

Our City

It took a lot of gears working together to make last Monday's opportunity possible for the 2016 American Falls Ag Issues team. Frankly, I wasn't sure it was even possible; but then you never know until you try. The issue the team is presenting this year is prefaced as, "Should immigrants working in agriculture receive a preferred path to citizenship?" It has been an interesting journey as the team has talked to groups of immigrants, farmers, judges, police officers, mayors, State legislators and representatives from Congressman Simpson's office as well as Senator Risch's. It wasn't until after the team's forum with Travis Jones, the State Policy Director for Congressman's Simpson's office, that I thought a team interview of our State's top officials might actually be possible. Travis Jones put the team in contact with Greg Wilson, who works for Lieutenant Governor Brad Little. While Governor Otter was unavailable on the day we were going to be in Boise, Mr. Little arranged for Benn Brocksome, a Special Assistant to the Governor and an expert on immigration, to attend the forum as well. In a hugely cooperative effort, the 2016 Ag Issues team met with Lieutenant Governor Little and Mr. Brocksome for 45 minutes last Monday to discuss the intricacies of the agricultural labor market and its dependence on immigrant workers. More on the results of that meeting in the weeks and months to follow as the team will be presenting their findings in more public forums in preparation for their State competition in April.

The other reason for the FFA Chapter being in Boise last Monday was to thank our Legislators for their continued efforts on behalf of Professional Technical Education (PTE) and more recently their support of the Agricultural Education Initiative. About 600 FFA members, legislators, and Idaho farm industry leaders attended the annual Cenarrusa Day on the Hill. Besides the eight members of the Ag Issues team, 20 more of our FFA members joined Senator Jim Guthrie, Representatives Ken Andrus, Kelley Packer, Julie Van Orden, Rick Phillips of JR Simplot and Glenn Orthel the Agricultural Program Manager of PTE for a luncheon sponsored by the Idaho FFA Association in partnership with the Idaho Cooperative Council. It was interesting for me to watch as the FFA members from last year's Ag Issues team reacquainted themselves with Senator Guthrie. It is an interesting dynamic to watch as kids become comfortable around adults who have the ability to change the life and path of the impressionable youth. To have witnessed how the relationships have evolved it is difficult to say who has been more positively affected, the adult or the students. In the end the only thing that counts is how positive it is.

After the conclusion of an FFA Foundation Board of Directors biannual meeting, the 30 of us loaded back on the bus and headed back to American Falls. As we were leaving Boise my cell phone rang and the lady on the other end proceeded to tell me she just had the bumper torn off her car by mounds of ice at the intersection of Pocatello and Calder; which prompted a few phone calls from me. If you live here you know many of our intersections have dips incorporated to help with heavy runoff. Well these dips get deeper as ice builds up parallel to them. As City street crew continue to work to maintain the drivability and serviceability of our streets, it can be difficult to keep up with everything; but the maintenance of these deeper intersections will be added to the Street Department's to-do-list.

As we look further into the year the drivability and serviceability of our streets will remain in the forefront; however, like other municipalities the maintenance line in our budget is almost

entirely driven by funds allocated from the State and the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD). Until such time as the legislature determines what it may or may not do with possible Business Personal Property Tax legislation and ITD distributes funds for roads and bridges, our City's superintendents have decided as a group to limit all City purchases to items essential to the current functionality of our provided services. I certainly appreciate their willingness to be proactive and forward looking.

In staying with that same philosophy our Golf Pro Denny Howell wanted me to let you know that our Golf Facebook page is active and that he is looking into a credit card reader that is "chip compatible" for the golf course in order to provide you with better service. Public Works Coordinator, Jeremy Peirsol, is researching software that will allow for online reservations and payments at the Willow Bay Campground, providing much better and more convenient service.

As the week progressed, 14 American Falls FFA members passed the District selection process and are being forwarded to the State Association. These candidates have met all the requirements and are now slated to receive their State FFA Degrees on April 8th at the State FFA Leadership Conference on the CSI campus in Twin Falls. The 2016 Ag Issues team is in the process of scheduling more public forums on immigration. If you are associated with a group that would like to learn more about the issue, please let me know; the team would welcome any opportunity between now and April 6th.

Until next week...