

2017 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Mayor Thomas Ratzlaff
Monday, March 13, 2017

As Mayor and Common Council it is our responsibility to protect citizens, offer a good quality of life, provide infrastructure for residents and businesses, and keep our community strong. It is rewarding to serve as your mayor and keep Park Falls moving forward.

We are excited about another busy construction season in 2017 as we continue to improve our infrastructure. Reconstruction of eight blocks in our downtown area will begin as soon as weather permits. This project is estimated at \$2.5 million. The city continues to be very active in seeking infrastructure grants and has qualified for a combined total of just over \$1.1 million in principal forgiveness, or essentially grant money, from the Safe Drinking Water and Clean Water Funds for this project.

In conjunction with our downtown project, the Department of Transportation will resurface State Trunk Highway 182 and replace the Highway 182 bridge this summer. Community Sensitive Solutions funding from the DOT will be used to incorporate decorative elements along the STH 182 corridor.

With low oil prices and a hot mix plant located near our city again this summer, the city will take advantage of market timing to improve our street infrastructure. The final coat of pavement on 5th Avenue South from Division Street to 9th Street South will be completed by early summer, and you can expect to see new fresh pavement on a number of other city streets as well.

The Highway 13 reconstruction project continues to yield dividends. In 2017 Kwik Trip will locate its business on Highway 13. We welcome them as they offer additional opportunities and employment for residents in our area.

The City of Park Falls CDBG Housing Rehabilitation Grant revolving loan program remains active. We strongly encourage citizens to take advantage of this program to fix up their homes. Qualified Park Falls applicants can receive zero percent interest, deferred payment loans for repairs and improvements including roofing, siding, heating, electrical, insulation, foundation, windows, doors, sewer and water laterals, and handicapped accessibility. Also, eligible families who are renting can access zero percent, deferred loans to assist with a down payment toward the purchase of a home.

Additional affordable housing money will become available in 2018 with a funding increment from our Tax Increment District No. 2. It is our intent to use this revenue to improve housing throughout our city.

Community pride abounds in Park Falls. This is evident in new improvements at our Athletic Field Complex. Funded entirely by donations, a new bathroom building was completed in 2016, and plans are now underway to replace the track and football field bleachers. Our thanks go out to all who continue to make these projects possible.

During my tenure, the city has encountered a number of challenges and has faced them head-on. I am pleased to report that we have substantially decreased our general obligation debt. Through careful planning, wise use of debt, and successfully obtaining over \$4.4 million in grants, we have reduced our general fund debt by \$2 million while still continuing to improve our infrastructure and replace essential equipment.

No one person does this job alone. Park Falls, as a community, displays great strength of character. I would like to commend our department heads and this Council for their insight and commitment to making our city an exceptional place to live, raise a family, and do business.

Thank you.