

Our City

Before looking too far forward I have found it usually serves me best to reflect a bit on the past; what worked, what didn't, what I or we did well and frankly what got lost in the clutter. As I begin to look at 2020 as I write this on Christmas Eve there are multiple things I would have done a bit differently in 2019 with regard to the City. As I look forward there is already a plan in place to address the two most relevant to you.

The first I wasn't made aware of the problem until it was really too late to address it for 2019. If you were out and about visiting friends or family on Christmas day you may have noticed that the Senior Center was very quiet all day. The annual senior Christmas dinner was cancelled this year because of a lack of volunteers and food donations, which came to my attention last Friday, December 20th. There are now plans in the works to begin recruitment of volunteers and the donation of food beginning in early November of 2020 for both Thanksgiving and Christmas. I happen to know some folks well suited to help with both provided we can find adults to mentor the cooking. To our seniors this year I apologize for not being more on-the-ball and in-the-loop. 2020 will be better in terms of these two events.

The City Code is now in the final editing stages but still three months from being ready to vote on. It is one thing that continually got placed on the back burner throughout most of 2019. There are now plans in place to have it ready for its first reading and public hearing during the first meeting in February with the vote coming during the first March meeting; provided there are no major changes sought during the public hearing. I continue looking forward to having it done; as I believe many of the updates will benefit us all.

As we continue to move forward I can report that I am very pleased with the questions, concerns and insights that have been shared during the first two of five Water Working Group meetings. The working group consists of Blanca Mendez, Colter Hollingshead of 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. Our first two meetings dealt with the City's water budget and the finding of the Water Facilities Plan Study completed by Colter Hollingshead and Keller Engineering. The next three meetings will be about finding viable solutions to our per capita use of water which is 2.5 times the State average and five times the National average, and to address our severely aging and undersized water lines. Again, I will emphasize that the Working Group is asking all the right questions and most definitely has everyone's best interests at heart. I am confident that while it won't be easy recommendations will be brought forward as to how we as a City can best meet these very real issues.

Work continues to be done on the potential Ferry Hollow Trail. I was pleased with the turnout to the open house held on December 10th; again the right questions were being asked by many of the right people. Since the open house I have received several phone calls with similar questions and much support of the trail. Public comments are being compiled and will be used to develop potential management plans as we continue to engage and find solutions to stakeholders' concerns, needs and desires.

As I suspected, in the back of my mind, the idea of establishing an Urban Renewal Agency brought a lot of discussion at the December 18th City Council meeting. Two Council members and I will be meeting with other taxing entity leaders to further discuss how to best address our aging structures and the attraction of new business in the weeks and months to come. Like our water issues I believe it is a discussion that needs to be had; the results of which at this point are anyone's guess.

In the bigger picture, three new City Council members will be sworn in on January 6th. This new Council will have the opportunity to review and revise our current Strategic Plan that was developed in 2014. This process, like the City Code, will take a couple of months. I look forward to developing a shared vision, mission and goals as we continue to make American Falls the very best place to live.

Until next week...