

Mayor Ogden Delivers State of the City Address

BY REID IFORD, TUALATIN LIFE

"Tualatin is thriving," an exuberant Mayor Lou Ogden told a packed house Tuesday, January 24, when he delivered his State of the City speech at Living Savior Church on Sagert Road. "We have a thriving economy. We have a thriving business community.

"I've had the privilege and honor to serve as Tualatin's mayor for more than two decades," said Mayor Ogden. "I'm really proud of what has occurred and been accomplished in that period of time... and I'm particularly proud of our Tualatin City Council." He noted there are three new councilors, observing "we're looking forward to a new perspective and energy these new folks bring to the Council."



The crowd appeared to share Mayor Ogden's upbeat and optimistic perspective, frequently breaking into lengthy rounds of applause as the mayor recounted successes and achievements from 2016, and spoke also about projections and plans for the coming year.

Transportation and congestion were two big focuses of Mayor Ogden's speech. He noted it is impossible to drive in Tualatin and not be aware of challenges facing anyone using the transportation system, particularly the Tualatin-Sherwood Road. However, he said progress being made, which should become apparent with major improvement projects slated to relieve congestion.

"2016 really was a fantastic year," said Mayor Ogden. "We continue to grow and make significant changes on important projects that make us on the move to a better future... A variety of projects - some completed, others underway currently - will have a significant impact on our ability to move." He said the 124th Avenue extension and Basalt Creek Parkway is one of the most important transportation projects to happen in decades, as it will change the way the city moves trucks to I-5.

"It will be the key to unlocking congestion," said Mayor Ogden. "And it is the transportation backbone for the Basalt Creek area. We're looking forward to bringing in several hundred acres of land that will bring in new job opportunities."

The mayor also talked about progress on the southwest corridor, which focuses

on extending a MAX line from Portland through Tigard and terminating at Bridgeport Village. He said that if a year-long study to analyze feasibility and cost benefit of adding the high-capacity transit line "proves out, we will be eligible for federal funding.

"One thing I really want to emphasize is walking," he continued. "We strive to make Tualatin a more walkable community." He said the city has improved safety and accessibility for pedestrians, including crosswalks and lights. Some projects were completed in 2016, with many more designed and slated for building in 2017. The goal of these projects is not only pedestrian safety, but also to promote walking as a tool to improve the health of Tualatin citizens. He noted the investment in trails and greenway spaces, such as the Tualatin River Greenway Trail, which has garnered state, national and international attention "... for its innovative landscaping and incorporation of architecture, art and history so people are able to evaluate and enjoy as they go along the Tualatin River." He cited a survey showing 93% of Tualatin residents visit a park at least once a month.

Tualatin has become a healthier community in a variety of ways, he added. These include city policies, such as passing an ordinance to make all city of Tualatin facilities tobacco free. But he said where Tualatin really shines is in its selection as a finalist to be a Blue Zone Demonstration Community, part of the Oregon Healthiest State Initiative. Led by Mayor Ogden, Tualatin partnered with the City of Tigard and more than 50 separate entities to participate. The goal of the blue zones is to assist communities in promoting healthy living and high longevity.

"It is not hype, it is science," he said. "We predict we're going to win, and when we do it will mean millions of dollars coming to our community over the next several years to fund community programs on healthy eating and active living."

Mayor Ogden cited scores of community groups, businesses and individuals who contribute to Tualatin success and livability. In the area of public safety he singled out several groups he said make a significant contribution.

"Public safety is critical in any community," stated Mayor Ogden. "In Tualatin, 97% of the people feel safe in their neighborhood, and that is because of our Tualatin Police Department." He added that safety is due to the work of other first responders, particularly Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue. He also cited Tualatin's mostly volunteer Community Emergency

Response Team (CERT) as well as disaster preparedness handled by the city.

Mayor Ogden noted Tualatin has made many accomplishments and set many records which directly benefit its citizens.

"Our citizens enjoying the lowest tax rate in the metropolitan area," he said. "We give tremendous service at a very low cost. How are we able to do that? Half of all the property taxes paid in this community are paid by the business sector." Mayor Ogden said this situation did not come about by accident, but rather through long-term planning with the deliberate goal of creating an environment which is supportive of business while simultaneously protecting the livability of neighborhoods.

