It has been said that, "You can accomplish less than you think in one year, but more than you think in five years". Tonight, I want to take a five-year look at our City and the progress that we’ve made. When I’m finished I think you’ll agree that we have accomplished a great amount in the last five years.

In the fall of 2012, the people of Creswell were preparing for the November elections. In coffee shop conversations and public forums, several topics of conversation came up frequently. These included: a general lack of confidence in city government, the cost of water, public safety, a lawsuit at the airport, and audits that were delinquent.

When I ran for office in 2012 my campaign slogan was, "Rebuilding Creswell." It had become apparent to me that the citizens of our fair city had lost confidence in their local government. Early in 2013 change was in the air. At the March City Council meeting, two Councilors and the City Administrator resigned. Of the five remaining Councilors, two were brand new and now we had no City Administrator. That year proved to be very turbulent. Fortunately, we were blessed with three highly competent interim City Administrators and new Councilors who served us well. It was a rebuilding year for the City, and that’s never easy. Just go a few miles up the road and ask the Oregon Duck men’s basketball team about rebuilding.

In the five years since I took office, eighteen people have served as City Councilors, and I am thankful for each one of them. Adam Pelatt and Brent Gifford were the first to fill vacancies and added great stability. Members A.J. O’Connell, Jacob Daniels, Nora Reynolds, and Jane Vincent committed themselves to Council teamwork and led through the resolution of the airport lawsuit and the summer spike in criminal activity. When Councilor Jane Vincent completed her term in 2016, she was the longest-standing member of the Council, having served for 8 years. I really appreciated working with Jane; she loves our community and is a devoted public servant! A new group of Councilors included Holly Campbell, Omar Bowles, Ted Romoser, Richard Heyman, Patrick Miller, and Jean McKittrick. Each came with a passion to serve Creswell. Before you tonight is our current Council of Richard Zetterval, Gary Mounce, Amy Knudsen, Martha McReynolds, Judy Drago, and Misty Inman. Last month Council committees were appointed for 2018, and for the first time in five years the Council Committees remained the same. This Council is beginning their second year together; for some cities that’s not a big deal, for Creswell it’s a huge deal. We have stability on our Council, and that’s a very good thing.

As a new Mayor in 2013, my personal goal was to rebuild confidence in the City Council and staff. Today I’m pleased to say, that has been accomplished. Hiring Michelle Amberg as our City Administrator in 2013 was one of the best decisions made
by the Council in the last five years. Michelle has developed a work plan built upon our Strategic Plan and has put together a top-notch staff. I appreciate every person who works for our City, from Cliff and the men in public works, to Mike at the water and sewer plants, to Shelley and Jerry at the airport, to Jim in finance, Roberta and Carolyn, Jennifer and Michael, Maddie and Michelle Furrer, and Administrator Amberg. We have capable, caring people working daily to serve our citizens. I enjoy working with them and am proud of their daily contributions for the good of our city.

An example of how our staff works to create a more transparent government can be seen in a phone call I received a few weeks ago. A resident called with concerns about animals-at-large. She wondered, “Does the City have ordinances regulating this?” I suggested she turn on her computer and we take a look. Together, over the phone, we found online the complete Ordinance #445, “For the control of dogs and other animals in the City of Creswell.” We read the sections pertaining to her specific concern and she found the answers she was looking for. As we ended the conversation, she expressed great appreciation to the City for putting the Ordinance online. In fact, the entire Municipal Code is now online. That’s the kind of work our staff has been doing to rebuild confidence in our city government.

