

Our City by Dan Hammond

Mayor Beitia is taking a well deserved vacation to practice his passion of fly fishing. I'm sure he is having a great time and he'll probably catch some huge fish.

As I was contemplating what to include in this weeks City News, I decided to comment on our collective use of one of our greatest treasures: Water! Generally, we as a community haven't been very frugal with our use of this valuable asset. Idaho is listed as leading the nation, with residents using 168 gallons of water per person per day (the national average is 88 gallons per day). This according to a report published in 2010 by Molly Maupin, a Boise-based hydrologist with the U.S. Geological Survey and lead author of "Estimated Use of Water in the United States in 2010", which is published every 5 years. Maupin says not all Idaho cities use water meters including most rural towns. That means many Idahoans pay a base rate no matter how much water they use. And others don't pay anyone for their water. As a city, we have looked into using water meters. Most people would rather not have them, but if we don't conserve voluntarily, we may not have an option.

During the rains we had in May some users in our community didn't shut their water off at all during this time when we received over 4 inches of the valuable wet stuff. Collectively we need to do more to conserve this precious resource. Here are some tips for conserving water: 1. Minimize evaporation by watering during the early morning hours when temperatures are cooler and winds are lighter. 2. Water your summer lawns every three days. 3. When the temperatures are excessive, water may need to increase and when the temperature cools off, water less. 4. Encourage our school system to develop and promote water conservation. 5. The internet is a good resource for tips on conserving water, there are lots of ways we as individuals can do to conserve water.

The last time I wrote the Mayor's column, I wrote of a Grant that the FFA program was working on with the advisory committee. The grant was for \$10,000 and was based on 6 program standards and 1 instructor standard. American Falls High School finished in 3rd place overall behind 2 programs from Burley High School. We received the \$10,000 which will be put to good use in the FFA program. According to Senator Jim Guthrie this program which, is in its first year, has to be reauthorized each year. We will have our work cut out for us next year because all programs will look to make changes and improvements.

Most of the Standards were worth 10 points. We scored mostly 10's , however there was one area where we scored only 6 points. That was the area of the teachers extended contract. The agricultural education instructor is expected to provide student instruction and supervision throughout the year in classroom and laboratory experiential learning and leadership and personal training and development. Mr. Beitia's extended contract is 37 days reduced from 40 days in 2009. This is the reason we received a 6 in that scoring area. Some of the other schools have 50 or 60 days extended contracts. The 2 Burley instructors have 50 days each. Kimberly, a school about the same size as American Falls, has 105 FFA members and 3 instructors with combined extended contracts of 60 days. Mr. Beitia has historically worked an average of over 50 days in the summer and over 50 extra days during the regular school year to fulfill his duties in the supervision of students' SAE's (Supervised Agricultural Experiences).

American Falls has 145 students enrolled in Ag classes and 106 or 73% participate in the FFA program.

On July 8th the advisory committee along with about 35 patrons and students went before the School Board to request that they reinstate at least the 3 days that were lost in 2009. Needless to say, we did not receive an overwhelmingly good reception. We were reminded that they needed to be fair and when all the furloughed days were returned, that the 3 days would be returned. There is no anticipated time the furloughed days will be reinstated. Since the days have not been returned it is viewed by the judging committee as a decrease in support for our FFA program by the AF school district. Senator Jim Guthrie, who attended the school board meeting in support of our FFA program, said "The American Falls FFA program is the finest program I've had experience with." Here is a shining star program of the American Falls High School, a program that brings huge notoriety and attention to the school district, that can't be properly funded. Here are the facts: We finished 3rd in the Idaho Quality Standards Program, we have finished as the top FFA Program in the State the last two (2) years in a row. In this agricultural based community, where our youth are taught and experience real life skills and work force training, we should be doing all we can to not only keep but strengthen our FFA program.

The City Council has been working on the 2015/2016 Budget for the past two months, and we are about ready to present it for publication. Our City superintendents have worked hard to stay within the guidelines of the new budget. We have awesome employees who work hard for the City and give us 110%. We appreciate all they do to get the most for your tax dollars. We all love the City of American Falls and want to make it the best place to live. We'll be glad to have Mayor back this next week. Thank you Mayor for your leadership!