

State of the City Address

Mayor Jason Snider



A Welcoming Tigard

Good evening, Tigard!

It is great to see so many elected officials, family members, friends, co-workers, and members of the Tigard community. Thank you all for coming to the 2019 Tigard State of the City address. I want to briefly recognize and thank the elected officials from all over the region for joining us.

I am going to wait on introducing our Tigard City Councilors because we have a fun audience participation opportunity planned that will help you get to know them better. I also want to thank our two generous sponsors, Comcast and Portland General Electric.

I also wish to thank my wife, Jodi, and our children for being so supportive. You have probably heard me say before that Jodi does more than her fair share. Because it is very hard for me to find time to work out these days, I REALLY appreciate her willingness to do enough time at the gym to cover for both of us... Though, I am not sure the approach is working...

With our children, Kellen, Ainsley, and Bowen. Jodi and I are constantly reminding them how good a life they have... and, in most ways they really do. However, my children have a former kindergarten teacher for a mother. My mom, my mother in-law, and two of my three siblings have all taught in public schools. How many educators do we have in the audience tonight? Representative Doherty, Mayor Callaway, Mayor Truax? Teaching is a very noble profession and I honestly do not understand how all of you pour so much love into children every day. That said, I have observed something about every teacher I know. I call it the "teacher system of justice." Teachers seem to apply it to all children at all times, regardless of who the kids are, where they are, if they are their own kids or not... all of that is irrelevant. The only tenant of the "teacher system of justice" is that all children are guilty until proven innocent, period. This is a bizarre cross between a fraternity, sorority, and a biker gang... This is what my kids endure every day.

From me, they get a former Reserve Police Officer who remembers a few of the techniques I learned way back in the 500+ hours of police academy training. As I will still need these tricks for the foreseeable future, I am going to share a story from my time as a Reserve Officer in Tigard that illustrates the types of things my kids endure. Since I already know the identities of my children, I am not giving much up by telling this story.

This call was in July of 2003. It was a very hot day. The kind of summer day where it never cooled down the night before... About 85 degrees at 11am. A shoplifting call at Washington Square Sears gets dispatched. About a minute later, the dispatcher advises us that the two female suspects are now resisting the Sears loss prevention staff and have left in a vehicle. It went from theft to? So, this is getting a lot more serious. As the first Tigard unit approaches Washington Square, they find a vehicle matching the description of the suspect vehicle stalled in the middle Greenburg Road, right in front of the Red Lobster. That is how much gas they had left in the getaway vehicle – they were prepared. As my unit arrived, we detained one of the female suspects who claimed to know nothing about an incident at Sears. Remember, it is 85 degrees at 11am. She is wearing 5+ pairs of brand-new pants. They were so tight I couldn't figure out how many pairs it really was. But, it was at least 5. She claimed all of these pants were hers and that she always dresses this way. This was particularly funny because suspects frequently tell police officers that the pants they have on are "NOT THEIRS"... which almost never makes any sense. Look around, could you just trade pants with the person sitting next to you? Or, with me? I heard this monthly despite averaging only 20 hours a month. Chief, in your career, how many times would you estimate you had a suspect tell you the pants they had on belonged to someone else? Wow... The next time you watch a reality police show, listen for the "not my pants" lines.

OK, back to the call. We have a pretty good idea what happened so now we needed to identify these people. FYI, people who steal 5 pairs of pants and fight with the loss prevention staff don't usually carry IDs. At this point, I had been out of the academy for a year and never had an opportunity to use this technique and it seemed like just the right moment. The suspect rattled off a name and date of birth – that I was pretty sure were fake. I asked her a few more questions and then went back to her birthdate. The way this works is when she gives me a date of birth like 12/8/76, I then come back and ask her to confirm her date of birth was 8/12/76 – just reverse a few digits. Pretty simple, nobody forgets their own birthdate. You then know if they are lying about their identity. She was lying by the way.

There are a number of these techniques and this is what my kids endure. Between this and the guilty until proven innocent approach, they think their friends have an easier life. And, they are probably right.

We have had some fun but now it is time to get serious for a bit. I will make you three promises about tonight's speech.

1. I will not use jargon or acronyms.
2. I will not get mad at you if you're on your phone. I encourage you to text or tweet so those who can't be here tonight feel a part of the event. You can help by using social media to share what you're hearing.

I suppose that I should show you how it's done...

3. I promise that, by the end of the night, you will know where Tigard is headed and when 'just okay is not okay'

Since I am health care administrator and a paramedic, I have been thinking a lot about the 'vital signs' of a healthy city.

I want to briefly talk about the city's four vital signs and how Tigard is going to improve them.

