

Looking Forward - 2022

By Anita Reding

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The state of the city is good, said Bobby Mouser, Stigler City Manager.

"We've had 26 consecutive months of increases in sales tax revenue. That's just one barometer, but it's a very important barometer," he said, adding that it means the city has the needed incremental funding which will be used to purchase new equipment and make improvements to city properties.

The tax increases also mean that businesses are doing better, because that's where the sales tax comes from, Mouser added.

The city plans to continue to focus on making improvements, which encourage residents to stay in the city and others to visit the city and spend money.

Hospital

Since the hospital in Stigler emerged from bankruptcy and was purchased by Dr. Kirnjot Singh, "he's made concerted efforts to improve the services and offerings at the hospital," Mouser said. "We went from a hospital that wasn't functioning to one today that employs over 80 people." He added that he is pleased with the successes that Dr. Singh and the new organization has had and will continue to have.

Economic development

The city continues to see successes as a result of its partnership with the Small Business Development Council. The partnership has expanded and "the numbers are available to prove out the fact that they are extremely important as it relates to growth, retention and attraction of new business."

"It was one of the best partnerships and investments that

we've ever made as a community because it allows us to offer a service to those people who are in need at no cost to them," Mouser added.

"We continue to grow our relationship with the Choctaw Nation from an economic development perspective. The Choctaw Nation has one of the finest economic development organizations in the state. They are a wonderful resource and a wonderful partner," Mouser said.

Chamber of commerce

Mouser complimented the Stigler-Haskell County Chamber of Commerce on its increase in membership and in organizing signature events for the city.

The Christmas parade was one of the best attended and had the most entries in recent memory. Participation in the Easter Egg Hunt continues to increase. Reunion Days, along with a city-hosted sports tournament, continues to bring large volumes of visitors to town.

The successes are due to the chamber's executive director, Janice Williams, the board of directors and the volunteers. "Nothing happens without people willing to give and share their time and their resources. And that's what makes all of these things successful," Mouser said.

Giving spirit

A donation and a grant will be used by the city to build a new recreation venue and add an improvement to the new sports complex.

Bill and Janie Cox gave \$100,000 toward the construction of the skate park. The city intends to begin construction on the project this summer. "That was a very generous offering from the Cox family and we certainly appreciate

it."

The Jerry G. Jackson Foundation Inc. provided the city with a \$75,000 grant to build a new pavilion at the new sports complex. "We're extremely grateful to the foundation and the board for their generosity," Mouser said. "It's just another example of the giving spirit in Stigler and the surrounding community."

Both donations will provide more opportunities for people of all ages to enjoy the additional facilities in Stigler. "I'm tremendously excited by that," Mouser said.

Sports and recreation department

The city has seen tremendous growth in the participation and the offerings at the sports and recreation department.

The department has had continued success with baseball and softball.

With the additions of soccer and NFL Flag Football, "we can continue to see growth," Mouser said.

He added his appreciation to the city's partners who are responsible for continuing to improve the concessions menu while controlling costs.

Airport

The city has been awarded grants through COVID funding, which will be used to upgrade the lighting for the runways and taxiways, and upgrade the navigation systems.

COVID-19 pandemic

"COVID is still something that causes me concern, both as a citizen and as city manager because every time we think we are about to turn a corner and see improvement, it appears as if we might take a step backwards," he said.

The pandemic continues to affect everything in the City



Bobby Mouser

of Stigler. Schools are often forced to close. Employees must follow health protocols when they or their family members get sick.

The pandemic has also affected prices of everything the city uses to conduct business.

Workforce continuity

The city is being challenged to work on a succession plan which will insure a continuity of leadership, Mouser said. The city's goal is to have seamless transitions as department leaders leave their posts due to retirement or other opportunities, he said.

Wish list

"Without question, my goal is to continue to try to do things that will improve the quality of life for the people in Stigler and provide opportunities for health, recreation and activities and those things that will continue to make Stigler a destination for guests from a wide area," Mouser said.

In addition to focusing on improvements at the city's two sports complexes, and the construction of a skate park and bike trail, the city's wish list includes the passing of a bond issue for school improvements, construction of a multipurpose center and construction of a new hospital.