

## Our City

I knew what not to say last Wednesday as I sat in our State's Capital Senate Cafeteria and it was an interesting dichotomy to what my students back in American Falls were learning from our regional industry professionals who spoke with them about the value of soft skills in the workplace. But then knowing what not to say has its own inherent value; and for me at times it has been a hard skill to master. Nearly three years ago Idaho Ag teachers worked with State Agribusinesses and the State Legislature to pass the Ag Initiative which increased funding for all Professional Technical Education (PTE) programs and established the Idaho Quality Program Standards grant process for Agricultural Education programs. Now the powers that be in PTE want the same type of grant made available to all programs; cool. Except at the outset they wanted the process to be easy and require no input from the teacher, administrator or local community; they wanted results from the push of a button and another State demanded test. Quality made easy. It didn't happen. Our local application this last year took me and six other people nearly 60 hours to complete; the true value of the Ag application process is not only the \$10,000 from the grant but more importantly the relationships developed in the process. In the end I held my tongue as the other 29 teachers from around the State realized that while it sounded good in theory, in practice the "test and push a button" format measured very little of value and certainly was no measure of enduring quality.

As my students and I worked on our soft and hard skills this past week our City crews in Streets, Water and Waste Water were receiving more training for their technical skills. Karl Kozain and Mark Scherer attended a pavement management class last Thursday while Ike Gonzalez, Brian Morris and Darren Dahlke learned about how to better test for flows and ventilation in our sewer systems. Not much else gives our community a better return on investment than a well-trained and hard-working City crew.

The Street crew also continued their work in our alleys clearing the way for our sewer maintenance team. You may have seen Mason Chacon sweeping sidewalks and clearing accumulated debris from summer and fall into the gutter ahead of Mark or Karl in the street sweeping machine. Mason was also cleaning up after our "fruitless" crab apple trees downtown; you may recall the downtown project called for fruitless trees but many that we received were obviously not. Hadlee Anderson continues to maintain the Idaho Street planting strips between cross-country meets, cheerleading and FFA events.

On the water side of things Ike, Brian and Darren were exercising valves so they remain in working order. Have you ever had a valve that you haven't turned on or off for years only to find out when you need to turn it on or off it is frozen in place and most often breaks when you turn it too hard, well that is what the water guys were trying to prevent. They also repaired a few home services on the City side of the connection along the way as they found them to be faulty. On the dirtier side of the Water and Waste Water Department they also cleaned and serviced the sewer lift station at Willow Bay; powered lift stations are required whenever sewage must be moved uphill. Bad things happen when lift stations do not work correctly, thus again the preventative maintenance. BGM Builders reroofed wells #3 and #6 just ahead of a few days of rain and weather that actually looks and feels like fall.

As a friendly reminder to the folks who enjoyed the many tournaments played on the City golf course this season your tournament earnings need to be spent by October 31. Club cash still on the books after the 31<sup>st</sup> will be placed in the Golf Memorial fund and used for its construction or other course improvement. Please make arrangements with our Golf Pro, Denny Howell, to take care of this unless it is your intention to see the funds used as specified.

As the golf season winds down City youth basketball registration is upon us. Please consider having your children take advantage of the new academy format where they will learn proper fundamentals from our High School's head coaches. Get your kids registered at City Hall.

As you register your child for youth basketball I would personally ask you to consider supporting the Plant Facilities Bond on November 3. It will cost you nothing more to support this bond and in doing so you will provide recreational opportunities for hundreds of our youth and more importantly the bond will modernize our oldest school building. Some of you will remember taking an afternoon class from me when my classroom used to be in the "Annex," now the fourth grade wing. It got hotter than the gates of hades, we used to shut the blinds and turn off the lights for just a few degrees of reprieve. It is certainly no environment for young kids to learn in which is why new efficient heating and cooling systems are required in a building that uses more power than the whole high school. As class sizes grow at Hillcrest Elementary new classrooms could be built on the opposite end of the "annex" from my old room to provide needed space for the third grade. Of course some may say, "It was good enough for me, it sure as "blank" is good enough for them." True enough, yet it seems a shame to not provide better for our legacy when better is certainly possible; think about it.

As we in local government do our very best to provide the services you deserve and expect from cleaning streets and sewers to providing learning opportunities for your kids the same cannot always be said about our Federal government and some of its services; namely the Postal Service. Mayors Blad and England of Pocatello and Chubbuck have not given up the fight to re-open the Flandro Mail Processing Center in Pocatello. However, they need your help finding stories from residents in our area about how the closure has impacted your businesses and/or your lives. I encourage you to go to [www.oldtownpocatello.com](http://www.oldtownpocatello.com) and fill out the short form. You will see the form as soon as the page opens. Stories can also be dropped off at Pocatello City Hall, Chubbuck City Hall, or you can send an email to [mayor@pocatello.us](mailto:mayor@pocatello.us). The deadline for stories is Saturday, October 24. Mayors Blad and England will take every story submitted with them to Washington, DC for their meetings with the "powers that be" on October 27. With our stories and their hard work maybe we can restore an invaluable service.

I can tell that the decrease in postal service has drastically affected our City's billing and collection efficiency. Payments the City sends to our vendors and service providers sometimes take weeks to arrive. Just as your payments to us may take just as long. Not too long ago we sometimes received them the very day you mailed them. Please help Mayors Blad and England help us, get them your stories. Washington needs to know service matters.

I missed the Beavers win over Marsh Valley as I was invited to attend the President's Alumni Recognition Dinner for ISU, sorry gentlemen. Newly appointed to the Alumni Board of Directors for 2015 are our own Gary Aldous, Patty Bolinger and Debbie Poulson. Honorees included my friend and staunch FFA supporter Rick Phillips and the J.R. Simplot Company, my high school coach and teacher Don Neves and his wife Kathy, Ronda Black our School District's education specialist, and the Chief Judge for the District of Idaho Lynn Winmill. You may remember Judge Winmill for taking time out of his schedule to work with this year's Ag Issues team. The thing that struck me about the entire night were the common traits possessed by each of the honorees. Traits like dedication, service, teamwork, and love of community – traits that are a true measure of enduring quality.

Until next week...