

Our City

It is a few days before the New Year and I have found myself looking forward for the past week or so; not in the New Year's resolution kind of way but in a bucket list kind of way. I will be sworn in to my second full term as your Mayor the day this column will be available to the public. For that honor I thank you. It is with a continued sense of humility that I look forward to serving each of you over the course of the next four years.

My bucket list for the coming year doesn't have anything on it that I have sole control over. That is a bit worrisome in itself but remains the part of the challenge that I look most forward to. Depending on the situation getting others to figuratively or literally buy into a concept, idea or project is what I look forward to the most in this position. Seldom has it been easy; but when it works it can be pretty awesome.

Much of my bucket list this year centers on recreation and accessibility to recreation. I have been working on the Seagull Bay to Massacre Rock trail idea for nearly four years. I hope to see that effort bear at least some fruit this year. I fully realize easements through any private property will be a challenge but much can be done working with managers of our public lands. So, I may be forced for now to work from each end of the proposed trail to the middle and I am fine with that. In that same vein the Willow Bay bike path and café are in need of real help and maybe complete reconstruction. In the next few weeks I hope to meet with Bureau of Reclamation personnel and Willow Bay Superintendent Chris Fehringer to devise a way to refurbish the bike path and add bird watching stations along its length while also discussing how to remodel or rebuild the café within the next year or two.

I look forward to working with the Great Rift Business Development Organization as we try to find the ways and means to build a new hotel for the community. I see only positives in the conversations that I have had with interested parties so far. It is a real must for our local businesses that often bring individuals in from out of town, it will only enhance growing recreational opportunities, provide much needed accommodations for family gatherings and school events. It is a market that for too long has gone to Pocatello. I am excited to begin moving forward with this opportunity later this month as it is something our community has lacked for some time now.

In talking with Superintendent Fehringer over the last month I am encouraged by his desire to begin refurbishing, replacing and adding to our current playground equipment throughout the City parks. It won't be so much right away but I believe it will begin to see a steady improvement in the months and years to come. I know we are barely into winter but my mind is already on spring and the completion of the tennis court project. It has been a long time coming but our collective goal is within reach.

A long time goal has been to provide a safe means of passage for our youth across the Highway 39 bypass. The grant for the construction of a pedestrian underpass at Hillcrest and the Bypass will be submitted shortly. If successful you will not have to worry about oncoming traffic as you go from Lee Street Park to Willow Bay; you will just walk or pedal under it. As is so often the case the grant is a longshot, but we took it. Time will tell if we were on the mark. I remain optimistic as I continue to work forward in the best place to live.

Until next week...