

## Our City

The past two weeks have been a mixed bag for me. I realize most folks don't get two weeks off for the Christmas and New Year Holidays; as a teacher I do, sort of. As Mayor, not so much. Time has become ever more valuable and for me it is important that I make the most of it.

On the Sunday before New Years I finally felt well enough to get outside as Sally and I loaded the snowshoes and Lilly and headed to the river. I had to recharge and reboot, it wasn't getting done inside working at my computer. We ended up parked on the frontage road above Angle Falls as we set out following remnants of the Oregon Trail to Eagle Rock. The snow and company were perfect. As we came to the cliffs above Rattle Snake Island we came upon a truck from Pocatello. Its wheels and bumpers packed with snow, mud, and ice. It had been stuck but managed to auger out somehow. As we made our way along the cliff and below the island, our path brought us close to the river and the two young duck hunters from Pocatello. According to them, they had been moderately successful having bagged five Mallards and a goose; and they were in the process of moving their blind up-river. As the three of us continued on our way down-river, the one with the best nose got excited. Before long, Lilly brought to hand a wounded hen Mallard. The duck hunters had a dog too, either it wasn't much good or they already had their limit of hens. Although they were polite and friendly, as drivers and sportsmen they seemed to be lacking. I carried the duck as we continued on our way and rolled over in my mind what I would do with it when I came upon the young hunters again.

I do some of my best thinking when I am outdoors. But therein lies a problem that I hadn't recognized fully until Sally pointed it out to me the day before. "You hardly ever just enjoy the moment. If you aren't working, your mind is on working. You can't recharge and reboot that way," she told me. As usual she is right. Admitting you have the problem is the first step they say. I do. The second step is choosing to change; the third and hardest is following through.

But then follow through is the key to making the most of anything. This past week found me following through or at least continuing to work towards a positive outcome on several things. The City decided a little over a month ago to go all in on the golf business. A business requires a plan and a budget. Our new Golf Pro Denny Howell, Golf Superintendent Cody Moldenhauer, Clerk Robyn Herndon and I spent much of the week working on both. I am pleased with the results and remain optimistic in the direction we have chosen to take this enterprise. The budget we came up with will be put to the Council during Wednesday's meeting for input and approval. Denny and Cody will be working together to implement the plan over the next two months. Part of that plan includes a youth golf recreational program that will also begin later this spring. My part in the implementation of the plan will be to work with the Bureau of Reclamation to get a driving range constructed out by Willow Bay. Admittedly, it would be ideal to have the driving range adjacent to the golf course but that is not possible. The site we have selected has its advantages and it makes use of property the City owns that is not currently utilized. We will continue to maximize the resources we have as opportunities present themselves.

I remain optimistic that we will have new basketball and tennis courts this summer as we continue to work together with American Falls High School seniors, School District Superintendent Ron Bolinger, the County Highway Department and those who are choosing to donate to the construction of both projects. The group will be meeting this Wednesday to continue the progress made thus far.

Monday after school will find me in two meetings; one on school business the other a much broader coalition. For the past six weeks, members of our Agricultural Education Advisory Committee and I have been working on completing the Idaho Quality Program Standards grant application. The committee will meet to review and finalize the application. This \$10,000 grant was made possible by business and industry support statewide and locally from Lamb Weston/ConAgra, AgriBeef/Snake River Cattle, the J.R. Simplot Company the Idaho Potato Commission and many others. The legislative initiative that led to the grant and increased funding for all Professional Technical Education programs was supported by 100% of our Idaho legislative body and signed into law by Governor Otter last March. Thank you for your continued support Senator Guthrie, and Representatives Andrus and Packer. Senator Guthrie is a member of the American Falls Agricultural Advisory Committee and is being nominated by the FFA Chapter officers for the Honorary State FFA degree in recognition of his support for Idaho agriculture and agricultural education. If our grant application is successful, the \$10,000 will be used to update our equipment and technology in the applied sciences in the Agricultural Education program.

Following the Advisory committee meeting, I will be attending a Joint Transportation Coalition meeting with the County Highway District Commissioners and folks from the Idaho Department of Transportation. One of the agenda items being discussed is the proposed installation of a roundabout capable of handling large truck traffic at the intersection of Pocatello Avenue and the State Highway 39 Bypass. This is a project that Councilwoman Jensen and I have been working on for nearly two years. The roundabout will improve traffic flow and safety at the intersection and could be completed as early as next fall. This could prove to be timely as recent news of the Magnida project crossed my screen late Saturday evening.

In an interview with Green Markets, Magnida's CEO Ric Sorbo stated that Magnida hopes to achieve financial closure in March. Société Générale SA, a French multinational banking and financial services company based in Paris, has been selected as the project's lead banking institution. Shortly after financial close, Magnida should decide between Bechtel/UHDE and KBR/Kiewit engineering, procurement, and construction bids before concluding which company will be chosen as general contractor for the project. Sorbo also said he expects construction work in the field will start within three months after financial close, with the project's completion targeted for the end of 2017 or early 2018. "Shovels should be in the ground this coming summer," he said.

I have long been a believer that opportunities can arise from challenges. Make no mistake, if in fact Magnida becomes a reality in the months before us, things in our community and region will change. These changes will present short term challenges for all of us; however I remain confident that many of those challenges will turn into long term productive growth and jobs for our local businesses with new businesses following in Magnida's wake. Be prepared to make the most of the opportunities that present themselves. As a City, we are.

I didn't think much more about the duck I was carrying and the opportunity didn't present itself to address the young water fowlers so on the return loop I simply left Lilly's retrieve on the hood of their truck in hopes that they too might make the most of it.

Until next week...