

## Our City

Last spring I was asked as Mayor to take part in a review of our school district. Honestly, I was pretty skeptical before the process started. Yet, as I entered the School Board room with other community members, my skepticism began to ease. Through the two hour interview things were discussed with openness and honesty that I thought would never be mentioned. A real credit to the citizens of our community I think. Other such interviews took place with groups represented by students, teachers, administrators and others associated with the community and school system.

A week ago last Sunday I traveled north to Coeur 'd Alene to the first SOAR Summit. American Falls has been chosen to participate in this evaluative and reformative process along with five other school districts throughout the State. Our team consists of Randy Jensen (Superintendent), Kamren Koompin (School Board), Maria Palacios (Support Staff), Blanca Mendez (Parent), Tyler Shafer (Principal), Jennifer Giulio (Teacher), Rebecca Pullium (Teacher), Paula Nelson (Teacher), Jesalee Smith (Community) and me (Mayor). I won't get too far into the weeds about the process we went through as we reviewed, analyzed and made preliminary suggestions for resolutions of the all the compiled data collected from last spring's seven interviews by the SOAR staff; however, suffice it to say I am extremely excited and encouraged from the City's perspective at the possibilities as the potential initiatives bode well for our businesses and community as a whole. I want to thank the School District for including me in both parts of the SOAR process; I certainly welcome the collaborative efforts going forward.

It seems like a long time ago that our Public works Coordinator Jeremy Peirsol left us, in fact it was about a year ago. Jeremy's move to Boise was a loss for the City no doubt. However, I have been pleased at how everyone within the City has joined in working more together in yet again another collaborative effort to fill the void left by Jeremy's leaving. One of Jeremy's greatest strengths was his ability to identify and write grants on our behalf. That our various superintendents have taken it upon themselves to begin doing this pleases me greatly. That members of the City Council have begun to do so also serves you exceptionally well. My thanks to Councilwoman Kristen Jensen for securing an Idaho Community Foundation IFFT Grant for \$4,816.00. These funds will be used to place bike racks throughout our downtown and tie-in the landscaping at City Hall to the rest of that on Idaho Street. It may not seem like a lot but it is something we have been struggling to find funding to do.

No doubt if you have walked or even driven down Idaho Street lately you will have noticed the Koshia, elm suckers and other unsightly things. Admittedly, the planting strips on Idaho Street have taken a lot of time and effort to maintain. This past Saturday 49 American Falls FFA members and student council officers picked up garbage and apples, pulled weeds and raked leaves on the 100 and 200 blocks of Idaho Street. Over 50 extra-large garbage bags were filled with what was cleaned out of the parking strips. More leaves still need to be cleaned out but that will be for another time.

As borne out in the SOAR interviews and summit we are a community that works well together. Regardless of the challenge, the community seems to find a way to make things work for the greater good. It is the single most inspiring thing I find living in the best place to be.

Until next week...