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CITY OF
REXBURG
America's Family Community

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Living Strong

Thank you Bart for the introduction, it is a real pleasure working with you and I am very appreciative of the time and effort you put into serving the community as a Council Member, you do an excellent job. I would also like to recognize Council President Chris Mann, Councilman Rex Erickson, Councilman Richard Woodland, Councilman Adam Stout, and Councilman Randy Schwendiman. I am grateful for their commitment to public service, their sense of teamwork, and dedication to the City of Rexburg. It is a real pleasure to work with these fine individuals. I ask you to join with me in expressing appreciation for their service. (Applause)

I would also like to thank the 122 full-time and 84 part-time employees who make up the City of Rexburg's workforce. Please know that as Mayor, City Council Members, and citizens we are aware of your hard work, and know that none of the accomplishments I will share today would have been possible without you. I want to especially thank those employees who helped organize and coordinate today's event, it took a lot of effort by numerous people. Can I please have all city employees that are in attendance stand? Please join with me in giving them a round of applause. (Applause)

I would also like to thank all of you for being here today. Because of your attendance we have been able to raise over \$3,000 that will be used to send members of our Mayor's Youth Advisory Board to the annual Association of Idaho Cities Conference in Boise this coming summer. We started the Mayor's Youth Advisory Board five years ago and during that time this board has provided countless hours of community service to make Rexburg a better place to live. We have wonderful youth in this community and the members of the Mayor's Youth Advisory Board are an excellent representation of the quality young people we have in Rexburg. Thank you Jessica for your remarks, the future of our community is in good hands with our youth.

I am also pleased that my son's fifth grade class could participate in the events today by presenting the flag ceremony. Though they had to get back to school, Mrs. Bidwell and Mrs. Corbridge classes have definitely earned a pizza party with the mayor next week. I also would like to thank my wife, Jen, for being here and thank her for her support.

This fundraiser would have not been possible without the generous support of our sponsors for today's meal: A-1 Rental, Archibald Insurance, Beehive Federal Credit Union, First American Title, the Idaho National Lab through corporate funds from Battelle Energy Alliance, Legacy Flight Museum, Madison Economic Partners, the Rexburg Area Chamber of Commerce, Rocky Mountain Power, Rudd and Company, and Zions Bank. These businesses and organizations are great community partners and I would like to recognize them for their support for this event. Please join with me in giving our sponsors a round of applause. (Applause)

THE BUILDER

**I saw them tearing a building down
A team of men in my hometown.
With a heave and a ho and a yes yes yell,
they swung a beam and a sidewall fell.**

**And I said to the foreman, "Are these men skilled?"
"Like the ones you'd use if you had to build?"
And he laughed and said, "Oh no, indeed...
the most common labor is all I need...
for I can destroy in a day or two
what takes a builder ten years to do."**

**So I thought to myself as I went on my way...
Which one of these roles am I willing to play?
Am I one who is tearing down as I carelessly make my way around?
Or am I one who builds with care, in order to make the world a
little better... because I was there?**

In our everyday life there are those people who in quiet and unassuming ways do much to improve the lives of those around them. In my mind they are truly builders of our community. For some it may be as simple as making a homemade batch of cookies for a busy working mom, or the person who gets up in the early hours and shovels snow off of neighbor's sidewalks. Or it might be acts that leave lasting legacies in the community for years to come. In Rexburg we have many of these Unsung Heroes; however, I would like to recognize five individuals today as the 2009 Rexburg's Unsung Heroes: Can I have the following individuals join me here at the podium for a presentation? Keith Archibald, Margaret Arnold, Trent Cichos, Joseph West and unable to be here today, Richard Smith.

I ask that you hold your applause until I have made all of the presentations. The first Unsung Hero is:

Keith Archibald – donates his time to benefitting the senior citizens of our community as the director of Madison Senior Center. Keith is an unpaid volunteer who works to receive grants and other funding to improve the quality of life for many in the community. As a former educator, Keith demonstrates an amazing ability to interface with people of all generations.

