

Our City

A week ago this Monday was Martin Luther King Day. He had a dream or an idea of what America could be in a more perfect union. The entire day epitomized his dream and my belief in those I serve with was elevated and my passion for public service reinforced. The idea of America and what it means to the vast majority of us who live in the middle of the political spectrum was evidenced in everyone I was fortunate enough to work with last Monday.

There was no school that day so my day was spent at City Hall which was also closed for business on the holiday. The day began with a conference call between local residents and others across the State. Our topic of discussion was the driving privilege permit legislation that was recently proposed by District 28 Senator Jim Guthrie. That legislation has been withdrawn; which was the topic of the conference call along with how to best address those engaged against the legislation and Senator Guthrie. The idea of America is hard, even in the best of times it has always been hard.

I was in a restaurant before Christmas with Senator Guthrie and Sally when two life-long friends walked by and exchanged Holiday wishes. Later one of the friends commented to Sally, “How can Marc be talking to Jim Guthrie!?” The idea that because someone may have a few different political beliefs than me precludes me from talking and working with that person is not my idea of America; nor does it represent the ideals this country was founded on. In today’s political spectacle and climate the idea of America will only continue to exist if we in the middle work towards the good of the whole. The fringes on the far left and far right continue to try and divide us further and if unchecked will splinter and shatter the very idea of America. The idea of America is indeed hard and it will take all of those who share the core values that can build a more perfect union working together to insure that future, that more perfect union.

Following the conference call the City Council’s strategic planning meeting got underway. As many on the Council are largely unknown to each other we began by discovering and sharing our personality types and leadership styles. This was done to give insight as to what motivates each of us. Perhaps, not too surprisingly, we are vastly more similar than we are different. In the search for the core values that will focus our work over the next two years those similarities became even more evident. Core values are enduring; they don’t change, they are the principles that guide an individual or an organization’s choices and behaviors. We selected five. Interestingly and unknown to the new Council, three were the same as those selected five years ago by that Council. The core values of your new City Council can be defined using the following words:

Leadership – Inclusive – Safe – Integrity – Compassionate

Like the idea of America, they look simple on paper. In reality these self-identified core values will be tested day in and day out, which is the very reason we identified them. They will guide our planning and decisions. Beyond the core values the Council identified their core purpose as a governing body; it may look familiar to you.

Provide leadership and value to the residents of American Falls by preserving and wisely using assets of the city, by maintaining a platform of creation, sustainability and growth while being fiscally responsible, innovative and forward thinking with the ultimate goal of making “American Falls the best place to live.”

The group subsequently identified seven strategic planning goals that will help us achieve our core purpose while maintaining our core values. Those goals, as currently drafted, include:

1. American Falls values and provides proactive leadership that is based on integrity and the common good of the community.
2. American Falls supports and enhances recreational opportunities that are internationally recognized.
3. American Falls is a compassionate and inclusive community that values its rich diversity, history and culture.
4. American Falls supports and enhances the well-being, safety and success of children, youth and families.
5. American Falls recognizes the values and importance of all its neighborhoods and dedicates its abilities, resources and assets to maintaining and rehabilitating those in need.
6. American Falls supports and enhances local business with a growing economy by promoting quality development, growth and the rehabilitation of diverse city infrastructure and assets.
7. American Falls is a fiscally sustainable, efficient, community-oriented city that values its employees and residents.

The idea of America and the idea of a better American Falls both require hard work and an unwavering dedication to the common good. To those on the far right or left I invite you to take a step to the middle. To those in the middle have your arms and hearts open and continue to do the hard work; much is on your shoulders.

Until next week...