



## **STATE OF THE CITY**

Good evening everyone. I want to thank the City Council and distinguished guests attending tonight as well as our audience at home.

Delivering my first State of The City is truly a unique experience. Throughout my campaign for Mayor, I spoke to many residents about their ideas for their vision of the future of Raymore. Naturally, many spoke to me about ensuring the safety of our community given my public service career in law enforcement. But they also spoke to me about the growth of our economic development efforts and continued success in expanding and maintaining our basic City services.

And so now, less than a month since being sworn in as mayor, I am privileged to offer to you, our City Council and our residents, my vision for the future of Raymore.

While it is important to set high goals and ambitions for the future of our community, it is also important to recognize the work that has been done already to lay such a strong foundation by, Mayor Kerckhoff, the City Council and City staff. When looking at these past accomplishments, you do not have to look far to see proof that the state of our city is undeniably strong and growing stronger.

### **I) A welcoming community for all**

For example, just this past week, the Mid-America Regional Council recognized our strength as an inclusive community when they awarded Raymore the Bronze-level designation as a Community For All Ages.

This designation is more than just a title. It was awarded to only six other cities in the metropolitan region and recognizes the hard work that has been undertaken by this municipality to be a welcoming community for everyone regardless of age.

This is but the first step forward as we, as a City, become a more diverse and richer place, welcoming people of different ethnicities, cultures, religions and backgrounds to our community — something we have quietly been doing for some time and doing extraordinarily well.

If you have questions about any of the projects above or would like something added, contact Communications Manager Mike Ekey at 816-892-3109 or at [MEkey@Raymore.com](mailto:MEkey@Raymore.com).



Also adding to the growing cultural landscape here in our community is the incredible work undertaken by the members of the new Raymore Arts Commission. In a few short months, this busy volunteer group has helped bring new art to the City Council Chambers, kick-started a community-wide arts project through the Pop-up Art Project and are working hard to reinvigorate and support the many creative individuals who call Raymore home. I am anxious to work with the Commission and to expand our efforts to highlight local talent in many forms of art and entertainment.

## **II) Safety for all**

As more people call Raymore home, we know it is critical that we also maintain that feeling of safety and security that our residents expect.

In the 2015 Citizen Survey, 98 percent of our residents said they felt safe in the community during the daytime. That is an unprecedented achievement by any community Police Department. It speaks directly to the hard work of our Police Chief and her officers, who frequently pursue opportunities to interact with the community. A recent example would be their participation in a little friendly game of basketball with neighborhood kids.

That one small game is but one of many ways that proves to me the men and women we have patrolling our streets are not just police officers, they are community members who deeply care about the safety and wellbeing of our residents every day.

## **III) Financial Stewards**

Of course, to provide these City services there is a cost; something that everyone on this dais is well aware of and careful to always consider. As Mayor, I am committed to providing the amenities and services that our residents ask for. Answering their needs is my chief priority.



To do that, though, it is important that we make the right financial decisions to ensure that our budget is not just balanced each year - as it is - but that we are using taxpayer dollars responsibly and ethically.

The health and vitality of our City's budget is directly tied to the success of our community, the expansion of amenities and quality services we can deliver in Raymore.

#### **IV) Economic and Community Development**

As I said during every opportunity I had during the campaign, to keep the budget healthy we must also look to expanding and improving our economic development efforts. Already, the City has taken some bold new steps with our newly formed Economic Development Team.

Because of the recent Bond approvals, our landscape will soon change in appearance giving an uplifting choice of amenities to our citizens. As Mayor I would also like to see more robust collaboration between our City Council and the Planning & Zoning Commission to work through the many issues that face our growing community and to reinvigorate our planning efforts that need to be done to refresh the Growth Management Plan which was reviewed and modernized just 3 short years ago.

We also heard loud and clear from the Reimagine Raymore community conversations that our residents are strongly in favor of a downtown identity in order to create a destination that defines Raymore. While it is not impossible, it is a major initiative that will require many voices to determine how and where a project of this magnitude would be most successful. There are staunch advocates on this Council for this effort and I look forward to continuing the work needed to lay out a strategy for this type of progress in Raymore.



Of course, that does not mean we will lose focus on the economic opportunities along Interstate 49 and the possibility of developing more mixed-use retail/residential and professional offices as well as commercial and light industrial development within Raymore.

The momentum is building, and while we cannot deny the excitement that a new restaurant or retail store brings to the community, we are similarly looking to bolster the number of jobs in our community for Raymore residents so they don't have to go too far from home to pursue employment.

As we continue to grow, we must once again open the conversation about annexation in order to anticipate the growing demand for new development throughout the distinguishable Raymore region of Northern Cass County. Although some might be hesitant to move forward based on the past, we cannot continue to look behind us as our residents have charged us to begin planning for the future of our community which most assuredly will include expanding our limits and responsibilities.

### **V) Tale of two Cities**

Our residents take pride in this community. They invest not only their dollars in Raymore when they purchase a home or shop at our stores, but also their time and energy to make this more than just a city; they make it their home. But the same can be said for every community in the region.

Our citizens are what make us great and so we owe it to our residents to end old rivalries. It is time to end this old 'Tale of Two Cities' theme and move forward with Belton in pursuing common interests that will benefit everyone in Northern Cass County, including Peculiar, Pleasant Hill & Lake Winnebago.

At the same time it will be critical that we strengthen our existing relationships with the Raymore-Peculiar School District. For years they have been a central reason why residents move to Raymore. As that growth continues, we know it will be important for the City to work with the School District on a variety of issues and



ensure they have a voice at the table when we consider new economic development along with financing tools, incentives and programs.

We want to keep those channels of communications open and work collaboratively and inclusively to ensure we can continue to support their success and, in turn, continue to attract more residents and business development to our City.

If a rising tide can lift all ships, then exploring these new and existing partnerships with Belton and the Ray-Pec School district could bring about an entire ocean of ideas and initiatives that will benefit our communities and, more importantly, our residents.

### **Conclusion and thank you to Council, Staff and many more**

The work I have laid out tonight is not going to be accomplished by any single person. I have the pleasure of working with some pretty smart and imaginative council members, board and commission volunteers and an excellent staff that includes a diverse and regionally recognized collection of driven professionals.

As for our workforce, they possess outstanding values and quiet determination in order to deliver quality public services and to ensure our City operates at a level that our residents have come to expect and deserve.

As Mayor, I have set the bar of expectations high because I know, not only do we have the people and an organization that can meet these challenges head on, but they also have the ability to exceed my and everyone's expectations. That is the path we have chosen and it will be my honor to help lead our community into this tremendous and prosperous future.

Thank you and may God Bless the City of Raymore.