

2023 State of the City

Mayor Kristofer P. Turnbow

Good evening.

First, I want to thank the members of the Raymore City Council, the staff at the City and, most importantly, the residents of this great community for allowing me to present to you tonight.

The City Charter directs me to present to the Council information on the affairs of the City and any recommendations I have for the improvement of the City and its affairs each year. I am honored to be before you this evening – more than a year into my third term as your mayor – to share with you the State of our City, which remains not only strong, but extremely resilient.

Over the last year, we welcomed many new businesses to Raymore, with the addition of:

- Johnny's Tavern,
- Whataburger,
- Elite Fence and Deck,
- Raydiant Selfie Studio,
- Stellar Gifts and Goods,
- Blush Bootcamp,
- The Painted Posie and more, including several new brick-and-mortar and home based businesses.

More businesses are on their way in, with Abelardo's Mexican Fresh planning to open at the end of September, and HTeaO, one of the fastest growing companies in the southwest, choosing Raymore for one of its store locations as it expands north from Texas. The Quilted Cow, a wildly successful quilt shop based in Branson West, is franchising and has chosen Raymore for its first additional location. I'm happy to report that new and exciting businesses continue to consider choosing Raymore and investing in our community.

We've brought a variety of new housing to Raymore with many new single family homes, beautiful town-home options and maintenance-provided villas, and in advanced progress is The Depot, a Class-A multifamily community.

At the beginning of 2023 and thanks to the tenacity of City Staff, we received a grant for more than \$4 million from the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission under the Governor's Transportation Cost Share Program. The grant is a 50% matching grant that will be used for:

- the installation of a traffic signal at the North Cass Parkway and Dean Avenue intersection,
- a future extension of Dean Avenue to 195th Street,
- And, in so doing, intersection improvements to improve safety at the 195th and I-49 underpass.

These improvements will support the addition of Nuuly, Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits and other businesses at the Raymore Commerce Center that VanTrust is not quite ready to announce.

Nuuly, a women's subscription clothing rental service, plans to open before the end of the year and will create 750 jobs in Raymore over the next five years.

Southern Glazer's – the largest fine wine and spirits distributor in the United States – continues to work toward full operations at the Raymore Commerce Center, and a third business is now being secured for building #2 in the commerce center. These additional jobs in Raymore will contribute to a more vibrant and prosperous community.

And over the last year, Raymore has attained many other tremendous accomplishments.

We continue to forge ahead with planning efforts for the improvement of Ward Road as we inch closer to obtaining the necessary easements. In addition, we have been in talks with the Cass County Commission to partner on Prairie Lane milling and overlay for the section between 58 Highway and County Line Road. This will be very important for travelers as a detour when Ward Road construction begins. Once those improvements are made we can then turn to Kurzweil for similar TLC. And of course, we continue to urge MoDOT in their planning efforts for the improvement and widening of I-49 from County Line to North Cass Parkway.

Last year we also made history by becoming the first city in the entire nation to offer three fully accessible play spaces with the opening of the Hawk's Nest Inclusive Playground at Hawk Ridge Park. Let me say that again. We are the **first** city in the United States to accomplish this – that's worth celebrating! Due to the hard work of a dedicated staff we also picked up a national award last year from the American Public Works Association for T.B. Hanna Station's universal design.

We are committed to improving the quality of life for our residents and creating a variety of opportunities for people of all abilities.

The voter-approved Hawk Ridge West improvements brought improved parking and a new trail to the west side of the park, with more improvements in the works for the east side of this national award-winning park.

At Recreation Park on the south side of town, new playground equipment is currently being installed to replace the aging play area for younger children and the voter-approved Raymore Activity Center expansion is in progress. This expansion will allow us to host even more year-round programs and activities for our youth and people of all ages when the work is complete next summer.

Last fall, more than 150 acres of future parkland were dedicated as part of the Good Ranch Master Development on the city's southwest side.

Through our Public Works Department in the last year:

- 5 centerline miles of streets were milled and overlaid,
- More than 17,000 feet of curb were replaced,
- Our Public Works street crews used 225 tons of asphalt to make street repairs and patch potholes,
- And our Public Works professionals continue to work tirelessly to keep our streets, curbs, sidewalks and drinking water safe, as well as maintain our stormwater and sewer systems along with other public infrastructure so we can continue to enjoy an exceptional quality of life in Raymore.

Upon the retirement of Chief Jan Zimmerman a new police chief was chosen. Chief Jim Wilson, a 29-year veteran of the force, was sworn in at the end of August. The department also had promotions from within, with one promotion to captain, one to lieutenant and one to sergeant. Raymore police also invested in three cadets by sending them to the police academy and hired another POST-certified police officer and three new dispatchers.

