



2021 Seminole State of the City

Presented by
Mayor Leslie Waters

“Seminole – Fiscally sound, family focused, and COVID careful”

January 26, 2021

For the benefit of hundreds of new residents and to refresh the memories of us all, I will begin this “State of the City” address with a brief historical review that I have shared in the past.

The City of Seminole was founded and organized on November 15, 1970 when community leaders and citizens sitting on folding chairs met in the Food Court of the former Seminole Mall. They voted 823-72 to incorporate a new city, a new beginning, separating from the oversight of Pinellas County government.

Due to population growth, the major 2-lane roadways in Seminole have expanded to 4-lanes over the years. The indoor Seminole Mall located on 40 acres at the epi-center of the city served the community for 40 years, was replaced in recent years by the bustling outdoor Seminole City Center shopping and entertainment district.

The City of Seminole is governed by a 7 Member Council, all elected at-large by registered voters, and managed by a City Manager. We are a Council-Manager form of government.

Since 1970 the voters of the City of Seminole have elected 9 Mayors, hired 11 Fire Chiefs, and contracted with 2 City Managers, Frank Edmunds and Ann Toney-Deal, to oversee City Administration, City priorities, and City growth.

The current budget of the City of Seminole is \$24,918,200, General Fund Budget of \$19,228,400, and has a population of 19,449, with 155.5 hardworking and diligent employees. The City is debt-free.

In 1976 Seminole was designated as a Tree City USA by the Arbor Day Foundation.

In 2003, the City, Seminole Community Library and St. Petersburg College - Seminole forged an award winning partnership that gained international attention for its innovative merging of both high-end technology and digital information with traditional library collections and services. Our Library is a state-of-the-art joint-use integrated facility, for the public and students.

In 2015 we branded ourselves a “red-white and blue” city. This patriotic initiative gives tribute to the thousands of veterans, military families, and the men and women who wear the uniform. Last November a spectacular annual “Field of Honor” was co-sponsored for the 5th year by the Seminole Kiwanis Breakfast Club and the City of Seminole. Over 310 sponsored American flags, in front of City Hall and flowing over onto the Post Office grounds next door, were the talk of people near and far. Red-white and blue banners fly from poles along the corridors of the City. New City employees are presented with a flag pin.

In 2017 Seminole was designated as a Purple Heart City by the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

As 2021 begins, the City continues to be debt-free for the second year, and has not raised the millage rate on citizens since 1996...for 14 years.

In May of this year the City sponsored a terrific city-specific Seminole Cares Parade, in recognition of many residents home-bound due to the COVID-19 virus. There were no floats, no marching bands. But even better, there was Pinellas County Sheriff Deputy Tiffany Ashcom leading the parade, followed by vehicles representing every City Department and of course, our Councilors riding in their personal cars, all decorated in red-white and blue balloons and streamers, with posters expressing support of our residents. The parade noodled through the Seminole Gardens and Freedom Square communities much to the delight of many home-bound residents. Residents waved from their windows and from the parking lot, a poster read “Good job!” and the banging of pots and pans all were great expressions of appreciation from residents for the City’s attempt to show them that “We Care” during the COVID-19 pandemic that is impacting us all in one way or another.

In July of 2020, your Mayor and Vice Mayor Chris Burke sponsored the second annual “Back to School Supply Drive” for the benefit of local schools, which was a huge success. Local manufacturer, S.S. White was more than generous, donating

scores of back-packs, and citizens added to a huge mound of pencils, pens, binders, construction paper, hand sanitizers, all divided for pick-up by pleasantly surprised school staff.

Seminole Water Front Park is developing nicely with future landscaping in the plans. Just last month a ribbon cutting was held for the Grand Opening of the recently completed Public restroom and City storage building, and in March of this year, a ribbon cutting will be held for the spectacular “state-of-fun” playground equipment on the west side of Waterfront Park. I am anxious for the jumping, swinging, climbing and playing by children to begin!

One of my favorite enhancements at Water Front Park is the newly constructed Boardwalk that provides a breathtaking view of the Seminole Bayou, wildlife and kayakers. I would like to thank once again State Senator Jeff Brandes for securing a legislative appropriation for the early development of Water Front Park.

Another focus of management in 2020 was the re-development of Blossom Lake Park, a wonderful neighborhood “pocket park” bordering the Pinellas Trail.

The Seminole Public Works Complex along 70th Avenue is home to those who are responsible for all infrastructure projects, and to the state-of-the art Seminole Emergency Operation Center which fortunately was not necessary to activate in 2020.

