



# CANYON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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## State of the County Address

*March 12, 2014*

### *Introductory Remarks – Commissioner Steve Rule*

Good afternoon everyone and thank you for joining us for the 2014 Canyon County State of the County Address. I hope you all enjoyed your wonderful lunch. A special thanks to Stacey Mooney and her staff for putting it together.

I also want to thank Nampa Chamber Director Debbie Kling and her staff for allowing us to present today.

Before we get started, there are a few people in attendance that I'd like to recognize. Would all the Mayors please stand up. Thank you all for your efforts in making Canyon County a great place to live and work. We appreciate all of your support.

Would all the Canyon County Elected Officials and Department Heads please stand up. Thank you for all that you do. We sincerely appreciate your hard work and dedication to Canyon County. Same goes for all of our county employees in attendance today. You are the real driving force behind what we do and the commissioners really do appreciate it.

I'd like to also recognize any State officials and legislators that we have with us today. As well as any other representatives from any other offices. Thank you for all being here.

## *Property Taxes & County Budget – Commissioner Steve Rule<sup>i</sup>*

It's been two years since we did our last State of the County Address, and we have quite a bit to share with you today. So let's get started.

The first thing we want to talk to you about is our county budget and explain where your tax dollars are going. Here's a pie chart illustrating the source of our funding. You'll see that 49 percent of our budget is supported by property taxes, next highest at 17 percent is our fund balance, services and fees, and so on and so forth. (refer to chart)

And here's one showing where our money is being spent. And as you can see almost half of our budget is dedicated to public safety – which is and will continue to be one of Canyon County's top priorities. (this includes Sheriff, jail, Prosecuting Attorney, Public Defender, dispatch and emergency communication, juvenile detention, misdemeanor probation) The next largest is general government services – things like our assessor, clerk, treasurer, coroner, IT department, etc. These are all services that are necessary for our operations and to provide services that are mandated under Idaho law.

Other portions of our budget go towards things like indigent care, parks and recreation, the animal shelter, and county fair. Our indigent care fund is the one area of our budget that's seen a steady increase over my 7 years as a commissioner. This year it's over five percent of our total budget. It's something we believe needs a better funding mechanism and we hope our state legislature will explore all options to find one. They can't simply continue to push it onto the backs of county taxpayers.

Here's a look some of the larger taxing districts in our county and the difference in dollars they requested from taxpayers over the past two years. At the far right, you'll notice Canyon County actually lowered your property tax budget this past year.

Here's a table that offers a better breakdown of the actual amount of levied by each taxing district shown in the previous graph. You can see down at the bottom that Canyon County put over \$1.5 million back in the pockets of taxpayers, and lowered our overall property tax budget by over four percent. We were also able to lower our levy rate by 11 percent.

And since we're here in Nampa, here's a pie chart showing where your property tax dollars are going. You can see that half goes to the City of Nampa, followed by 23-percent to the County, and 17-percent to the Nampa School District.

2013 was also a year where we really started to show signs of an improving economy. We saw a total of 564 building permits issued – a level that hasn't been seen since before the recession in 2008. The number of permits for new single-family homes almost doubled compared to 2012. We also had a close to 30 percent rise in permits issued for industrial, office or non-residential construction.

The total value of all building and mechanical permits was \$48.5 million.

Early returns on this fiscal year are showing good signs that the economy is really beginning to rebound from the recession. The recent announcement by Materne North America that they will be investing 85-million dollars into the former Micron Plant is fantastic news for Canyon County. They are expected to bring more than 230 jobs to the area, not including all the work that will be needed to retrofit the facility. You can find more information on the coming jobs at the website on your screen.

Before I turn it over to Commissioner Alder I want to highlight what I think are some of our biggest accomplishments over the past several years. With reduced budgets from 2007 to 2012, leadership maintained all county services, improving and building high quality service in all departments despite the reduced budgets. Not only did we reduce your

property taxes \$1.5 million this year, we are completely debt free as a county. We don't owe a dime to anyone for anything. That's a testament to strong leadership. We have been – and will continue to be – good stewards of your taxpayer dollars.

