



NEWS RELEASE
City of Chico
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*****MEDIA ALERT*****

MAYOR DELIVERS NEW YEAR'S ADDRESS

(Chico, CA – January 1, 2020 –) City of Chico Mayor Andrew Coolidge delivered a New Year's address on January 1, 2021 at 12:00 pm via Facebook Live. A transcript of his speech is posted below.

Greetings and Happy New Year.

These last many months -- and last few years -- have brought many difficulties and tragedies for our City and county, as well as our state and nation. I am speaking to you today to let you know that Chico will recover and return to a safe, beautiful and clean city if we rise to the challenges we face. We have much work to do, both as a city and a community.

Our City Council has already moved to protect our parks, passing sweeping regulations which will reduce fire danger, protect the environment, and make our parks safer for all of our residents. This change will not take place overnight and it will not be without criticism by some.

The City stands ready, both with financial help and assistance, to work with service providers to create temporary housing for those in need. We await a group willing to step forward in the current crisis to facilitate the oversight and service provision necessary to meet this challenge. While the county and the state have helped with the issues facing the unsheltered population, they have fallen woefully short of their goals time and time again – often times making the problem worse. A lack of targeting the root causes of these issues remains an ongoing reality. From drug addiction to mental health concerns, there needs to be a willingness to drill down on where the dollars are being used. To this end, I am asking Council to approve a review of the County Behavioral Health Department to assess where the millions of dollars spent in our County each year are going and identify where the promised help is for those in need within Chico.

We must also work with our county and state representatives to bring public drug treatment facilities to Butte County as well as to expand mental health resources. These two areas are instrumental in providing real help to those in need and in helping to design a long-term solution, targeting the two most identifiable and treatable root problems, rather than simply treating symptoms.

Progress will continue with the relocation of the Jesus Center. We will see a strong program emerge, which will focus directly on the goal of moving people from the streets, to assistance, to housing, to success. Their former location on Park Avenue will also be torn down to make way for new affordable housing for our community, which will not only beautify the surrounding neighborhood, but provide more housing to those in need.

Council has also moved to hire new police officers, dispatchers and park rangers once again so that our community can be protected from those who attempt to bring their criminal enterprises to our beautiful and growing City.

In addition, this spring, Council will announce a citywide clean-up weekend. We will need every organization, service club, business, family, and person to come together behind this effort to clean our town and parks of the trash, graffiti and garbage which have littered it for too long. No patch of grass, no strip of sidewalk, no field or overgrown yard – and no individual or group - is too small to be part of this effort. Realizing and giving credit to so many in Chico who already conduct regular clean-ups, this City-sponsored event will enable us to step up in a greater way to show the public that we too are vested and willing to get our hands dirty to make our community shine!

At the next Council meeting on January 5th, I will also be asking Council to discuss approving a sales tax measure to place on the ballot to help directly fund our ailing roads, fire department, and police department. As our community and those towns around us grow, this progress utilizes and strains our resources and infrastructure. This necessary additional revenue will allow the City to keep our roads, public safety and infrastructure functioning effectively.

At future meetings, I will seek to agendize sustainability programs like I did with the LED Street Light program during my previous term on Council. Solar energy, high efficiency watering, and additional LED light replacement can save the City money and lessen our impact on the environment. I am also currently outlining a continuation of the tree planting program in Bidwell Park to allow future generations to enjoy the natural beauty of Chico's crown jewel for years to come.

We, as a community, have much work to do, as does the City Council. We need our community to come together to find solutions to our issues, to criticize when necessary but to always be mindful of the goal, and to realize that we are one community facing the same problems. We may have differing perspectives, and we may have different understandings, but we must leave behind the arguments of the past and find intelligent and calm consensus.

This pandemic has tested us. The fact that I am addressing our community in this way, virtually, speaks to the life-altering challenges we have faced. It has pushed many over the edge as problems like suicide, depression, illness and financial collapse have affected our community, our state, and our nation. I am asking you to support our small businesses during these hard times. They need your help now more than ever. Take the time to wait in their lines, be patient with their occupancy limits, but please patronize their stores, get curbside takeout from our local restaurants, make the effort.... Truly, make the effort.

The change within our community starts with you. Chico needs you to make this happen and all of us must work together to realize this goal.

I am ready and I know our community is ready. Join us in these efforts.

To you and yours, I wish you a Happy New Year!

For media inquiries, please contact Lynda Gizzi, Public Information Officer, at (530) 896-7204.

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