Updating city signage is also being planned helping to complete a welcoming city identity and image.

Long-term plans are still on the drawing board for the Recreation Complex for a refreshed re-design and re-build.

Of great importance to the City of Seminole is the recent completion of a seven year Pavement Plan along with a Financial Plan sufficient to implement the Pavement Management Plan without raising taxes. City-wide road and resurfacing projects are part of this pavement plan, including Johnson Blvd and Liberty Lane.

We will strive to keep the comfortable quality of life in Seminole by maintaining city parks and green space; strive for continued crime prevention, and recognize and appreciate our highly-regarded elementary schools, numerous churches, veteran’s posts, and civic clubs.

The strong relationship between the City, the Seminole Chamber of Commerce, the St. Petersburg College-Seminole campus, the Seminole Historical Society and Museum, and the Seminole Interfaith Food Pantry, will continue to add to the diverse and interesting fabric of a thriving Seminole.

The City experimented last year with “Art through Lighting” with various colors being displayed on the front of the Recreation Complex. Lighting such as purple

representing our Purple Heart status, or Pink-tober for “Breast Cancer Awareness” month, etc.

The elected city leaders will continue to be active members of the Suncoast League of Cities, the Florida League of Cities, the Pinellas County Council of Mayors and the Florida League of Mayors. All members of City Council will remain vigilant in protecting “Home Rule,” helping to remind the 2021 Florida Legislature that “*Local voices, making local choices,*” is what the citizens of Seminole desire, not necessarily the voices only of our legislators who do not even live in Seminole. Members of Council will continue, as in past years, to work with the Florida League of Cities and the “Home Rule Heroes” recognition program. Mayor Leslie Waters, Vice Mayor Thom Barnhorn, and Councilor Jim Olliver were recognized “Home Rule Heroes” in 2020.

City Manager Ann Toney-Deal continues to be active with the Florida City County Management Association, and continues her coveted and well-earned Credentialed Manager certification.

The City of Seminole received the Government Finance Officer Association’s Certificate of Achievement for Financial Reporting for the 22nd consecutive year, as well as the Government Finance Officer Association’s Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the 13th consecutive year.

The recent CPA financial audit and comprehensive financial report for the fiscal year that ended September 30, 2020, conducted by auditor Peter Schatzel, CPA, a partner in the accounting firm Wells, Houser & Schatzel, P.A., told the City Council that the City continues to maintain positive processes and appropriate and healthy fund balances. Our goal is to continue to receive such distinguished fiscal recognition and to remain in a stable financial condition. The citizens of Seminole expect nothing less.

The City’s 50th Anniversary Celebration Committee, Chaired by Former long-time Seminole Mayor Dottie Reeder, will be rethinking and rescheduling events into this year as the pandemic subsides.

As the proud Mayor of the City of Seminole, my focus as well as Council, for the year 2021 will continue to:

- Follow the City’s long-range plans as a guide to the future;
- Encourage good citizenship and participation in community outreach efforts;
- Remain a flexible, focused, family and business friendly city;
- Maintain a fiscally conservative approach to taxpayer money;
- Oversee the dedicated law enforcement services provided by the Pinellas County Sherriff’s Office;

Rise to the challenges of COVID-19 throughout our City, State and Country; and Work in sync with Council, City Management, and Members of City Boards, Committees and City Volunteers in order to continue to strengthen, improve and evolve into *“an even better Seminole.”*

Due to the COVID-19 virus the year of 2020 was challenging for cities across the State of Florida, as well as cities across our nation, and the world. The City of Seminole met and surpassed the challenges, for which I am proud.

In conclusion, the City of Seminole is clearly a well-governed, well-managed and fiscally solid city, of which we are all proud.

Thank you for your attention.

Seminole City Council 2020-2021

- Mayor, Leslie Waters
- Vice Mayor, Thom Barnhorn
- Councilor Chris Burke
- Councilor Tom Christy
- Councilor Roger Edelman
- Councilor Jim Olliver
- Councilor Trish Springer

Seminole Management Staff

- Ann Toney-Deal, City Manager
- Jay Daigneault, Esq., City Attorney
- Ann Marie Mancuso, City Clerk
- Allison Broihier, CGFO, Finance Director
- Heather Burford, Fire Chief
- Rodney Due, Public Works Director
- Mark Ely, Community Development Director
- Becky Gunter, Recreation Director
- Erica Ottmann, Human Resources Director
- Lorie Tonti, Library Director

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