

State of City – April 16, 2019  
*As prepared for delivery*

Thank you to our leading businesses in Rosemount. Your success benefits the entire community.

[Recognition of guests.]

It's an honor to stand before you today, and share with you the continued good news about the state of our City. I am not alone to bring you this report. I am joined by members of the City Council: Heidi Freske and Jeff Weisensel ... and this year, beginning their terms on the Council, Tammy Block and Paul Essler. Tammy and Paul are bringing a new energy to our work, especially at this time of year as we revisit our goals for Rosemount and set the initiatives for the year ahead that will maintain and improve our hometown's quality of life.

You can see that by the numbers. We are a community approaching 25,000 people. Our median household income is \$94,300. Our county's unemployment rate is 2.6%. And jobs in Rosemount are expected to more than double between 2010 and 2040. We have appeared in the top ten of Minnesota in several rankings during the past year, including safest cities and best suburbs for families. In 2015, the last time Money magazine did its "best places to live" feature for cities of our size, Rosemount came in as 4<sup>th</sup> best place in the nation "to be a kid."

I was proud that a lot of that came across for TV viewers last month, when the Channel 5 show "Twin Cities Live" featured Rosemount for a week. Many of our local businesses were featured. But you know

how The Media are. During the broadcast from Carbones, they hit me with a gotcha question. They asked, “Do you pronounce it Rose-MOUNT or Rose-MONT?”

All right: Rose-MOUNT is our community. Rose-MONT is a Chicago suburb of 4,000 in the flight path of O’Hare airport. We got our name from a rural crossroads in County Westmeath, Ireland. And I was so pleased last month that our ambassadors to the world – the young musicians of the Rosemount High School band – made a stop at our namesake during their spring tour performing in the “Emerald Isle.” The Rosemount Area Historical Society says our name was proposed by settler Andrew Keegan, who said the land here looked so much like the land near Rosemount, Ireland. And our band has provided proof that it is so.

I’m grateful for the families and band instructors who made it possible for our students to visit another nation, because as Mayor, I see time and again that international ties are increasingly important to Rosemount. When the Council interviewed applicants this year to advise us on City commissions, several told us they work frequently with global contacts through their jobs.

I always enjoy hosting visiting students from Germany, who spend time here every two years or so. But again, there were more difficult questions. During the students’ most recent visit to City Hall, one young man asked where I live. I started to describe the neighborhood. But no – it turned out what he meant was, where in City Hall do I live. I assure you, the list of City projects will not include a “mayor’s mansion.”

And one more reminder of how international affairs can have an impact on our people: I ask that we remember the people from our community who are serving overseas. Last fall, the Red Bulls deployed to Kuwait. We are anxious for their safe return late this summer.

They will come home to see a community that continues to thrive. Rosemount has had a good year for new projects. The City issued 256 new housing permits in 2018. And we believe it's a reasonable estimate that we will have 270 more housing units permitted this year. Residential property values increased by 6.7%.

Having more places where people want to live will benefit us all by helping to share the tax burden and by providing new customers for our businesses. At the same time, even with this growth, the housing market has been tight. And there is a particular need for senior housing, starter homes, and rental units to meet demands. For those of us who already own a home, it's encouraging to see increased housing values. But at the same time, it becomes more difficult for people on a fixed income ... or people looking to buy their first home.

Affordable housing is a challenge we will continue to address. And we look for opportunities to partner with agencies and developers when the chance arises. It helps that the Dakota County Community Development Agency is building a 47-unit apartment development at Akron Avenue and 141<sup>st</sup> Street that should open in a few months.

For commercial properties, we were pleased in December to receive an application for the old Pizza Hut site. It should hold two restaurants and a service business. We expect them to break ground this spring. We were honored to be invited to the ribbon cutting for the new headquarters of Minnesota Energy Resources. It's a handsome building inside and out. And most important, it brings new jobs to Rosemount. And Public Storage is building a significant expansion on Chippendale.

Flint Hills Resources keeps adding to Rosemount's tax base with major expansions. They enhance the efficiency and safety of operations, while making significant improvements to environmental considerations. In nine years, Flint Hills has invested nearly \$1.7 billion. We welcome CA Gear, which brings new jobs. And many other businesses have improved or expanded their footprint. It's an encouraging sign to see these commitments to the Rosemount economy.

One way the City tries to help is to coordinate all this development under the Comprehensive Guide plan. We're just about to complete the major revision required by state law every ten years. And we've made every effort to benefit those who want to expand here ... and those who already live and work here.