Margaret Arnold – as past chairperson of the Rexburg Arts Council, and still a current board member, Margaret donates countless hours to planning the Tabernacle’s summer concert series, and supports many other art events in the community. Because of her efforts the Arts in Rexburg are expanding, and improving every year. Margaret and her husband have owned their business for about 45 years, and Margaret can still be found working in the business every day.

Trent Cichos – gives of his time and resources to many youth programs in the community, including the Rexburg Police Department’s Shop-with-a-Cop program. Each year we have McDonald’s host area children for breakfast prior to their shopping experience during the Christmas holidays. Trent, you and your family’s generosity to the community is greatly appreciated and thank you for your support for many community programs that benefit our youth.

Richard Smith – and his wife Jill are about to leave Rexburg for a few years to serve as a Mission President for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Richard’s mark on our community is admirable. He has served on many boards as a director; and in recent years has served as the BYU-Idaho community liaison. We have worked closely with Richard to ensure that as the university has expanded the city is in a position to help support that growth. As a developer within Rexburg, Richard has also built great neighborhoods that serve many people within our city with well-designed streets, parks and other amenities. His counsel and wisdom have always been appreciated and will be missed.

Joseph West – as a member of the Trails of Madison County committee, Joseph has written and obtained several grants that have improved the trail system in Rexburg for walkers, joggers and bicyclists. Without his efforts many of the projects that have been completed or are in the works wouldn’t be accomplished. He is also a member of the Rexburg Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and serves as a Board Member of the Rexburg Urban Renewal District.

I would like to thank each of these individuals for their service to our community; please join with me in giving these “Unsung Heroes” a round of applause. (Applause) Thank you, please be seated.

As you can see on the handout at your table, the theme of my remarks today is Living Strong in America's Family Community. Our greatest challenge for the coming year will be the economy. Our nation is in a recession. Cities across the country are eliminating services, cutting budgets, and some are even declaring bankruptcy. Rexburg is not completely isolated from economic hardship. Some of our small businesses are struggling to make ends meet and we have seen some friends and neighbors lose their jobs. Yet, amidst these concerns, the City of Rexburg is faring better than most. Our unemployment rate is one of the lowest in the State of Idaho, our housing prices are more stable, Brigham Young University-Idaho recently announced an expansion in their student population and according to real estate numbers, and our community is slightly ahead of last year on home sales.

To give you a sense of perspective, when I was first elected to the city council the building valuation for new construction that year was \$4 million and last year we had new construction valued at \$89 million, that is over a 2000% increase. In the City of Rexburg, living strong means that our community is well prepared for our current economic challenges. For over twenty years the City has maintained a "rainy day fund" of at least 25% of the general fund budget. Currently this fund is at 27% of the general fund expenditures and in addition we have set aside another 4% in this year's contingency fund to offset any downturn in revenues or unforeseen expenditures. Based on numbers that we have received from the Idaho State Tax Commission we are anticipating a shortfall in sales tax revenue of \$172,000 in the current fiscal year. While we have set aside reserves that would cover these shortfalls, I think it is important for us to match these shortfalls with a reduction in our current budget. Over the last two weeks I have worked with each department to strategically cut in areas that will not dramatically reduce the services we are providing the community. The end product is a more efficient local government that is well prepared for the future.

A lean, responsive budget is part of living strong, but we have also worked hard to create a community that promotes economic health and job creation. The City's most productive role in economic health is building an environment where businesses can succeed and thrive. The consolidation of our community development department with the functions of City Hall was the driving force in the purchase of the new City Hall building. We have sold the current City Hall building to Madison Memorial Hospital and have purchased the AMET building or some of you may remember this as the old JC Penney building. We will lease out a portion of the new building to the hospital and we will also sell our building on Main Street where the Planning & Zoning, GIS, and building officials are currently located. This will enable us to have a "one stop" shop for businesses, citizens, and developers that interact with the City of Rexburg, thus increasing our efficiency and ability to provide excellent customer service. The purchase of the new building is more than offset with the sale of our existing buildings and property located at the Rexburg Business Park. We will fund the remodeling costs of the new building out of existing reserve funds.