Five years ago, Creswell residents were unhappy about the perceived high cost of water. Some believed the cost to be way out of line and many were just not sure. One of the first orders of business in 2013 was to address the cost of water. A Water Rate Study was commissioned. I’ll never forget the first meeting we had with the firm we hired. I asked the question, “Do you think it will be possible to lower our water rates?”, and they replied, “Probably not.” When the study was complete, we learned that our water rates were not keeping up with expenses. Water rates needed to go up. The Council announced the decision to increase water rates and citizens were not happy. A ballot measure was put forth giving the people of Creswell the opportunity to vote on water rates. The City Council put forward a competing measure which prescribed a new way for setting annual water rates. Members of the Council and citizen volunteers went door-to-door to provide information and engage citizens in conversation about the cost of water and the upcoming vote. At the September 2015 election, Creswellians cast their votes in favor of a Charter Amendment establishing a new process for setting water rates. The Charter Amendment prescribes that water rates must cover the actual cost, be reviewed annually by a water rate advisory committee of three councilors and three citizens, and be set on an annual basis. This year we will use the voter approved process for the third time; water rates initially went up but have leveled off for the last two years. Last year the Oregon Health Authority presented the City of Creswell with an Outstanding Performer award for our water system. This is the first time we have ever received this award, and it’s another indication of how far we have come!

Concerns about a spike in criminal activity brought the subject of Policing to the forefront in the summer of 2013. Citizens flooded the Council chambers to express their
concerns. The Council listened and in August made the decision to increase the number of full-time Deputies from two to three. In addition, a police report was commissioned and undertaken by Portland State University. The study was presented to the Council in August of 2015 and concluded that the most cost-effective method for providing police services to Creswell was to continue to contract with the Lane County Sheriff’s Department. During the following year, the Council listened to the citizenry about the level of policing. As a result, citizens were asked to vote in November 2016 on a five-year public safety levy that would increase the police force from three full-time Deputies to six full-time Deputies and a Sergeant. And the citizens voted, “No”. Consequently, no new taxes were raised and the level of policing remained the same. Creswell today does not have 24/7 policing; there are weekly gaps in coverage. In 2013 we had two Deputies and a one-third time Sergeant. Today, Creswell has three Deputies and a full-time Sergeant; we have almost doubled our police force in the last five years.

In 2013 tensions were running high at the City-owned Hobby Field. A lawsuit had been brought against the City and many months were spent trying to negotiate a settlement. The Eugene Register-Guard reported in their Sunday, Sept. 8, 2013 edition that, “the long dispute between the city and a local parachuting business appears to be on a glide path toward final resolution.” By January of 2014 an out-of-court settlement was reached and by August skydiving had returned to the airport. Five years later skydiving continues at Hobby Field! There is a new sign visible to I-5 travelers proudly announcing the Creswell Airport. An Automated Weather Observing System (AWOS) has been installed and is operational, grants are being applied for to build additional hangars, install restrooms, and purchase an emergency generator so the airport can become our Emergency Operations Center in case of a natural disaster. In 2017 we spent many months developing a long-range vision for the Airport. The Creswell Airport is on the right path to success. Last year Creswell hosted the Oregon Airport Managers Association Fall Conference and our airport manager, Shelley Humble, is currently the President of the Oregon Airport Manager’s Association. Hobby Field has come a long way since the tension-filled days of 2013!

There were concerns about the financial state of the city five years ago, partly because we were not current on our audits. Under the direction of two interim City Administrators, the annual budget timeline and the audits received great attention. Our finance director worked hard, and in 2013 the budget was adopted and the audit was completed on time. In the years since, every audit has been completed and accepted on time. We now begin our audit fieldwork mid-August and the final report is issued before the December timeline. Last year, Creswell received a Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the FY 2016/17 from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada. And on January 29, less than a month ago, we were notified that we have received the same award again, making the City of
Creswell now a two-time winner of the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award. We have come a long way!

Lack of confidence in City government, Public Safety, Water, Airport, and Audits – these were major concerns in 2013. Five years later our finances are in good shape, our water is protected, our police force has grown, our airport is busy, our Staff and Council are doing great work and there’s a whole different feel in Creswell. Along the way I have appreciated the coverage provided by the Creswell Chronicle. The City needs to be accountable to the citizens, and the Chronicle has done a great job reporting on the work being done. We have a constructive relationship with the Chronicle, something that was lacking five years ago. Scott and Erin have spent many hours in these Council Chambers listening, taking notes, shooting pictures, and asking questions so that they could let the people of Creswell know what their elected officials and city staff were doing. Thank you!

