STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS
February 24, 2015

I am pleased to provide my third, and possibly last, annual State of the City address to the citizens of Woodland and the City Council. We live in a city with great potential, great possibilities and dedicated city employees & volunteers. Our community is made up of groups that work together to make our community better. Rotary, Lions, Planters Day Committee, Downtown Woodland Revitalization, Woodland Action Center, Woodland Museum, Lilac Gardens, Woodland churches, and the Chamber of Commerce are all involved in this effort.

The economy is improving, and according to a recent report, our area is on the upswing. We are seeing indications that individuals are, once again, willing to invest in our community. I am certain that our community is on the verge of a tremendous period of opportunity.

I am optimistic about the direction the City of Woodland is headed. 2014 was a busy year, as there is always a lot going on at the city.

Last year’s accomplishments
1. The Gateway area was rezoned to C-2 which gives more flexibility in how that area can be developed - Councilmember Scott Perry championed this rezone.
2. Budget creation & passage has evolved into something that the city council and staff believe is an efficient and lean process
3. Funding was approved to water the parks
4. The Strategic Plan was one of my initiatives for 2014 - The city council agreed, and we hired John Luthy, a nationally known expert, to help with the plan. It was completed & approved by council on December 15. The city council is working on implementing the plan
5. Hiring of a new police chief – Chief Phil Crochet joined the city in December
6. Recreational marijuana ordinance was passed. A city council committee was appointed to develop this ordinance and come back with recommendations. The process involved citizens, as well as proponents, to craft the ordinance. Once completed, the city council took testimony from Woodland citizens, and made modifications to the proposed ordinance before finalizing it.
7. Ranney well improvements were completed with a generator as backup power. This project increased the ability of the city to draw water from underneath the Lewis River, providing a more reliable and efficient water source for the city.

8. Technology improvements at city hall included implementation of iCompass and CivicWeb, planning and implementation of the recent InvoiceCloud online payment service (e-bills & online payments for bus license, events and utility bills), and a financial reporting software called OpenGov, that includes a public access piece.

9. Groundwork was completed for the Comprehensive Plan by the Planning Department and the Planning Commission. Work continues with a completion date of June, 2016.

10. Horseshoe Lake Trail was completed using grant funding. This project increased community use and created a positive ambiance in the park. – Public Works Director Bart Stepp deserves credit for the funding and project completion.

11. The City’s bond rating increased to an A+ which is a credit to the Clerk-Treasurer’s Office for keeping our finances in good shape.

12. General Fund reserves (the City’s saving account) have increased over the past three years. The plan is to reach a $1M by 2016, with $950K projected by end of 2016. This is an increase, from approximately $300K, when I took office in 2012.

13. Scott Ave Reconnection project planning took shape, with the consultant report due in June. Our next stage is seeking funding.

14. The new high school building has started taking shape and is nearing completion.

15. Regional Fire Authority planning was completed, and thus far, the fire and EMS service to the community has improved.

16. Traffic Triangle landscaping was completed - thanks to Noel Johnson, Bill Raybell, Advanced Sign, Refuge Painting, Chamber of Commerce and Cub Scout Pack 531.

2015 – A look ahead

1. New swimming pool outlook is better than ever before, with the purchase of the old motel property by the park and the agreement for the YMCA to manage it.

2. Lewis River Road & Scott Avenue intersection improvements set for summer 2015 - construction of a roundabout, approved by the city council.


4. Regional Fire Authority vote on April 28th

5. New Woodland High School opening in September

6. New Woodland Library building plans are taking shape.

7. Comprehensive Planning will continue

8. Work on a new fire station on Scott Avenue, next to the police station.

9. Implementation of the Strategic Plan by Mayor & Council

10. Finally - the city is struggling to control health care costs. Bargaining in progress with our three unions to find healthcare care plans that make sense for both the city budget and our employees.

Election Season - A New Opportunity for Woodland

Three city council members and the mayor are up for election this year. Four years ago, there was a good response from the community, with several candidates coming

Mayor Grover Laseke, State of the City Address, 2-24-15
forward to run for these offices. We even had a little excitement when we had a coin toss to settle one of the council races. I encourage folks to be thinking about serving their community by running for one of these positions. Filing week is coming up May 11th, and it you don't even need to go to Kelso to file as it can all be done online.

Our community is a great place to live and I look forward to working with all to prepare it for the future. I challenge each citizen to do something to improve our community through volunteer efforts and service.

Thank you!

Grover B. Laseke, Mayor