



Kuna Idaho

2016 State of the City

Presented by

Joe Stear, Mayor

November 9, 2016

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Mayor
Joe Stear

City Council

Members
Briana Buban-Vonder Haar
Richard Cardoza
Pat Jones
Greg McPherson

City of Kuna

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Good evening Citizens of Kuna, Directors, Staff Members and Distinguished Guests,

Welcome to my first State of the City address. I appreciate you taking time out of your busy lives to join me here this evening in our beautiful new Kuna City Hall.

I would like to begin by reporting that financially the city is in a strong position and remains debt free. Because of growth we are in particularly good standing. One of my goals as a Mayor is to keep us in good fiscal shape.

We live in an interesting time. When the economy is weak investors seem to be all out, when the economy is strong they seem to be all in. It's reflective of a feast or famine type of situation.

In my estimation this can provide for an unstable environment. When the economy crashed in 2007-2008 the city was not properly prepared and sat in a very uncomfortable position. The property tax portion of our budget is only a small part of the overall monies that the city receives to operate on. However, besides user fees, property tax is the only sustainable operating income that we receive.

It is important to keep the levy rate at a level we can depend on in the event of any kind of an economic hiccup. When you hear that we're taking a 3% increase or as we did this last year, take the forgone amount (the 3% from the previous year), that is because we are experiencing substantial growth. Generally, growth is enough to cover the levy rate adjustments so your tax bill does not vary greatly one way or the other. As we add more parks, as we improve our parks, as we add other amenities we need to be able to maintain and properly provide for the upkeep. In other words as the city grows our budget needs to grow with it.

Another one of my goals as Mayor has been to provide for easy access to the cities financial activities to the public. "Transparency". I encourage you look on the cities web site under the heading of City Government, then Agendas & Minutes, then go to most recent packet. You will find all of the information provided to council for city council meetings. This includes an accounts payable report of all expenditures and to whom they are paid. In addition, any and all other items that council would take action on are listed. I always encourage anyone that would like more explanation to contact the city and we will answer any questions that you may have.



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This year we brought the Economic Development Committee under the umbrella of the City. We have a good mix of local stakeholders on the committee that have progressive ideas. Our mission is to spur commercial growth as well as to help improve the first impressions that people have as they enter the city. We are committed to a plan that will create jobs as well as commerce to help achieve an eventual goal of being a self supportive city.

Commercial growth is key to easing the tax burden on residents. Currently, we have an undesirable ratio of 10% commercial tax burden, leaving 90% to fall on our property owners. We are in the beginning stages of putting together a plan to present to council for a funding request to help us to achieve success.

We brought electrical and plumbing inspections in house and have had great success. This change provides the city with more quality control over the inspections process. We can offer dependable inspection times and has provided for additional city revenue that had previously been going to the state.

Something else that we have been working on is to greatly reduce the need for using potable water in our pressurized irrigation system. In the 2014 season we used 234 million gallons of potable water to supplement the demand on irrigation. In the 2015 season we reduced that to 96 million gallons. In this, the 2016 irrigation season we achieved a reduction down to 2 million gallons. In total, we are saving over 230 million gallons of drinking water a year over 2014. The primary change allowing for this dramatic reduction was linking pump stations without storage capability to pump stations that did have storage capability so that variable irrigation demands could be met without need for potable water. Needless to say, I'm proud of our accomplishment.

We also brought on Well 11 and reopened the Butler Park Water facility. We converted Well 3, with its sour water, to an irrigation supply well. Additionally, we added a mixer to the Cedar Water Tank to flare off entrained air/gas so that the drinking water supplied from that well didn't look as cloudy from the micro bubbles.

Also this year in an effort to make growth pay for itself we established a Park Impact Fee Committee. This allows us to expand parks and facilities into areas that are experiencing the most growth and still preserve what we have in place.

I am also happy to announce that in this fiscal year's budget we have included funding for a dog park and a splash pad. Both are amenities that we don't currently have and both are paid for in large part because of growth. It is always a good thing when growth provides extra benefits to those that already live in Kuna.

As this city continues to grow we are committed to "Smart Growth". The city's Comprehensive Plan which is a guideline to how that growth occurs has proven to



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not always fit with the vision of the city and its residents. As part of that commitment we budgeted in the upcoming fiscal year to do a complete rewrite of Kuna Comprehensive Plan so we can include input from the community and get a fresh look at how our city should look moving forward. To go with that we are also doing a new master plan for water, waste water and pressurized irrigation.

