

**The Honorable Tammy de Weerd  
Mayor, City of Meridian  
2012 State of the City  
Much Done...More To Do  
February 1, 2012**

I am honored to stand before you today, as your Mayor; newly re-elected to serve this community for the next four years. I love this city - Meridian is where I work, this is where we have raised our kids; and, now, our kids are raising theirs. The state of our city is strong. Much has been done, but there is more to do.

What I learned from our citizens this last fall while campaigning was invaluable. I found there is broad support, citywide, for the direction this city is headed. Much has been done. People appreciate that, they recognize what has been accomplished.

Let me share 'the good' of what I learned on the campaign trail.

Our citizens appreciate living in a safe community. We are one of the safest cities in Idaho. Our crime has reduced by 36% per capita over the last eight years.

They like our Firefighters, our Pipes & Drums that you just heard, and they like that we have paramedics on every engine. Our Public Works Director, Tom Barry, appreciated this fact when his baby decided to arrive while they were still at home.

Our citizens want a responsive government; they like the efforts we have made in being more responsive to our citizens. I met a couple on the campaign trail that drove this home.

John and Shannon Uriona told me of the personal visit they received by our Building & Development Services staff that came to their home, sat in their living room, and focused on solving their problem. That had not been their experience when they first came to the city ten years ago. They felt they hit a stone wall then, now they appreciate our culture of service.

Let me share two more examples of this culture of service.

A letter to the editor, in the Idaho Statesman this weekend captured this perfectly. Let me read a few lines.

“During the standoff in Meridian on Jan. 13, my staff and I had the behind-the-scenes chance to observe our law enforcement in action...

...Everyone was professional and courteous in spite of their necessary focus on the issue at hand...Two officers stopped to check in with us the following Monday to say thank you and ensure everything was in order on our property. I was impressed with the way they conducted themselves during the incident, and the courtesy to check in later was a gesture of pure class and respect.” GARLAND RISNER.

This attitude, while different, was reflected when customer, Paul Stolle, was concerned about his water bill, showed up in our Water Department. Our Backflow Inspector Cullen Raley overheard the conversation. He told the customer he would run by and perform a leak check for him - right then. He followed him home and found the leak; we had a happy customer.

We will be bringing our customer care to the next level, rolling out 'The Meridian Way'. We went to our customer care experts, just like these I mentioned, to help frame the service you can expect. Our pledge is to provide CARE to our community in a timely, friendly, professional, and solution oriented manner. “The Meridian Way’ plaques will be present in each department; more importantly, they will be present in our approach and actions.

I found, while knocking on YOUR door, that you love our vibrant, family-friendly parks, our community center, and the many events that take place in them. There is great excitement and interest in the opening of the Julius M. Kleiner Park. Citizens have had a sneak peek, whether it was during the Veterans Rock of Honor dedication, or field trips to the new Meridian Senior Center. This is an amazing gift, a \$25 million donation from Eugene Kleiner to our community; scheduled to officially open June 9th. Heartfelt thanks to him and the Kleiner Trust.

Settlers Park continues to be ‘Your’ favorite. This park is not only loved for the ball fields, award winning playground, horseshoe pits, fishing pond, and tennis courts; but also for the events held there. Fourteen year

old Hailey Nelson went door-to-door campaigning because she loves, loves, loves, our CableOne Movie Night.

Our citizens like the opportunities to be involved and to have a voice. Just ask Ralph Chapelle or Tom & Karen Sauer, they can speak directly to decision and policy makers at events like Coffee with the Mayor or Town Hall meetings - and they do!

Citizens can have their voices heard on policy committees or task force groups; they can be involved and serve on commissions - like Greg Steele who has experienced the maturing of our Parks Commission during his 10+ years; citizens can step forward like Connie Peterson who volunteers at our animal shelter; or the annual involvement by Ten Mile Christian Church during our Old Town clean up.

There are many opportunities for volunteers and organizations throughout the year. Last year alone, our Parks Department clocked over 4,400 hours donated by community members.

