



2018 State of the City Address

Members of the City Council, Elected Officials and Special Guests, City Staff, and my Fellow Mukilteans:

I would like to begin with a few words of thanks. Thank you to Judge Bui for joining us and for your work for our community. I also want to thank my family for all their support this past year, my mom and dad—Bill and Jill, and my sister Anne, brother-in-law Alex and my amazing nephew Westley! I also want to congratulate our newest City Councilmembers Sarah Kneller and Anna Rohrbaugh, I am so excited to work with you. And I would like to congratulate my friend Bob Champion on his reelection and thank him for his partnership over the past three years as City Council President. I also want to acknowledge Council President Schmalz, Council Vice President Cook, and Councilmember Whelpley who are in attendance today.

It is hard to believe that it was four years ago that I stood before you and took the same oath for the first time. I can remember the great sense of responsibility I felt in that moment, and how much I wanted to make you all proud. I can admit now that I was a little scared and nervous too, I knew I had the skills and the preparation to do a good job, but like so many women leaders and executives, I allowed myself to doubt that. But four years later, I know today what I believed then: Serving as mayor has been the best job I have ever had, and I am so proud and honored to lead my hometown.

And these four years have not been easy. Our city has been shaken to its core, and we have had to come together and rebuild our sense of community and our sense of safety. Four years ago, I could never have imagined what it would feel like to be woken up in the middle of the night to the news that there had been a shooting and young people had lost their lives. But that experience reaffirmed everything I believed about our community and our city.

We are a small town but full of big potential and amazing people. On that terrible night, we were reminded that our police officers and firefighters dedicate their lives to keep us safe, and when it mattered, they shone. We also saw strangers come together to honor the victims, support their families, and help our community heal.

But our community has not been defined by that night, we showed the world what we already knew: we are Mukilteo strong. What defines us is our history, our sense of community, our beautiful green spaces and waterfront, and most importantly: our dreams for an even brighter future.

Because as we have learned from the native people who came before us, Mukilteo has always been a gathering place with special meaning. For the earliest people, it was the beach and the waterfront that brought them here. For the first white settlers, it was the possibilities they imagined here, and for today's Mukilteans, it's our great schools and our beautiful neighborhoods and safe community that bring us here.



Over the last four years as your mayor, I have worked hard to strengthen what makes our city special, but also tackle the big challenges that face our small town. And thanks to voters, who gave me more of their votes this election than when I was first elected, I have four more years to keep leading us forward.

Today, I want to share a few of the accomplishments we have achieved together, and share my vision for how we can keep our city strong.

Beginning with my swearing-in four years ago, every year I have shared an action agenda of what I hope to see accomplished in the year to come. This has become a useful way of sharing my priorities but also holding myself accountable. Our city team knows that these are things we are all going to focus on, and I am proud of their help in delivering so many important accomplishments.

In my first Action Agenda, we made important strides that have shaped my first term. We formed a Green Team that has brought together city employees from every department to look for ways that we can be more sustainable. They led a citywide energy challenge that cut our own power bills but also launched an effort to make our buildings more efficient. This year, we expect to partner with a contractor to make some physical investments in our oldest buildings to improve performance for the employees who use them while reducing energy use.

We also hired our first Human Resources professional in my first year. I am so proud of the work that Julie Good, our first HR Manager has done, to help us manage the most important resource of our city government: the people who serve our community. Thanks to Julie's leadership, we have avoided costly labor disputes with our employees, and we have professionalized the hiring process to make sure we are identifying the very best people to come work here.

That first year, I also asked our Police Department to focus on domestic violence and do more to help victims. In the last four years, we have made this a priority and hired a Victims Coordinator to support victims, connect them to services, and make sure that their abusers are brought to justice. While we may never completely eliminate this crime, we can make sure that every victim we encounter received all the help and support we can give them.

In 2015, I asked our community to begin a conversation about how to care for our streets and our transportation system, so that all of our residents could safely move around—whether they drive a car or not. We know that one-third of our residents can't drive, and the reality is that all of us are pedestrians at some point during the day, so we need a transportation system that works for everyone.

The City formed the Wise Investments in Transportation Taskforce, and nine residents spent a year studying our transportation needs before making recommendations. I am so grateful to those WITT members for their dedication, and I grateful to the staff who supported them—led by Marko Liias—our Policy Analyst. The work they did formed the basis for our award-winning Bike, Transit, Walk or "BTW" Plan, and it also was invaluable to the City Council as they formed the Transportation Benefit District and asked voters to approve Proposition 1 last fall.



Also in 2015, we worked on business license reform, which led to fee reductions for 60% of our businesses as we simplified the system for our smallest businesses. We also began a process that will culminate on February 1st, as we join the state's Master Licensing system, so businesses in Mukilteo only have one place to go to get fully licensed for the state and city. This is easier and simpler for them, and also eliminates a lot of administrative work for the city as well. This was another project led by our Policy Analyst Liias.

