

RYAN: Retiring mayor most proud of Sisters' visioning process

Continued from page 1

under City Manager Cory Misley, has a highly qualified staff that keeps the City humming, and boards and commissions peopled by qualified citizens selected from the largest pool of candidates to ever step forward to volunteer.

The City is in a strong financial position and able to make plans for the future. The successful completion of the Sisters Country Vision, championed by Ryan, laid the groundwork for the Sisters 2040 Comprehensive Plan update currently underway.

In response to questions posed by *The Nugget*, Ryan offered his assessment of the work done by the City Council under his leadership, and the health of the City as he leaves office.

What are you most proud of?

Without a doubt, I am most proud of our visioning process for Sisters Country. I have always been a forward planner and this process provides exactly that for our community. All the key organizations of the city and county, along with community volunteers and consultants, came together to make the visioning a serious process that has already achieved great accomplishments and has the potential for even more significant progress. And the best part of the visioning is that it is a community plan with 20 key strategies the community voted for as the most pressing needs

for Sisters Country. I look forward to the continuation of this progress and the updated Sisters Comprehensive Plan which will use many of the facets of the visioning in its formation.

I am proud of the progress we made in expanding affordable housing in Sisters and partnering with organizations like Housing Works, Hayden Homes, and Habitat for Humanity. I have been told many times as mayor that Sisters led the way for Deschutes County in our ability to expand affordable housing in a town that has to constantly balance its attractiveness to people who can afford to live here vs. people who work here but find it unaffordable to live here.

I am proud of the stability and overall healthy morale of our staff, Council, and supporting boards/commissions the last four years. There was definitely some significant turmoil and prognosticators that focused on negative aspects of the City and its management. That corner has clearly been turned, as evidenced recently by the amount of interest from the community to join City Council or other City boards/commissions. Having a strong city manager and supporting staff, along with an engaged Council, cannot be underestimated as the main reason for this progress.

I am proud of our newly signed contract with the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office and our ability to expand and commit to community policing for Sisters.

I am proud of the economic progress and diversification that we have made in Sisters. Our partnership

with EDCO was a bit tenuous when I started as mayor, partly due to the amount of turnover in both staff (especially the city manager position) and Council. Stability and trust have allowed both organizations to thrive and focus on improving our overall economy. This is highly evidenced by the growth and maturity of the local EDCO Board of Directors that is driving this progress.

Finally, I am proud of our many businesses and not-for-profit organizations and their tenacity to adapt and survive through devastating wildfire seasons and the recent pandemic.

What do you wish could have been accomplished but wasn't?

Honestly, I have no regrets. In the four years as mayor, I believe our Council was known for tackling prevailing issues head on. Obviously, the pandemic shifted focus somewhat this last year, but we continued to be proactive. Similar to the EDCO relationship progress above, the City is committed to planning the future relationship with the Chamber of Commerce and determining what structure would be best for Sisters and its businesses going forward. Those discussions are under way, but progress was a bit slower due to the pandemic. Finally, I do feel that we need to be more proactive in overall government in regard to lowering the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. Recent events are foretelling of what will continue to happen unless major change is made at all levels of government.

What did you see as the biggest challenges of your tenure and how were they

met or not met?

In my private life, the saying was always pairing "challenges with opportunities" and again I am so proud of our Council and staff for tackling so many issues, as evidenced by the accomplishments I listed above. As I said, there was definitely a bit of a cloud hanging over our City for some time, and every surrounding town and the county knew about it. I could never understand why, given how special this place that we live in is, so I wanted to see if I could help turn that around with my previous private experience. I believe honesty, lack of personal bias, hard work and having the City's best interests at heart are so important as the key attributes for City Council, staff, and the supporting boards/commissions to have, and that makeup is what drove our turnaround to what is now an admired City for its management and communication style.

Your hope for the coming year for the City and Council?

Simply continue the positive trend we have established. The updated Comprehensive Plan will be the biggest task, as that provides the roadmap for how we grow and how we manage and balance that growth. The momentum is already there for a successful process, and keeping the community informed and engaged will be paramount.

Words of wisdom for the incoming Council and new mayor?

This one is easy: First and foremost, hire great city managers and let them hire and maintain great City staff.

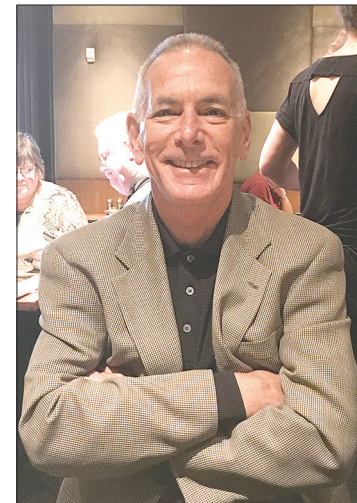


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Chuck Ryan is retiring after serving four years as Sisters' mayor.

Second, let go of any personal bias or ego in your decision making. Third, assuming you've done number one right, let staff do their job. Fourth, don't take on too many tasks that can overload your staff — focus on quality vs. quantity. Lastly, have fun. Don't take yourself too seriously and remember how lucky we are to be part of this community.

What's next for you?

I am so grateful for the four years I spent as mayor, but it does limit my ability to travel and do other things so, as the saying goes, "happy wife, happy life." It is time for me to free up my time somewhat to allow us to enjoy our family and explore the country and kick back a bit.



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