Our citizens like the business growth and job creation - we have netted over 12,500 jobs in my first two terms; and over 1,000 businesses. We added 500 jobs just last year. Meridian is unique; and many of our businesses reflect that.

Did you know that we have the largest manufacturer of inflatable water crafts in the country? (Aire Inc.); that NorthWest Machining produced a 'part' that was used in the InterContinental Ballistic Missile called the Peace Keeper, and currently makes a gear system for Rolls Royce. That we have the largest wickless candle company in the nation, and the world; and they are one of the fastest growing consumer product companies in America - Scentsy. I would venture to say too, they will soon be the largest chocolate fondue company!

And, we have engaged small businesses, like Brandon Wright with Ultra Clean and Redline Recreational Toys; they add to our unique business community and lend their business space, time, and talent to provide tools for other small businesses to network and succeed.

We also have the largest insurer in the State of Idaho, which happens to be today's title sponsor.

United Heritage is a great community partner!

Our citizens like our retail businesses and restaurants - much has been done offering choices in shopping and eating - places like Epi's, where the owner, Chris, will come sit at your table because she cares about her customers.

Our citizens are discovering the talent and premiere services we have in health care; in particular, in our health science and technology corridor - The CORE. Amazing things are going on - from serving the under-privileged at Idaho State University's health and dental clinics, the clinical trials at several medical-related businesses, the on-going research....who knows maybe we will be the first to discover a cure for a specific cystic fibrosis strain right here in Meridian through St. Luke's on-going research!

Meridian citizens like their schools and the choices for higher education. We have seen rapid growth and selection in this area. Look at what has been added in the last ten years!

While campaigning I received mixed messages about our school funding issue; but firm resolve that our children and their education is a priority. Now, I don't like paying taxes any more than the next person, but I will always support providing our children with the best education!

The School District recently announced they will be putting a supplemental levy on the ballot on March 13th. I don't have the details, but I pledge to be part of this process. I encourage you all to educate yourselves on this topic. We must be involved and present as our community, school district, and our school board trustees tackle these issues.

Our kids are important. One of the noteworthy days I had last fall, was during a school in-service day; a day off for kids. Two 5th grade boys walked a mile and a half to drop by and tell us what a good job 'the mayor' was doing. They took turns coming up to the office because they had their dog with them.

I noticed the second boy had cleats on, I asked if he played soccer. He told me he would love to but the government takes all his Dad's money.

Long story short, Luke in my office gave him information about PAL's soccer scholarships and our Parks & Rec 'Care to Share' program - his feet never touched the ground when he left. We watched out the window as he joined his friend, hands a-wavin' while sharing information with his friend. As they walked off, he jumped up and kicked his heels. That's what it's all about.

Our citizens recognize our community's families in need and support non-profits like the Boys & Girls Club and the Meridian Food Bank. I am honored to announce on behalf of the Meridian Food Bank, through an anonymous donation they will be purchasing the Meridian Senior Center on Broadway just blocks from their current facility.

Before I move on, let me talk briefly about an issue that was also a topic of discussion during the campaign - the City Hall lawsuit. This City, in my years of involvement, has not initiated a lawsuit. We solve our issues at the table. That is what we do. We tried to do the same in this case.

Our decision to go to court was based on principles and protecting the best interest of the community. This will be resolved; and we will move on.

Yes, much has been accomplished, many things have happened, AND there is more to do.

When the dust settled after Election Day, and all the signs were gone, it was important to me to capture the lessons learned. I met with and listened to the other candidates to learn what they thought, and heard, during the campaign. Using what I heard during that meeting and feedback collected last fall; I have formed four work groups that are focusing on: jobs, business climate, communication, and services.

I assembled a collection of stakeholders with a diversity of opinion that have been tasked with looking at the 'much done' in identifying and defining strengths and challenges. They will set objectives and bring recommended actions for the 'more to do' over this new term.

