

Our City

For about the last six years Growing Our Own has been a real emphasis with the Agricultural Education program at the high school. More recently it has also become a priority with the American Falls School District in general. As I have written before our community, region, state and nation face a very real skilled employee crisis in multiple areas of any given work force. The City of American Falls is not exempt from that crisis. Our Police Department has been short a patrol officer for nearly five years, our Water / Waste Water or Street Department always seems to be short at least one employee, further within a month we will be trying to hire an accounts receivable employee in administration as Clerk Robyn Herndon prepares to transition into retirement.

Within the last eight months in both the Water and Street Departments the City has hired three American Falls High School graduates and employs many more. Recently within one of my classes I even heard students talking positively about maybe having a career at the City. That day was last Wednesday the day the FFA Chapter hosted the annual Growing Our Own Career Day. The career day has been an annual event for the past four years and beyond the City I think it is making a difference for many regional businesses as the City is not the only one hiring our graduates. Led by one of our awesome teachers, Troy Singleton, several other similarly minded teachers at the high school are trying to address one of the most critical shortages in our nation, that of a teacher shortage. This shortage is at crisis stage. Thanks to the efforts of these teachers we are beginning to fill that pipeline as well.

At Last week's Career Day teaching was in fact the third most selected profession behind human medicine and engineering, law enforcement and the military were fourth and fifth respectively. For those of you in agriculture don't despair, beyond the five rooms above nine of the remaining 10 were devoted to careers in or related to agriculture. Potential employers often comment on the fact that this is the only career day like it in the region and that even making a positive contact with one potential employee is worth their time. As one business owner put it, "If we don't do something together to keep our best and brightest here of course they will leave. It's our job to work with the school and help build our future workforce. Nobody will do it for us! We tried that for years and we are still behind."

Later that night the City Council approved the purchase of an 18 foot equipment trailer that will be used to haul the mini-excavator, lawn mowers and other equipment to and from job sites to save on wear and tear. In the weeks to come you will also notice the placement of Read, Talk and Play banners throughout downtown as we work with the School District to encourage parents to do those three things everyday with their children. A public hearing was scheduled for proposed new camping rates at Willow Bay; the hearing will be on April 3rd at 7:05 pm.

The American Fall FFA Ag Issues team presented their public forum on the proposed trail from Seagull Bay to Massacre Rock State Park. It is my unbiased opinion that they did a good job of presenting the pros and cons of the issue and they answered multiple questions fairly well. I look forward to seeing them improve in the coming weeks. We should be hearing back on the Idaho Gem Grant that was submitted to do the actual planning, construct a maintenance plan and work through the trail's actual alignment on the ground. If this process goes well we may

be applying for a Federal Lands Access Program grant to begin construction or reconstruction of some portions of the trail in 2021.

All in all the week that was - was dedicated to the future of our community. In almost every way it remains up to us to determine that future.

Until next week...