All of these things are vital to growing a healthy city. I also have committed to working with the school district on a master plan and being involved in the task force to give recommendations to the school board on what they have, what can be done with the options available as well as what is needed going forward. If we work together and plan together we can make for a better future for us all.

I also follow the Gate Way West project very closely. This is a project that originally planned for very large towers and transmission lines to route along the out skirts of our city. Mayor Nelson worked on the committee and was able to guide the project farther south of our city. This year's first proposal that was released in April, kept away from town as we had negotiated. The latest proposal released in October, puts it completely away from Kuna and routes it through Owyhee County. I remain hopeful that we will keep it from being evasive to our great city.

A couple of the projects that have been completed this year that I want to share with you.

The Linder/Main Street round-a-bout. This was an Ada County Highway District project in conjunction with the City. The project stirred conversation in and around town. It seems some loved the idea and some not so much. Now that it is completed it seems to be a great success. So far as I am aware there have been no accidents there, and traffic seems to flow quite well. It also provides for a means of runoff drainage which as some of you know, has always been a problem in that area. An important need was also addressed by the project; there are now sidewalks around that end of the park. That location was dangerous if you were a pedestrian prior to the completion of the project.

Furthering our commitment to provide for more youth friendly facilities we expanded the Arbor Ridge park soccer fields. We redesigned the area with a big irrigation ditch through it and made it functional as soccer fields.

We have also provided for more parking having access in mind for the Greenbelt as well as Downtown, on 2nd St. near the skate park.

A project that is currently under construction is access from Avalon to the Greenbelt on Orchard St. by way of a side walk. This is another way that we are able to effectively tie the Greenbelt to destinations that are likely to be used when walking or riding your bike.



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A project that is upcoming is paving the Greenbelt extension behind the Indian Creek School. This project is made possible from a grant that we recently received through COMPASS (Community Planning Association). It provides connectivity for residents to schools and our downtown core.

Another upcoming project and one that I am very excited about is the Downtown Revitalization Project. This is a project that we have been working on for a few years. In 2012 ACHD received a National Planning award for this project. We had great participation from the Community, Business Owners, City Staff as well as ACHD. It has been a long time coming but will be worth the wait. Because of the multiple funding sources needed it became a very complex project to even get off the ground. We are up and running and in the final stretch of the planning stage and look to begin construction next year for phase one. There have been so many people involved in making this project a success that I will not even begin to name them all but I will tell you that it took an incredible amount of team work and support from all over the valley. I will add that this project recently became a double award winner when JUB Engineers and the City Of Kuna were awarded the 2016 Idaho APA Public Outreach Award. On that award it appropriately says “Revitalizing the Heart of Kuna”.

We have been very successful in efforts to obtain grants this past year. Some have required team work from multiple departments. I would also like to give a sincere thanks to our friends at COMPASS, the CDBG Economic Advisory Council, the High Five Grant representatives, Ada County Highway District, Ada County Commissioners, our Treasure Valley Mayors and our many other friends and partners from all over the State that have assisted in our success with these grants. The following is a list of the amounts, the grantors and the projects that they are tied to.

\$500,000 CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) – Downtown Revitalization
\$500,000 COMPASS (Community Planning Association) – Downtown Revitalization
\$200,000 ACHD (Ada County Highway District) – Downtown Revitalization
\$16,000 COMPASS – Planning for the Downtown Revitalization
\$15,000 Blue Cross of Idaho – Youth Innovation Grant
\$1,000 Ada County Farm Bureau – Mayors Table, Farm to Table initiative
\$19,700 COMPASS – Greenbelt extension behind Indian Creek School
IN TOTAL \$1,251,700 in grant funding

We have also received the following sponsorships
\$5,900 for park benches and bike posts
\$3,855 for Movies in the Park
IN TOTAL \$9,755



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I would like to also speak about some of the events that the City puts together.

The Community Prayer Breakfast. This is held on National Prayer Day and brings together members of the community for an hour and a half of fellowship, a chance to listen to speakers talk to life the way they see it, be thankful for our trials as well as our many blessings and eat some good local food. It is also a great chance to see a sense of community that is not always present and is not always felt. It reaffirms the fact that Kuna is a great place to live with many people that are always caring and generous.

Movies in the Park. This has been a great success in bringing the community together for an evening of family fun. This is the type of event that provides for lifelong memories. Your children will always remember the fun they had laying out on a blanket in the grass watching a movie with mom and dad and their friends. It helps to insure that we take a moment and spend quality time together as a family. Those types of things pay big dividends in more ways than one.

