I usually start off my State of the City with a very upbeat introduction. That’s easy for me to do, because I find that there is always much good to report.

But for a moment, I’d like to talk about the things we don’t have or see here in American Fork – to give some contrast, and to demonstrate how truly fortunate we are.

We live in an imperfect world. Not everyone enjoys the freedom and opportunity that we do. On a worldwide scale: Last year in Afghanistan, elementary schools were bombed – even though they were totally unrelated to the Taliban, and the children posed no risk to international security. In Syria, children as young as age four were bussed every day to be trained by Al Qaeda. In Paris, in June last year, a newspaper was stormed and eight people shot for drawing political cartoons, and later in November, a nightclub was bombed and 130 innocent people were killed.

Here in the U.S.: In Baltimore, racially charged riots broke out against the Police, and the City had to declare a State of Emergency because of the rampant crime, looting and violence. In California, 29 government workers were shot to death at a routine Christmas Party.

Many people experience personal loss and struggle each day. It can be overwhelming and troublesome.

And though every one of us is affected from time-to-time with hardship, here we are in this beautiful City that bears the name of our great Country. Even before beginning my summary of City accomplishments, I think it’s fair to say that we are truly blessed.

What’s more is that we live in a City that is committed to sound principles of good living. President Dwight Eisenhower once said, “A people that values its privileges above its principles soon lose both.”

I’m here today, with confidence that our values will continue to guide keep our community in great shape.

So today as I go over successes, will you keep in mind how fortunate we are, and consider the principles we must uphold in order to preserve the lifestyles we enjoy.

**First off: Our economy is strong.**

Last year we collected about $3.8 million in sales tax and $6.6 million in property tax. As a City, we have not raised property taxes since 2008.

We annexed more than 130 acres into the City and approved more than a thousand single family and multi-family housing units. Last year, we welcomed more 11 new restaurants and 14 new retail businesses, and eight new businesses with storefronts.

We continue to be the home City for several large corporate headquarters, Domo, Visa, Xlear, Gold Tip, Morinda, and Thermoworks. This year
ThermoWorks, a company that manufactures thermometers, sensors, handheld instruments, loggers, controllers and calibration gear, among other measurement products, built a new 80,000 square foot Corporate Headquarters here, which was dedicated in October.

We continue to work to improve our process for developers and other builders. Major studies are underway that are about to wrap up the Meadows Crossing Study and Main Street Vision II, and we recently completed an economic development strategic plan to ensure that the City has sound policies and programs in place to encourage additional development.

**Our community is safe.**
The American Fork Police Department is one of the most pro-active in the state. Last year, they started tracking community needs to pinpoint the "most dangerous" locations for driving, in order to help moderate speeds and traffic in high-risk areas. In addition, the data they are collecting will help the City prioritize road needs.

Our Police officers work continuously to teach classes, inform the public about safety through social media, and last year they implemented body-worn cameras in response to national discussion about police accountability.

The department also works continually -- doing drills and discussions -- with schools and businesses in the community to ensure that we are prepared in case of any emergencies, such as an active shooter or bomb threat.

Our police are quick to respond when necessary. Last year, our Police Department responded to 29,847 service calls, and opened more than 10,000 investigations. Among these, our officers made 37 felony arrests, 44 misdemeanor arrests, they served 12 search warrants and confiscated more than 20,000 grams of illegal drugs.

**Our citizens are cared for in emergency and crisis.**
This past year, our Fire and Emergency Services team responded to nearly 3,000 calls that included fires, hospital transfers, car accidents and hazardous materials responses.

In addition to responding to routine incidents, this our highly trained team ventured into new territory -- figuratively and literally. This year, we started an intern program to meet long-term staffing needs, we promoted three lieutenants, to mentor them toward the rank of Captain, and we added three dorm rooms to accommodate staffing.

We also send a group to the central part of Washington State, at the request of FEMA, to help fight that largest wildfire in that State's history.

And as always, the team continues to work hard preventing fires through business inspections, site-plan reviews, fire hydrant inspection and replacement, and education programs.

In fact, this year, the American Fork Fire Department took first place in the Fire Prevention category at the Utah State Fire Convention.

