

Our City

I got a late start this morning; October 14th. I wasn't overly excited about the prospect of walking in the season's first snow. Actually, we had a few flakes a week or so ago but they were later in the morning not at 4 o'clock and didn't really stick around to count. As Lilly and I made our way north on Oregon Trail the white pellets were b-b sized and came into my hood with the easterly wind to sting my face and eyes. The pellets began to stick as I rounded the corner on Whitman by Driscoll Potatoes. As I was walking I was wondering how to get back in the groove writing after a month hiatus. In the last week or so some folks must have gotten curious because they started asking about the lack of this column in the Press. Each time I would chuckle to myself as I recalled a line from the movie *Dances with Wolves*; the teamster Timmons looking at a skeleton with an arrow sticking out of it and laughing, "Someone back east is saying, now why don't he write."

To be honest it wasn't entirely my choice to take the break; although it was the right thing to do. It seems to be a little known piece of trivia, but there is actually an election in less than a month for three City Council positions and the mayor's office. No one filed to run for any of the positions during the filing dates, but the opportunity for someone to run as a write-in remained open until last Tuesday. To be fair to any potential interested individual Brett Crompton and I agreed that it would be best if I suspended the writing of the column until after the final closing date for running. That being said please vote! The election has to be held according to State law even if all the races are uncontested. It's our tax dollars at work, don't waste them.

It may be easy to become complacent in a public office that is uncontested. I hope I never find myself in that position. It is easy to fall into a routine though and do things as they have always been done because it seems to work. Sometimes it takes a wakeup call to bounce you out of a comfortable routine. That call came twice for me over the past three or four months; and not from those you might expect. During two department superintendent meetings that occurred about a month apart an interesting question was posed. "Why do we do "things" this way?" I had no really good answer other than, "it has always been done that way." Ya, I wasn't happy with it either. Too often we do things out of tradition and routine I think; it's easy. But, not always efficient or the best practice.

Over the next four months the City Council will be working hand-in-hand with our superintendents and me to revamp our operating policies and procedures along with all of our ordinances. The ordinances have been in the works for nearly a year; however, a lot of work still needs to be done in Water, Waste Water, our Building Code, Streets and even some in Police. It is a tedious process but it is long overdue in happening. Most of the operating procedural changes will make little difference to you outright. Keep an eye on the Press as we get into March as public hearings will need to be held as we begin to amend or abandon ordinances.

I had all but abandoned my early morning walks until a month or so ago. Now I am back in the swing of things and enjoy the thinking time of the wee hours. I am not doing it just for me though, it is also part of the Mayor's Challenge. If I walk at least 10,000 steps a day for the month of October I earn \$1000 for playground equipment for a city park or Hillcrest

Elementary. As I was into my fifth mile up on Bennett the pellets turned to flakes as vehicles, lawns and roofs became blanketed with white. I am sure it will be gone by noon but back again in the weeks to come. Like the snow I will be back the weeks, months and years to follow. I will admit the break was nice after nearly five years of weekly columns. I look forward to getting back into the groove of things as I also look forward to serving and working with you for four more years.

Until next week...