Nearly one-third of our City staff have been employed with the City for more than a decade, with 18 of those employees serving our City from 20 years, all the way up to 44 years. That's a lot of dedication toward providing high-quality services and amenities to our residents. It's also a lot of loyalty and a big responsibility to serve the interests of all of our community members. Our 108 full time employees have truly invested a lot of heart and hard work into this organization. They are committed to serving you every day – whether it's being a first responder at a time of need, fixing a water main break through the night, keeping our parks beautiful and coordinating community events or any of the many other tasks performed behind the scenes, to keep things running smoothly and to make this a great place to live, to raise your family, and/or to retire.

With all that has been accomplished by our team, I have to say that I'm disappointed that the use tax measure was not approved last August. Votes were close, and I appreciate all who made it to the polls. However, it does sting a little that we weren't able to get the needed support to grow our investment in our public services and get our people the much needed support to help with the hard work they perform that keeps things running smoothly and safely. Funds received from a use tax would have gone toward public safety and services by adding additional positions in Police, Public Works and Parks. All of which are presently staffed well below industry standards. Our staff in those departments have been doing more with less for many years.

While we continue to invest more into public infrastructure maintenance than ever before, I urge everyone to carefully reconsider the use tax and what it would bring to our community. We could have an improved presence of police within our community. We could also provide more infrastructure services and do it faster and more efficiently with additional personnel in Public Works. Additional personnel would ensure our parks remain pristine, viable and relevant to our residents along with many more incredible opportunities if we had the necessary resources. And I haven't even addressed what a use tax would do to put our

brick and mortar stores on parity with their on-line rivals who avoid collecting local sales tax.

The City monitors sales tax collection for the Community Improvement Districts – CIDs – within Raymore. A few of those CIDs include both sales and use taxes and the State and County already collect an on-line use tax. Recently though, a sale that occurred for one of our new warehouses was inadvertently filed as if it were within the boundaries of one of these districts that collects *use* tax. Had we been able to collect a local use tax, \$550,000 from that sale would have come to the City. The county got their share and the state got their share of use tax from that large sale, but we failed to take advantage of that opportunity. Those dollars would have really impacted what happens *here* in Raymore, where it really matters. It only makes sense that we think about putting this issue back before voters, so I urge you to start considering *now* what benefits a use tax will allow our community to be better prepared for as the demand for services expands.

With that being said, I cannot emphasize enough how honored I am to be here at a time when the people of Raymore and our neighbors have been united in a way I've never witnessed before. We are all united in the common interest of our community, of our future, and of our children's future.

There are challenges that we must overcome, but I know that we will overcome them because we are strong and driven. Our city's success will be determined by those who are unified in their steadfast resolve to work together to safeguard our community from those who are out to hurt it.

We are fighting this landfill threat with all that we have. We do it because it's the right thing to do. We do it because we've worked hard to make Raymore a place to work and play, and *not only* just to live, but to live out our American dream and to *love* where we live. It's vital to our quality of life to live where we know our health, our safety, our investments and our livelihoods are protected and respected.

We are working on multiple avenues to reach a permanent solution to kill the proposed landfill that threatens our way of life.

While we weren't victorious at the last legislative session, I'm proud of the progress we made earlier this year. We were not strangers at the state capitol. *Everyone* there knew what we were resolved to accomplish. We got somewhat of a late start last session but we are going back to Jefferson City in the next session to continue pursuit of an amendment to the current state statute. We will continue to engage, and encourage others to stay engaged with our elected state officials to help them understand how critical the need is for an expanded buffer zone between residential communities and landfill developments that would negatively impact our home values, our environment and, most importantly, our health and well-being for generations.

The work isn't done and I assure you the work won't stop until the threat of a landfill on our city's border no longer exists. The people of Raymore were generous with their time and

efforts in answering every call to action we put out earlier this year and it is appreciated so much. You made a positive difference. We're going to be calling you to action again. We need even more residents and citizens of the surrounding communities to fight with us in contacting state legislators when we ask you to and we'll also ask you to show up at the state capitol again when it's time to testify and show our strength in numbers.

We all face difficulty and adversity, but – after all – the strongest steel is forged in the fire. Unfortunately, in this case, a dumpster fire....right? Our work today **WILL** create a better Raymore for tomorrow. I can't imagine anyone I'd rather fight with and fight for, than the folks in this room and the citizens of Raymore. I believe in us. I believe that what is right *has* to win over what is wrong....and make no mistake, **WE WILL PREVAIL!**

Though we are facing challenges we never imagined we'd have to face, the state of our city stays strong and resilient.

Every day, I am inspired by this Council, the City staff and you, the Citizens of Raymore - Your dedication to this community is **AWESOME!**

Raymore, God Bless you and thank you.

