

Novato 2019

Good morning, thank you all for coming. I want to start by recognizing the wonderful people who have made this event happen....

This is my third State of the City address as the intrepid leader of our beautiful Town. The past year has brought an unprecedented amount of involvement from our community, dedication from City Staff and an exciting amount of progress throughout the City including a good deal of private investment in Novato. So many projects have moved forward, and 2019 promises to build upon this great success.

- 2 new hotels are in the works for Novato and have both essentially passed through the entitlement process...which is great since it has been about 19 years since our last hotel was built.
- 1st and Grant Mixed use project has also essentially passed through the entitlement process
- The Downtown Train Depot revitalization project is looking at interesting alternatives to enhance and support the new third Novato SMART Station
- The third Novato SMART station is on track/scheduled for completion late this year
- The Hill Recreation area Master Plan "central hub" project will get underway this year
- The commissary site in Hamilton has a proposed 81-unit townhouse project on tap...we are currently starting negotiations with the leading developer (City Ventures) from our RFP process...it was great to see so much private sector interest in Novato and continued investment in our community

Cannabis Update: staff is still working on the commercial cannabis ordinance development. We have a new CDD Director, Vicki Parker, who has direct experience from her previous work in Cotati. That experience will be a great addition to our ordinance development here in Novato... to ensure that we have the best and most expedient and effective process for cannabis business development in Novato. The process is intended to meet the expectations and desires that we have found over the past year of community outreach on the subject of cannabis.

Over the past two plus years I continue to be impressed by our dedicated City Council and top-notch professional City staff. **Novato is headed up Upon a solid foundation.** We have made some excellent hires over the past few years to go along with our current and long term employees...which I totally benefit from as the leader of this organization. We have great people in all departments that I hope each of you get the opportunity to interact with.

THE CITY is moving along quite well.

Like we did last year, I'll start with some finance facts. That is generally an area where people give some consideration for how you are doing. Some of you might be aware that we have had some transition over the past year...that is true. Despite the best laid plans...we struggled with staffing needs following a key retirement and staff turnover that plagues most Marin County cities. But we have

brought in excellent support from the private sector and brought back retired people on a limited basis and transferred others to fill in for key projects. Also, we had our Finance Manager position interviews this week. We hope to have the position filled in the next few months. Keep your eyes out for our budget process and the updated forecast for the next five years that will be presented to the council on March 12.

Our Finance department has reported that our general fund reserves are at 15% which is our adopted city policy. Like last year.... that makes me feel good, this fact is very important because local government is hard...there is a lot to do and many things to maintain...and lots of outside influences that are not often favorable. In particular, our pension liabilities and required payment to CalPers. There is another huge payment due this year (\$3.71M) ... We are able to fund our obligation for the coming fiscal year...but each year that follows grows more and more difficult. This prudent City was given authorization by our City Council to pursue the creation of a new trust to help ensure we are able to address the long term unfunded pension liability for the city. This will not solve the issue that faces most all cities in the state...but it helps.

Maintenance of our city facilities.... The city has a very aggressive maintenance program. Just last Tuesday evening our Public Works Superintendent Lyle Waite shared some great success stories of preventative maintenance our crews completed that lessened the impacts of the recent storms and this wet winter we are all enjoying.

Why else are we doing pretty well?... I like to point to partnerships and collaborative efforts. If an organization has good partners, that translates to more opportunities and greater service levels for your community. Over the past year, we have examples of good partnerships in Novato.

- We are about to enter the second year of our Reimagining Citizenship program with Dominican University – Staff is looking forward to the return of our students
- Workforce housing opportunity currently under pursuit with NUSD, our initial site analysis is now complete...and we will be considering potential next steps
- The Marin Mobile Care, and mobile showers program continues to serve a key segment of our population – and I believe our leadership role in this endeavor has enabled others like San Rafael and Sausalito (maybe others soon) to initiate the programming for their communities - partnership with the other Cities/County and local nonprofits working together to tackle a major human services issue
- We are working with the NFPD on continued strategies to prepare our community for wildfires and there are more new efforts soon to be implemented, please keep your ear out for news from Bill Tyler and the NFPD Board.

There are more, but this is a good showing of the fact that Novato has partners, and is willing to work collaboratively.... which will translate to support if and when we may need it most in Novato.

There is always more to do in local government. But examples of how we are improving is an area I enjoy sharing.

Parks and recreation – Kevin Conklin gets the floor to share information on the rock stars on staff who are HELPING TO BUILD COMMUNITY making changes to programming efforts and adding all the time.

Let's talk about Interest and investment in Novato. An area where the "how we are doing" question also leads me to "Novato is doing really well."

