

2016 State of the City of Seminole

Address

Good evening everyone, I am pleased to present the 2016 State of the City. We are now entering the fourth month of the Fiscal Year 2016. Our fiscal year begins October and runs through end of September. This year's revenue forecast for our general fund represents a slight decrease from last year. The ad valorem tax revenue is projected to increase by 9.6%. In recent years it's been necessary for the City Council to be mindful of our declining revenue to ensure that our spending is adjusted in order to work within a balanced budget. I am optimistic that during 2015 our revenue picture improved as a result of redevelopment activities that included the opening of the Texas Roadhouse, the Village Inn, the Bay Pines strip center that includes Jimmy Johns and Starbucks, and numerous single family homes that were built at the Cove at Bay Pines, Boca Club Court, the Enclave at Lake Seminole, Kersey Lake Estates, and Seminole Groves.

It continues to be a credit to the City Council's policy and to our city administrative staff, that Seminole has not cut services or raised the millage rate during the years immediately following the 2008 recession. In fact, the budget reviewed and approved by the City Council has resulted in the millage rate decrease over the years from a high of 3.5690 mills in 1994 to today's rate of 2.4793, a decrease of 1.0897 mills. I'm proud to say the City of Seminole has one of the lowest

property tax rates in Pinellas County, and the highest Fire Pension funding level (at 95%) in the entire State of Florida.

City administration organized and conducted its second City Government Citizens Academy, which continues to be a priority of this City Council. Our citizens may now look forward to the opportunity to learn about their city government beginning March 30 for seven Wednesday evenings. Details about the Citizens Academy can be found on the City of Seminole website at www.myseminole.com.

The renovation/reconstruction of the former city hall building located in City Park has been completed. This newly renovated community building includes a beautiful community room, available for rental use by the general public, complete with a state-of-the-line stainless steel catering kitchen, and is a perfect venue for wedding receptions, birthday parties, banquets, and other special events. The building also houses the Seminole Historical Museum and is the meeting location of the Seminole Historical Society.

Virtually all of our departments participate in special community events conducted annually for the benefit and enjoyment of our citizens. The Pow Wow festival and parade, the Music in the Park series of concerts, the Field of Screams and the new Haunted Forest, Winterfest and the Fire Department Annual Open House, the Fit and Fifty health awareness event, and the Seminole Hurricane Expo are only a few examples of the special events City employees successfully organize each year.

It is worth noting that most, if not all of special events, are funded from the City's special event fund which is derived from sponsorships and user fees and not supported by property tax dollars.

The Seminole Red White & Blue Initiative was initiated in 2015. Many citizens, veteran posts, schools, City departments and various civic organizations organized events and supported this initiative in many different ways. The City purchased red white & blue banners and located them at major corridors, the Seminole Kiwanis Breakfast Club initiated a "Field of Honor" where Flags honoring our veterans were placed in front of City Hall, SPC-Seminole Student Veterans Association organized a significant community veterans program, and I along with several Seminole fire fighters and SPC student veterans participated in Wreaths Across America to honor our veterans at Bay Pines National Cemetery. I had the pleasure of providing the keynote presentations at the annual Pinellas County Korean War Veterans dinner in December. This Red White & Blue initiative will continue into 2016.

During this past year we received our eighth consecutive Distinguished Budget Presentation Award and our seventeenth consecutive Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting. Both are prestigious recognitions by the National Government Finance Officers Association for governments that demonstrate the

highest level of financial accountability and provide citizens a transparency in the use of tax dollars.

During this past year activities associated with the development of Waterfront Park continued. The eight acres of property along Long Bayou on Park Blvd and next to Home Depot have been graded and hydro seeded. The site is now ready to begin the construction of the park. City administration continues to pursue grants to aid in its construction.

I'm thankful that the City Council has completed the recruitment process for our new City Manager. Ann Toney-Deal was hired in August as the City's second City Manager. I look forward to City Manager Toney-Deal and her staff preparing and presenting the proposed Fiscal Year 2017 municipal operating budget which will be the road map for providing the best level of citizen service and amenities at the most efficient cost.

Also, upon the retirement of the City's longtime City Attorney, the City Council selected Jay Daigneault, a partner in the law firm of Trask-Daigneault, to serve as our City Attorney. We welcome both Mrs. Toney-Deal and Mr. Daigneault to the City of Seminole Family.

2015 saw the approval of a Development Agreement for the former Seminole Mall. We are excited to see the progress as the site is razed and redeveloped and we welcome new and former businesses to the new Seminole City Center. Along with

the efforts of the Seminole Chamber of Commerce, together we will rebuild a vibrant and busy epicenter of the city's businesses, shopping and commercial district.

I continued to visit with members of our business community. Last year the City, with the support of the Seminole Beacon, helped to increase the awareness of the Seminole Interfaith Food Pantry in the collection of food items to benefit hundreds of families and children in the Greater Seminole area. I continued to hold quarterly "Meet the Mayor" forums throughout the community. I also enjoy the civic education activities speaking to elementary and high school students, inviting classes and teachers to city hall, as well as hosting Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts and other youth groups to either city hall or meetings and events. In 2015, the Florida Caregivers Association designated the City of Seminole as the First in Florida "Dementia Friendly City." We will help lead the way with this important health and family issue.

I look forward to the opportunities the City Council will embrace during 2016 to move Seminole forward. As Mayor I want to thank those who make our City a caring and giving community; I want to thank the Pinellas County Sheriff for providing professional law enforcement to the City, helping to keep our neighborhoods safe and secure. Thank you to our local schools, churches, civic clubs, businesses, professional organizations, city employees, citizen volunteers, and City

Council members, who all help to make Seminole a great place to live, to work and to enjoy a good quality of life.

On behalf of the entire City Council – Vice Mayor Jim Quinn and Councilors Bob Matthews, Thom Barnhorn, Chris Burke, Roger Edelman and Trish Springer, I wish everyone a happy and healthy New Year.

Leslie Waters, Mayor, City of Seminole

January 12, 2016