

## Our City

It began for me, and many of our city employees, as a week of uncertainty at best; a week of doubt and skepticism at worst. The reasons were entirely unrelated however. For me the uncertainty and doubts were to come later in the week. For the city employees, they began three weeks ago this Monday when Dusty Whited gave me his two-week notice. It was then that I began to mull things over in the wee recesses of my mind as I pondered how to best replace the loss. Was it an opportunity or an obstacle?

My belief in the employees of the City of American Falls led me to choose an opportunity. An opportunity to make more efficient and better use of personnel, equipment, and facilities. I need to thank Councilpersons Hammond and Jensen, Clerk Robyn Herndon, our attorney Tippi Jarman and Sally for helping me work through the broad strokes of the City's new Public Works organization. I also need to thank all the employees for their constructive input and patience as we work out the finer details of the restructuring. It will be an evolution of sorts.

The broad strokes include the consolidation of Enterprise Services to include Water, Waste Water and Sanitation in one department, a Buildings and Streets department, and a Recreation department which incorporates all city grounds, the Golf Pro and Community Outreach. All three departments are included under the umbrella of Public Works. The City used to be structured similarly about ten years ago, but when Gerry Giesbrecht retired the public works umbrella disappeared because at that time no one was able to assume Gerry's responsibilities. It was the best use of the City personnel Mayor Manning had employed at the time. Times and some personnel have changed over the past ten years; as have the skills and expertise of our employees. Experience and baptism under the fires of all the projects our City crews have completed recently has done that; it has changed many of our employees into the consummate professionals they are today. I am so very proud of each of them for their growth within their areas of expertise but more importantly their growth as leaders. Yes, leaders, not managers. They are two very different things.

You will notice no change in the services you receive. The restructuring, while making the City more efficient, will also allow for some cost savings. Time will tell, but that was one of our goals. For City employees the details of the inner workings of the Public Works umbrella still needs some fine tuning which will take some time; and like most changes uncertainty will exist until those details are defined and worked into a routine.

While the City employees have been working through the uncertainty of the new Public Works umbrella, which I am completely confident they will, I had no shortage of doubts and uncertainty as I loaded the FFA bus headed to Twin Falls and the State FFA Leadership Conference last Wednesday. I had a bad feeling. A feeling of imminent defeat. I didn't like it and I was on edge as I abhor losing. My kids caught the vibe as the Ag Issues team stumbled and bumbled their way through a practice in the event room on the CSI campus. I didn't do my full Coach Koetter impersonation, but it was close.

Cheese and Rice, I love them to death, but they do try one's patience and personal beliefs that months and even years of hard work and dedication will pay off. Of course they are kids, what would most folks expect. I know what I expect and it is not to fold and crumple like a cheap

umbrella in a slight breeze. Maybe it was just pre-game jitters for all of them? Time would tell the tale.

To be fair, the freshman parliamentary procedure team had an uphill battle as they were completely reconfigured two days prior due to things entirely beyond anyone's control. Still, they battled to a fifth place finish. Abby Rowe finished similarly in the prepared public speaking event; but she had other things going on as well. If you know Abby you know she is on a national gymnastics team, and she also had a meet in Salt Lake City last Friday. I am not sure Garrett Wagoner would agree that it is a "Man's World" as he finished sixth in the Job Interview event in a field composed of one male and eight females. Skylyn Sprague finished second in the Star Agribusiness award category for her efforts in operating the FFA Greenhouse; while Emily Henesh finished similarly in the Turf Management Proficiency area for her work at Riverside Golf Course.

For the first time in my 25 years at American Falls High School one of my administrators came to Twin Falls to see what all the fuss was about. The kids made several comments on how "cool" it was to have AFHS Vice Principal Nathan Whittle come and watch them. I agree, it was "cool" and to no small degree made him aware of what our FFA program is and what we work to accomplish every day in and outside the "normal" classroom. I think he was more than a little surprised when Senator Guthrie, a member of our Advisory Committee, sat with us after giving the keynote for the final session and receiving his Honorary State FFA degree, having been nominated by AF Chapter President, Riely Geritz.

I am not sure if Mr. Whittle was surprised or impressed when our Ag Issues team won the State event for the fifth straight time, I know he wasn't indifferent. I know he was impressed when Riely Geritz left no doubt that she was one of the very best public speakers ever produced by Idaho FFA as she owned the Extemporaneous Speaking event overwhelmingly, following her win last year in the Prepared Speaking event. As the National Chapter Award (determines the best Chapter in the State) results were being announced and American Falls stood on stage with the likes of the 11-instructor program at Meridian and several programs with three or more instructors, I am not sure how Mr. Whittle thought we would fare. We were ranked first for the second year in a row! All I can say is we have some really awesome kids that are in no way like a cheap umbrella.

Senator Guthrie, Mr. Whittle and I stood shoulder to shoulder as the six new State Officers were announced. Riely Geritz, a girl whose goal for the past four years has been to become a State Officer, stood 50 feet away with a look of uncertainty and doubt on her face after five rounds of interviews by peers and adults alike. Her immediate future in their hands. As the first five offices were filled, the concern on her face became deeper. In the following moments I thought she might collapse. As her name was called as State President, tears filled her eyes as she ran by the three of us to the stage. My heart filled with pride as either Senator Guthrie or Mr. Whittle slapped my shoulder, I couldn't tell which as I stood transfixed in the moment. To paraphrase the words of Celia Gould, Director of the Idaho Department of Agriculture, who played a part in the State officer selection process, "She is an amazing young woman!" She is indeed! But, then all of my kids share that same potential, any time they decide to realize it.

Until next week...