Adding to the retail base of Rosemount has been a top priority of the Rosemount City Council as long as I have served. It's been a challenge to be on the edge of metro development, and to have large tracts of land that limit commercial development – the land committed to the refinery, and the UMore Park property.

As a Council, we are committed to finding additional businesses to serve our unique area. Two years ago, we hired the consulting firm Retail Strategies to work with City staff and with property owners to engage national firms that seek new markets. We also partner with the state Department of Employment and Economic Development ... with the Greater MSP and Xcel Energy to attract new businesses, bringing new local jobs and buying power. And we partner with the University of Minnesota to reach potential businesses that would like to locate at UMore.

I have to be vague here, because some of the possibilities often involve confidentiality agreements, but we have been involved in several inquiry processes to develop land in the community over last few years, and I suspect that will continue.

UMore also promises to address some of the challenges I mentioned earlier, and to become a home for more residents who will contribute to the vitality of Rosemount. In June, the University entered into an agreement with Newland Development. This company is credited with several of the most successful, innovative residential projects around the country.

Their plans so far at UMore are tentative. Even the name "Vermillion Crossing" is a placeholder at this point. The details will be firmed up as Newland works with homebuilders, and those details will go through a public approval process.

In all, these new neighborhoods may hold more than 1,500 new homes. The current concept envisions 10 acres set aside for retail development. And there would be 134 acres in open space – nearly one-third of the project's land.

Newland does not envision this as the traditional suburban neighborhood. The concept include innovative street designs, with alleyways and one-way streets. It proposes special amenities – an example being a welcome center with public access to programming. A greenway corridor would link its own parks to the greater community. And the variety of housing could meet the needs of more families.

The City has approved the concept. But projects of this sort are always tentative in their details and timelines. Still, it is possible we may see the first houses built in the year ahead.

Near UMore, we continue to see new neighborhoods growing: Rosemount Crossing, Meadow Ridge, Prestwick Place, Greystone, Harmony, Dunmore, Prestwick Townhomes ... all approved in 2018.

What draws people to neighborhoods, new and existing, are ways to get outside, enjoy ourselves, and connect with our neighbors. Our parks system is meeting the challenge. This year we added Horseshoe Lake Park in the Bella Vista neighborhood. We upgraded the playgrounds in three more parks. And we added to the trail system. Our Parks and Recreation Department works closely with the neighborhoods involved to make sure our plans match their desires.

We continue to make progress on plans for a feature people throughout the City would like to see: an indoor recreation facility. We began work last fall with the 292 Group, which has consulted on successful facilities across the Midwest. We've met with stakeholders in an effort to meet the needs of many groups, not limited by age or sport of choice. This month the Council will once again work with the consultants to come up with specific features and to get more clarity on costs and how to pay for them. There will be another round of meetings with interested groups before we move forward on a project that will add to our community's health and enjoyment.

As part of our efforts to preserve the parks that we already have established, we are active in the fight against invasive species. Buckthorn is a plant that was introduced to the environment and spread out of control. It affects several of our parks. We are fortunate that the group Great River Greening has taken on the organization of a major effort to restore the forest in Carroll's Woods and Schwarz Pond Park. On April 27, more than 100 volunteers are expected to chop out buckthorn and by so doing, protect the natural habitat in this 67-acre greenspace.

Our residents can help even if they're not present for this effort on the 27<sup>th</sup>. It won't do any good to clear Carroll's Woods if buckthorn spreads back in from private land. I encourage Rosemount property owners to hunt for this plant in their own yards. You can get some advice from a new resource that the City has put online. The Conserve and Preserve blog has entries on buckthorn and on other items to protect Rosemount's environment.

We also continue to remove boulevard trees at risk of infection by the emerald ash borer. January's bitter cold may have slowed the pest, but not enough to eliminate it.

One of the most important things our City government does is to protect our citizens and property. This has been a time of transition for our Police Department. Chief Mitch Scott retired this winter to accept a position in the private sector. Commander Mikhail Dahlstrom has stepped up to serve as Interim Chief while the Council decides on the next steps for the Department's leadership.

Building on a strong mission and values statement, the Police Department continues to serve the City in a variety of ways. The statement defines their purpose, and it provides the values they will need to meet the dynamic challenges and demands of the profession. It reads, "In partnership with the community, the Rosemount Police Department assists and educates the public, resolves problems, prevents crimes, and enforces laws. We pursue our mission and serve with honor, integrity, and courage."