There are far too many accomplishments from four years to highlight all at once, but there's one more that I would like to highlight. For the last four years, I have presented budgets every year to the City Council that were balanced, took a break from tax increases, and paid our employees cost of living increases. It hasn't been easy, but I am proud that we have been good fiscal stewards while treating the women and men who serve us with fairness and respect.

Looking forward to the future, and as I think about the important challenges that we face, I would like to share my Action Agenda for this year. And I would like to begin with that last accomplishment: fiscal responsibility. At the end of the day, managing the resources we receive from taxpayers, and delivering good services, is the core responsibility of the City. And it is time for us to join our neighboring cities in making smarter, long-term budget decisions by passing two-year budgets.

Neighboring cities like Lynnwood and Mill Creek, as well as larger organizations like state government, pass two-year budgets that plan on a longer time horizon. I have learned over the last four years that it can be tempting to make short term decisions with long-term consequences. We have had to make some tough choices to keep our budget balanced, but those tough choices have laid the groundwork for our success. I am asking the City Council to partner with us to make the switch this year and add more discipline into our budget by thinking further into the future. Two-year budgets alone won't assure fiscal responsibility, but they are one more tool for public accountability and transparency.

When it comes to delivering services efficiently and well, there is nothing more important than the public safety services we provide. We are fortunate to have career professionals in our Fire and Police Departments who keep us safe. These services come at a cost, and its time for us to talk about how we pay for emergency medical service. In 2010, 70% of Mukilteo voters approved a permanent, fifty-cent property tax levy for emergency medical service. Unfortunately, due to a state initiative, our EMS levy has fallen to forty-cents and it no longer covers the cost of the service. This year, I will be asking the City Council to send a measure to voters to reset the levy to the fifty-cents they overwhelmingly approved and support this vital service.

And speaking of voter support, I am making it a priority that we keep the promises we made last year with Proposition 1 and deliver transportation improvements on time, on budget, and in every part of the City. This year, we will embark on an ambitious plan to preserve streets in several neighborhoods and also deliver bicycle and pedestrian projects envisioned in our BTW plan. The City must produce an annual report to residents, and I look forward to reporting back to you that we have done exactly what we promised.



One other public service that is important but often overlooked is garbage collection. This most basic service keeps our community clean and protects public health, and its regulated by the city. I have heard from residents in Old Town and the north end that they would like recycling service like the rest of the city—in one bin. This year, we will negotiate a new garbage contract, and I have made it a priority that every resident get the same level of service city wide. We will also work to make composting easier and more available as well, to reduce our waste stream and recycle organic materials instead of sending it all to be buried in a landfill.

My final two priorities are focused on the future. If there is one thing I have learned in the last four years, it's that time goes faster than I expected. I want to make sure we are setting the stage for the next generation of leaders to find a stronger, better city for the future.

One important legacy we must leave for the future is a Peace Park. I want to make sure that future generations remember the loved ones we have lost in our city, but I also want future generations to have a place of hope and renewal they can visit when they need it. We have been so fortunate to have hundreds of residents share their thoughts and ideas, and we've been blessed at volunteers who have shared their professional skills and offers of help too. I have heard the respectful concerns of councilmembers to manage the costs and ensure that we are being wise stewards of tax dollars too. So this year, I will work with the City Council to finalize a plan that will build a beautiful park, using community support and volunteer help, in a way that balances all of these values.

The final priority I have for this coming year is personal for me. I want to make sure that the next generation of Mukilteo residents can afford to live here. I was fortunate to grow up here, leave for college and return. With the rising costs of housing, I am concerned that this dream will become out of reach for future generations. So this year, we will work inside City Hall to make sure our permitting processes are efficient and cost-effective, so we aren't adding to the cost of new homes through red tape or delays. And I will also work with a regional effort to help fund affordable housing projects throughout our county to ensure that families have quality, affordable homes throughout our region.

As I close my first term and begin a new one, I can say with confidence that the state of our city is strong. We are faced with great challenges, but even bigger opportunities. From our beautiful waterfront redevelopment, to the new Harbour Reach Corridor Project, we are literally building a new future for our community.

I hope that all of you here will join me in the work that we have to come, but I also hope that you will keep sharing your thoughts, advice, and constructive criticisms too. You've got my email, my phone number and you know where to find me.

As the early settlers of Mukilteo noted a century ago, "Mother Nature is lavish" in the gifts she has given our community. We are so lucky to live in a place as special and as beautiful. I have been lucky to call it home for my entire life. As I start a new term, I am filled with optimism for what we can achieve together and I am full of thanks for this opportunity to serve.

Thank you.