Another tool that ensures that we are planning for our future is our comprehensive plan. In 2008, we updated our compressive plan and went through an extensive process of defining how our community will develop over the next twenty-years. Numerous community meetings were held and countless hours were devoted to make sure we adopted a plan that reflected the priorities of our community. I would like to read you the Community Vision Statement that was adopted as part of that plan:

Residents of Rexburg have chosen to live here because they enjoy the current quality of life, aesthetics, recreational opportunities, mix of land uses, and patterns of development that the City provides. The primary vision of the City of Rexburg Comprehensive Plan is to ensure that these qualities are maintained, preserved, and enhanced.

Along with the Comprehensive Plan, another tool is the creation of Urban Renewal Districts. In 2008, we created an Urban Renewal District in the University Boulevard area that will encourage investment in this large commercial district. Currently the Marriott Spring Hill Suites is under construction in this Urban Renewal area and I anticipate we will see additional growth occur as the new Madison High School gets completed.

With this growth we need a good transportation system, which will help us live strong by boosting the economy. In 2008, we completed a number of transportation projects including the re-construction of east Main Street by the hospital, the widening of seventh south, the construction of Sunrise Drive, crack and chip sealing a number of streets, the improvements on 4th East near the Eaglewood Subdivision, and upgrading some signals with more energy efficient LED lights. We have over \$2.3 million worth of street and infrastructure improvements planned for 2009. One of our main focus areas this year is on safety improvements. Over the last several years with the increased number of residential homes and apartments along Pioneer Road we have seen a number of vehicle accidents at the intersection of Main Street and Pioneer Road. Over the past several years we have been able to purchase land through a grant from the FAA and are now in the position to move forward on this project which will bridge the canal and realign Pioneer Road with Airport Road. Since Main Street is also State Highway 33, we are working with the Idaho Transportation Department to signalize this new intersection. Another project is the pedestrian safety improvements planned for 3rd South and 2nd West. As you are aware we have had two pedestrian fatalities at this particular intersection and our planned improvements will dramatically increase the safety at this intersection. These improvements are also a part of our “Share the Road” campaign which focuses on education, enforcement, and engineering. We have partnered with the BYU-Idaho in getting the message to students of the importance of sharing the road and being attentive both as a driver and pedestrian. We have stepped up our enforcement all over town as it relates to crosswalks and school zones. And finally, we have added and will continue to add safety improvements in a number of high pedestrian areas. It takes all of us working together to increase our awareness and to “share the road.”

We live strong by remaining focused on essential services such as police, ambulance, and fire protection. We live in a very safe community and our Police Department has one of the highest solvability rates in the State of Idaho. We had a rate of 67% solvability in 2008. During the past year we also went through a major restructuring of our Police Department. For years we had an agreement with the university on how to best manage police protection on campus. The officers in the Campus Division were employed by BYU-Idaho, yet operated under the authority and command of our Chief of Police, Lynn Archibald. Because of an opinion by Attorney General Lawrence Wasden, we had to change how we operate the campus division. In 2008, we hired five police officers and one office staff person to provide police protection on and around the BYU-Idaho campus. We have an excellent working relationship with BYU-Idaho and they are contributing to the cost of this protection which has not only increased the police presence on campus, but has increased our police protection city-wide. I am grateful to President Clark, Henry Eyring and other BYU-Idaho personnel that made this consolidation occur very smoothly. We have an excellent Police department that serves this community well.

