

2024 State of the City Address

Mayor Keith Weiss

As I prepare this talk I have with you every year, to let you know about the happenings in Veneta, and to project where we are headed as we move into 2024, I would like to quote a phrase I heard and borrowed from our City Manager Matt Michel: "THE CITY OF VENETA IS THRIVING"!

It could be me, but as I go around town, I notice more people out and about, more children laughing and, based on the attendance at the last two holiday events, more families getting out and having fun. What a great feeling! It is so good that overall, we are back to our healthy selves.

There is new construction going on in different areas of town. Growth is always good to show a city is vibrant and has much to offer to new people to our area. We continue to keep our parks clean and enjoyable, and we expect to add new parks in the coming year. A new off-leash dog park and a new 7-acre park space in the southwest area will need to be designed and improved, and I can't forget Pickleball! We plan to build four pickleball courts at Territorial Park.

We have had several events at the City Park next to the pool and it is such a good setting. It is truly a lovely place for families to spend time together and have fun.

We are so grateful that our previous City Manager and Staff were able to see into the future and make sure, by contracting with EWEB, that we would be able to meet the city's water

needs well into the future.

Our other city services are in good shape and functioning well. As we continue to grow, we will need to upgrade our sanitation facilities in a few years and like a Department Store layaway plan, we are putting money away month by month so when we need it, we will have it for the project.

It is a priority of the city to try to be good stewards of the money that we receive from you the taxpayer to help us operate the city. As we approach the process of developing a new budget for 2024/2025 I am so honored to report that once again the city's finances are in the black, and for the 10th consecutive year the city received the Government Finance Officers Association's Distinguished Budget Award.

Another thing to report is that as we were going through Covid we lost several good city staff workers for one reason or another. We struggled for a while to find the right fit, but boy did we add to an already great staff. The city has hired new staff members who are top notch professionals. It is such a good feeling to know that the work is getting done effectively and efficiently, and we don't have to worry about it.

Recently, I met with Governor Tina Kotek for breakfast at Our Daily Bread. She asked me how things were going in Veneta. Before I even spoke, I think by the smile on my face she knew what the answer was going to be: THE CITY OF VENETA IS THRIVING! She had done her homework and said she was pleased with what she was hearing.

City on
The Move



Events

Many of you will recall how much importance I place on the happiness and well-being of our children. We have a top notch education system in our area thanks to the Fern Ridge School District.

As a city we plan and put on several events each year to enrich the lives of our children and to give them an opportunity to get out and have fun in a family setting.

April

In April we welcomed the return of the annual City of Veneta and Friends Easter Egg Hunt. The Easter Bunny was there and hugged the kids until everyone got the perfect photo taken by their parents. There was candy and Easter Eggs for children of all ages to find. The Fern Ridge Kiwanis always show up in force to make sure our kids get free books in addition to free candy.

August

In August we celebrated the 4th annual National Night Out to honor our wonderful First Responders - Lane Fire Authority and the Lane County Sheriff's Department. It was a friendly family event giving the general public an opportunity to mingle and interact with members of those fine organizations. There were fun things for all to do, a Dunk a Deputy tank, a band, and interesting displays. There were also free hot dogs and drinks for all, sponsored by Sanipac, our trash haulers who volunteer so much to our community.

September

On September 9th the 14th annual Harvest Festival took place downtown. We had the annual Chili Cook-off, food trucks, music, tons of vendor booths, and the Kiwanis "Kruise-in" displaying about 100 classic cars. The streets were filled with people having a good time.

On September 24th we hosted the 2nd annual Veneta Celebration Run/Walk. Many attended and participated in the 5/10K courses for running or walking. We also featured a Dilly Dash for kids sponsored by our local Dairy Queen. I enjoyed being at the finish line and seeing the big smiles on the contestants as they crossed the finish line.

October

Alexa Benson's vision and passion brought the first ever Veneta Haunts event to City Park at Halloween time. The Parks Board helped sponsor the event that had so many kids and adults show up to have fun with crafts, music, and an amazingly spooky pop-up haunted house!



Events

November

On November 10th the Veneta Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce, the local Scout Troup #50, the American Legion Post 61, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars Jack Kelley Post 9448 hosted a memorable Veterans Day ceremony at the City Park. As a proud Veteran, I was honored to be there to help with the ceremony.

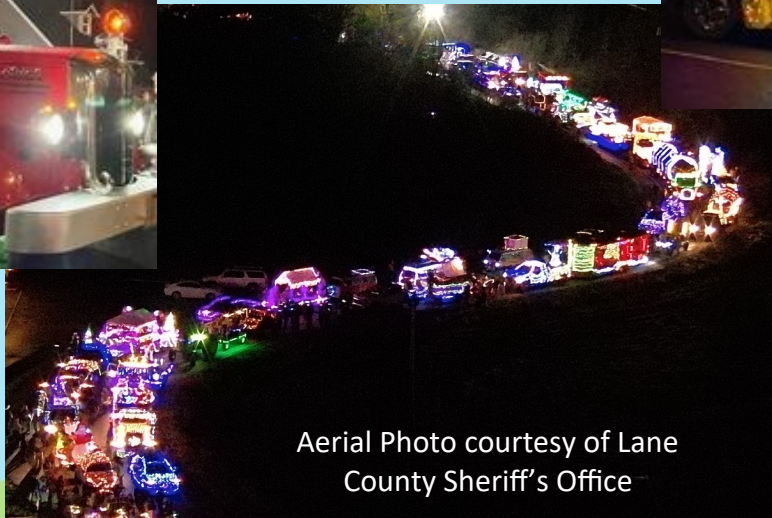
On November 30th, I was joined by Santa and several hundred children to ensure the beautiful City Christmas Tree was properly lit to the delight of all. Santa was so patient and listened to the Christmas gift desires of all the children there.