Being a City for Everyone (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion)

Tigard is a community for everyone.

Let me say that again – Tigard is a community for everyone.

We welcome:

All races.

All cultures.

All religions.

All countries of origin.

All sexual orientations.

All genders.

All ethnicities.

All abilities.

We will show this commitment with actions.

I heard about the importance of this commitment during the campaign and after my column about embracing diversity.

I've been heartened by comments like:

Your words made me feel more a part of the community. Thanks for helping create an "aha" Tigard moment for all of us!

Thank you for stepping up, speaking out and being an advocate for inclusion in our city!

We should engage immigrants about their new home, not put up barriers. The Mayor and the City represent all of us and I applaud them in their efforts to be inclusionary.

A healthy city embraces the rich fabric of its citizens.

Our strength is in our differences.

We will embrace these differences to make decisions reflective of all parts of Tigard.

We will communicate with and welcome all community members.

We will continue to recruit multilingual employees.

We will continue to use “blind recruitment” where job applications are reviewed based on what they know and not who they know.

We will continue to offer translation and interpretation services to assist you with your water bills, to report a crime, find a book or participate in a city project.

We will not deny rights, benefits or services to our neighbors or community members because of a language barrier.

As a result, we will be a stronger and better community.

Out of City Hall and into Your Neighborhood (Robust Citizen Involvement)

I have a question for the audience, “How many of you have attended a city meeting?”

Okay, the results might be skewed because you are in the minority of people who are able to attend a State of the City or Council meeting.

The majority of our community -- because of their job, childcare situation, or volunteer work -- can't attend a Tuesday night meeting at 6:30 pm.

This does not mean that they won't have a voice in Tigard.

I commit to you that your city council and city leaders will get out of city hall and into your neighborhoods this year.

There is no replacement for in-person engagement. This is how we build lasting relationships and gain your trust.

Our first interaction should not be to ask you to fill out a survey or volunteer for a committee.

Our first interaction should be learning what's important to you and your neighborhood.

I am asking for your help in getting there.

Here's my challenge – I have a special prize for anyone who emails or texts me with an invitation to a community event by the end of tonight's program.

We know about the big events – Balloon Festival, Farmer's Market, July 4th Celebration

We do not know as much about the smaller, equally important events happening in your neighborhood, at your church, or at your business.

My cell phone number is 503-810-0269

If you can't think of one right now, keep us in mind throughout the year.

We've set up a Your Tigard page where you can let us know about opportunities to get into your community.

You Know How Your City Spending Is Your Money. (Transparency & Accountability)

You need to know this. And you shouldn't have to do a public records request to find it.

I work with financial and performance metrics in my professional life. We don't make any key decisions without knowing all the relevant numbers.

Numbers may be boring to some people, but numbers mean information, and information is key to determining what we are doing well and what we must do better.

You will know exactly what you are paying for and we need to make it easy for you to find out.

We are taking steps to make sure you know that the city is spending your money wisely.

We're completing performance audits of all city departments.

The results will help us make more informed decisions.

Protecting You and Your Loved One (Superb Public Safety Resources)

You may have seen the ["Just okay is not okay"](#) commercial during the Super Bowl?

The point was you wouldn't want your surgeon to be deemed just okay right before you're about to go under the knife.

Or a babysitter who's just okay with kids?

Or a mechanic who's just okay working on brakes?

Like it or not, the city plays a large role in your daily routine... from the clean water you use to brush your teeth to the safe playground where you spend hours watching your children grow up.

And as Tigard mayor, I am not 'okay with being just okay'

My experiences as a paramedic and reserve police officer impressed upon me the importance of a strong, responsive, reliable police force, that is more than just okay.

Just okay is not okay when it comes to feeling safe in your home and on our streets.

Just okay is not okay when it comes to your children feeling safe at our parks and schools.

I'm concerned that it's taking longer for police to respond to calls because there are fewer officers covering our 53,000 residents than there used to be.

I'm concerned that because officers have been reassigned to respond to the most critical calls, we have lost some important connections with some of the underrepresented parts of the community like our homeless population.

To address these concerns, the council will explore a levy or a bond in May 2020.

Before making any decisions, we will work to gain your trust and support.

We will publish a regular City report card, detailing our progress and challenges, and comparing our work to peer cities.

We will complete a comprehensive audit of city services.

We will embrace data and technology to reduce costs but maintain the level of service you expect and deserve.

And most importantly, we will get out of city hall and into our neighborhoods to learn 'when just okay is not okay' for the residents of Tigard.

In closing, the State of the City's vital signs are decent, but I want to make sure our great community thrives.

I know the entire Tigard City Council has the same goal.

With your ideas and involvement, we will achieve these goals.