Thank you.

## *County Campus Improvements – Commissioner Kathy Alder*

Thank you, Commissioner Rule.

This has been an exciting year for Canyon County in terms of improvements and changes to our county campus in Caldwell. We are in the process of creating a more welcoming environment for our citizens, starting with our new Administration Building.

To date – construction on the building is more than 40-percent completed. We continue to stay on budget and on time. You're looking at some photos from our recent tour with all the Elected Officials, and as you can see things are moving right along.

Once it's completed this summer, the Administration Building will be the new home for our Assessor, Treasurer, Clerk, Development Services Department and Indigent Services Department. And beginning next fiscal year, it will also be home to our new in-house public defender's office. You'll hear more on that from Commissioner Hanson in a few minutes.

We're also working to build a historical art display for the entryway – something that all our citizens can enjoy. I strongly believe that the people of Canyon County are proud of their heritage and deep roots in the community. And we want to capture that in an art display that pays tribute to our rich history and culture.

So we are asking anyone – citizens, businesses, historical groups – to nominate historical artifacts for our historical art display in the new building. They can be historical photos, documents, family relics, or any other type of artifact that reflects a period of Canyon County History.

Once we get the nominations, they will be reviewed and vetted by the Canyon County Historical Preservation Commission. Around fifteen finalists will be chosen for the final art display, which we hope to have ready for the grand opening of the Administration Building.

Information on how to nominate can be found on the screen or in the handout, it's also available on our website.

Meanwhile, we've continued to find ways to save money and cut costs throughout the construction process. For example, we were able to get 34 pallets of Herman Miller cubicle furniture from the Bureau of Reclamation in Boise for no cost. Bought new, the same furniture would cost approximately 20-thousand dollars.

We were also able to get another 38 pallets of Herman Miller cubicle furniture from the IRS in Ogden, Utah through a government surplus site. Our IT Development Manager Don Brown found it on the auction site and we ended up only having to pay one dollar for the entire set of pallets. We did have to pay a company to transport it up here for us. But all-in-all, we were able to get the majority of our cubicle furniture for the new building for less than five-thousand dollars.

Our facilities department has also been hard at work building all of the cabinetry and casework for the new building. This will result in a significant cost savings for the county and taxpayers, and we're lucky to have such skilled craftsmen on our staff.

Anyone interested in staying up to date with the administration building can do so our website. You can find conceptual drawings, floor plan layouts, and the 24/7 construction cam. We also have a time lapse video of the construction process.

We're also more than half way through the courtroom addition project on the Southwest Idaho Juvenile Detention Center. We're expecting to have this new addition opened by the end of spring. It will add two new courtrooms to the Juvenile Detention Center, along with Judge's Chambers, public restrooms and a common meeting area for families of the detainees.

This new addition will improve the efficiency of our criminal justice system and also cut down on the man hours needed to transport juvenile

offenders to their court proceedings, which currently take place in the courthouse.

I also want to remind you that both of these projects are being done without any additional tax money. The Administration Building is being financed through an agreement with the Caldwell Urban Renewal Agency – and the Juvenile Courtroom Addition is being paid for with revenues from the State Lottery Commission and court fines.

Both of these projects, but the Administration Building in particular, will change the landscape of our county campus in Caldwell. The Administration Building is located in what used to be one of the main employee parking lots. So it's been a bit of an adjustment period for our employees and we thank you for your patience.

If you take a look at the map on your screen you'll see the new parking lots that will be completed prior to the opening of the new building. We actually just put them out to bid a few weeks ago. All told, there will be over 200 new paved parking spots. All of which will be lit and landscaped in accordance with Caldwell City Code.

Moving away from our Campus in Caldwell, great things are also happening at our Parks and Recreation Department. Last year between April 1 and October 31, nine thousand kids from the Treasure Valley and beyond, visited Celebration Park and Wilson Springs Nature Area for our school field trip programs. The numbers for 2014 are even bigger and there is a waiting list of teachers who are anxiously awaiting word that there may be an opening for a field trip this spring. Arguably, our field trips are the most popular and well attended in the Northwest.

