



# **MAYOR GREGERSON'S REMARKS**

## **STATE OF THE CITY**

### **February 4, 2017**

Council President Champion, members of our City Council, City staff, honored guests, friends and fellow Mukilteans:

Earlier this week, we marked six months since the date that changed our community. On July 30<sup>th</sup>, we lost three beautiful people, Anna Bui, Jordan Ebner and Jake Long. Will Kramer was seriously injured and so many lives were impacted by the violence and sadness that took place. In just a few moments, our lives and theirs were changed forever. On my desk, here at City Hall, I have a jar of full of what looks like potpourri--made from the flowers left at the memorial in the Kamiak parking lot. I keep that jar as a reminder of Jake, Jordan and Anna—but also as a reminder of the sense of community and togetherness that was born out of tragedy.

On this first State of the City address since that terrible day, I am proud to share that the state of our city is strong—Mukilteo Strong.

The experiences of these last six months have tested us all—they have shaken our confidence, caused us to ask ourselves difficult questions, but we have also begun to heal. When I was sworn in as your Mayor, I never could have imagined what lay ahead. But, I have never been more proud to call Mukilteo my home, and I could not be more grateful for the work our City employees do every day.



Too often, we take things for granted. But on July 30<sup>th</sup>, when we needed them most, our amazing Mukilteo police officers and firefighters did their work with professionalism, dedication and speed. Within three minutes of being dispatched, our first police unit arrived on scene. And within four minutes of arriving at the scene, the first ambulance was whisking Will Kramer to Harborview. Their quick action saved his life, but those firefighters would tell you they were just doing their job.

It wasn't just our first responders who helped however, it was City Hall workers who came to organize a press conference in the middle of the night, so that our community could be reassured. The Public Works crews who helped bring tents and chairs to the memorial at Kamiak, and the Rosehill staff who helped a grieving family say goodbye. Our entire City staff pitched in, and reminded us all that we are fortunate to have them serving all of us.

While the healing process has begun, and the wounds have turned into scars, we still have a long way to go. In my budget message to the City Council last fall, I wrote that "While this budget has several key priorities that I will share with you, more than any I have presented this one has an overriding priority: rebuilding our sense of community, commemorating those we have lost, and working together to confront violence and spread compassion."

### *Mukilteo Strong*

In each of my three addresses before, I have shared an Action Agenda—the goals and initiatives that I will focus on this year. Well this year, at the very top, in bold purple letters is my top priority: Mukilteo Strong.

I want to thank the City Council for providing the funds we will need for this important work. To plan a Peace Park, together as a community, so we can remember those we have lost and work together to spread peace and compassion in their memory.



We will also work to improve recreational opportunities for our teens and young adults, to confront the loneliness and isolation that too many feel, and bring our community closer together.

And led by our new School Resource Officer, we will build stronger partnerships with our schools, our community organizations and our families, so that we can nurture and support healthy kids in a safe and healthy City.

While these actions alone cannot solve every problem or prevent every act of violence, I am committed to ensuring that we do as much as we can, for as many as we can, to ensure that tragedies like this one do not happen again.

But just as our lives have returned to a new normal, the same goes for the City, a new year is here and we have more work to do. I would like to share a few of my other priorities for 2017.

#### *Green Business Certification Program*

Three years ago, in my first Action Agenda, I pledged to form a Green Team of City employees from every department, focused on ensuring that our City is a model of sustainability. Over the last three years we have done great work! From new recycling bins at Lighthouse Park to a Citywide energy challenge that saw us reduce energy use in our buildings by 12 percent last fall compared to the year before!

Now it's time to take our success story and share it. I will ask our Green Team to help craft a Green Business Certification Program for local businesses that want to join with the City in becoming more sustainable. Reducing energy use, avoiding toxic cleaning products, composting more, these are all great for the bottom line and for our environment.

#### *Emergency Preparedness*



Last year, I pledged to focus more attention on public safety prevention. We know that the best way to protect our community is to prevent accidents, injuries and crimes before they happen. I am proud that we have a new full-time Fire Marshal on board. Roger Rudikoff is a long-time member of our Fire Department and knows our community well.

This year, I will ask the Chief, Roger and our entire public safety team to focus on emergency preparedness. We don't know when the next earthquake or landslide or severe storm will happen, but we do know they will happen. Every one of us needs to have basic supplies and a family readiness plan in place to prepare. If you have a serious health condition, do you have an extra week of medication on hand? Do you have enough water and food to make it through the first few days after a major disaster? Is there information about your pets conspicuously posted for first responders who may come to your home? These are the kinds of questions I will be asking you and our community to think about this year and into the future.

