

Tonight’s State-of-the-City address, has three components: Finances, 2022 accomplishments, and 2023 aspirations.

1. Finances

At the beginning of 2023, the state of City finances remain solid. The biggest exception is our sewer fund, which we are in the process of addressing by raising rates through the Proposition 218 process. Other notable activities includes a better than average contribution from interest, and a poorer than anticipated contribution from TOT (transient occupancy tax). The TOT shortfall is due largely to the Imperial being closed for renovations.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that our long-time accountant, Mary-Louise Nixon, passed away last month after a debilitating illness that lasted more than a year. Both personally and on behalf of the City, I would like to express gratitude for her careful stewardship of our funds and extend condolences to her family. During her leave, we were ably supported by our Treasurer, Holly Groth. We will discuss the future of the accounting position later in this agenda.

2022 Accomplishments

In January of 2022, I described six focus areas for the year. When I look back on these today, the expression , “It’s not a sprint; it’s a marathon” comes immediately to mind. The following chart summarizes our progress in these areas:

2022 Focus Area	Minimal Progress	Good Progress	Excellent Progress	Complete
1: Sewer study				
2: Housing Element				
3: Short-term rentals				
4: American Rescue Plan				
5: Fire resiliency				
6: New park at City Hall				

2022 focus area 1: sewer study. I hope this is nearly done. You should have received a letter explaining the new rates, the process for filing objections, and the public hearing date, which is March 3. There are still details to nail down, but I hope the heavy lifting is finally done on this, and we will be able to move forward to bring our sewer system into solvency.

2022 focus area 2: Housing Element. Again, I hope this is nearly done. Last month, Susan Peters conducted an informational session during the last City Council meeting; and now, the State is conducting its review. With luck, the State will approve it by late Spring.

2022 focus area 3: understand how Amador City is served or harmed by short-term rentals. We definitely started this work but have not made as much progress as I had hoped. Although committee members represent differing opinions about whether or not STRs should be more constrained, they are all in agreement that we need to do more to automate the collection of TOT.

2022 focus area 4: American Rescue Plan funds. At last, I can report that we made a decision! We used the funds to hire a City Manager for a year.

2022 focus area 5: fire resiliency. Sutter Creek Fire conducted a fire resiliency workshop, and we are in the early phases of becoming a Firewise Community. As for the tangible aspects of fire resiliency like debris clearing, we have made very little progress.

2022 focus area 6: new park at City Hall. We made a lot of progress on the park this year. As of the January, 2023 City Council meeting, we are prepared to go out to bid; we expect completion start construction in April.

In addition to working on these focus areas, we accomplished a great deal, including the following:

We had a good year for City Staff. We gave long-overdue raises to existing staff. We also hired a new City Attorney, a City Manager, and a City Planner. These last two additions are in support of our efforts to improve City operations in a manner that is efficient and consistent with current practice and law.

We had a lot of activity in our Building Department -in addition to the design and engineering of the park, we revised Encroachment Permit, passed updated Building Code Ordinance, updated permit fees, and added a public-facing permit tracking document available monthly at City Council meetings.

We made steps toward the intractable problem of speeding on main street by installing radar speed signs at either end of town. While not a perfect solution, it is a tangible step in solving the problem. We have also raised this issue with the Sherriff and have asked them to increase their presence in town as a deterrent.

Finally, while the City Council and Staff work largely in the background, much of the excitement and “buzz” in the City is attributable to its residents and businesses. ACBCA had a banner year, taking advantage of lessening COVID restrictions. Among the many wonderful and well-attended events, I want to specifically point out the return of Dancin’ in the Streets, an iconic event for Amador City. While the City provides the table, residents and businesses provide the feast. And it was certainly a bountiful feast this year.

2023 Aspirations

Looking forward, 2023 looks to be an action-packed year with the following focus areas. Note that the first five items are carryovers from 2022.

Focus area 1: Proposition 218 process for sewer rates.

Focus area 2: Begin needed updates to City Code as described in the Housing Element.

Focus area 3: Construct the park at City Hall.

Focus area 4: Update short-term rental ordinance as necessary.

Focus area 5: Fire resiliency. This involves completing our Firewise application, strengthening our relationship with Sutter Creek Fire, and acquiring funding for debris removal on public and private property.

Focus area 6: Safety on Main Street. Although we have installed speed signs, we would like to implement additional measures to encourage drivers to drive more slowly down Main Street.

Focus area 7: Road maintenance and repairs. We would like to explore what the City would be obligated to do in order to receive up to \$250,000 from the state that could be dedicated to road improvements.

Focus area 8: BPAC (Bicycle Pedestrian Access Committee) participation. This committee is working on improvements that increase safety for bicyclists and pedestrians on the back route between Amador City and Sutter Creek. It is the first phase of a larger, County-wide effort.

Focus area 9: Update City code as needed to improve our approach to code enforcement.

Focus area 10: Make sure City website is up-to-date and Municode is up-to-date.

And with that, I wish you all a healthy, happy, and bountiful 2023.