

Our City

“..it” happens. Not so much in the past, but more recently “it” has been happening much more than we at the City and homeowners would like. Sometimes you get more than you bargained for or what you got was much, much better than what you had before and it takes some getting used to. Such was the case when the Waste Water Treatment Department bought the new sewer flush truck. The truck and technology within it are vastly superior to that of the old truck. The new truck flushes sewer lines with a vastly higher water volume and pressure than the old truck was ever capable of for any given diameter of pipe. And, therein lies the twofold problem, I think. The problem can be solved; it just has to be worked through while the process and solution are refined.

This past week the City Waste Water Department was flushing sewers in Zone 1, over by Pizza Hut and the LDS Church, when the City Office began receiving numerous calls about sewage backup into homes. I don't mean to imply that this has never happened before; but since we began using the new flush truck the incidents have become more frequent. The typical cause of that problem resides in the residence or building. If a sewer line is properly plumbed, it will have venting through the roof of the house. The purpose of the venting is to allow pressure and gasses that build up within the line to escape to the atmosphere. If those vents somehow become plugged, restricting the flow of air and gasses, then sewer backups are quite common in those buildings. The maintenance of these vents is the property owner's responsibility. Ya, I have never checked or cleaned mine either, but I think I will when I clean my rain gutters in a week or two.

The old flush truck lacked the water volume and cleaning pressure of the new truck, so sewer backups were less frequent, but they did happen, primarily due to poor venting. I think perhaps another contributing factor to the problem was that due to the lack of volume and pressure the City's sewer lines may not have been getting as clean as they are now and residue (grit, fibers, and undissolvable solids) built up and remained in the line. Well, the new truck and flushing system made short work of the residue and as the residue mass back-flushes down the City sewer pipe, pressure builds in front of it, much like that of a toilet plunger on in reverse, which may be causing the backups in some properties. This is only my hypothesis; Waste Water Superintendent Pete Cortez and his crew will solve the problem on our side of things. I would ask that you do what you can on yours to make sure your sewer line is properly vented and the vent is clear.

We know the new flush truck is doing the job we bought it to do as we have collected over 400 gallons of grit, fibers, and undissolvable solids at the Waste Water Treatment Plant during the past few weeks in the plant's grit separating and collecting chamber. Typical collections of residue are much less than 50 gallons per week. Again, we will solve the problem on our side of things. If you have concerns or questions please contact Superintendent Cortez at City Hall. If he is unavailable at the time, he will get back to you as quickly as he can, as a backed up sewer system is a problem no one likes, but sometimes “..it” happens.

Another item related to the opposite end of the waste water system will be on your ballot when you go to vote next Tuesday. I wrote briefly about the Water Bond last week; however, I am not sure if I emphasized how critical a long term secure source of water is to our City should

we begin to grow or if we hope to attract new business and industry to our community. It is critical. Don't be mistaken by thinking the bond will only benefit agricultural or processing interests. We at the City do our best to meet the soon to be required 12% reduction in water use. The water bond could provide for much needed relief from mandatory irrigation restrictions on lawns, parks, schools and other green places. For the past several years I have written about how we use our water and how it will one day become much more restricted. A "YES" vote on the Water Bond will allow us some potential flexibility of how we as a City meet those imminent restrictions. It will keep your lawns, gardens, parks and schools green, businesses open and make new opportunities possible.

The other bond election on the ballot next Tuesday is the Hospital bond. Like a secure long term source of water it is no less critical to the wellbeing of all of us. The new emergency room and associate facilities are worth whatever the cost if heaven forbid you, a loved one or someone you know is in dire need. I am not sure how you put a price tag on the ability to save a life; moreover, not electing to. But, we live in a democracy and it is your vote that will determine the security of your future should you or someone you care about ever need the services of our local hospital. I will be voting to secure that possibility; I hope you do too.

I have just asked you to vote favorably for two bonds knowing full well that monetarily it may be at least an inconvenient for some and even a hardship on others, but we are all in this together. We have to do the best we can for ourselves and our neighbors I believe. At the City we continually strive to provide the best services and amenities we can to each and every one of you. We do our best to make your tax dollars go as far as they possible can. We have been exceedingly fortunate in being able to bring much of your federal tax dollars back to our community in the form of grants for the purpose of improving your quality of life and even sometimes leisure. One such grant is in the process of being completed at Willow Bay. You may not recognize the facilities when you visit or camp there next year; enjoy!

Our Public Works Coordinator Jeremy Peirsol has scheduled a meeting this Thursday of all the stakeholders as we prepare for the demolition and eventual reconstruction of our community's tennis courts. As I have written previously this project would not be possible without the buy-in of so many partners; both private and public. Yet, like the Water Bond, the Hospital Bond and multiple other community upgrades, much is possible when we all pitch in providing whatever we can as we work together to make ours the best community in which to live.

I thought he would have been gone for good by now; but Jeremy has chosen to return to American Falls weekly from Boise and his new home to finish what he has started. All of our City employees are exceptional, but once again, I will take the opportunity to thank Jeremy for going above and beyond in making American Falls the best place to live,. He has found the solutions to so many of the things that were once a problem for each of us and now those problems are only a distant memory.

Until next week...