

Our City

The right thing to do can be difficult to flesh out at times. Last Wednesday night was a good example of that. If you have yet to read Preston Crompton's recap of last Wednesday night's recessed city council meeting you may consider doing that before reading further.

Last Thursday morning I received a text from Jeremy Peirsol, the City Public Works Coordinator, which said, "That was a very productive Council meeting last night." It was. You are well represented by the Council you have elected.

What Preston's report probably doesn't tell you is that the meeting started about seven minutes late as Clerk Herndon, Police Chief Wilkinson, City Attorney Wittrock and I discussed the addition of three emergency items on the agenda. The items added to the agenda included the approval of the hospital's annual Brake for Breakfast on the 300 block of Idaho Street between the City Parks, the possible disbursement of departmental funds, and an executive session to discuss personnel. The Brake for Breakfast was quickly approved and the results of the executive session set up two interviews for this Monday evening for some form or fashion of Jeremy Peirsol's current position. Jeremy's time with the City is short as he will be moving at the end of this week to be with his family in Boise. Until such time as he finds suitable employment in Boise, he will be driving back and forth weekly to continue working here at the City two to three days per week.

Preceding the discussions and actions on the Brake for Breakfast and the disbursement of departmental funds, Alan Geisbrecht of JUB Engineering presented four options dealing with the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) that I wrote about last week. The option the Council chose I believe gives us the most "bang for our bucks" and will rebuild the 400 block of Roosevelt and part of Gifford Street which is commonly referred to as Hospital Hill. It will also provide storm water relief to problem areas in our downtown. The potential \$539,000 project will cost the City about \$99,000 in cash from our Street and Water Departments. This proposal is reduced in size and scope from its original form; but will still allow for much needed improvements. The Department of Commerce, the administrators of the grant, will be here Tuesday of this week to preview the project and provide some guiding input to us as a City and JUB for writing a successful grant for the proposed project. If all goes well, the project should be awarded and completed by the summer of 2018.

Following the CDBG and Brake for Breakfast discussions and motions came the emergency item dealing with potential transfer of departmental funds. Again, I am not exactly sure what Preston's recap of the meeting will include, but it will undoubtedly tell you that \$16,000 will be transferred from the Police Department's current budget and another \$20,000 from other budget lines within Parks/Golf/Willow Bay/Organized Recreation Departments to help backfill the hole the Golf budget is in; a \$61,000 hole. An entirely unacceptable situation by anyone's account. The reason for the hole is that golf revenues are down and the initial investment in the City's assumption of the retail side of the department is still in the process of being recuperated.

The reason there are Police Department funds available is twofold. First, Chief Wilkinson is an exceptional manager of personnel and finances. Second, the department has operated an

officer short for the past two years as police officer recruits are nearly impossible to find. The City has budgeted for a new officer each of the last two years but the position remained unfilled until this month. The funds allotted for a new officer, along with money the Chief has been able to save through frugality, were the monies (\$82,000) the Council deliberated on transferring part of to the retail golf line item. I believe the Council made a well deliberated decision; one that leaves the Police Department the ability to make much needed purchases and one that helps nearly restore golf to the original position the City's assumption of the retail side of the enterprise put us in.

Going forward Chief Wilkinson will be purchasing some patrol vehicles as monthly repairs to some current vehicles are to the point of being cost prohibitive. He will also be purchasing some technical equipment to replace that which is currently at the end of its usefulness. On the golf side there will be a reckoning of sorts; there has to be. I will report those details as they happen. Councilpersons Jensen and Hofmeister will be meeting with our Golf Pro Denny Howell and me this Thursday to address proactive actions and concerns moving forward. Concerns that are not irreconcilable but must be addressed to solve a very real problem.

If things go well during Monday evening's interviews, I should be able to report next week how we as a City plan to move forward after Jeremy finds a suitable position in Boise. I am pleased to report this week that through Jeremy's efforts and our collaboration as a community we have been awarded a \$15,000 grant from the United States Tennis Association. While we were hoping for a \$20,000 grant award, what we received puts us roughly within \$8,000 of being able to make the new tennis courts a reality. I will be working with Lisa Leyshon of AF Impact to see if the balance could be garnered through donations between now and spring. If that proves to be a real possibility, as folks start looking at ways to divert tax dollars to local interests, then the demolition of the old courts and the construction of the new courts will begin very soon. Our plan would be to have everything done except the actual tennis court surface this fall and complete the final surfacing phase late next spring as weather stabilizes.

As the City's budget year closes this week, I am pleased to tell you that through the careful management of their departmental budgets the City's superintendents working in concert with Clerk Herndon have done an exceptional job in providing all of us with exceptional services. While the retail golf budget finds itself in a hole, the City's overall budget to end the year is balanced and stable as we move into the new fiscal year next week. I am looking forward to working with all of our City employees along with your City Council as we all do our best to make American Falls the best place to live.

Until next week...