As their mission indicates, developing a strong partnership with the community is a top priority. This past year, members of the Department were consistently involved in community-oriented events that bolstered relationships, broke down barriers, shared perspectives, provided education, and even raised money for charitable causes. It is evident from the smiles in those interactions that Rosemount's Officers find fulfillment in this partnership and cherish the opportunity to make a positive and lasting impact each day. It is noteworthy that many of these events were self-initiated and orchestrated on the Officers' own accord.

Demands on our public safety personnel remain high. The Department handled over 15,000 calls that led to 482 arrests throughout the year. The Department takes pride in proactive policing to keep Rosemount ranked as one of the safest cities to live in Minnesota. Most important, the Department appreciates the citizens and business owners of our community acting as extra eyes and ears for the Department; after all, public safety is a community effort.

Our Fire Chief, Richard Schroeder, has accepted another term to lead our paid on-call Fire Department. The Department continued to see growth in calls for aid last year, responding to 820 calls, a 10 percent increase from the previous year. The more prevalent types of calls were medical emergencies, car accidents, and alarms for fire or carbon monoxide. The Fire Department also provided mutual aid on 20 occasions to surrounding communities.

Although staffing remained a challenge in 2018, the Department added two additional women Firefighters to the team who are currently in the process of finishing their training and will be certified in June. Each Firefighter averaged around 100 hours of training and the Department totaling nearly 4,000 hours. This is a tremendous sacrifice of time away from their families. But it prepares them to handle the situations they can be called out to all of hours of the day.

The professionalism and the “go above and beyond” mentality was evident on several occasions. During an incident last fall, the middle school suffered a fire suppression system break that quickly flooded the main entrance area as well as the gym that just had the floor replaced two weeks earlier. Members of

the Department quickly grabbed squeegees, brooms, and towels to remove the water from the gym floor preventing it from serious damage.

The Rosemount Fire Explorer Program, led by Lt. Chris Besnett, once again put the City of Rosemount on the map by winning the Minnesota Fire Explorer competition at the Minnesota State Fair. This was the second year in a row the Rosemount Post has won the competition. The Rosemount Explorer Post was selected as post of the year and Lt. Besnett was selected as Explorer Post Advisor of the Year.

Ben Taylor was chosen as Firefighter of the Year and Firefighter Corrie Sehr was selected as Rookie of the Year.

And one more member of the City staff to mention: City Clerk Erin Fasbender was selected as the City's Employee of the Year. She took the position just as preparations were underway for the 2018 elections. She also supervised the City's continued efforts for efficiencies and economies in moving to digital records.

The City this year received an award. It's happened for the past 22 straight years, but we never take it for granted. It's called the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting. And it's given out by a professional association that encourages clear and accurate disclosures of government finances. Rosemount once again received this honor. Our credit rating from Standard & Poor's remains at a high AA+. The City's debt is \$11.4 million – 16 ½ million less than it was in 2008. We thank the finance employees who do the sometimes mundane but crucial work of monitoring where the public's

money goes down to the penny. We are also in the midst of technology upgrades to grow our productivity.

When it comes to technology, our City government must also be a leader to take into account the long-term perspectives for our community. It falls under the broad category of Smart City services. And it ranges from infrastructure to support autonomous or self-driving cars ... electric vehicles ... drones, street light controls ... traffic management ... technology in parks and public spaces ... networks to homes ... communications platforms ... security cameras.

Much of this is straight out of Silicon Valley, and like many things from there, much of it may eventually prove to be impractical. But it's our duty as a City to research the possibilities that make the most sense to serve our residents' and businesses' needs.

Today our City government has 86 fulltime employees who are dedicated to providing the services our residents expect. We are a growing community. But we are very cautious about adding to our payroll. So when we do, it's a sign of the importance our Council places on the duties to be performed. We are adding two Police Officers. And in the next few months, we plan to add an Economic Development Coordinator to work exclusively on issues of helping our existing businesses and attracting new ones to serve and employ our residents.

We in City Hall know firsthand the challenges that employers face recruiting new workers. Today's economic environment requires closer cooperation than ever before with the schools and colleges

preparing the next generation of our workforce. As you've heard, we have various partnerships with the University. But what brings us great pride is the presence of the Dakota County Technical College. They are doing critical work in our tight job market. Last August they were rated in the top 25 of two-year trade schools in the country by Forbes magazine. It scored the schools on debt repayment, graduation, and retention rates. And DCTC excelled. Under the leadership of Michael Berndt, we look forward to continued accomplishment. Our economy will depend on it.

