



2018 Year in Review

Ken Jaray, Mayor, Manitou Springs, CO

2018 was a year of many surprises, challenges, and great opportunities. I thought it would be helpful to take a quick look back before jumping into 2019. We will be talking about some of the lessons learned and opportunities for next year at the January 8th City Council meeting.

Personally, I was honored to represent Manitou Springs at so many community events, celebrations, and local, regional and state meetings. Starting with the Manni Awards (coming up for 2019 on Thursday, January 31st), and ending up with the Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners and AdAmAn sendoff, the year was filled with magical Manitou moments. Times when we get together to celebrate, acknowledge the good work of many volunteers, and solve community problems.

I especially want to acknowledge the hard and dedicated work of our City Council members Gary Smith, Bob Todd, Nancy Fortuin, Becky Elder, Susan Wolbrueck, and Jay Rohrer. They have been very patient with long meetings (we are hoping to change that), and very respectful and courteous during our deliberations. For me, this is a really critical part of good governance and something that I understand is not always followed in other communities. I am delighted that we do so here in Manitou Springs.

There were a number of organizational challenges and opportunities including significant changes in our staff with the departures of our City Administrator and Planning Director. Although we have not been able to find a new City Administrator, we were grateful for the 10 months that Malcolm Fleming was able to spend with us as our Interim City Administrator. Malcolm left us in mid-December to take on the Town Administrator role in Erie, CO. We are looking forward to welcoming Leah Ash as our new Interim starting Jan. 8th. Leah has over 20 years experience as a Manager and Director for Colorado Springs Utilities and will bring a wealth of organizational experience to help us continue our efforts to create a responsive, efficient, and effective city government. We will continue the search for a new permanent City Administrator and hope to have someone on board by June 1st. We are also very fortunate to have hired Kim Johnson as our new Planning Director in late November.

As part of our effort to create an Employer of Choice organization, we implemented salary decompression adjustments to align salaries with comparable markets and approved a merit pay for performance system. We will be focusing significant effort to create a fun, fair, ethical and innovative work environment that allows our staff to do meaningful work based on clear and well-defined objectives. We will strive to provide sufficient resources and recognize contributions throughout the year.

The city dealt with major infrastructure challenges this year including the Park Avenue bridge, the collapse of Manitou Ave., July floods, hail damage, and lots of water main breaks. Early in the year we took on a major graffiti remediation effort in the area around Rainbow Falls. So far

these efforts are paying off as the area has generally remained clean. A huge thank you to city staff and volunteers who helped deal with the aging infrastructure needs and keep our city clean and beautiful. We also recognize how difficult it was for businesses, residents and visitors and very much appreciate their patience and understanding.

There were a number of positive developments including the creation of a partnership with the City of Colorado Springs and the Cog to fund a comprehensive mobility study. There will be lots of opportunities for the community to help guide this process over the next 6-12 months. We also began the design process for improvements to the Ruxton corridor and approved a Creekwalk Master Plan.

The City continued our efforts to improve how we manage and preserve our mineral springs including a recently completed Williams Canyon Functionality Study and improved communication and expectations between Council / staff and the Mineral Springs Foundation. We are committed to providing the necessary resources to preserve and protect these important natural features of our town.

In June the City Council adopted a framework to help **strengthen the strong culture of engagement** and better involve our community in the decision-making process. We started with resolutions to frame the work of the Crystal Park Road project and Hiawatha Gardens redevelopment efforts. We will continue to refine the framework and create capacity to take on additional projects. Our overarching goal is to ensure that all are heard, respected, and valued throughout the engagement process.

The year also brought significant economic challenges including a decrease in parking revenue, Cog Railway closure, and storm damage. We were relieved to have been able to negotiate a long-term tax incentive agreement with the Cog to ensure they rebuild and continue their place as a significant economic driver. We also implemented several strategies to help maintain and improve economic vitality and growth including funding a revolving business loan pool, the creation of a 5-year capital improvement plan, and adoption of a conservative 2019 budget.

It has been a busy and very rewarding year. **Many have asked if the position of Mayor turned out to be what I expected.** I certainly did not expect all of the weather and infrastructure challenges, but was very gratified by the support, participation, and encouragement of our community. Whether it's the business owners and Chamber of Commerce helping with our holiday party or citizens taking time to help hire city staff we have weathered the storms, turned challenges into opportunities, and created a stronger platform to help build our future.

I am looking forward to sharing our 2019 work plan with the community over the coming weeks. At the January 8th City Council meeting we will be talking about prioritizing our projects to ensure that we are able to provide sufficient human and financial resources to get the job done right. Please do share this with others and as always you can reach me at kjaray@comsgov.com or (719) 550-4690. @cityofmanitousprings, @allaboutmanitousprings, @ilovemanitou, @visit.manitousprings