



Santaquin City – State of the City Address “First Five Weeks in Office”

Written by Mayor Dan Olson – February 9, 2022

As your new Mayor, please accept my greetings and those of our City Council and incredible City Staff,

At the writing of this report, it has been five weeks since our newly elected council members were sworn into office and joined our three existing council members. Many things have been worked on during these busy five weeks. Recently a comment was made asking what this council has accomplished besides presenting a proposal for new low-cost mountain bike and hiking park. I wish to address this question and will ask the council, in future reports, to address their accomplishments individually.

In the early summer of 2021, as the election kicked off, I made a statement regarding the issues I wanted to begin working on if I was successful for my bid for this office. Each item became a personal issue for me as they collectively represented items that I felt, and still feel, are important to every citizen of Santaquin.

As the months progressed and as the elections closed, I felt I was ready for the many challenges that lay ahead over the next four years. My intent from day one of signing up was to work for the betterment of Santaquin, in every way, and to do my very best to represent the needs of this city. Within the first week after the election, I was attending meetings and being introduced to other government leaders who I would begin working with. I thank Mayor Hunsaker for his support and confidence as he took time to help me in those first few weeks.

I kept my list of issues I wanted to work on very close so I could read it often, knowing that they were things I could personally begin to address at the start of this administration.

The list from June of 2021 is as follows:

My goals for this office remain:

Decisions need to be made locally and reflect the citizens views

I have always felt that the property rights granted citizens through the constitution are paramount to our success as a nation. Every person has the right to own property, to build a home, and to have an expectation that their property will remain safe and protected. However, we also need to respect the will of the community at large. Our city does have an issue with the number of small lots and high-density units that have been approved in the past and will continue to be built within our city under those previous approvals. Not much can be done with those past approvals going back decades other than to ensure the developers will meet all the codes and regulations of our city and to ensure that the developers follow all the terms of their legally binding contracts.

As we move forward, I believe zone changes and new regulations will be needed to ensure lot sizes and developments meet the expectations set forth by the citizens. Our current council has made decisions to keep commercial areas as commercial and to stick with the plan to encourage commercial growth. We will also

continue to work on the General Plan which will better define our zoning areas and regulations as we continue to grow.

We have worked on and encouraged improvements to code enforcement in areas of noncompliance. We continually discuss how best to inform citizens on the challenges of formulating codes that will help us as our population grows. Currently, we are also involved with studies to improve our signage, fencing, and traffic ordinances. For example, this past week we were able to secure funding for a new local roads study funded mostly by state funds with a 10% match from the city.

Taxes are sacred funds and watching over that money is a fiscal responsibility I am committed to.

My goal from the beginning has been to live within our budget and keep any costs from coming in that would affect us in a negative way. The previous administration was able to accomplish this by making good financial decisions such as the early procurement of pipe for the new Summit Ridge Irrigation Tank Project before inflation and supply chain issues dramatically increased the cost of materials. Their foresight saved the city more than a million dollars and helped to keep this project within budget. This is a great example of the model that our new council will continue to follow to safeguard the financial resources of the city.

During the past five weeks, changes to our staffing levels have been needed due to a couple of employees choosing to move on in their career and with their family pursuits. In the spirit of living within our budgets, we made organizational adjustments during our first few council meetings of the year to shift job responsibilities and leadership roles to key individuals already employed by Santaquin City. These decisions have been made to promote talent from within our pool of proven employees and to reorganize our staff with a “no budget change” mindset. This type of reorganization will help build morale while encouraging strong employee bonds within the ranks, all while working to keep our service levels high, yet doing so within the limitation of our existing budget.

I want to work with existing businesses and meet their needs

This past month we were able to spend an afternoon with Congressman Burgess Owens. The time was spent discussing issues in which we needed his support, as well spending time visiting with four of our local businesses to discuss issues they were concerned with. These businesses were all selected based on the needs I knew they had and the issues they were individually facing. Together we visited with Ivanov Estrada and Emily Geake of Maracas Mexican Restaurant, Kevin Marchant with the Santaquin Pharmacy, Mark Openshaw of Little Opee’s Produce, and Blake and Dain Murdock of Murdock Ford. Upon taking this position, I made a personal commitment to myself to work with all our businesses and to help them be successful in any way that I can. Each of the businesses we have in our great community are an integral part of the future success of our city. I visit as many of our existing businesses as I can, and as often as possible, to keep in touch and to understand their needs. I promise to continue to work to solve issues faced by our business leaders using the best methods we have. Remember, some solutions take time, study, and persistence.

