

Our City

If you are sick of reading about my thoughts on water conservation skip to the fourth paragraph. As a City Councilmember for over seven years and now a Mayor for a week less than four years I can honestly say that the City has always had your best interests as citizens at heart. And, that every decision we contemplated was based on those same interests. As we look to the future of American Falls, your interests remain paramount.

As I have written recently, when the City joined the Aberdeen American Falls Groundwater District it literally bought us a bit of a reprieve from having to demand that you decrease your water usage. In my opinion a reprieve is all it is; it is not a solution to our water use problem by any stretch of my imagination. In an interview with Daniel Moore of the Power County Press, this week following Wednesday's City Council meeting he asked about our way forward and what we could do as a City with regard to water conservation. I won't reiterate the conversation as I am sure Daniel will do that very well. What I will say is that the water issue is something that will not go away. It's kind of like death and taxes, sometimes you can stave off both for a while but eventually they catch you. Often times it's not our choice how or when we meet the former; but we can certainly decide how we will deal with taxes and water. In a meeting last Tuesday with Keller and Associates, Water Superintendent Pete Cortez, Public Works Coordinator Jeremy Peirsol, and I discussed ways and costs forward. The cost to meet our 12% reduction in water use in full will not be cheap when it comes.

As the City Council works through the budgeting process this year something that I will ask them to consider is a way to begin saving for reduction or reuse projects that will in my estimation be required within the next five to ten years. As Pete Cortez aptly pointed out during the Tuesday meeting the City currently lacks revenues to replace the miles of four inch water mains that no longer meet fire code and need to be replaced with six inch pipe to meet both the fire code and peak use demands. Significant portions of our aging sewer system also need to be replaced and we are verifying these areas as City crews camera and document that system. Most of the components at the new waste water treatment plant will be out of their manufacturer's warranty this year and will require that we begin the process of paying for their maintenance. It all costs money; there is no responsible way around it. How we choose to meet that obligation is our choice.

I made the choice a few years ago to hire Judy Fehringer as a fulltime Ordinance Enforcement Officer; however, I didn't do a very good job of explaining my expectations, which is obviously my fault and no one else's. My idea behind hiring Judy fulltime was that she would be responsible for enforcing all the relevant City ordinances. I failed to communicate the "all" part as Judy has really only been enforcing those ordinances related to the police side of the City. After my conversations with Police Chief Brandon Wilkinson and Judy this past week we were able to clear up my lack of communication and Judy will begin to familiarize herself with the other ordinances that will require her attention. My initial lack of communication may have led to the perception of some that as a City we have only chosen to enforce certain ordinances; for that I apologize.

One ordinance that will see an increased vigilance on behalf of the City deals with dogs and leashes at Willow Bay and on the bike path. New signage will be placed and enforcement will

become more visible as several incidents have been reported to me; one involving a drawn concealed weapon and the near shooting of a dog not on a leash. I don't believe any responsible dog owner knowingly puts another person at risk as they exercise their pet. Most of us "know" our dogs would never do anything to another dog or person, me included. But, someone that doesn't know you or your dog has no idea what to expect when approached by a dog off leash. I know without equivocation that Lilly, my ten year old lab, would never attack another dog or person; but if she were off leash and approached someone with a concealed weapon and was shot it would be 100% my fault. Please be mindful of the ordinance. More and more folks are using Willow Bay for camping and exercise and most of them are not from here. Reported altercations have increased as well. If you have a dog, please do your part.

This Friday I am asking that we all do our part as the City crews will be working with the County Highway District to chip-seal a significant portion of our major streets and traffic areas. Several streets will be temporarily closed to traffic as the project makes its way through town. Please be courteous enough to take a small detour. For a complete list of streets to be chip-sealed refer to the press release in this issue of the Power County Press. Thank you so much.

Thank you too to everyone one who puts in countless hours to make their yards and homes so appealing. I know I said it would be a few weeks before I announced the results of the Historical Commission's selection of our town's best yards, but they were way more efficient than that. Their selection of the top three include 905 Hillcrest Avenue (a perennial favorite), 1621 Falls Avenue, and 234 Garfield Street. Another 28 were determined to have outstanding flower gardens: 355 Autumn Way, 575 Snowflake St., 266 Washington St., 385 Jefferson St., 370 Madison St, 260 Monroe St., 373 Van Buren St., 764 Bannock Ave., 704 Hutchinson Ave., 193 Howard St., 222 Lincoln St., 330 Lincoln St., 835 Fillmore St., 510 Ralph St., 650 Bennett St., 680 Hillcrest Ave., 612 Hillcrest Ave., 572 Hillcrest Ave., 547 Gifford Ave., 431 Calder Ave., 904 Reed St., 885 Read St., 114 Grant St., 510 Grant St., 126 Hayes St., 425 Hayes St., 446 Cleveland St., and 246 McKinley St. My thanks to the Commission for the great work!

For all of our areas that we need to improve on we are not alone in any of these. Frankly, due to the foresight of your City Council and our City employees, I believe we are significantly ahead of many communities with similar means. To those of you who choose to make the interests of American Falls paramount as you care for your families, homes and this community, I sincerely thank you. You make all we do for each other possible.

Until next week...