The interest from developers, potential and existing businesses has been staggering. And we are committed to providing our community with the best jobs, housing types, places to shop & play—so we continue to strive to make Novato the place you are proud to call home. Some of you may recall seeing the downtown video "Get to know your Downtown Novato!" that made a splash this past year...thanks to all of the private investment in our City...the subjects in the video were easy decisions for determining the content.... A big thanks to our consultant Kiosk, for helping create this on a tight budget and the turnaround time was fantastic. We have had over 19,998 views.

First and Grant; the top interest from groups over my first 18 months in Novato was..." what is going to happen at the old Pini hardware site?" now as I'm out in the community...the question is "when is the first and grant project going to get under construction" - we have a response. This year. 32 units of residential and 13,000 sf of retail on Grant Avenue Downtown. We have now seen more interest in other properties on west Grant.

Novato has retailers looking at spaces on Grant. We have existing business owners putting down serious dollars toward improvements and expansions. There is serious momentum with the urban winery efforts downtown. Both Mantra and Trek continue to be busy and are a wonderful bright spots downtown...particularly in the evening. There are international firms- both of which are home grown Novato businesses - putting down major dollars in our business parks...and winning international awards for their facilities and others making major campus type planning efforts. As an administrator with an economic development background...having this kind of interest in Novato is awesome.

Please understand that local government IS people/Staff. People propel our operations and provide the service to our community. People. Officers, park maintenance staff, clerks, engineers, streets workers, recreation program staff, etc. Today we will be hearing updates on city activities from our excellent management team. A little less of me is always better.

Police department

Last year there was a 17% decline in crime over 2017 and a 31% reduction in crime since 2016.

Public works

- Downtown SMART Station with our partners at SMART
 - will be under construction this summer
 - making access to our Downtown restaurants and businesses easier
- Hill Recreation Master Plan – a multi-million-dollar recreation improvement
 - The environmental review work is complete
 - final construction plans will be presented to the Parks & Rec Committee tonight
 - and, the first phase of the project will be out to bid in a few months

- Vineyard Drive Re-Paving Project – improving pedestrian and bicycle access on the westside
 - this long awaited project has been in the works for 10-years
 - construction will be delivered this spring & summer
 - using green technology to recycle the paving through what is known as “Cold-in-Place Recycling”
- Nave Drive Pavement Rehab Project – serving the Hamilton Area and Bel Marin Keys Commercial area, the home to our valued biotech companies
 - Repaving and re-striping over 2-miles of key roadway in the City
- Number of Pedestrian and bicycle improvements, including several traffic calming projects in local neighborhoods

We are also continuing our focus on making improvements to existing facilities that the community enjoys and relies on, including:

- Dogbone Meadow Dog Park Renovation
 - Without question the best dog park in Marin or Sonoma County
- Rush Creek Drainage Channel Clearing
 - A cooperative effort between Caltrans, County Flood Control and the City to virtually eliminate flooding in the Armstrong and Cherry neighborhood
- Re-Plaster the Hamilton Community Pool
 - This spring before the pool opens in May

I'm proud of talented engineers, technicians, analysts, and maintenance personnel that keep our City running smoothly.

The backbone of our economy is our small businesses. We continue to look for ways to retain, and accommodate the expansion of, Novato businesses. By Partnering with the Chamber of Commerce and the Small Business Development Center we are connecting our businesses to resources that will help improve their bottom line. The city is also working with local professionals for services and other needs to the extent possible. For instance, we are seeking support for the local employment needs of our business community.

Our Shop-Local program continues to help our retailers and services grow their sales locally and connect them to our community.

Our General Plan update, is still in process. We now have a new CDD Director in place, and the Environmental reviews are coming to a close soon.... but I believe prudently has been striving to ensure that the plan not only looks to our future, but is open to the reality of the day and current market reality and trends. If the City is not prepared to accommodate the reality of today...a major effort might be a bit diminished.

What about GOOD NEWS? We launched #NovatoProud a year ago to feature Novatans doing good and extraordinary works, fun facts, and innovative businesses— this has been a huge

success for Novato. We have even incorporated these positive events into our city council meetings once per month....

Please reach out to us and share your #NovatoProud story!

The key to maintaining and improving City services is to continue to retain and attract a talented, professional workforce by offering an environment that provides growth opportunities, the latitude for creativity, and the right tools to do the job—and at a competitive salary in order to live in our community. We are just now in the midst of working toward new contracts for all of our labor groups and hope to have new contracts in place over the coming months.

In Novato, we are fortunate to have an engaged community. Whether it is serving on a City commission, committee, or board, volunteering for one of our non-profits, joining a service club—one of three Rotaries in Novato, or just coming to a City Council meeting or City-sponsored event. Do and Get involved. This is your Novato!

A great first option for you is this Earth Day, sign-up for our annual Clean & Green Day April 20...which will also feature a Green Living Festival (thank you Gretchen) or volunteer to adopt-an-island and help beautify Novato year-round.