I am sure the focus on jobs doesn't surprise anyone. While we have made progress in this area, even during the downturn; we want family-wage jobs. This group, led by Rick Ritter, will not only look at job creation,

but also our role in the Governor's Project 60. Early discussions have them focusing on attracting suppliers for our current manufacturers; helping their business bottom-line having that supplier close; at the same time, attracting business and jobs. They will also look at the industry clusters we have plans for over the next couple of years, evaluating their feasibility and if they align with this region's core competencies and values.

While the 2010 Boise Valley Economic Partnership's survey showed Meridian City's processes ranked an 8.5 out of 10 - 10 being the best. We should always be our own toughest critic; so our business climate group, led by Jason Monks and Ron Van Auker Jr., will be evaluating how we are doing and identifying what we can do to move the needle towards the 'ten'. They will focus in two specific areas; business processes for commercial development and strategies and tools to boost our entrepreneurial climate.

Our communications group, will put strategy behind how we can improve the various communications tools we are using and help us get information to 'you'. Finding more ways we can use "This Week in Meridian" or how we can increase viewership of our monthly TVCTV "Celebrate Meridian" program. They are also working to centralize information so it is easy for citizens to find.

Our city services group are discussing and defining typical services offered by a city and who the providers are. They plan to review the quality of the services and compare them to citizen expectations and identify any gaps. The group will then focus on solutions and funding ideas for the 'wants' of the community.

These groups each recognize that much has been done; I look forward to all their reports.

While we have these groups working on our future and the 'much to do'; who is better positioned to work on our future, than our kids who are our future.

I am lucky to serve with the young leaders that comprise, MYAC, the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council. Here is their video that advisor Luke Cavener put together to capture what MYAC is all about.

I would like to invite MYAC's current Chair, Janelle, to share with you - their much done and more to do.

I can only hope to have that much enthusiasm, optimism, and energy! Guaranteed - they have MUCH they WILL do!

I can say while much has been done; I am anxious to roll up my sleeves and get to work.

Meridian has evolved - we are unique, we are different. What makes us different? We are a city that is still growing, even during the hard times. We have satisfied citizens that love where they live; as seen through last year's citizen survey, where 9 out of 10 residents report that the quality of life in Meridian exceeds expectations. Exceeds Expectations!.

We are a city that operates in the black and pays cash for our capital needs. We are a city that has been listed in the top of the nation for a number of reasons. We have achieved this by working together as a community - we are unique.

And we, as a city, play our role in achieving this recognition. We stay focused on the vision of the city to be a vibrant and diverse city, a premiere place to live, work, and raise a family. We do so by putting Meridian first.

We are able to do that because we have employees that stand ready to serve. They work hard to provide the service you deserve. We have elected City Councilmen that are dedicated to growing per our plan; they budget and invest wisely; and set policies that reflect community standards desired by our citizens.

I am challenged and inspired by the Senior leadership team I serve with - our Directors. These leaders are innovative, focused on efficiencies and cost savings.

Our leadership team delivers a balanced annual budget recommendation to Council. This process begins months before the Council's budget workshop in July, going through performance and strategic reviews. The budget is balanced by our leadership team through a collective process of 'needs' vs. 'wants'. We budget with purpose and planning - and performance - led by Finance's Todd Lavoie; who leaves no

stone unturned as we scrub department budgets line by line. We involve City Council liaisons and an inclusive employee process that encourages ownership of spending priorities at all levels.

These Directors - our Team and the city's employees - think beyond their own departments strategically, to the whole picture, not just their piece of it. Much has been done! This thinking has brought improvements citywide, such as our data management system called Accela. Accela, is the city's enterprise software program that has connected several departments for the purposes of permitting, inspection, code enforcement and licensing. Soon citizens and customers will realize greater efficiencies by being able to access their information 24/7.