I’d like us to think about the coming five years, but before we do let me highlight a few accomplishments from the last twelve months. In 2017 the Council reviewed and updated the Strategic Plan. Adopted in 2016, the Strategic Plan guides our work. Here are some of the objectives completed last year:

1. Increased community use of the Cobalt Building – 2018 marks five years since the Food Pantry moved into the building. In addition to the Pantry, there is an after-school program, exercise classes offered, and a commercial kitchen in the planning and grant-writing stage.
2. A new Wastewater Facilities Master Plan was completed, accepted by the DEQ, and adopted by the Council.
3. Along with an outdoor summer movie program, the City now offers a winter movie program.
4. A first-ever Creswell Code Enforcement manual was developed and adopted.
5. The water reservoirs on Creswell Butte were completely repainted.
6. Steady progress was made on Comprehensive Plan, Transportation Master Plan, and Water Master Plan.
7. The decision was made to begin giving Councilors and the Mayor a monthly stipend in appreciation for their many hours of service.
8. Nine young people graduated from the Teen CERT program, trained by South Lane County Fire and Rescue and ready to respond in a crisis.
9. New street lights will soon be installed on Niblock Rd. Our high school and a newer residential district are accessed by Niblock Rd. and there are no street lights on this county road. Last year Councilor Richard Zetterval brought this to the attention of the Council. Thanks to some very generous donations, Councilor Zetterval’s unflagging efforts, and partnership between EWEB, Lane County, the Creswell School District, and the City of Creswell, five street lights will be installed by early April.
10. Discussion began in 2016 and the decision was made in 2017 to surplus the Old Schoolhouse. This treasured part of our history will now be restored and become a vibrant part of our future. Later this evening the Council will be voting to transfer the Old Schoolhouse to the Creswell Heritage Foundation.

What’s in store for the next five years? Where might we be in 2023? Here’s what I’m personally hoping for:

- Parks: In five years I hope we have more parks in Creswell and I hope that the 57-acre Cinderella Park east of town is owned by the City and providing new opportunities for recreation to our citizens.

- Preparedness: I hope that by 2023 every home and business in Creswell will be ready for a natural disaster. We cannot depend on local, county, state, or federal agencies to provide our every need; every family and every business must make their own preparations. There are articles in the Chronicle every month on how to get ready, and I’m thrilled that on May 19 the City will host our first Emergency Preparedness Fair at the Cobalt Building.

- Public Safety: By 2023 I hope our level of policing is up to five or six full-time Deputies. I long for the day when we have 24/7 coverage in Creswell. As Creswell continues to grow, public safety and the level of policing must be addressed again by the City Council.

- Housing: Housing needs are changing and I hope that in 2023 there are more options available. We have businesses hiring new employees who cannot find any place to live in Creswell.

- Employment: It’s exciting to see new business come to Creswell, like the Creswell Health Mart Pharmacy and The Dollar Store and the Tractor Supply store in 2018. It’s exciting to see existing business grow, like Wise Woman Herbal. It’s disappointing to see our largest piece of industrial property so under-utilized. My hope is that in the next five years the Bald Knob mill site will be teeming with activity and once again offering employment opportunities for Creswellians.

- Partnerships: We are stronger together. We partner with our churches on projects like Hope Restored and emergency preparedness. We partner with the Chamber of Commerce to promote tourism. We partner with the Heritage Foundation to restore the Old Schoolhouse. We partner with Creswell First! to provide grants to local organizations. We partner with the Food Pantry to provide sustenance to those in need. And now we are looking to create a new partnership with the School District to provide vocational training opportunities at the Creswell Airport. It is my hope that by 2023 students at Creswell High School can receive aviation-related vocational training by seasoned pilots and mechanics at Creswell’s Hobby Field.
Looking back at Creswell, 2013-2017, it really is true that, “You will accomplish less than you think in one year, but more than you think in five years.”

Looking forward, I am excited about where we’ll be in January, 2023!

When I gave my first State of the City address on February 11, 2013, I said that what makes Creswell truly special are the people living here. That hasn’t changed and I hope it never does. Creswell is a great place to live, to raise a family, and to grow old. It is our responsibility, each one of us, to help Creswell live up to its moniker; we are Creswell, The Friendly City!