I also want to highlight the Rexburg-Madison Emergency Services Department for their integrity, service, and efficiency. In 2008, Chief Larson retired and we hired Chief Cory Child. Chief Child has stepped in and the department did not miss a beat. Last year, our Emergency Services Department responded to 410 fire calls and 1407 medical calls. We also were able to reduce our ISO rating in the City of Rexburg from 3 to 2 because of the purchase of a 109 foot ladder truck. This in turn benefits each resident of our community in better fire protection and possible reduced home owners' insurance fees. This department also received a \$1 million federal grant to help purchase radio equipment as we transition to the 700 MHz radio frequency. This multi-year upgrade will ensure that all first responders will be able to communicate with each other in a time of emergency.

Protecting our community is important, so is protecting our environment. In 2008, we operated the Rexburg Recycling Program and were able to keep 315 tons of recyclable goods out of the landfill. We continue to develop ways to expand and improve this program and I encourage you to participate with your own recycling efforts in your homes and businesses. Next week the City is sponsoring an Energy Efficient Seminar in cooperation with Rocky Mountain Power, I would encourage you to participate in this free seminar to lower your consumption of energy. As an organization, I believe we are leading by example. From our efforts to upgrade the energy efficiency of the new City Hall building, LED lighting upgrades, the energy efficiency seminar, to our recycling program – we are reducing our carbon footprint and saving taxpayer money.

Living strong means that we are also striving to improve the livability of our community through parks, trails, and recreational programs. This past December many residents of the city received a Community Satisfaction Survey that they were asked to fill out and return. We had a very good response rate and I would like to highlight the results concerning the

Parks and Recreation section of the survey. Eighty-six percent of the respondents believed that the maintenance of our park and trail system was good to excellent; we also received high marks for the quality of our facilities including the new Hidden Valley Park, the new community tennis courts, and the Idaho Centennial Carousel. Our parks crew really has done an excellent job taking care of our facilities. We also had very positive results concerning our current recreation programs. We had 3,007 children and adults participate in the recreation programs we offer and we were able to offer swimming lessons at a private facility in 2008, which made a lot of parents very happy. However only 34% of the respondents believed that we had adequate recreation for teenagers and 53% of respondents felt that we needed to increase our planning for future recreational facilities. As you may be aware, we are awaiting an Idaho Supreme Court decision concerning the development of Riverside Park and the future aquatic complex that will be built at that site. I am hopeful that we will receive a favorable ruling by the court this fall, which would then allow us to use urban renewal funds to develop this recreational complex. I agree with the overwhelming majority of the citizens of Rexburg in that we need additional soccer fields, ball diamonds, open space, trails, and a community swimming pool. As we wait for the court ruling we will begin the construction of the field portion of this complex. We currently have \$400,000 of federally allocated money to help with this development and hopefully by the end of the year we will have a clear direction on how best to move forward to provide adequate recreational opportunities for our youth.

I recently had the opportunity to speak to a government class at the high school. I was asked why I got involved in local government. My answer is probably the same thing you would say if you were asked why you are involved in a service club, or any civic organization; that is to make a positive difference. The decisions at the local level have a huge impact on your quality of life. It is at the local level that parks are developed, water is treated, garbage is picked up, pot holes are filled, streets are maintained, and jobs are created. Last night President Obama spoke to Congress and the nation and said “we will rebuild, we will recover, and the United States will be stronger than before.”

Well, I believe this happens at the local level, one community at a time. Because the City of Rexburg has been living strong, I think we have a great opportunity to lead the State of Idaho in its economic recovery. You should expect excellence from your local government. I know the City Council and I expect that. And, I’m convinced, day in and day out, City of Rexburg employees and community and business leaders deliver on that expectation. Let me assure you that we understand that many residents and businesses are facing unprecedented economic challenges. But we must continue to live strong by moving forward with an optimistic attitude and work together to make a positive difference for the greater good of the City of Rexburg. I appreciate the opportunity that you have granted me in serving as your mayor. Thank you.

Now I would like to spend a few minutes answering your questions. Please raise your hand, and we’ll bring you the microphone so that everyone can hear your question.

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