This 'whole city' approach has brought Police and Fire collaborating in emergency response scenario planning and leadership training; the Police and Public Works Environmental Division have partnered on the prescription drug drop off program to prevent drugs from being flushed into our sewer treatment system - 3500 pounds to date. Folks, that is nearly two tons of pharmaceuticals kept out of the environment! There are many other examples of collaboration among departments. Much has been done.

They keep their teams focused on their strategic plans and keep their plans relevant to our community needs.

The Fire Department has completed their five year plan using a process which included various stakeholders and the public.

Principal Planner Caleb Hood, led the updating and reformatting of the city's comprehensive plan. It is now user friendly and easier to read. We added Economic Development and Sustainability chapters with identified goals, objectives, and actions.

We have done much over this last year...over the last eight years.

Major accomplishments over that eight year period, we have seen: over \$3 billion dollars of commercial and residential development; a streamlined permitting process reducing processing time by half; an improved fire rating, saving citizens and businesses money for insurance; we've seen 117 new acres of developed parks where, for every tax dollar spent, three dollars came from partners or growth; we were the first



municipality to receive a Class A Reclaimed Water permit that offers a source of lower cost non-potable water in west Meridian; and we have seen the completion of Locust Grove overpass, 13 major intersection improvements eliminating four way stop signs; and...the opening of the Ten Mile interchange!

Our transition from a residential community to a full-service city is noteworthy. We have a tangible energy - you can feel it.

We, as a City, are working to complement what is happening in the private sector and by others. We put Meridian first, what's best for the "community" as a whole. We believe that local government - should be and is - a reflection of our citizens. We put Meridian first and foremost in our minds.

It is that thinking – putting Meridian first – that brings us to our Legacy Award. The Legacy Award is given each year to recognize someone that gives unselfishly of their time, talent, or finances to the benefit of our community. Recently, there has been a great deal of activity at the Pine Street School. Paul Davis Restoration stepped forward in helping to fix or restore a number of the needs in this historical, one-room school.

This school is the 'love child' of a teacher who taught for 38 years, but nurtured Meridian's children in this school for 10 of those years. Today, she is a one-person attendant to this school - caring for it, as she cared for her students in this same building over fifty years ago. Please join me in recognizing, Betty Kusler.

Working together: we have 'more to do' to meet our vision of being a premier city - the best city in Idaho. We will keep our focus on "putting Meridian first"!

We have heard you - through our citizen survey, in our public meetings, at various community events; also at the grocery store, at church, and in our schools. I listened, when you opened your door last fall, and on Election Day.

Here is what you told us: You want a safe community. You want a responsive government. You want places to go to with family and friends. Everyone wants to see a better economy -- and you would like us to help

attract and grow family wage jobs. And, you want more time at home, not on the roads.

Okay, so here are my five strategic priorities for the next four years:

I will begin with, a Safe Community:

We will continue our focus as one of the safest cities in Idaho. This will happen through:

- Prevention programs such as the Mayor's Anti Drug Coalition. MADC is in the fourth year of a Drug-free Community \$500,000 Grant and eligible for a five year extension. We will be aggressive in our efforts to achieve that renewal. Working with partners like PAL, the School District, and our business community we will continue to 'fight for our families' working with our Coalition;
- We will continue our strategic 'rooting of crime' through our Impact Team, bicycle patrols, and working with citizens. We will use DDACT, our crime analysis tool, to identify crime areas to address the 'cause' not just react to the symptoms.

My next priority is Responsive Government

- I earlier announced 'the Meridian Way', building on our culture of service. I will challenge our community - businesses, non-profits, organizations - to adopt "The Meridian Way". We can brand our community as a place that welcomes and cares for those that live and work here as well as those that visit here - a place where people want to be.
- We will build upon our communication tools to keep you informed, involved, and give you a voice - putting Meridian first.

My - Places to go with family and friends - priority.

In this priority, we will focus on our downtown, parks, and pathways.

- In our downtown, as we have told you in the past, it must be a place to go to, not drive through. The City is working with the MDC and downtown businesses to foster an environment that encourages investment; we have made advancement in spite of the economy. We are currently working with developers and potential investors

on two different opportunities that, if successful, will be catalyst projects for downtown.

