



Randall J. Noblett | Mayor

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2020 State of the City Address

Last year's State of the City address declared the State of Cave Springs to be in transition. As 2019 progressed, transition proved to best epitomize the year for our city.

The year began with the transition to a new City Council and new Mayor. A positive new logo and slogan signaled the transition to positive new policies, processes and procedures. The transition to a process of professional cooperation for mutual benefit was initiated with neighboring Mayors. The transition in public relations policies was demonstrated by using every media interview to promote Cave Springs, apprise of special election details or caution of weather disasters that befell our city. The City Council worked hard together to bring forward an effective budget and expenditures policy and to address many important areas of concern.

The Water Department transitioned from about 18 months of violations to compliance, resulting in a suspension of fines and the permanent elimination of the fines if compliance extends into June. 8 FEMA projects from the April 2017 floods were completed and the last project will be finished soon. The 2017 State Aid Overlay project, 1 FEMA project and cooperation with the City of Rogers resulted in the resurfacing of all or part of 6 streets.

Planning transition began with new Planning Commission members and engaging the services of a planning consultant. The Master Street and Comprehensive Land Use Plans are in the process of being updated and tonight we have the opportunity to approve a new Karst agreement almost 14 years after approving the last one.

Transitions included much needed plans for Capital Improvements. A Capital improvement fund for the Fire Department, Impact Fees and Funds for the Water and Sewer Departments, and a temporary sales tax to build a new fire station, fund a water system expansion and fund part of the sewer system expansion were all established for Capital Improvements.

Amidst the temporary sales tax election, two declared disasters occurred in just two weeks. A major flood on October 6th and a tornado on October 20th, demonstrated an organized disaster response the City of Cave Springs and its citizens can be proud of. Coordination and cooperation between public works, police department, fire department, ARDOT, utility companies and the private sector served to efficiently open our roads, restore services and ensure safety for the people of Cave Springs.

2019 was a year of transition. With completion of events and projects from the previous two years, we can now transition to current and forward-looking projects. This year will bring these projects into 2020 focus; as agreements are negotiated, contracts are approved, accounts are established and professionals are employed for the implementation of approved Capital improvement projects.

March 15th will be the 110th anniversary for Cave Springs. We are a city with a rich history. This city has a heritage that should be preserved, with a strong sense of community where neighbors helped neighbors in times of need. We witnessed that community spirit as we faced the challenges of last year's disasters.



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As we approach the ides of March, the state of the city is strong. Despite two disasters in two weeks, and the cleanup that followed, all city funds were operated below budget this past year. All but the Street fund were profitable. After close to \$200,000.00 in disaster relief and cleanup, we used less than \$90,000.00 from Street Fund reserves. If state and FEMA declarations are made, the city can see most of that \$200,000.00 refunded.

Today the sales tax bonds were issued and sold in order to fund the exciting new Capital Improvement projects in our city. Just over a week ago, the ANRC board approved the NACA Sewer extension project and the rest of its funding without requiring a rate increase. The February NACA Board meeting should bring a buy in agreement which we will bring to the City Council for approval.

We are working to reduce the cost of Water and Sewer system expansions by cost sharing with potential residential developers. We are reviewing grant opportunities and disaster assistance from both the state and FEMA. Each project is reviewed for less expensive options or alternatives.

Whether responding to two disasters in two weeks, prioritization of maintenance projects or implementation of new Capital improvement projects; we approach each project as a team effort. Closure of past concerns and preparation for future projects was handled through joint efforts of city employees, elected officials and occasionally other agencies, the private sector and residents.

This team effort is how we ensure that the City of Cave Springs stays on a strong financial footing as we transition our community into our 111th year and beyond.