I want to attract new business and offset the need for additional taxes

For every dollar paid by individual property owners in the city, the current businesses pay nearly four times that amount, and those funds go directly into the operations of our city for public safety, safe drinking water, plowed

streets, new parks and trails, as well as so many other services we all use daily. Each business is critical and adding more businesses will strengthen our local economy and tax base. I have personally been meeting with prospective business leaders exploring new business opportunities and proposals and inviting these businesses to come to our city. This takes time to travel to Salt Lake County and other places to encourage new business development and present our city as a destination and a great place to grow. As I have visited each new prospect, new friendships have been made and new seeds have been planted which will lead to new opportunities landing at our doorstep. So far, we have been met with warm acceptance and I believe our efforts will prove successful as we undertake these endeavors. I promise this effort will continue, but it takes time and patience to see progress and to encourage capital investment into our commercial base.

Review the city budget and ensure fiscal responsibility

Starting on February 11th and 12th, the city council, city staff, and I will spend many hours preparing a budget that works for our city for the new fiscal year starting July 1st, 2022. As newly elected leaders, we have made trips to Salt Lake City to attend training on city government leadership, budgeting, and the legal responsibilities involved with being elected leaders. Our commitment as a council will be to prepare this budget with as little impact as possible on everyone's pocketbook, yet find ways to host family activities, provide recreational opportunities for our youth, and manage the growth of the city in a responsible manner.

Work with the U.S. Forest Service to open Santaquin Canyon

In December, I met with our local Spanish Fork Ranger for the U.S. Forest Service, the Contractor that is rebuilding the lower portions of the Santaquin Canyon Road (Phase 1), as well as members of our city staff at an onsite meeting and tour of the progress being made in Santaquin Canyon. At that time, I was able to drive to Tinney Flat and see the things accomplished within the short time the contractor has been able to work. Since that time, I have met with Congressman Burgess Owens, his staff, and our local District Ranger to continue the work of securing the additional funds needed for the subsequent phases of construction needed to open the canyon road. I shared with them the economic and recreational benefits of restoring access to the canyon and the benefits of restoring our traditional access. All of those meetings have been very positive. I truly appreciate the support of our federal partners towards this end. This is a long process but, in the end, we will have a much better road.

On February 9th, I had a follow up discussion with Congressman Owen's office staff. They reported to me that the Federal Highway funds have been fully approved and awarded to fund the second phase of construction with a focus on reopening the entire roadway. It is my understanding that construction will be underway during this upcoming construction season this summer.

During that conversation, it was also reported that the Forest Service has funds set aside this year to begin the restoration of the damage done to Tinney Flat with hopes of reopening the campground after the bridge repairs, campground maintenance, and water repairs are finished. The estimates of completion are all tied to weather. As a result, it is my understanding it may take until early summer 2023 to open the campground. The Blackhawk campground is also under repair and is anticipated to be placed back into service near that same time frame. Keep in mind that access to Tinney Flat and Blackhawk will be from the Nebo Loop until Phase II of the Santaquin Canyon Road Restoration Project is complete.

Review and increase future street widths to include sidewalks on both sides of the road, ensure space for adequate parking, and improve public safety access

From our first week as a new council, discussions began regarding the expansion of the minimum standard road widths and dimensions that would be accepted by Santaquin City. Mayor Hunsaker had been working on this before he left office. I felt it was important to continue this effort and accelerate the approval of these changes prior to the acceptance of any new development applications. This effort has gone forward, and new standards will be presented for adoption by the council in early March. I believe these changes are important to enhance public safety access, improve traffic flow, and to provide much needed space for our snow plowing efforts. All the City's Standards will be revisited and updated as items are engineered, studied, and presented to the council.

Review and modify the zoning and local codes to ensure safety and a quality of life we desire

The updating of zoning standards and areas within the city are critical. Along with community development, engineering, and input from the council, we are reviewing our zoning codes that no longer seems to meet the everchanging needs of our community. In fact, many of our codes now appear to detract from the intent under which they were initially instituted. With input from the Imagine Santaquin Committee and with community feedback derived from surveys and townhall meetings, the Santaquin City General Plan is currently being updated to envision a new direction for our community and it will be adopted this coming year. With that in mind, our planning commission, city council and I will review and update our city code and zoning to support this new vision so that new projects meet the will of the community within the legal boundaries established by the state of Utah for land-use and property rights. Any areas of our code that need to be updated to meet this new vision will be evaluated and updated openly with the public and with complete transparency.

