

Hello everyone, Happy New Year and thank you for being here.

We started 2015 with a focus to become more proactive and start the process of planning for the future of our county. Now in 2016, with the information gathered through data, analysis, and community forums, we have the foundation of a strategic plan for Curry County. Our most powerful course of action for success requires careful planning and committed dedication to move the county's vision forward. Every strategic plan presents challenges and opportunities. Our challenges are many, but our opportunities are vast.

That is why I am declaring 2016 the Year of Opportunity. Working together, we can seize on the opportunity to better our county. Working with leadership in our cities, ports, and local organizations, we can pursue opportunities for partnerships to address important issues.

Curry County must take every opportunity to support businesses so they can thrive, grow and succeed. We must support opportunities for better housing and more jobs. We must support our citizens and our natural resources.

We must embrace innovative ideas, explore every potential solution and seek out new ways of thinking to continually improve the quality services the county delivers and more importantly, improve the quality of life for all our residents.

We must avoid the bad political habit of rejecting ideas, abandoning solutions or discouraging new ways of thinking based on where those ideas came from or who supports them. Too often, we choose sides instead of choosing solutions.

Curry County can be successful if we all come together, be open to new ideas, and create opportunities.

Curry County leadership cannot achieve these goals alone. Our successes come from dedicated staff members who deliver county services and work behind the scenes every day to carry forward the mission of the county. I am going to take this opportunity to share our many successes in 2015.

Curry County said happy retirement to Jerry Herbage, who has served as County Counsel for 34 years. Jerry served under numerous Commissioners and has

always guided with patience, reasoning and with the ability to focus on what is best for our County. He will be missed.

John Huttl has been hired to replace Jerry as County Counsel and we look forward to his advice in the coming years.

Sheriff John Ward explored funding options for his department through citizen input which brought awareness of issues his department faces daily. Sheriff Ward was able to increase jail space and streamline procedures to operate the jail more efficiently. Several Sheriff's Department staff was recognized across the State for their excellence in service, starting with Deborah Storns who received the prestigious Victor Atiyeh Award. Sergeant Ted Heath and Deputy Walter Scherbarth both received Life Saving Awards for their life-saving efforts during a boating incident. Deputy Joan Allen Steineke was awarded the Civil Manager of the Year.

Search and Rescue had more than 20 missions and were responsible for several life-saving rescues. Upgrades to the 911 equipment have begun and a new county wide mass notification system is being implemented.

Public Services Director, Dave Pratt, retired after nearly ten years of service to the county. The department was re-named the Community Development Department and we were fortunate to hire Carolyn Johnson as the new Director.

During 2015, 366 building permits were issued, exceeding those from 2014 by 54 permits. Positive growth is happening.

Roadmaster Doug Robbins has reported no real significant events but continues to work diligently to keep the county's 225 miles of road and 33 bridges in good repair. The Morrill Bridge on Floras Creek Road showed major signs of deterioration and has been temporarily fixed, funding will be pursued to replace the bridge. The Road Department said goodbye to two long term employees; Jim Jordan, a 33 year employee and Ron Speece, a 27 year employee.

Economic Development Director, Julie Schmelzer and staff had a very busy year and brought some major ideas to fruition. Starting with a new tourism and economic development website; www.TravelCurryCoast.com. This site promotes the entire county, as well as provides economic development information.

The Strategic Technology and Economic Development Task Force was organized and developed a plan on how best to utilize the fiber optic loop that runs through the county.

900 parcels of county owned land was studied to determine best use with highest impact.

Economic Development facilitated the partial filming of a movie based on the book, *The Man Who Planted Trees*, which documented several events in Curry County where members of the Archangel Ancient Tree Archive and citizens of Curry County planted cloned redwoods and helped propagate the Coast Redwoods.

Veteran's Service Officer, Tony Vouidy, has completed his training and accreditation to provide the best possible service to our county veterans. More than 1,000 Veterans have been assisted through this office since Tony began his post. The Veterans Office has a new partner location in Port Orford to accommodate the needs of our North County residents.

Parks Director, Jay Trost, partnered with Economic Development to raise funds through county events to repair cabins at Lobster Creek Campground. In Tune with the Trees and the First Annual Fungi Festival raised enough money to repair 2 cabins and the Gold Beach Rotary Club stepped in to repair the main building at Lobster Creek.

Curry County appointed a new County Surveyor, Reily Smith, who has updated the surveyor's office and brought the department into the twenty-first century; developing a user friendly website and organizing maps and surveys which are now more easily accessible to the public.

Curry County RSVP volunteers donated more than 16,778 hours of time in 2015 for a value of more than \$387,000.00. Nancy Vanderlinder donated more than 725 hours at the Brooking Harbor Food Share and was named the RSVP Volunteer of the Year.

Facilities Director, Eric Hanson, upgraded heating, air-conditioning, de-humidifying and air purification systems which made our buildings healthier and safer, and improved LED lighting systems has resulted in cost saving to the county.

Work has finally begun on the wildlife fence that will keep all the large animals off the runways at the Brookings airport.

Curry County provides a variety of services to the communities every day; issuing marriage certificates and occasionally performing the ceremonies, recording home sales and deeds, conducting elections, maintaining roads and county parks, issuing building permits, performing building inspections and processing land use applications, supporting the county fair, planning for disasters, overseeing public health and animal control, caring for our veterans and maintaining public safety. These and many other services are the backbone of county government.

The County Board of Commissioners sets the tone and leads through actions. It's up to this board and subsequent boards to determine the course of this county and in times of financial and social challenges, as we have today, leadership is more important than ever. County leadership is multi-faceted; it's not just about the services, it's not just about the staff, and it's not just about the citizens. It's about finding the solutions to meet the needs of all, and unfortunately that will not always happen. But what should always be a priority to the Commissioners is open, honest, respectful communication, no matter the differences in opinions and beliefs. Too often passions and prejudices overtake professionalism and common courtesy. I challenge my fellow Commissioners to take every opportunity to discuss and deliberate decisions for the overall good of the citizens, the staff and the services equally.

2016 is going to be a difficult year and it will require all of us working together as a team to find solutions.

I look forward to this team coming together and leading the county in a positive, productive manner.

Thank you,

Susan Brown

Chair, Curry County Board of Commissioners