### *Community Policing*

Our focus on prevention-oriented public safety isn't just about talking to the community about what to do, it also requires us to listen to our community as well. I am so proud of the amazing work that our Crime Prevention Officers have done these past few years to build and strengthen our Police Department's relationship with our whole community. Sergeant Colt Davis, Officer Myron Travis, and especially our first Crime Prevention Officer—and our new Police Chief—Cheol Kang, have all become beloved community members and we are so grateful for their work.

But this work isn't theirs alone, it has taken leadership from the Police Chief all the way to our patrol officers to build community trust. This year, I am asking our Police Department to double down on building stronger relationships with teens and young adults in our community. While our School Resource Officer works in the school setting, I want all of our officers engaging with



our youth to send the right message at an early age: we are here to keep you safe and we are here to help. Officer Travis will be leading this effort, along with our entire team.

### *Recreation Scholarships*

From my very first days in office, I have been committed to ensuring that the community is truly at the center of the Rosehill Community Center. Together with the Council, we created the Rosehill Community Board, to bring residents together to help set the direction for the Center and bring a community voice into the management of this vital asset. We have worked to adjust hours of operation, make more free space available, and increase the number and types of special events at the Center. I am grateful to Jennifer Berner and her entire team for their willingness to think creatively and engage with neighbors, residents, and Councilmembers to find the best way forward. We are all sad to say goodbye to Jennifer as she leaves for a new opportunity, but she has built a strong foundation as our City's first Parks and Cultural Services Director, a foundation for our next director to build upon.

And while we have worked to ensure our programming is affordable and widely available, we know from Census statistics that at least 1,000 Mukilteo residents live below the poverty line, and many of our seniors struggle to make ends meet on fixed incomes. Our community center needs to be a vital institution for every member of our community—regardless of how much money they make. So this year, I will work with the Rosehill Community Board and our City staff to raise funds for our new recreation scholarship program. I hope you will all consider chipping in a little to help ensure that there is a welcome place in our community to everyone who lives here.

### *Promises Made, Promises Kept*

When I was sworn in as your Mayor, three years ago, I promised that we would work together to achieve a vision of a city that is safe, vibrant and sustainable. Over these past three years we have accomplished a lot to make that vision a reality.



We have brought the darkness and loneliness of domestic violence into the light. Our crime reports show that on average, more than one person a week is arrested in domestic violence incidents in Mukilteo, this is more than twice as many arrests as we see for DUI. I committed myself to focusing our attention on this issue, and together we have made this a priority. Our Police Department now has a dedicated Victim Coordinator to help victims of violence get the help they need, and to allow for a resource for our officers to best serve these victims.

I also promised to ensure that our community had a lead role in shaping the future of our own waterfront, rather than letting outside partners dictate the way. We have established pedestrian access all across our waterfront for the first time in 50 years. My husband, Jeff, and I walk that waterfront trail every week and we have been so delighted to see how popular it is with people of all ages! And with the ferry terminal set to begin construction this year, our community is at the table in all the major decisions that are being made, so that we have a voice in future of our most precious asset—our beautiful waterfront.

And when it came to our City finances, I pledged to take a break from the tax increases we had seen through the early years of this decade. My first two budgets proposed no tax increases and I am proud to say that in my third budget, the increase I originally thought we needed, we were able to avoid thanks to the great partnership and work with our City Council. This does not mean that costs have not gone up, we have asked residents to pay higher stormwater fees as we are required to make costly investments to comply with state and federal regulations. We have also raised user fees to ensure that they cover the costs of the services that users receive. And, we have asked visitors to pay for parking on the waterfront.

None of these decisions has been simple or easy, but we have made them in a spirit of openness and with the input of our entire community. I believe this is the best way to make decisions.



We have also looked for ways to reduce costs and prioritize our spending. I started with my own office. From 2014 to today, we have cut costs and saved thousands of dollars by reducing expenses and finding efficiencies. Four years after I took office, even as costs have gone up each of the last three years, my office budget is still more than 5% lower than when I started.

We have also asked our employees to move to a lower cost health plan, which is saving us tens of thousands of dollars a year, while still providing similar levels of coverage. And we have partnered with the Council to go line by line through the budget and look for ways to save, every year, finding new ways to do more with less.

This work is never over, we can and we will do better. But, I have kept my promise to ensure we keep our City on a sustainable path forward.

### *Conclusion*

As we look towards 2017, I know we are Mukilteo Strong. I have been so honored to see the strength of those impacted by violence, the compassion of our entire community, and the resilience that I know now that we have. Let us continue to stand together as Mukilteo Strong.