Work on recreation for the youth with low impact cost in mind

In the past, Santaquin has looked at building a recreation center. Of course, this proposed project failed at the ballot for a variety of reasons. However, the need to provide recreational amenities for our growing population remains. I believe we must continue our efforts to provide for those needs but do so in a more cost-effective low-impact manner. Many projects are on the horizon utilizing funds the city already has on hand, such as the new pickleball courts and parking lot at the Harvest View Soccer Complex near Summit Ridge. This investment is moving forward with anticipated completion by summer 2022 so that it can be used by our youth and their families in the upcoming recreation season. Other projects are being planned as well to expand the number of activities and programs we offer for our youth.

At the first meeting in January, I presented a proposal for new low-cost mountain bike and hiking park in the canyon. This park (Prospector View Park) will utilize 120 acres of land already owned by Santaquin City. The conceptual vision of this park has been shared with, and warmly embraced by, federal, state, and private property owners whose lands surround the city property. It is our hope that, in partnership with federal, state, and private landowners, we can build a network of trails utilizing grants, donations, and volunteer labor to help keep the costs to the city at the absolute lowest levels. Santaquin City has an untapped asset in these beautiful lands, and it is our desire to open them up to our residents and visitors alike for hiking, biking, and simply to enjoy nature. Beyond the canyon itself, we hope to tie this trail network to the Bonneville Shoreline Trail as well as to a future city-wide trail network that will connect to Ted Ahlin Pond Park and then to the other wonderful

parks within our community. This will be an incredible hiking and biking trail experience that will benefit our community for generations to come.

I am excited to report that I have been approached by hundreds of people who have expressed a willingness to volunteer and help build these trails. Businesses have also shown a commitment to support this project by making donations that will allow us to provide amenities such as park benches for the trailhead, dozer services, gravel and others. Preliminary plans are being developed by our engineering staff in coordination with the Forest Service and other trained professionals. A member of our Community Services Board has been assigned to be our Committee Chair as well. It is so great to see so many wonderful people volunteering their time to support this vision.

Maintain water resources and prepare them for the future

Our engineering department has completed the updates to Culinary and Pressurized Irrigation (PI) Water System Master Plans. They are about to begin the effort to update our Sewer Master Plan which will continue to recover and reuse 100% of all water that goes into our wastewater treatment facility. As mayor, I have been involved with furthering the implementation of these water plans by attending meetings with the Central Utah Project (CUP) and Summit Creek Irrigation company, which we are a part of.

The CUP Project is knocking at our door and will bring water to our community within the next four years. There are three sections of pipe, two in Salem and one in Santaquin, which will complete the project and allow waters to flow. The bid for construction of the Santaquin Phase is due to go out soon with construction starting after the completion of the other two phases near Salem. Of course, when the waters begin to flow to Santaquin, there will be costs involved. However, I am very pleased to report that the efforts of our previous mayors, councils, and financial staff have prepared our city well for this day, so that the impacts on our residents will be minimal when we begin to use this resource.

I have also met with the Director of the CUP Project, and our respective technical staff members, to discuss areas for recharging the aquifers in our area and to explore various proposals to do so. Aquifer recharge and recovery is the answer to many of our long-term water needs in the state of Utah and I am happy to work with Provo City and other community leaders who are leading the effort to pilot this endeavor. All the cities of Utah County share a common aquifer system and are keenly aware of the challenges and solutions for providing sustainable culinary water that will benefit our region for many years to come.

Councilmember Siddoway was assigned the responsibility to inform us of new legislation coming from the state and analyze how it affects Santaquin, such as water legislation. We also appreciate the efforts of Representative Doug Welton to keep us informed on important legislation. For example, House Bill 232, which will create the new Utah Lake Authority, would have raised the sewer bill by \$2/month for every home in Santaquin. Because Santaquin has never discharged our sewer or storm drainage waters into Utah Lake, efforts were made by Representative Welton to ensure the exemption of Santaquin City from this potentially impactful legislation. We are very pleased to have a good working relationship with Representative Welton. We also appreciate his willingness to attend our February 15th City Council Meeting where he will provide a report on the legislative session and his specific efforts to support local government and to preserve local control.