Grand Marshall, me, lead a procession of over 50 floats, not to mention decorated llamas, dogs, a rainbow beetle (actually a VW bug), so many Grinch-es, and a Sasquatch (with thanks to the Eugene Emeralds) mixed in. I would be remiss if I didn't take time to thank our Council President and Secretary/Treasurer of the Veneta Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce, Robbie McCoy, for, according to her, holding the rain back for both the Tree Lighting and the Light Parade. Even though it rained before and after each of the events, it was somehow dry during both. Good work Robbie!

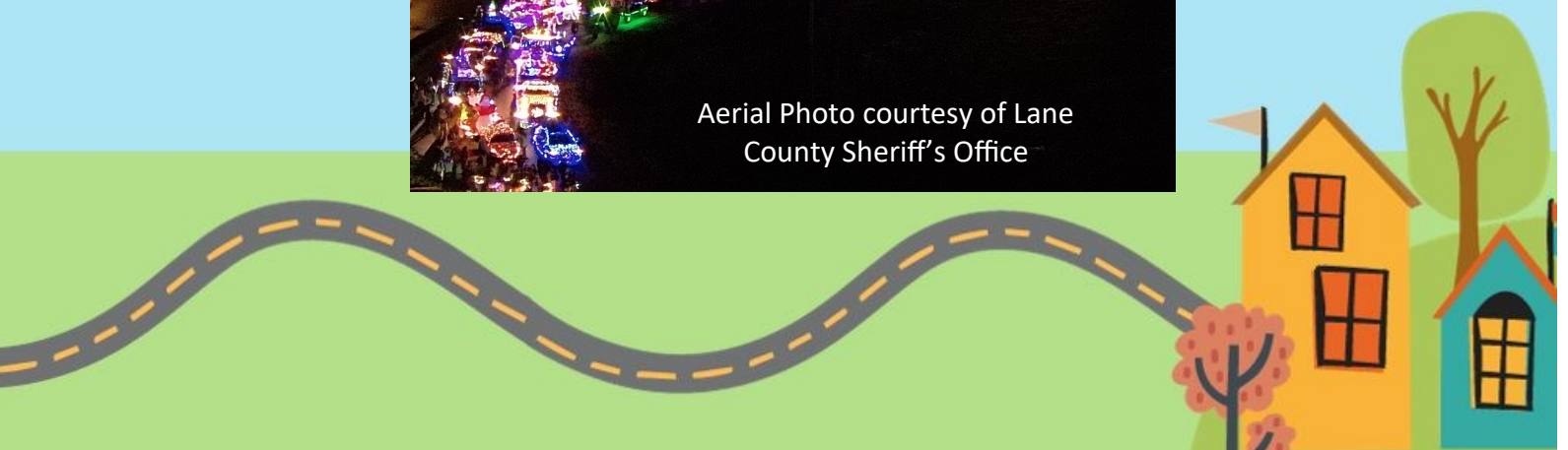
Additionally, of course we had the pool open for the summer. We hosted several special nights including "Night Waves Teen Party" and "Family Fun Night". New this year, movies in the park and music in the park debuted as well as many other smaller events that added to the fun of our community.

December

On December 7th, an estimated crowd of 5,000 lined the streets of Veneta to watch the esteemed



Aerial Photo courtesy of Lane County Sheriff's Office



Department Updates

Administrative

We were very disappointed to find out recently, that the grant for funding of the Huston to Lakeside Drive portion of the 126 extension project we were hoping to receive has been put off for another year. We are still in hopes of improving the Huston Road intersection.

I have been promising for some time now improved high speed internet for the whole city and it looks like this year should be the culmination of that. We have already installed it in the Fern Ridge Service Center and the Public Works yard. Look for more information on that soon.

We are continuing to improve how we communicate with our residents. We have an improved Monthly Newsletter and you can now sign up on our new website to receive email notices when a new agenda comes out or a page is updated.

Public Works

The Public Works Department under the keen eyes of our Director, Kyle Schauer, and Superintendent, Kip Orme, keeps our city beautiful and safe on a daily basis. They do set up and tear down for most of our events and are really the face of our staff. No matter how much work they seem to have, they always have a smile and wave for those who pass by.

Community Development

The city continues to partner with the Corp of Engineers, Lane County and the State of Oregon to provide a new path between Elmira and Veneta to make it safer for all, including our students, to walk or bike between the towns. The city has matching funds available to add to the potential grant. In addition, we are applying for grants to rebuild our Community Center, and we are working with the Territorial Sports Board to make major improvements to the Bolton Hill Sports Complex.

Economic Development

There are several small development projects underway in the city currently. There are more potential projects which could bring as many as 400 – 500 more homes in the next few years.

As your Mayor, I know I speak for the whole City Council when I thank you for your support for what we do here on a daily basis, to hopefully enhance the lives of each of you and your families. After all, that is truly what we are here for. So, once again, I am honored to declare, "The State of the beautiful city of Veneta is GREAT"! Respectfully,
Mayor Keith Weiss



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