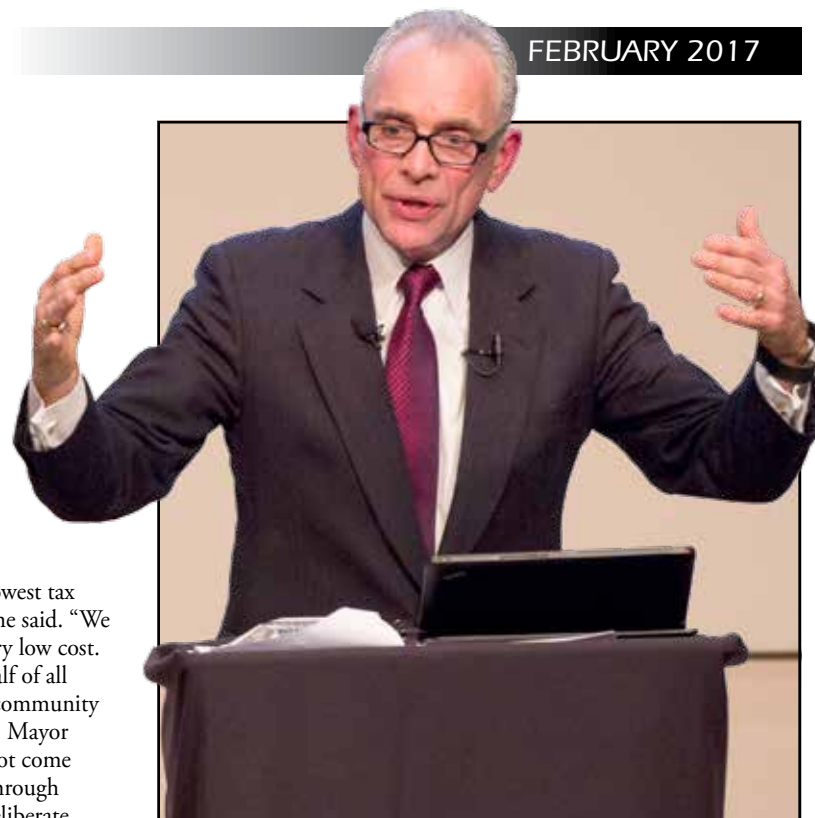
He talked about how Tualatin's "built environment" - water, sewer, business and industry locations, residential locations - contributes to maintaining livability while simultaneously supporting and attracting business and industry and the jobs and taxes they bring to the community.

"In 2017 we need to update our development code to make doing business in Tualatin easier," said the mayor, adding the city is also updating its sewer and water master plans to meet projected growth and development. "We want to keep Tualatin's economy moving. We want to keep it growing."

"Tualatin has the lowest unemployment rate in the state, and perhaps the nation," stated Mayor Ogden, saying Tualatin's unemployment rate is just 3.6%, and the city added 800 jobs in 2016. "More than 20,000 people come into the community each day. Development in Tualatin in 2016 alone provided \$86 million in investment in the business sector."

Mayor Ogden made clear why he believes Tualatin is doing so well in so many areas. He talked about Tualatin's connections through residents who hold positions of power in a variety of county, regional and state agencies, such as former Mayor Roy Rogers, who now serves on the Washington County Board of County Commissioners. And he praised city staff, saying their hard work and imaginative, can-do approach provides tremendous benefits to the city and its citizens.

"I'm very proud of the work our city staff does," he said. "These folks love this community. They work hard, and they care about serving people." And he noted the partnership between city staff, business, schools, community groups, and especially Tualatin citizens and their willingness to volunteer are the real reasons for Tualatin's success, noting Tualatin volunteers invest 27,000 hours per year, just counting the city volunteer effort.



Dale Potts led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.



Color Guard saluting the flag as the Tualatin High School's Crimsonaires performed the "Star-Spangled Banner" in the background.



Tualatin Rotarians: (L to R): Linda Moholt (Tual. Chamber), Melinda Anderson (City Tual), Bill Steele (Chief TPD), Lisa Thorpe (City Tual), Jeff DeHaan (Tual City Council), Jeff Welsh (Tual Rotary Pres). Not pictured: Alice Cannon (City Tual), Lou Ogden (Mayor).

Photos courtesy of Nathan V. Holden