Ensure that our city has and maintains an adequate flood plan

During the past few years, Santaquin City, Summit Creek Irrigation, Utah County, and the Strawberry Highline Canal have all worked together on the Summit Creek Water Management Plan to plan for, and deal with, the high-water canyon flows coming from Santaquin Canyon each year, especially during emergencies. Utah County is heading up the planning for the reconstruction and reinforcement of the debris basin at the mouth of Santaquin Canyon to ensure that, in the event of major flooding, all preparations have been undertaken to mitigate the risk of flooding and debris. Federal funding of nearly 12 million dollars has been appropriated toward this project and will help in the effort to increase the size and capability of the debris basin to handle large water events and direct the water through a prescribed channel. Santaquin does share a percentage of this cost and financial planning is underway to ensure Santaquin's match has been set aside within current budgets. All factors are being weighed, including storage and direction of high-water flows, to ensure our community's safety and protection. This flood planning is ongoing and requires bi-monthly meetings of all parties to review present water conditions (snowpack) in the mountains and the capabilities of our present infrastructure to handle anticipated yearly flows.

Our engineer staff, as well as many of us who have interest in these snow measurements, personally watch stream flows and snow water content in our canyon daily. Discussions on present conditions occur in staff meetings and in all our water meetings.

Santaquin City has also successfully acquired an additional 9.2-million-dollar grant to design and build a series of debris basins along the other watershed channels that threaten neighborhoods and properties along our entire eastern foothill stretch. Geotechnical studies and design efforts are underway to determine best location eventual construction of 5-6 additional debris basins. 100% of the cost of study, design, and construction will be paid for by this grant. However, Santaquin City will be responsible for acquiring the land needed to build those structures once those locations have been determined. This will be a continued effort for all of us over the next four years.

Study and address I-15 Exit 244 Interchange and Main Street traffic flow

Presently, the Santaquin City Engineering Department is taking lead on behalf of the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) and Mountainland Association of Government (MAG) to complete the design for the widening of Main Street to 99 feet beginning at 300 East spanning westward as far as funding will allow (hopefully to 600 West). The plan is nearly complete with the approval of nearly 9 million dollars appropriated by MAG and UDOT to construct the required enhancements. I had the pleasure of working with our staff as we completed a review of all changes to our Main Street. We submitted our red lines comments and changes to the designers of this project which were due for submission the first week in February.

In early February, I also met with the MAG to propose a study for the area from 400 East to 900 East along the Main Street I-15 Interchange Corridor. My concerns include access to future schools planned to the north on 400 East, access to our growing commercial district, and traffic flows from our eastern frontage road as they relate to possible modification of the Exit 244 I-15 interchange and off ramps. The first request to study our local roads was denied by a technical group from MAG; but in early February, due to efforts made by our government leadership, the funding has fallen into place to begin the study to plan safe traffic flow, interchange requirements, and future traffic patterns. This should help accelerate the work needed to begin to help the traffic flow more smoothly. It may lead to helping update our interchange sooner than anticipated.

The addition of high-speed internet for all to have access to in Santaquin.

As last year's election was underway, it was repeatedly shared with me that the need for high-speed internet was critical for Santaquin's future. Covid seemed to expose the issue of slow speeds and bandwidth problems. One of our local private service providers presented a new plan to bring gigabyte internet speeds to every part of Santaquin. Some areas of our community, mostly the newest developments, have been built, and are being built, with "fiber to the home." However, the older parts of town need to have this essential infrastructure installed either by aerial lines along telephone poles or through the laying of new conduit in areas without telephone poles. For the areas of our community without telephone poles, but do not have conduit, the company has proposed a new type of cut-in-trenching allowing a more rapid and less intrusive installation into the city street. This new method is being reviewed and studied by our engineering staff to ensure that the street's 25-year life spans are not reduced significantly by adding the fiber through narrow cuts in the asphalt. We are presently studying this proposal and we will report our efforts to the council and the community as the testing and evaluations are complete. The goal is to have high speed internet available to each of our homes as soon as possible.

Conclusion

There is much happening in Santaquin with efforts going into every aspect of our lives. Our city staff works hard, and I am very happy with their efforts. This new council has been tremendous to work with and very supportive as we study the needs of the city and prioritize our efforts to align with those needs. I encourage all of you to take the time to get to know the people that serve our city and provide so much for each of us.

I commit to continue to work for each-and-every person; and when you need my help or when there are issues that need to be addressed, I promise to respond and to be there. I have done so, even in the past few weeks, and will continue for the remainder of my service.

Mayor Dan Olson