In 2014, the completion of the Canyon Crossroads Transportation Museum at Celebration Park will increase the number of field trips available for students and teachers. With a new indoor classroom, our field trip season can expand beyond the months of April through October, and waiting lists will become a thing of the past.

Plans for exhibits, presentations and special events in the museum have just begun. Our citizens and visitors can get their first glimpse of this exciting new facility in May during Idaho Archaeology and Historic Preservation Month.

We've also continued our strong partnerships with Idaho universities and colleges...including those we currently have with Boise State, College of Western Idaho, and the University of Idaho.

Beyond Celebration Park, Canyon County Parks, in partnership with Idaho Fish and Game, has completed improvements at Martin Landing. A popular Fish and Game access that had fallen into some disrepair, Martin Landing is located west of Parma at the confluence of the Boise, Snake and Owyhee rivers. It now offers great outdoor recreation amenities, including: ten (10) RV spaces – one of which is ADA accessible; new restrooms; “boat-in” tent camping spaces on the river; and day-use facilities.

If you're not spending your leisure time in our Canyon County Parks, you should be!

Now, I'm going to turn it over to Commissioner Craig Hanson to talk about some of the other things happening in Canyon County.

## *Public Safety/Year in Review – Commissioner Craig Hanson*

Thank you, Commissioner Alder. And thank you all again for being here.

The state of Prosecution in Canyon County is stronger than ever. Our Prosecutor, Bryan Taylor, has assembled an incredible staff that works tirelessly every day in the name of public safety and facilitating a well-functioning county government.

Each year, Prosecutor Taylor presents to city councils around the County updating our communities regarding the State of Prosecution.

According to those reports, you can see an almost steady rise in the number of cases handled by the Prosecutor's Office over the past five years. (make reference to chart). With an increase to population, comes an increase to criminal cases. If you look specifically at the number of felonies and misdemeanors, you'll notice the number of felonies prosecuted were slightly up last year, while misdemeanors were slightly down. Despite the increased workload placed upon our Prosecutor's Office, Bryan and his staff have been able to maintain the highest level of dedication, courage, and integrity to assure that our community is safe.

Our Prosecutor's Office continues to provide excellent prosecution services for the City of Nampa – handling all of their misdemeanors and infractions. Over the past 4 years, this agreement has saved Nampa taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars; \$200,000 in contract costs alone. (This number is based off the contract he replaced. The next closest bid the year we took over was \$200k more per year) This is because the County does not make a profit from this service. They also have the benefit of a completely paperless system, which not only improves efficiency and effectiveness, but also saves untold thousands in paper and transportation costs for the taxpayers of Nampa.

We understand that Mayor Henry is exploring the possibility of going a different route for their prosecution services. We urge the City to stick with its current agreement with the Prosecutor's Office. The service is

excellent and it is the most efficient and effective prosecution you can receive for the price and doing anything less would be a disservice to Nampa citizens and taxpayers.

I'd also like to take a moment to recognize Erica Kallin (**Kuh-lean**), one of our deputy prosecutors. Erica was recently honored as one of the Idaho Business Review's Women of the Year. She has served as a deputy prosecutor for nine years and currently supervises the Prosecutor's Special Victims Unit. She has committed herself to become one of the foremost prosecutorial experts on child maltreatment and crimes of abuse in the State of Idaho. Her tenacity in the courtroom and her compassion for children has led to successful prosecution of over 100 criminal defendants in the past 18 months. (**Ask Erica to stand**) Please join me in a round of applause for Erica.

As Commissioner Alder mentioned earlier, we're transitioning to an in-house public defender's office in the coming year. Our goal is to have the position filled by mid-summer, so whoever is appointed has time to build their staff and get everything in line for the start of fiscal year on October 1. We were prepared for this, so we budgeted extra money this year to assist with the transition and to ensure we don't compromise our current public defender service.

We decided to make the move after the studying the issue and reaching out to the Criminal Justice Planning Committee. They formed a subcommittee and issued a report, which recommended that we move to an in-house model. As Kathy noted, the public defender's office will be located in the new administration building. This will no doubt improve efficiency in our criminal justice and help promote the principles of defense as laid out by our constitution. It will also make for a more accountable and transparent system, which is what our citizens deserve.

