

## Our City

I was in Boise when the call came last Monday. I was attending the Professional Technical Education (PTE) Summer Conference and in-service; it was good to see Teri Jones, Hillary Dillar and Karen Ludwig there as well representing American Falls High School. The theme of the conference was “Connecting PTE to Careers.” I enjoyed and appreciated the remarks of Jeff Sayer very much. Did you know it is predicted that Idaho will add 109,000 new jobs in the next ten years? Did you know that Idaho’s population is expected to grow by 108,000 in that same time period? If you knew those two fun facts, can you guess the age of the expected new residents? At least 95,000 are expected to be over the age of 65. Only 14,000 are expected to be between the ages of 25 to 50.

One of Mr. Sayer’s truisms was that “growth follows talent.” Fun fact, or NOT, Idaho ranks seventh in the ten western states in Gross Domestic Production. What does that say about our talent pool?

My personal favorite Jeff Sayer fun fact is that a student’s “hope, engagement and economic status is a 30 times greater indicator of success than test scores.” Yet, here we are throwing money hand over fist at various tests that do little but frustrate teachers and make students despise the educational system. Go figure? “To prepare Idaho’s students for the 109,000 new jobs that will await them as they finish high school more students need to acquire skills not degrees.” “WOW,” flitted through my mind as the statement resonated with me and applause broke out.

As Mr. Sayer’s presentation concluded my phone rang and I slipped out to answer it, Robyn Herndon was on the other end. She was happy! The check from the Idaho Transportation Department had actually been in the mail and it was in her hand when she called me. I need to thank our partners at ITD for their diligence in helping the City complete the Downtown Revitalization project and returning City funds that were not used. With all the various accounts and grants it would have been very easy to lose track of \$125,000 in a budget of almost five million dollars. ITD, thank you for your part in making American Falls the best place to live!

Those returned City funds will allow us to pave lower Fairway Avenue below Oregon Trail in the weeks to come. If it can be worked in and around grain harvest it may also allow us to work with our neighbors along Madison between Fort Hall and Oregon Trail and pave those two blocks. So while not huge projects when coupled with what was done on Lee Street, Fort Hall and McKinley that’s a pretty damn good summer’s effort for our Street Department. In between and around projects Jeff Nelson tells me they will also be ordering “hot mix” to finish repairing pot holes and patches in and around town. You can also look for all the crosswalks to be painted and striped in the not too distant future. Well done gentlemen!

One thing about the future that is a bit uncertain or up in a flap is the Federal Lands Access Project (FLAP). The turnover of personnel at the Federal Highway Department apparently has been extensive. The new folks in the administration are “quite sure” our redesign of the intersection at Fort Hall and the Highway 39 Bypass meets the intent of the original grant. Superintendent Jeremy Peirsol is working with his new counterpart through the details of the

reassignment of funds. The estimated cost of the reconfiguration of the intersection is about half that of the original grant application that was approved. Time will tell.

Time is one of the few things that seems to be perpetual. It keeps marching on. I knew the days were numbered but I didn't think they would be on me so soon. When I returned to my City Office today upon my desk was a letter of resignation from Debbie Erickson one of our Deputy Clerks. After nearly 30 years of service to the City, Debbie is retiring. Her plans include spend much more time with her husband Clay, traveling and of course visiting the grandkids. I wish Debbie the very best in her retirement; it is certainly well deserved. She will be greatly missed by more than just me and her co-workers. She was the face of City Hall, one of the most compassionate and people-oriented civil servants I know. Thank you Debbie for what you a given everyone of us in American Falls.

While not quite the same as Deb's contribution, I also need to thank two folks who have improved my life and neighborhood. To the residents of 704 Stevens Street and 169 Polk, I must say for two single guys, you do a hell of a good job with your yards. Our neighbor at 147 Polk thinks we are having yard wars. Are we? It is nice to once again have neighbors in those two homes that actually take pride in where they live and do what they can to brighten not only the street but the entire neighborhood. 169 Polk hasn't looked this good since Hulda Haines lived there. In my 24 years of living where I do, 704 Stevens has never looked as good as it does today. Brandon and Preston, thank you for being such good neighbors and welcome to the neighborhood. Brandon, the City is indeed fortunate to have you as our Police Chief. Preston, John McNabb made a great choice when he hired you! Welcome again to American Falls, the best place to live!

Until next week...