**We enjoy all the extra things in life that are fun, uplifting and joyful**
Our City is only about 10 square miles. But in that relatively small space, we host 27 City parks, a state-of-the art golf course, and a boat harbor – which last year was awarded about $300,000 dollars in grant money for us to make upgrades.

Our Fitness Center welcomes 260,000 visits each year and manages more than 7,000 registrations for local sports programs.

Last year, we replaced our outdoor pool bubble, thanks to a previous windstorm, and we installed all new Christmas decorations along Main Street.

Our Parks and Recreation Department also coordinates community-learning classes, wedding reception reservations at our amphitheater, and it manages hundreds of hours of community volunteer hours through local Eagle Scout programs and projects.

This year, our Parks Department also began expansion of our cemetery and the building of a new Memorial Children’s Garden that will feature a 50-foot American Flag as well as other fountains and statues.

Through our Fitness Center, more than 700 hundred kids have taken swimming lessons, and dozens have taken ski lessons and enjoyed summer recreation projects such as hikes to the Timpanogos Cave.

We have tremendous opportunities for learning.

Sheena Parker, the Library Director since 2002, retired in 2015. She had worked as our library director since 1988, and did several things to move the library forward including starting the North Utah County Library Cooperative.

Last year we hired new Director, Colleen Eggett, who came with public library and state library experience.

Under her direction, the library is now offering more programs than ever – for all ages.

One example of a great addition for adults is the “One Book One American Fork” program. The book that the entire city is reading: Mistborn by Brandon Sanderson, an American Fork author with a national presence.

Last year the children’s library served 10,105 children at story times, summer reading programs and other events. In 2015, participation increased 25 percent from the previous year. Our children’s services rival the very best and we are extremely proud of that.

Total book circulation was up last year, as people checked out about 307,772 items. What is especially remarkable is how our circulation of e-books and e-audiobooks increased by 64 percent. As such, one of the library’s goals is to make our online presence more widespread.

The library now has 54 databases that offer online reading and information for all of our residents including e-books and e-audiobooks, online language learning, online magazines and streaming videos, online newspapers including the Provo Daily Herald, Deseret News, New York Times, and more. Online exam tests such as the ACT, SAT, LSAT, and AP tests.

The library now has amazing Wi-Fi. It is 266 percent stronger than it was last year, thanks to a grant that was secured by our new library director.
We are on the leading edge of technology, to better our City and efficiently manage and communicate.

In 2015 we implemented a cloud-based software solution that allows us to manage our public meetings, cut costs and connect with citizens. The software, called Acella, allows us to easily prepare for meetings, approve agenda items, generate documents, create meeting packets and improve the flow and retention of information.

In 2015 we also upgraded all our Wi-Fi at City Hall. This allowed us to start live streaming City Council meetings, displaying meeting content, and showing Council vote results in real time. All these enhancements allow for easy access and transparency with our citizens.

We also have new VOIP system implemented for all City buildings. It was just implemented after much study last year. This will allow us to improve customer service and responsiveness.

**We enjoy the conveniences of a well-functioning community machine.**

Our Public Works Department oversaw the improvements of 10 major road construction projects – including a new access point into Art Dye Park, with a roundabout, widened curb and gutter and a beautiful bridge.

On another major project, the road south of the amphitheater at 700 North along 900 East, we replaced storm drainage and curb gutter sidewalk. Crews also added on-street and off-street parking, and decorative rock.

On all of our road projects, we made sure underground utilities were carefully assessed. The City worked hard to encourage water conservation, and rebuilt its Cave Camp Spring Water Collection facility. As a result of that project, the springs are now collecting about 30 percent more water. The ongoing inflow and infiltration reduction program continues to produce great results, keeping current flow rates to the TSSD treatment plant as low as they were in 1996.

Again, I feel confident that our employees, residents and businesses continue to enjoy tremendous quality of life, thanks in part to their focus on great principles. And I would add that I sit here today flanked by gentlemen who I believe epitomize the kinds of values and principles our City represents. I'm honored to serve with this City Council, and other councilmembers who have served in the past with me. Their commitment and integrity is exemplary.

My hope is that will we all recommit ourselves to great principles as we dive into another year.

Thank you.