

Our City

It is easy to see how they got the impression and felt unappreciated. Many of our volunteer firefighters attended last week's recessed City Council meeting in an effort to emphasize their need for the equipment I wrote about a few weeks ago. To a person the Council and I were all open to their thoughts and concerns while we promised to work forward to a solution.

Do you ever get that sense or feeling that things will just somehow work out? I had it tucked away in the back of my mind most of last week, yet I had nothing to base it on. On Thursday my FFA members presented their public forum on "Can a bird save a democracy?" Nothing unusual in that, except the chamber had two guests that I had not known about. They approached me after the forum wanting to talk to the mayor. Renee Richardson works for our U.S. Senator Jim Risch, Josh Sorensen works for our U.S. Representative Mike Simpson, both wanted to speak to me about City matters and how they could help. It was a little weird because I had tried calling my "old" contacts at both offices just days before with no results. Sometimes things just work out.

What we talked about was the dire need of our firefighters for proper equipment. As I wrote two weeks ago Fire Chief Williams has written FEMA grants for the past three years to try and garner funding to purchase the self-contained breathing apparatuses and a fill station but with no luck. I have tried repeatedly to contact FEMA offices but with no answer or response. Renee Richardson will be working through Senator Risch's Office to try and find out at least where the grant process is for this cycle and why we have been unsuccessful in our past attempts. Josh Sorensen and I will be working with Dave Doran at the Southeast Idaho Council of Governments (SICOG) to see if there are funds available to help with the crisis.

No, neither avenue is a sure thing, but it is more than we had a week ago. I want to thank Ms. Richardson and Mr. Sorensen for their efforts on our behalf. I will keep you informed of any progress that is made as we try and secure additional funding for our firefighters' needs.

Following Thursday's fortuitous meeting I met with Chief Williams, Assistant Chiefs Coppock and McLean, Rural Fire Commissioner Scherer, and Councilpersons Jensen and Workman to try and find another solution to our antiquated firefighting equipment. Our limited local funds can only be stretched so far, but as we partner with Rural Fire perhaps they will go bit further. Failing the award of the FEMA grant again this year or alternate funding solutions from SICOG we were able to find a small (minimum) fix for the immediate crisis; although a long term maintenance, restoration and replacement plan was established. As the meeting concluded I told our firefighters that a lack of communication does not equate to a lack of appreciation. We are all "busy," our Councilmembers are no different, and as such have obligations that take them away from one responsibility to another. It is hard to find the balance that keeps everyone at least satisfied that you are doing your best to help them all, it is something everyone often struggles with. On behalf of the citizens of American Falls and Power County I thank our volunteer firefighters for everything that they sacrifice for each of us.

While they are paid, our police officers sacrifice for each of us as well and their job becomes almost impossible when we as parents or guardians don't do our jobs. As has been the trend for the past ten years or so when the weather warms vandalism increases exponentially. Fair

warning to parents and guardians, the curfew ordinance is being strictly enforced. You will be picking your child up at the police station when they are apprehended regardless of hour or inconvenience. I had teenage children not too long ago, they can be escape artists I know and sympathize with parents in this matter, but I stand firmly behind the ordinance. I have asked Judge Laggis, Police Chief Wilkinson and our local prosecutors to join me in discussing long-term solutions to this ongoing problem. I will keep you apprised of any developments.

Until next week...