

Our City

It is usually not good when you feel compelled to begin an informal meeting with an apology. I did last Wednesday night at 5:30. I honestly couldn't remember the last time I had met with them, it must have been a least six years ago when I was still on the Council. I understood their frustration though; recognition of one's efforts are important, especially as members who serve our community both within the city and outside it on a volunteer basis. It's not that I didn't value their service because I most certainly do, it's that I never told them how much I appreciated them that made me ashamed and disappointed in myself.

Most communities have two lines of front line defense; their police department and their fire department. We have both. However, there is a difference between the two and while the individuals in both departments live by the mantra to "protect and serve" only those in the police department are paid as full-time employees. Our firefighters are all volunteers; men and women of our community who choose to be selfless, who without a second thought would risk life and limb to help or protect each of us and our property. As I got the chance to visit with a few of them over our Christmas break the disappointment in myself began to grow as I believe much of their expressed frustration stemmed from a lack of leadership by me; leadership is largely about listening and sometimes responding to needs, and I hadn't truly done much of either with our Fire Department in my term as Mayor and for that I apologized last Wednesday night and vowed to do much better in the years to come. If you are able, have a sense of community and a desire to serve it, I would encourage you to volunteer in some way for any service group. As I listened to the stories of our firefighting volunteers I can tell you that it is their sense of unity as a group and community in general that makes each of them special.

Shortly after that meeting the first regular meeting of the American Falls City Council convened for 2018. The first real order of business was the audit report for fiscal 2017 that Morgan Hatt our auditor delivered. I am pleased to say that like the past 12 years it was a positive report. Morgan was gracious in his praise of the City Treasurer / Clerk Robyn Herndon and each of the departments as all made improvements in their bottom lines. He did make one comment in regard to our Waste Water Capital Improvement Fund however; while it is healthily in the black there is little there in infrastructure updates and improvements beyond the payments and reserves required for our bond on the waste water treatment plant. It may be something the Council needs to address during budgeting.

Following the audit report I was sworn into my second full term as your Mayor, Councilperson Dan Hammond was sworn into his fourth term while Gilbert Hofmeister and Kurtis Workman took the oath for their second time. Hammond was elected as Council President and Hofmeister as Vice-President which was followed by a public hearing on an ordinance change involving parking on grass. Then it was time for me to make my appointments.

I am often asked by those not from here how I do it. How do I teach fulltime, work with the FFA Chapter and have time to be mayor. My answer, as you have heard before is, I work with great people both at school and here at the City throughout each department. I am no superhero but I do have my Robyn and for as long as she wants it and as long as I am Mayor Robyn Herndon will be our City's Treasurer/Clerk. And, likewise I don't have a Commissioner Gordon but again as long as he wants it Brandon Wilkinson will be our Police Chief. It is not

often that you get four for one but that is what we get with Nolan Wittrock as our City's General Counsel, Steve Muhonen as our Prosecuting Attorney, TJ Budge as our Planning and Zoning Attorney and his father Randy Budge the managing partner at Racine, Olson, Nye & Budge on matters that deal with water. As Fire Chief I appointed a man who has dedicated much of his life to volunteerism and selfless service and like the other volunteers in his department, the Rural Fire Department, Search and Rescue and those who serve in law enforcement they are the real superheroes and a real reason American Falls continues to be the best place to live.

Until next week...