

## Our City

Yesterday afternoon I found a letter on my City desk after returning from meetings in Boise all day Thursday. The content of the letter was quite clear on the author's point of view for the proposed Smoking Ordinance; and I was happy to read it and receive the input. However, there were a few sentences that twitched a nerve. I would hope, and even dare to think, that when a City Council member is approached by a citizen with a concern and then that Council member brings the concern to the Council for deliberation, those who oppose that particular concern wouldn't think it a complete waste of time. As elected representatives of the City, we are each charged with representing everybody's viewpoints, not just one side of an issue or the other. There are typically at least two sides to any issue, if there weren't, it wouldn't be an issue. Both therefore have validity and deserve well thought-out deliberation. I believe our City Councilmembers do their very best to represent the desires of the whole and will continue to do so. In my opinion, this is never a waste of time. Further, I hope it is why we were elected.

Prior to Thursday's trip to Boise I was privileged enough to be able to fit the wrestling dual between number one ranked American Falls and number two Snake River. It was as if it had been scripted for a movie as it came down to the second to the last match to determine the winning team. It was a pin or be pinned affair with athletes on both sides exceeding the expectations of their coaches. A few lost on each side who on another day may well have won. They may well win because both team's coaches and athletes prepare daily to do just that. It has been a tradition in each program for decades. Sure, failure hurts. But very few know a season, let alone a lifetime, without it; it is what drives champions to be better tomorrow than they were today. That intensity to always make your best better. A drive and passion that Jim Giulio and his team live every day. Decades ago I wrote a poem dedicated to Jim Koetter titled "The Builder of Men." Like coach Koetter, Jim Giulio certainly is, I can give no higher praise.

Over the past three months members of the American Falls Agricultural Education Advisory Committee have met five times as the program was reviewed and the application for the Idaho Quality Program Standards (IQPS) incentive grant was completed. The extensive documentation required to complete the application was daunting. But besides providing the opportunity to compete for needed funding in the end the hard work has made the program better than it was as all stakeholders have been involved in the task. They all know the program's strengths and the three areas where improvement can be made. One of my meetings on Thursday was with Professional Technical Education Supervisor for Agriculture, Glenn Orthel. Glenn and I reviewed the application and talked about the value of the entire process. Honestly, I don't know how our application will compete with the many outstanding agriculture programs around our State. I can tell you the application is the result of the very best efforts of the Advisory Committee and myself. Time will tell.

I also met Thursday with the six State legislators who represent Power and Bannock Counties. I enjoyed the conversations I had over lunch with Senator Roy Lacy and Representatives Elaine Smith, Mark Nye and Ken Andrus. Just prior to lunch, Lieutenant Governor Brad Little approached me and asked about the Magnida project. I told him all I knew, which isn't much. It remains a wait and see game for the announcement of financial close on the two plus billion dollar project. As you may know by now I do my best to be proactive rather than reactive and thus the purpose of my four o'clock meeting.

I need to thank Representative Kelley Packer for putting the meeting together with Senator Bert Brackett (Chair of the Senate Transportation Committee), Jim Carpenter (Chief Operations Officer for Idaho Transportation Department), Mollie McCarty (Governmental Affairs Manager for ITD) and our Senator Jim Guthrie. The six of us met to discuss the proposed roundabout at the junction of Pocatello Avenue and the State Highway 39 Bypass. My concern has long been that this intersection is not conducive to commerce or safety. If Magnida in fact comes to Power County, the intersection will be even less so. The gist of the meeting was that if Magnida does decide to build, then ITD will fast track the construction of a roundabout at this intersection, which will safely accommodate large semi-trucks, farm machinery and the vast number of huge parts that will need to be transported through the intersection to the Magnida site. If Magnida chooses not to build, the roundabout will be placed in the normal ITD funding queue and built in the next five years.

There has been a two year discussion on building a new access to the property northwest of the SH 39 Bypass intersection. Jim Carpenter has put me in contact with the folks at the Local Highway Technical Assistance Council (LHTAC), a federal agency that helps local communities with road construction and maintenance. With some more luck and work it is my intent to pursue local property owners' permission to enable the County and City to use LHTAC resources for the construction of a road off the proposed roundabout that will connect to upper Fairgrounds Road. If successful, this could open up opportunities for further economic development should Magnida choose to build and ancillary businesses follow. This will be a lengthy process as anything dealing with the Federal government tends to be; but in the end I believe the possible results are worth the effort.

As my Agricultural Advisory Committee has been working on the IQPS incentive grant a similar effort has been undertaken by the entire staff at American Falls High School, as we prepare for our accreditation review this Tuesday and Wednesday. Focused reflection and analysis can be productive; as I believe it has been in this case. We do a lot of very good things at American Falls High School and I am proud to be a member of its faculty. Are there things we can do better? Of course - and like your City Council and Coach Giulio's wrestlers, we endeavor to always make our best better. That effort alone is never a waste time.

Until next week...