

Our City

The rainbow swam out of my hand as the phone rang in my pocket. Work and responsibility can be almost impossible to get away from unless one is fully committed to doing so. But, I am getting ahead of myself. I answered a few short questions and said I would. The day that had started so well was over. I reeled in, wrapped the tippet end and flies on 15 feet of leader around my reel and tucked the trailing fly into the fifth guide up the rod, the wade out would be as difficult as the wade in. The deep undulating bottom and mud provided its own pucker factor. I made it to the far bank with an inch to spare at the top of my waders. It was a handsome fish that was well caught, at least that's what the guy who had driven up and watched the whole thing said. I wasn't as conversant as I should have been. I wasn't rude either. I wasn't pleased about having to leave rising fish, but I did have to get back to American Falls as somethings don't just take care of themselves.

I am not a Facebook user but apparently some pages have been infested with news of "worms" eating the trees in City Park. They are not worms but rather larva. The larva of the American Elm Beetle. They will eat themselves out of house and home eventually, but before doing that they will lay eggs that will hatch next spring. Like somethings, this infestation won't cure itself, it is likely the result of a larger infestation around town. The treatment will involve spraying all the infested trees next spring as the leaf buds begin to break in late March or early April. In the meantime, additional fertilizer will be applied to help compensate for nutrient loss and stress due to the infestation and adequate watering will also be maintained. Spraying now will do no good as the beetles have already laid their eggs under the bark. I apologize for the unsightliness. If you are a homeowner and have American Elm trees you may well want to check your property for the same infestation. If you suspect they are present please call Jeremy Peirsol at City Hall and he can more definitively identify them and recommend professional contacts for treatment.

If you are a homeowner who qualifies for the County's Circuit Breaker program the City Council voted to change fees for water, sewer and garbage for you pending the results of a Public Hearing on July 15. The payment assistance program would cost the City a total of \$4,224.00. To a person during the budgeting discussions the Council agreed that the assistance to potentially 88 families is worth the cost. I couldn't agree more.

As we have been working through the budgeting process, while difficult to convert the old budget categories to the new restructured categories, benefits are already evident as resources, capital and equipment are being pooled between divisions to better utilize both, which was one of the primary goals of the reorganization. While providing for better use of resources it has quite likely made a bit more funding available for salaries, most of which we plan to use to bolster the lower end of the salary schedules. Keeping well trained and qualified employees is essential in providing you with quality services and infrastructure; a locally competitive wage is critical in this endeavor. While the City offers some of the best benefits anywhere health, dental, vision and life insurance don't put food on the table. While I am always proud of our employees and the job they do, I am equally pleased with the Council's efforts in this regard. We will know by July 15 how everything will truly shakeout.

I have known for 26 years that I had exceptional kids in my Agricultural Education Program here at American Falls; however, I didn't know until two weekends ago how generous they were. At the annual Chapter Banquet this past May the retiring officers gave me a gift. A gift of time and great pleasure. Without me knowing they cleared my entire schedule for June 26, 27 and 28 of SAE project visits, required professional meetings, and any City obligations. Thanks to those who helped them; I can't do it, it couldn't have been easy. What they gave me was an all-expense paid weekend in Yellowstone. What it meant to me brought tears to my eyes and gladdened my heart. The highlights included a caddis hatch on the Gallatin Friday evening, Green Drakes on Soda Butte Saturday morning, quality time with the love of my life and some of the best food I have ever eaten at Café Madriz. Interestingly the chef at Café Madriz is a retired Biology teacher from Spain, she cooked many of the dishes my Grandma Beitia used to, it was like going home in a way I hadn't been in quite some time. It was perfect.

I have long known too that our Ag Program was pretty good even in the big scheme of things. The quality of the program is largely due to the involvement of our community and your continued support of it and our students. While at the State Ag Teachers' Summer In-Service I found out the results of our efforts in applying for the \$10,000 Idaho Quality Program Standards grant. For those of you who know me well know that I don't have a competitive bone in my body and am easily satisfied with just doing my best. As I looked at the results after they were given out I was pleased as I saw our program was in a three way tie for first with a 9.5 and disappointed all at the same time as I saw my instructor score of 9.6, third. The top four scores were separated by five tenths of a point on a 20 point scale reflective of seven State Program Quality Standards and 44 quality indicators. Yes, it was close. While third out of 49 applicants isn't bad and certainly qualifies the program for the \$10,000 incentive grant that will be used to purchase science equipment there is room for improvement. It will be made.

Parents of students in our program, the Ag community and I owe a special thank you to the Program's Advisory Committee for their outstanding work on the IQPS Incentive Grant Application. The members involved include: Patty Porath, Dan Hammond, Tom Brown, Kamren Koompin, Ana Rowe, Kimi Taylor, Nathan Whittle, Riely Geritz and Senator Jim Guthrie. If you have a desire to help and/or work with the program, please contact any of us except Mr. Whittle as he is now in Colfax, Washington.

However, please don't try and contact me between July 7 and 14 as I will be unavailable and off the grid. Yes, I am making the commitment, I will be on vacation fishing the headwaters of the Boise River drainage with my lifelong friend Al Goetz. Early reports indicate wadeable water and moderate temperatures. The fishing will get good when we get there.

As I left the gravel road and hit pavement on my way back to American Falls, another phone call rang in. He needed me to look at the street in front of his mother's house as it was impeding the entrance to the drive way, as the rest of the City personnel were on vacation I told him I would be there in 30 minutes. I was. Preston, here is the column you needed today; it worked out better for me today anyway. However, my phone won't ring next week as the sides of another rainbow slides through my hands. You will need to call Dan Hammond; thanks for being so diligent in your efforts to report what is happening in American Falls.

Until two weeks...Dan next week is yours, thanks!