Still, we strongly believe that public defense is a state responsibility that has been delegated to the counties for far too long. They need to find a better funding mechanism for it and we're happy to assist the legislature in developing a plan.

It's been an incredible year for Director Steve Jett and his staff over at the Southwest Idaho Juvenile Detention Center. Just a few weeks ago, the Center became certified as being compliant under the standards of the Federal Prison Rape Elimination Act, also known as PREA. This is a tremendous achievement in its own right – but also because it made it the first incarceration facility of any kind in the United States to be certified as PREA-compliant. This is an amazing accomplishment and a testament to the work Steve and his staff does with at-risk juveniles every single day.

Some of that work includes the Pat Andersen School Garden, which has donated over six-thousand pounds of produce to charity since 2011. You're looking at some of the pictures from their garden, which will make anyone jealous. The kids at the center, with help from the staff, learn everything about growing a garden – from planting and irrigation, all the way to harvest. It gives them a hands-on experience as they work towards the common goal – and it couldn't be done without the help of the generous sponsors that donate supplies and materials to make the program a success.

It's also been a successful year for our Problem Solving Courts, in particular our Veterans Treatment Court and Juvenile Drug Court, which both had their first-ever graduation ceremonies this past year.

I would now like to ask my fellow Commissioners Kathy Alder and Steve Rule to join me as we discuss two more important topics.

## *Canyon County Fair – Board of County Commissioners*

The Canyon County Fair has been a hot topic of late, so we thought we should address some of the misinformation that is out there. First of all, we'd like to point out that the total budget for the Fair is roughly 375-thousand dollars, which is less than one percent of our entire budget. And of that, two-thirds goes towards salaries and benefits. It's a small price to pay for the agricultural and educational opportunities it provides for Canyon County children, let alone the entertainment it brings for families each year.

The Canyon County Fair will remain in its current location for 2014 and 2015 both for the annual fair and its other year-round events.

The Fair is currently in discussions with the Ford Idaho Center to determine the feasibility of moving the four-day annual fair to the Nampa-based event center. We are still awaiting cost proposals from the ID Center.

If moving to the Ford Idaho Center is not feasible, it would cost approx. \$10 - \$12 million to move the Fair to the proposed location on Hwy 20/26. The money would come from private donations and would not include any additional property tax dollars.

More than 45,000 people attend the Fair each year and it is simply outgrowing its current location, especially with the recent addition of the College of Idaho Football program. (C of I still hasn't granted us permission to use Simplot Stadium for concerts this year – who knows what will happen in the future)

## *Lake Lowell – Board of County Commissioners*

### *Commissioner Alder*

When it comes to the issue of Lake Lowell and the Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge, we remain steadfast in our fight for local oversight and management.

Based on the most recent draft of the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Comprehensive Conservation Plan – and after reviewing it with our legal department – we have serious concerns. The federal regulations themselves – which may appear reasonable for the time being – are not as troubling as the state's rights issue and the question of whether any federal regulations are even lawful.

Our primary concern has to do with giving the federal government the authority to regulate our use of the waters of Lake Lowell to any degree. We Commissioners and our Prosecuting Attorney's Office are still of the firm belief that the federal government has limited authority to regulate the use of our man-made lake created for irrigation purposes. They can certainly administer the Refuge lands proper, but the waters of Lake Lowell are not theirs. By allowing the federal government to regulate Lake Lowell now, we grant the federal government a right they may not actually have and a foothold that we may not be able to eliminate in the future.

### *Commissioner Rule*

We are still waiting for the US Fish & Wildlife Service to the release their final draft of their Comprehensive Conservation Plan...which is expected sometime in the coming months. If the issue of water rights still remains...we are seriously considering legal action to clarify that the federal government does not have the authority to regulate our waters.

We urge you all to show your support we fight together to protect our freedom, heritage, and way of life.

Thank you all for being here as we work together to make Canyon County a great place to live, work and play.

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