

State of the City
(CALL TO ORDER, WELCOME, AND OPENING REMARKS)

January 10, 1996

Welcome to our 1996 State of the City, a time when we highlight our accomplishments, acknowledge our shortcomings, and lift up our goals. Thank you for being with us today.

This is my fourth State of the City. That means the clock is ticking and sometime next month I will decide whether to ask voters for additional State of the City opportunities. I want to thank all those who offer me advice about that decision, varying all the way from "Yes by all means" to "What! Not again! surely you're kidding". Less clear as to the meaning are three similar comments received within the last month. All three approached me and said something like this, and with obvious relief written on their faces, "Oh, you don't look nearly as bad in person as you do on television."

Four years ago when first asking voters to move me from my city councilor role to that of mayor, I hammered onto a wooden scaffolding five large wooden planks with five goal statements on them. What's become of those. The first plank said, "Hult Center--Keep it." Thanks to a gifted staff & many, many citizens we have kept it, are keeping it very well indeed. Some stats: In 1995, over half a million folks attended events; 200,000 tickets sold, & remember there is a \$1 charge on every ticket that goes to Hult Center maintenance; 60% of those tickets are sold to Eugeneans, 10% to Springfielders, 30% from elsewhere, 400 different zip codes represented by the ticket sales. Last year the Hult Center averaged close to 3 events every day--890 different events. And 55 of them were free. Last year our outreach education programs doubled. Volunteer tour guides from SHO welcomed 5000 visitors, gave tours of the facility to 2000. There is not a more successful performing arts center in our country. It serves as community center and is acclaimed throughout the northwest. The lobby serves as an indoor city park. Senior discount coupons & student rush tickets help those who wish to attend performances. Four resident companies involve hundreds of volunteers, and all this builds community.

Second plank--Mall Fountain--Jackhammer it. Thanks to a pair of effective, hard-working councilors & an election, this spring I can do that.

Third plank--Jobs plus Wetlands--Do it. When I hammered that plank onto the scaffolding almost four years ago, not one single member of the press showed up. Not one. There I was with my kayak observing the wildlife and noting that we didn't have to dislodge Spectra Physics; they could provide jobs and the city could protect wetlands side by side. No one seemed interested. Last year at this event I talked about the city's national model wetland program and the 1200 acres we were protecting; but, I said, we were not yet moving ahead, and needed to move ahead, with job development on the 300 acres designated for jobs as part of the Wetlands plan. No one seemed interested. In May that changed. In 1996 we will see that job development begin to happen in the planned for area & in an environmentally sensitive way. And we will continue to seek funds for and protect West Eugene's 1200 acres of designated Wetlands.

Fourth plank--Affordable Housing--Build it. On many fronts we've been active and successful. But it is not enough. Immediately following this State of the City event we will kick off the campaign to address the cruel lack of housing for low income folks.

Fifth plank: New library--get on with it. We haven't. Our library is a civic embarrassment. There is not a library in the Pacific Northwest that does not cause me to hang my head in shame over Eugene's seedy, inadequate, behind-the-times library. We have lost 3 elections. And now a proposal must wait behind other more pressing civic needs. But sometime.

So much for a recap of those planks. Not a perfect score. Yet.

At the State of the City we traditionally present placques to citizens in recognition of valuable contributions. Today we present only one placque. Will city manager Mike Gleason please come forward.

Mike, the countdown begins. Two more days added on to 15+ years. Friday nite this community, your community, that you have served faithfully, gathers for dinner in the Hult Center lobby for a roast and recognition. At that time you will be given an opportunity to make a speech, to have the last word. This noon we present this placque. (Read quote).

Thanks, too, to our splendid city staff who tomorrow, after work will have an opportunity to thank Mike at an informal drop-in. Special thanks today go to Sheri Pearsall and other staff who coordinated this State of the City event.

GIRL'S CHOIR

(Move to lectern)

STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

In the crucible that is South Africa, and when Bishop Tutu and Nelson Mandela were yet young, a celebrated author, Alan Peyton, wrote a book titled, Cry the Beloved Country. The main character, rather than embracing expected and understandable pessimism, repeatedly affirms his belief in and commitment to hope. His clarion call is "Sober and responsible hope; long may it live".

Recently in Eugene our governor responded to a sour question about crime with a quotation, "There is no survival value in pessimism".

Also, recently, an old friend, a physicist from Los Alamos days, said he planned to write a book. He had the title and main points. The title was "Reason Enough for Hope" and his three points : 1) We're not going to destroy our planet with a nuclear holocaust. 2) We are learning how to control population & 3) The environmental movement is alive and thriving.

