city management transparency and the opportunities for public input into the decision and policy-making process. As part of our transparency, I asked City Administrator Martinenko for all City Council, Planning Commission, and Committee meetings to be available via Zoom. The use of video conferencing technology allows all residents to participate virtually in public meetings.

Lastly, after witnessing past City Council meetings where City Councilors were disrespectful of other City Councilors, the Mayor, guest speakers, and the public, it was time for the conduct of our local governing body to change. I insisted that conduct of the City Council and Mayor should reflect our community's values, demonstrate ethical leadership, and promote an environment that upholds the City's reputation for integrity, ethical conduct, and trust. I'm happy to report we've established a positive, productive environment where every City Councilor has respect for one another, respect for the validity of their different opinions, respect for the process, and respect for the community that we serve.

## 8. LONG-TERM OUTLOOK

All of our priorities, mentioned in this address, are part of Monroe's long-term outlook. It's an optimistic outlook where we have clean drinking water, immediate and long-term repairs and upgrades are completed to the City's infrastructure, continued fiscal responsibility and transparency, public safety, events which support community, culture, and livability plus economic development to grow and enhance Monroe, its businesses, outdoor recreation, arts and culture, agricultural tourism, and the Monroe Festival. We have a great deal of work, but our kids and grandkids are worth it!

### 2022 GOALS

- Use Business Oregon grant funds to complete engineering study and plan to implement drinking water upgrades.
- Sell surplus City property to fund immediate repairs resulting from deferred maintenance at the City's water plant.
- Secure funding (mostly grants and use of the City's SDCs) from the USDA for repairs and upgrades to infrastructure.
- Review, update, and ensure viable emergency preparedness plans are in place, city-wide.
- Review the City's garbage and recycling collection IGA with Republic Services.
- Complete and implement our new Monroe Economic Development Plan.
- Celebrate our community at the Monroe Festival (i.e., Saturday, April 30, 2022 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.).

When I was sworn in as mayor, one year ago, I promised to serve the residents of our community. Every decision that myself and the City Council have made, in my first year as mayor, was and continues to be for the good of the City of Monroe and our residents. Now, in 2022, we are in the fortunate position of being a city in the midst of a positive transformation. There remains much work to be done, but we are not afraid to face our challenges. You are the reason for this momentum! Thank you for your support! You make me proud to be Mayor of Monroe and I am sincerely honored to continue to serve you. I look forward to the opportunities that lie ahead of us in 2022.

Sincerely,



Mayor Dan Sheets