When I delivered the State of the City message last spring, we were fresh off an April snowstorm in a winter that overstayed its welcome. Clearly we were due for a milder winter. Well, we got half of one. The cold, and record February snows, and then the messy thaw last month were trying on our spirits, and our basement insulation ... and a challenge on our roads. I thank our Public Works employees for their dedication over long hours to perform their jobs safely, and to keep us as safe as possible on the streets. And the work continues today to mend the potholes inflicted by the weather.

Even outside of winter, our City's infrastructure consumes most of the staff's time ... and the Council's attention. Our network of services, including streets, trails, and parks, requires significant resources to maintain and to anticipate and encourage growth. So much of it, like water, sewer, and stormwater systems, is underground and seldom seen but is critical for everyday life.

Last year, we worked with the county to improve McAndrews Road/County 38. Through next year, we will work with county to pave Akron Avenue up to the northern city limits. We will also pave Biscayne Avenue between County Road 42 and 160<sup>th</sup> Street. And we will pave Bonaire Path from Akron to the

railroad crossing, which will be added to the quiet zone. Since 2009, we've averaged an investment of \$1.1 million a year to update older roads.

We added Well 16 to our utility network in December to have sufficient water for our newer homes. Siting and building a water well is a three-year process and costs nearly \$2 million. We are in the planning stages to build the City's next well.

We also continue to look at the need for a water treatment facility. We haven't needed one so far, but based on the experience of other cities, as our population continues to grow, a treatment facility is necessary for water quality. We are working to determine the site, type, size, and financial needs for such a facility.

We are also researching ways to give our operations more space. Moving some of our personnel should extend the usable life of City Hall.

There are other ways we are updating the City's infrastructure for efficiency. In the past two years, we have upgraded watering systems on City land with "smart meters" to sprinkle only when it's needed. That has saved more than 3 million gallons in some of our larger parks. We have used the "SCADA" system to keep water running efficiently from wells to towers to your taps. We changed policies to be more careful about how much salt we use on the roads during the winter, sparing our groundwater from permanent pollution. We're even running television cameras through the sewer system to catch problems early.

And we look for more economies in our operations. One example: we just approved another contract to purchase solar energy. It will save us over \$1 million during the next 25 years. We now have 80% of our energy usage allocated to solar.

That's an overview of just some of the operations we perform in City government. But I want to conclude by mentioning what makes us a great City. And that's on the human side. We are home to young families who want the best for their children. That means good schools. District 196 and Intermediate District 917 lead the way in our state. We have a wealth of private schools and of childcare providers. Those options, and others that the City offers through Parks & Rec, help keep children active throughout the year. The business community plays a key role. Next month, Flint Hills will hold its Family Festival in St. Paul: five days with 128 performances and 480 artists.

Our Arts Council continues to supervise a long list of cultural offerings for our residents. Youth athletic groups give hundreds of kids opportunities to compete and have fun doing it.

Rosemount's faith community takes care of our residents in ways government cannot. Last fall, three churches – St. Joseph's, The Well, and Lighthouse Church – celebrated their 150<sup>th</sup> anniversaries. Their history is our hometown's history.

We partner with 360 Communities, which meets many social services needs in our community. With its help, and a grant approved by the Minnesota Legislature, we are expanding the Rosemount Family Resource Center. Through its food shelf and other features, it will meet the needs of many of our families. 360 Communities is currently soliciting donations for this effort.

It's our job on the City Council to reach out to all of these groups and all of our citizens. One initiative we added this winter was monthly get-together sessions we call "Coffee with the Council." It's a way to have informal conversations away from the formalities of public meetings, to tap the wisdom of our residents, hear questions, get ideas. The next will be May 11 at the library, and I invite everyone who's interested to join us.

Our message we share there is what we've discussed here. We are aggressively working with developers to bring more retail to Rosemount. We continue to draw on the expertise of our consultants to plan a new community facility, and we expect to make decisions about it in the next few months. We continue to work with Newland as the company hones its plans for the first housing projects at UMore. Our priority with that project and those of other developers is to provide a greater variety of housing options to bring people to Rosemount, and to keep them here.

Rosemount's quality of life – the "state of our city" – is already high, and we believe it has room to grow and to serve more people. Through your work and ours, we can strengthen the bonds that make us a community. Thank you.