Now, let's return from that global view to the nuts and bolts task of governing in Eugene. Let's hold onto "Sober and responsible hope", turn our backs on pessimism, and seek instead "Reason enough for hope" here at city hall.

You can identify your own reasons. For me, the reasons for hope explode around me like those wonderful downtown fireworks at midnight on New year's Eve at Eugene's first First night.

But putting aside for a moment the naming of specific, bright bursts of hope, let me cite three simple, basic, rock solid reasons for hope in Eugene's city government. One is a tradition of citizen involvement. Two is the council/manager government structure. And three is a council with agreed upon goals and focus.

First, citizen involvement. Those of you gathered here highlight the value our city places on citizen participation. In a few moments each councilor will identify and recognize your various work areas. You help us govern Eugene effectively. You provide the lengthening, strengthening arm of the nine of us here.

Citizen involvement is not a static concept. We continue to seek new, more effective approaches. For example, four years ago we decreased the number of standing boards and commissions sunsetting a number of long standing bodies, e.g. the Downtown Commision. At the same time we

increased the number of committees with a specific and time-limited assignment, e.g. the West End Planning Committee & the Plaza Committee.

In those instances the results, I believe, were positive. Other outcomes leave me dubious. Sunsetting the Tree Commission and the Mayor's Bicycle Committee, I believe, weakened our city's commitment in both those areas. Establishment of time-limited task forces could get us moving again.

The use of random draw and neighborhood interest pools helped us to involve new citizens. With positive results. But the creation of a Citizen Involvement Committee and the expansion of its duties has, in my view, had confusing results and should be reconsidered. Citizen involvement in land use planning areas should be guided by the Planning Commission, the most important citizen body appointed by the City Council. Other citizen involvement decisions need the oversight of the elected City Council.

Other venues for input are public hearings on items of community concern, e.g. the Hyundai hearings. Or on topics on which the council will soon make a decision, e.g. Lorane Highway.

A decade ago, as a new councilor, I helped begin the Public Forum, a once a month opportunity for citizens to bring new problems to the attention of councilors. Examples: 1) Residents described intersection problems at Fox Hollow & East Amazon. Council subsequently made that section of East Amazon a dead-end street. 2) Distraught mothers of runaway middle school children asked for help. That testimony came several years ago, startled us, and was, perhaps, our first inkling that we were on the threshold of a new and serious youth problem.

In recent years the Public Forum has degenerated into an opportunity for repetitive personal attacks. Good government is not well served. We need to return to the original intent-- a time to identify new ideas & problems.

In conclusion on my first point: In Eugene, the tradition of citizen involvement runs deep, runs strong. Keep it that way. It affords us "reason enough for hope".

The second reason is the structure of our City Government. The Council/Manager form.

In '93 and '94 the citizens of Eugene observed the floundering and failings of the city council. Dysfunctional was the word I most heard describing us. Rumbblings began about changing our government structure. Some were basic changes. Some were tweaks. Make the mayor weaker. Make the mayor stronger. Weaken the city manager. Do away with the city manager. Elect the councilors from at large and not from wards. (Meanwhile Springfield considered changing to ward elections from election-at-large) Try preference voting. Limit terms. Pay the mayor & council. Lots of rumbblings, but none, I believe, with merit.

Our present city charter provides us the best possible structure under which to govern Eugene. The Council/Manager form of government is the preferred and adopted form of some 85% of the cities in the U.S. And for most of the western world.

It's main advantage is clear lines of accountability. The elected Council is accountable to the voters and holds in its hand the city rudder, the ship-of state's rudder. The Council steers, or at least should. The Council chooses the city manager, and a majority vote by the Council can fire the manager without cause, tomorrow. The manager is clearly accountable to the Council.

The manager as the full time paid administrator is responsible for city staff & for hiring practices which are off limits to the political council. One of the excesses that prompted city

government reform throughout the U.S. in the '30's and '40's was the prevalence of machine politics. In my neck of the woods, Mayor/Manager Boss Pendergast in Kansas City laced his pay roles with family members and friends & insured his reelection with such tactics. Contemplate with dismay a city government staff padded with Mayor Bascom's extended family and friends.

The basic Council/Manager system comes in different varieties. Ours, I think, is particularly well suited to Eugene. We are large enough to have ward elections; this allows more personal campaigning and insures representation from all parts of the city. Having the mayor elected at-large strengthens that role, gives the city both an identity figure and a lightning rod for grievances, and offers an effective counter weight to the city manager's influence.

