

## Our City

A FEW WORDS OF EXTREME CAUTION! If you are a parent, guardian or grandparent and are responsible for the safety and well being of children under the age of 18, do not stop reading. Four months ago I was in City Hall when a mother came in with her daughter to pay on a very delinquent water bill. She was due to be turned off, she was that far behind. As Clerk Herndon and I talked to her, I looked over at the young girl who was probably of middle school age. She was on her phone and standing shoulder to shoulder with her mother. What was on her phone's screen made my skin crawl. Two naked forms in an explicit position accompanied by language in text that is associated with pornography. A battle raged in my mind as to what I should do, as I was unsure of my authority in the situation. I feel I made the mistake by not saying anything. I reasoned, wrongly now I believe, that the mother was already in tears and I wasn't at school and not in my teacher role. I told myself it wasn't my place to reprimand another person's child outside my teacher role and that I didn't want to make matters worse for the mother. I should have.

I was talking with Chief Wilkinson this week and part of our conversation was about children with phones and instances like the one I just described that are running rampant, not in some far off place, but here in American Falls. To make matters worse there are predators out there who groom children on Facebook and other social media platforms to perform the very acts none of us could ever see our children doing. It is happening. If your child has a phone or access to the internet at home they are at risk! There is no clearer way to state it. Chief Wilkinson and I will be meeting with our School District Administration to see what we can do to educate the parents of our children about this risk. Make no mistake, this is not a City or a School District problem, but short of responsible parents and guardians it becomes our problem when our children become victims of crimes associated with pornography and predators. If you read this and know parents of children with phones or access to the internet at home please warn them to take a more active role in monitoring what their children are doing and have access to. It won't be easy, there are very sophisticated applications available made specifically to hide such activity from prying eyes. It is one of the first things the predators groom children to do; delete or hide everything. It won't be easy, but then parenting seldom is. END OF CAUTION.

On another potentially gloomy note Street Superintendent Dalhke and Public Works Coordinator are finding that our very limited street budget doesn't go as far as when Daren was superintendent years ago or even last year. With the continued rising cost of asphalt the cost estimate to correctly fix Roosevelt Street on Hospital Hill is \$56,000; which would replace all the asphalt and road base from where the hole started down to Bannock. That amount is over two-thirds of our Street Maintenance line item and, if all \$56K is used, will severely limit the rest of the repairs that can be completed in the months to come. As a matter of public policy, under Idaho Law since the estimated cost is over \$25,000 the project will most likely go out to bid unless a less expensive way can be found to fix the deteriorating "Penepime." Hopefully through the bid process a more economical solution can be found.

As of this Monday the Street Department will be working four ten-hour days (4-10s); Monday through Thursday. This annual change will not affect our service to you but will allow the department to be more efficient in the use of their time as they work through a list of lengthy projects. As you probably already know the 4-10s allows for less time starting and cleaning up each day allowing the crew to spend more time on the actual task at hand. If you haven't been out to Willow Bay, all the gravel roads and parking lots have been graded. As weather permits potholes are being fixed, the streets continue to be swept where they are clear of parked cars, and the curb on Lincoln Street by the Falls Motel and Cable One is under repair after the broken water line was fixed a few months ago.

This past Monday Daren, Jeremy and I met with the County Commissioners to discuss our Annual Spring Cleanup. Specifically we were there to ask if the dump fees could be waived for the project. I have written of this previously but as you begin to do your spring yard cleaning PLEASE keep your grass, leaves and branches separate from all other forms of garbage. Please do not put old boards with nails, concrete, rocks, pipe or anything else that would not normally go through a mulcher in the pile with your yard debris. Put all that “stuff” in a separate pile and we will haul it for you. Along that same line please do not expect us to haul your old appliances, tires, batteries, paints, or chemicals. Those all cost money to dispose of; and they are your responsibility and not part of this service project. City crews will begin the Spring Cleanup on April 25<sup>th</sup>. Please have your yard debris neatly piled (NOT BAGGED) in the alley by that time; the entire process will take about two to three weeks for the City crews to complete. Thank you to the Power County Commissioners who graciously waived the dump fees pending your and our ability to keep yard debris separate from other garbage so that the mulcher is not damaged like it has been in the past.

I was pleased to hear also at the same meeting with the Commissioners that they are as tired of the over parked cars on our streets as the City Council and I am. Chief Wilkinson, City Attorney Nolan Wittrock and I discussed a new parking ordinance that I will bring to the Council for their consideration in the weeks to come. We can and will do better American Falls.

Over on the wetter side of things the Water and Waste Water Department has completed their cleaning and flushing of our sewer trouble spot throughout town and will move on to cleaning entire areas. They will also be finishing up some concrete work at St. John’s at that water service. Superintendent Pete Cortez is in the process of setting up Hepatitis B, Tetanus shots for his entire crew. As you would suspect, both illnesses can be easily contracted in the work that the department does daily.

The plantings on Idaho Street were sprayed with pre-emergent last week and thoroughly cleaned the week before, by the Parks and Golf crew, in hopes of minimizing the labor it takes to abate the weeds that find their way into the plantings. The weed control does not abate the garbage that collects there however, and the City will continue to clean and maintain the entirety of the plantings. Some areas are worse than others and as business owners, although the City does it for you, you may consider putting forth a bit more effort in policing what your customers throw away outside your establishment. Consider the thought, it will make us all look better. Thank you. The same crew will be injecting systemic insecticide into City elm trees to control the elm beetle infestation we experienced last year.

Congratulations to Pete Cortez for being the City employee with the most steps, over 1.25 million, in our initial Fitbit challenge. Chief Wilkinson was drawn as the recipient of the \$50 Blue Cross expense card. We started a new challenge this week, those details to follow.

Great job to Scott Ploussard on his first week of business at the Willow Bay Café. We enjoyed Friday Steak Night with friends last week and it was an excellent meal! Tamby and Anthony are also doing a bang-up job at the campground as reservations keep coming in and improvements continue to be made to the entire campground operation.

Sally and I extend our heartfelt condolences to Terri Miller and her family for the loss of her Father. As she and I discussed, he is in a better place.

Until next week...