Down and Dirty. What to say about that! You simply cannot beat running through the mud. Just watching those kids and yes, adults are included in that, run through and fall in the mud is a priceless experience. The obstacle course gets to be more fun every year.

Mayors Table. This was the first year that we had the event to promote a farm to table experience and support our local agricultural roots. I will tell you that when I looked down that row of tables it was clear that everyone there was a distinguished guest. The entertainment was nothing short of spectacular and the interruption of the train shouted KUNA! These are the things that help us to appreciate the beauty of our Greenbelt the beauty of our City and the beauty of our citizens.

Trunk or Treat. This was the first year that we were able to host that event in partnership with the Kuna Chamber of Commerce. We now have a parking lot sufficient to support events like this. The Kuna Chamber organizes Trunk or Treat and when they were looking for an alternative place to have it, it just made good sense for it to be here. I believe this type of activity is a good safe way for parents to take their children out and get a variety of different experiences that you might not otherwise enjoy.

We have several great committees and programs that have been a great success.

The Ranger Program. This is a program that operates under the direction of the Parks Department. It involves kids learning and helping throughout the summer with the community garden and many different aspects of our parks system.



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The Community Gardens. We now have 2 gardens that are accessible to our citizens. They seem to fill up quickly and I am happy that we can provide for that.

The Mayors Youth Council. That has been a great deal of fun. I learn a lot about the things that are important to our youth and I must say that I am impressed. This first year we set out to do several projects that fit in with the High Five grant initiative of healthy lifestyles. Because of the Youth Council and our partnership with the High Five Grant we will be installing exercise equipment along the Greenbelt. They are also looking at more drinking fountains and basketball court repairs. This year we will be organizing it to be an actual council type of organization to include education on the workings of government. I see great things ahead for this program.

I would also like to mention in April when our Troops were deployed, it was my honor and privilege to be there on the tarmac shaking their hands and wishing them safe travels and thanking them for making our world a safer place, as they boarded that plane. I was also privileged enough to be there upon their return just a couple of weeks ago. Kuna has a large population of active military members and that makes me so very proud. A very sincere Thank You and may God bless to each and every one of you.

Now I would like to speak to the great City Staff that I have the privilege to work with. We all are truly a team here. All of the things that happen in this city are not just because of 1 or 2 people. Everyone does their part and then some. Going the extra mile here is just the norm on a daily basis. When we begin to move into some endeavor, whatever it may be, we work together, brain storm together and always come up with a great game plan moving forward. Everyone here has multiple duties, roles and responsibilities.

It is just normal to see the Parks people working with the Facilities people or the Clerk's office working with Parks and so on and so forth. When someone is overwhelmed and puts out a call for help the response comes without hesitation and from all over. A perfect example of that came with the purchase of this City Hall. The closing of the property came slower than we would have liked. This gave an impossible time line to renovate and move in of just 2 ½ months.

Our Facilities Director and his crew worked fast and furiously. The parks staff and others stepped in to help where they could. Everyone was offering to do whatever was needed to help this project to be a success. As the time came closer to move, everyone packed up their own things and helped with the move.

I will finish with a look at this City Hall. The City has not owned a City Hall for quite a long time. When they outgrew the building that we now know as the Kuna History Center, they made the move to lease space at the end of the complex where Albertsons is now and held council meetings at the Senior Center.



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That worked for a while until they outgrew that facility also. Then about 10 years ago the City began to lease the building that we were in up until the end of September. When I took office we had already had discussions on making a purchase so that we could stop paying rent. As I began to really take a look at our financial standings it seemed that the time was now.

We could do it in a way that would not require asking people to add \$300 a year to their property tax bill and in fact, let growth pay for most all of it. We assembled a list of possible options including the space we were in, the old 4th street gym, several properties around town and even some that would require building a new facility. At the time I hadn't even thought about this building, even though I drove past it every day and had seen it was for sale. I didn't think that it was big enough to fit our needs so I never gave it a second thought.

I received a call one day from one of the council members telling me that the Creekside building was for sale and we should check it out. I grabbed my Facilities Director and said would you contact the realtor so that we can look at the Creekside. We came to look and as I walked in, I realized that it was a lot deeper than I remembered. As I found out the square footage was sufficient, I began to realize that if it was priced right this could be it. We added it to the list and as it turned out this was the new Kuna City Hall.

Like I had mentioned earlier, the closing took a bit longer than was desirable, giving us an almost impossible time line to renovate and get moved in. But through a great deal of team work and going the extra mile here we are in a building that the Citizens can be proud to say we own.

In closing, I invite you to tour City Hall this evening, remember our door is always open and each citizen is valuable to our community. Thank you.