Citizens set the structure of our city government in the 40's, but in 1976 we held an extensive community discussion, review, and update of the charter. It was largely a tidying and clean-up of the basic document. Still, in typical Eugene style, there was heated debate. Last week the librarian pulled for me the neutral material, the editorials, and the news articles surrounding that positive vote of 20 years ago, I was struck by the mistrust expressed by opponents. Misinformation, even disinformation abounded. One particularly strong claim was that the new charter would remove the 1972 requirement to vote on new freeways and throughways. Utterly untrue. But evidence of basic mistrust. That mistrust continues to plague those of us in elected office. A change in our city charter, in our government structure is not the answer.

We can, however, try these remedies:

1). Vigorously contested Council & Mayor elections so that candidates clarify their positions and voters are aware of the issues. One candidate elections are not elections at all. Fortunately, this May the races are shaping up with multiple candidates.

2). Mayor & council can avoid the inclination toward quick fixes whether in firing the city manager or in passing new ordinances. On city and state books are dozens of dusty ordinances that are ignored and need to be repealed. I speak from experience having labored in the '70's to pass bicycle regulation ordinances only to find it necessary to labor another 2 year: to repeal the same. Early in my mayorship, my unsuccessful veto of a hastily conceived and passed tree ordinance was an attempt to ask the Council to address more thoughtfully complex issues.

3). The Council as a whole must agree on focus areas and also on division of work among councilors. The Council/Manager structure allows that focus.

That leads me from my second point, our effective government structure to my third "Reason enough for hope".

Focus. This current council has focus. The goals on the back of your program represent that focus. In these five areas we are already hard at work. Many of you in this room are at work with us. Now each councilor will report on that focus and the work of many of you involved citizens gathered here.

INDIVIDUAL COUNCILORS 3 MINUTES EACH

Before closing on this third point, goal focus, let me identify my special focus in these goal areas.

- 1) The Public Safety goal has been covered.
- 2) Government. We're working in good faith with our partners to untangle the issues around Glenwood. Are there Springfield representatives here. We've adopted a much improved format for the Voter's Pamphlet which I hope will attract more readers. Any City Clubs here who

worked on that? I know ten members of A new Community Meeting are here. Your work has noticeably increased understanding, civility, and public cooperation related to the "gay rights" issue here.

3) Housing. Immediately following this event, in this room, we will hold the kick-off for our campaign to face the critical housing shortage for low income folks by passing a 1% utility tax. Where is fairness, where is justice when folks who work full time at minimum wage rates must pay one-half to two-thirds of their income for housing, or not find housing at all? (Eastside)

4) Transportation. First, our new train, the Cascadia, that overnights here and leaves for Seattle at 6:10 a.m. How many of you have taken that train? Each of you have helped to keep that service alive & bring us closer to our goal of frequent passenger train service in the Cascadia Corridor. Second, The East Bank Bicycle path. We're assured of 2/3 of it. Opponents still fight that last critical third. We must not lose our focus. Succeeding generations will be grateful to us. LTD transfer station will rise at 10th & Olive, and perhaps we will finally see the shuttle service between there, the U of O, a new downtown convention center & the fairgrounds. And lastly under transportation, The Ferry St. Corridor. We've kept our federal funding for improved north and south connections. A new concept suggests multiple river crossings instead of one massive Ferry Street Bridge. And tolls on the bridges to cover costs? Wow.

5). Finally, Goal Five. Land Use. Remember Return to the River? The vision to connect downtown Eugene the few short blocks to the river. Here the term "Brownfield" emerges. Compact urban development requires redevelopment of underused sites like AgriPac or on vacated land like old mill sites in central Eugene. But these sites usually require clean-up. Hence the term brownfield. How clean is clean? Who pays? Sustainability requires us to answer those questions.

There are, I believe, bright bursts of hope in Eugene like those fireworks evident at midnight on our first First Night like our riverbank bike paths and our new train.

But behind these are three solid foundation stones on which we build during the coming year. Three reasons for Sober and responsible hope in Eugene for 1996. Those three are: A tradition of citizen involvement; An effective city government structure; and a council with agreed upon goals and focus.

These provide, I believe, "Reason Enough for Hope"

Now let's add, for good measure, the bright voices of the Girl's Choir.

GIRLS' CHOIR

Thank you for coming. We are adjourned.