

## Our City

As promised last week the following is a list of our community members who are serving on the Water Working Group: Blanca Mendez, Colter Hollingshead – Keller Engineering, Doug Nilsson, Gary Ferguson, Gilbert Hofmeister, Jason Povey, Kevin Lynott, Randy Jensen, Rebekah Sorensen, Scott Dalling – City Water Superintendent, Terri Miller – City Clerk, Tim Rudeen, Traci Woodworth and me. The first meeting of the group is set for November 21<sup>st</sup> at 5:30 pm at City Hall Council Chambers. Please contact anyone on the Water Working Group with any thoughts, suggestions or concerns you may have in regards to our water, its use, distribution and cost. I have set a preliminary agenda of five meetings the content of which will be focused by two directing questions.

The question directing meetings one and two is: **Do we plan to grow as a city?** During meeting #1 we will discuss the directing question, then review the City Water Budget and the associated fees and payments. In meeting #2 we will review domestic and irrigation water use by residents and businesses, the School District and the City. We will also review and discuss the findings of the Water Facility Study.

The second directing question will guide the remaining three meetings: **Do we repair, replace or remedy system deficiencies before or after they begin to fail, cause property damage or violate State statute?** In meeting #3 these four questions will be addressed: What do we **not** address from the Water Facility Study? What **has** to be done in the next two to three years? What **needs** to be done in the next three to five years? What **should** be done in the next ten years? During meeting #4 we will determine the best funding solutions for the identified water system updates. And, in meeting #5 we will develop the Water Working Group's recommendations to the American Falls residents, businesses and City Council.

As I have written previously we are also trying to find our best way forward to a better equipped and skilled workforce. Last Wednesday School Superintendent Randy Jensen and I met with folks from across the region and state to discuss how we can better meet the labor demands of business and industry. So as not to exclude anyone interested in having a seat at this table what follows is a portion of a letter I sent out to over 20 local and regional businesses. Please consider this a direct invitation to attend the two meetings described.

*For those of you who do not know me my name is Marc Beitia. I am an Agricultural Educator at American Falls High School. I am currently working with ISU, CSI, Idaho Businesses for Education and our local business and industry partners to establish internships and apprenticeships in agriculture and its many supporting industries. If you would be interested in being a part of this effort we would very much welcome the opportunity to work with and include your business as a partner. We will be forming the regional partnerships at a meeting on December 18th, during a noon luncheon in the American Falls School District's Board room located at 827 Fort Hall Avenue in American Falls. We will also be introducing the broader concept of the plan at our December 9th Ag Advisory Committee meeting in the American Falls Ag Building on the AFHS campus (2966 South Frontage Road) at 6:00 pm if you would like to attend that meeting as well.*

*If you currently or traditionally have hard to fill positions within your business this may be an opportunity for us to collaborate and identify early potential employees who may eventually be a good fit for what you struggle today to find. By working with ISU, CSI and other groups we will be able to bypass many of the prohibitive age requirements that currently keep high school students from traditional employment in businesses such as yours. Several businesses in the community have been successful at employing high school aged students for a period of one to three years, determine if in fact the student and the business are a good fit for each other then through agreed upon measures the student secures any further training / education needed and returns to the employer full time.*

While the above description was initially intended for high school aged students adults who can benefit from the opportunities will certainly be welcome. Also, as a result of last Wednesday's meeting the new Community Learning Center in conjunction with ISU will be providing continuing education opportunities in Microsoft Word and Excel, Quick Books and Spanish for English speakers beginning in January. Courses in business management and finance are real possibilities in the future.

Watch this space for updates on our water and workforce.

Until next week...