

Our City

In the January 10, 2018 edition of the Press I wrote about the wonderful men and women of the American Falls Rural Volunteer Fire Department and their dedication and service to our community. About 10 days ago I attended one of their meetings; which turned out to be a training put on by the State Fire Chief. It wasn't at all what I thought it would be. For the two summers after I graduated high school I worked for the Nevada Division of Forestry as a mechanic and firefighter; my training outside the mechanic's shop dealt with a shovel, Pulaski, hose and pumper truck. The training I attended with our volunteers was quite different. The State Fire Chief taught the group of nearly 20 firefighters about how different types of building construction burn, the fail rate of different types of construction material and how to recognize bearing walls from the outside of the structure. Things that would save their lives and the lives of those they may need to rescue; things I had never thought of before. I very much appreciated those volunteers being there for the training as I saw veterans and newer members all engaged in what was being presented and it was easy to tell what was being taught was in no small way meaningful not only to the firefighter but to each of us who they may someday have to help.

On about the same day as I went to the Fire meeting I received some bad news. Sometimes it seems we just get things going in the right direction and something upsets the apple cart. Scott Ploussard, the chef at Willow Bay Café, called me to tell me he would not be able to return this spring. It is not because he did want to or that the Café wasn't doing well. Sometimes, you have no say in the matter. Scott has battled with health issues for a number of years. The hours that he spent doing what he loved at the Café only made them worse. I will miss Scott, his excellent cooking and his Wednesday, Friday and Saturday night specials. They were awesome! Later this week bid packets will be available at City Hall for anyone interested in operating the Café. Normally we would be in a hurry to get the position filled but we would rather get things right than get them fast; so the Café may be a bit late in opening this spring.

As spring nears the pace of things will begin to pick up for all of us I suspect. You may remember me writing about more public hearings on the intersection of State Highway 39 and Pocatello Avenue. There is still plenty of debate about what best to do there that will allow for the better flow of truck and machinery traffic and not cause safety issues for drivers in personal vehicles. Those meetings are scheduled for March, April and May. They will be publicized in the Press and I will post them here as well. If you have an opinion on the matter please attend and share your thoughts; it's the only way the best decision will be made.

If you read the front page of the Press last week you would have learned of a few decisions made by our School Board. Oftentimes we think of their decisions being based on what is best for our kids and in my 28 years in this community they largely have been in my opinion. The decision that was made last month to expand the existing opportunities was based on an even broader vision than that. For years employers throughout our community and eastern Idaho have gone wanting for a skilled workforce. For longer than that we in education have had the mindset that all students must ultimately earn a four year college degree or we have failed. We are obsessed with the "Go On Rate" and in being so obsessed we have almost totally neglected the needs of our own communities and the businesses that support them. The kids that don't fit in a four-year degree program usually end up back here under skilled and under trained for

most of the careers that would have been easily obtainable with some fundamental training and work habits. As mayor, I applaud the School Board for their landmark decision and direction. The opportunities your decision will provide will go a long way in bridging the gap between those who need employees and those who want well-paying careers without the expense of a four year degree. The route to a four-year degree will still be available at American Falls High School don't get me wrong and the classes that those students want to take will also be more diverse and meaningful. I know of very few schools anywhere which are doing what our School Board has set a path forward to accomplish and certainly none our size.

Life is largely about seizing opportunities and making the most of those available. Our eight bilingual students and now one bilingual parent are doing wondrous work. More to follow.

Until next week...