

Our City

A citizen contacted me last week with a question and concern both of which were legitimate. I will get to them both; but first some history. On January 7, 1998 the City Council passes Ordinance 515. In short, Ordinance 515 requires the installation and licensed inspection of backflow assemblies on any water system connected to a service where potentially contaminated water may reenter the City's potable water distribution lines. It is an ordinance with which the City has not been able to comply with until last year after considerable expense. Thanks to Superintendent Pete Cortez for his diligent budgeting and efforts to bring the City into compliance. These continued efforts by City employees will no doubt pay dividends later.

You will recall our recurrent bouts with Total Coliform Bacteria (TCB) for almost a year after the completion of the Downtown Revitalization project. Recall also that TCB include bacteria found in the soil and in water that has been influenced by surface water. It is very different from fecal coliform or E. coli bacteria which can also be found in unsecured water sources. TCBS, fecal coliform and E. coli still a pose a threat to our drinking and culinary water should the City's distribution systems become contaminated from water systems connected to private systems, particularly sprinkler systems; hence the requirement of backflow assemblies, their installation and annual inspections.

The question the citizen posed was actually threefold, the third part of which raised a concern for both the citizen and me. The first question was, "Why are backflow assemblies required to be installed and inspected." My response was drawn from the facts listed above. The second question asked, "Why hasn't the ordinance been enforced before now?" A good question. Since its inception, Ordinance 515 has not been strictly enforced by the City because the City itself was not in compliance; the pot can't very well call the kettle black. However, since the City has met all the requirements for compliance, inspections of all backflow assemblies will be enforced. A very common place backflow assemblies are required is in the sprinkler systems that many folks have in their yards.

The recent inspection enforcement brought about the concern. The inspections must be completed by a licensed inspector, a Backflow Assembly Tester. These licenses are issued by the Idaho Bureau of Occupational Licensing. In American Falls there are five, three of which happen to be current or past City employees; there are 27 in Pocatello. The City's Grounds Superintendent Cody Moldenhauer has a private sprinkler business; which is perfectly fine. The conflict in my eyes and the eyes of the citizen was that Cody contracted, privately outside the scope of City business unbeknownst to me, with Pete Cortez to inspect his sprinkler systems' backflow assemblies upon their installation and annually since Ordinance 515 began being enforced. While I am certain that no conflict was intended by either Cody or Pete, it does have the wrong appearance. That same sentiment was confirmed by the City's legal counsel. I have asked Pete that he no longer inspect privately installed backflow assemblies as a private contractor as he is responsible for the City's enforcement of Ordinance 515. I will make a list of the licensed Backflow Assembly Testers available at City Hall. I do not know how many will provide the service or what they may charge. I do know that Superintendent Pete Cortez will be enforcing Ordinance 515 as we endeavor to provide each of you with clean, safe drinking water.

Above ground the City crews have been hard at it. All the City's American Elm trees have been injected with a systemic insecticide that will prevent the infestation of the American Elm beetle. Work began on Tee Box #5, across from the School District Office, and Tee Box #7 I believe to expand the tees box areas. Jon Isaak will be laser leveling them prior to seeding. Thank you Jon! Thank you too to Brian Adair for your additional donation to the tennis court project; which by the way is still moving forward nicely.

The Street crew continues to make progress on the smaller potholes around town. The larger ones are on hold as they will all need to be cut out, the base fully compacted, the hole filled and leveled. They are also continuing their sweeping efforts and alley trimming. The Spring Cleanup will begin this week. Please remember to not bag your debris, separate out other refuse from your leaves, grass and branches. If you still have questions about what can be included in the cleanup, contact City Hall for clarification. Thank you!

Last Wednesday the City Council approved a motion to allow me to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Power County Highway District. The MOU will allow for extended cooperation between the two entities. Potential joint projects could include the magging of the usual City streets; lowering the profile and magging Teton in May; paving hospital hill on Roosevelt in June along with possibly Madison and Elevator Streets west of Fort Hall; chip seal Falls Avenue east of Lincoln and Pocatello Avenue from Bannock to Hillcrest.

Last Friday was my student teacher, KylieShaul's last day at American Falls. She will be missed! I wish it had worked out that she could have gotten a job teaching here with me, but she will be close to home with her new job teaching at Ridgeview High School, the new high school in the Vallivue School District. As we both said our goodbyes last Friday, tears welled as we both knew we made a good team, one that could have built something more than what I have been able to do with a single person department. She will do well as an Ag Teacher and FFA Advisor; the teachers of the Meridian FFA Chapter and the University of Idaho should be very proud of her. I am. What they taught her and what she learned while here at American Falls will pay her and her new students big dividends well into the future. It was great working with you Kylie; I know you will do exceedingly well.

Until next week...