We will brand our downtown districts with signage; we are focused on defining parking areas and creating outdoor activities for dining, entertainment, and art of all forms.

Our focus in parks and pathways is to create - positive experiences and lifelong memories.

- In Parks as funding allows, we will finish the last phase of Meridian Settlers Park, adding parking and expanded tennis options. We will begin the first phase of Borup Park; here, I pledge to our dog lovers that a Dog Park will be in this first phase.

We plan to address, in part, the need for indoor field house space. In South Meridian, we will begin phased planning for our 70 acres of parkland at Locust Grove and Lake Hazel.

- As to pathways, we will continue to make connections where possible that will offer safe routes to school and other places to go for all ages; and we will be diligent for a 'rail with trail' either in the rail road's right-of-way or alongside it, for an east-west connected pathway.

My fourth priority of five, 'Attract and grow family wage jobs'.

- We will stay focused on enhancing our business friendly climate that will be nurtured through the merging of Planning and Building and Development Services into one unified focus - Community Development Department.
- Our focus on value added jobs will be delivered through strategic Business Enterprise Corridors. We want to replicate the success seen in The CORE, by bringing together complimentary type businesses in other areas of our city. We will roll out plans for The Fields District and Public Safety District; and promote the Ten Mile region and Downtown to targeted businesses.

Lastly, and importantly, Transportation - more time at home, not on the roads.

I saved this for last as I my comments will be specific to two projects. We will stay focused on positive relationships with ACHD and ITD as they are the roads and maintenance providers.

- The first project is the Split Corridor Phase II - this project will begin late this summer. As part of this road widening project, the City has a water main line we will be constructing. This project will close Meridian Road for up to a year. ACHD and our Public Works have been working on a communications plan-please sign up for their updates and stay involved. They have also been working closely with the businesses. We need you to support the downtown businesses during this construction project; this will have a huge impact to them. Their inconvenience and survival is for your long term convenience.
- Meridian Interchange - you have heard me talk about this before. The bridge condition gets worst every year, every year we risk losing a pedestrian, child, or bicyclist's life; we are not realizing the full benefit of the I84 improvement because of this bottleneck; economic growth is impacted by the inability to accommodate more traffic.

This is not only a Meridian problem - its regional, and it connects to an interstate system. Locally we have done our part - the State needs to do theirs. The investment in the I84 corridor has been huge and needed; but that they would exclude the middle portion defies all reason!

Can we turn up the house lights, please.

Those that believe the Meridian Interchange needs to be rebuilt, would you please stand up?

Okay, you can sit down now; those that stood up - we need you! We need you to be a supportive voice and help Senator Winder and Representative Hagedorn advocate for getting the Meridian Interchange rebuilt. We need you to call ITD, to call newly appointed Chairman Jerry Whitehead, to call the Governor's Office. This needs to be a priority. We can't afford it not to be!

This list is ambitious, but working together we can make significant headway in all five strategic priorities. These are not just my priorities, they are yours – safe communities, responsive government, places to go, jobs, and transportation – these reflect those areas you told us are most important.

We have a simple mantra at the City of Meridian: Put Meridian First. This means having a clear vision for the future of the city that is reflective of the values of Meridian citizens. It means being accountable, responsive, and truly connected to our citizens. I have shared with you examples of this today.

If you believe in putting Meridian first, there are many ways to get involved.

Join us; embrace ‘The Meridian Way’. Stay informed, visit our website frequently. Get involved, there will be many opportunities.

Be an informed voter - be educated on the issues and support candidates who will stand up and fight for Meridian, who have your same standards and principles, and who will advocate for community needs such as the Meridian Road Interchange, and MYAC’s ban on texting while driving legislation.

Put Meridian First.

Much has been done! We want you to be involved with us during these exciting times, because together we can achieve so much more. Meridian is unique. There is much to do – let’s get going!