

Our City

I have been thinking about the year 2020 for as long as I could comprehend numbers, years and dates. It was the year I would turn 60. It was a long way off and hardly imaginable. My grandfather was 60 when I started working for him on the ranch when I was eight; he seemed so seasoned and wise, he always knew the right thing to do and seemingly without effort how to get the most out of the men he worked with and the horses he rode. When my Dad turned 60 I was in college and he had already been retired for three years; he too had life pretty much figured out. I marveled at the clarity with which each of them saw what was before them; and as I turn 60 in a few months very much lack that same clarity.

We are at best in uncertain times as we look at shifting social norms, divisive politics and ever more frequent ecological changes and disasters. It is that uncertainty that shades my clarity. Ten years ago as I turned 50 the clarity of what was before me was vastly better than today. I am certain that a comfortable degree of personal clarity would return if I chose to ignore that which bothers me most about today's social, political and environmental changes; but, that would require turning my back on the way I was raised and the things I value most. It's just not in my nature to turn away from something just because it is hard or uncomfortable.

My duties on Governor Little's "Our Kids-Our Future" task force and the Career and Technical Education Working Group have been completed. I have a few more things to do to finish up my Teacher of the Year responsibilities. By July I will no longer be the co-chair of the Idaho FFA Board of Directors. I am looking forward to being able to once again just focus on my students and the City.

That just said; and, in full disclosure a few things will be different. If you know me or read these ramblings you know who Lilly is. Sally and I lost Lilly to cancer a bit over a month ago; it has been a real struggle for me as she had been literally by my side at school and everywhere else for 14 years. This April I will be bringing home someone to share the next 10 to 15 years with. To develop the bond and abilities that Lilly had, and Doc before her, takes time. The time I take with the new puppy will not distract from school or the City and in all honesty it will make my time at both more productive. I would like to think I may even fish and hunt more; however, that is likely not going to happen until I retire from teaching.

I share all this with you because I believe it is important that you know where my focus is as Mayor as we start 2020. There is no fuzziness in the way I see some of the perennial challenges; our aging infrastructure and continued ability to provide the very best in needed services. The primary purpose and responsibilities of City government remain crystal clear in my mind. It is when you venture very far beyond those confines that things become less clear in terms of social norms and personal politics and agendas.

We start 2020 with a City Council that is 50% new, representing a generational shift in representation and leadership. I work with some of the best and brightest kids anywhere every day; I am not suggesting the new Councilmembers are kids, although four of them could have been or were students of mine. What I am saying is that new ideas and perspectives are always welcome and I am glad that a new generation will have a voice and a choice in the direction our City goes. I am excited to work with each of the new Councilmembers and have to say in

all candidness that I think they may be a bit surprised as to how open and progressively-minded the older generation actually is. I hope each approaches this opportunity with a set of life experiences, insights and the clarity that will allow them to make the right decisions even when they are uncomfortable and hard. And, that when they turn 60 they can proudly look back or point and say without regret, hesitation or any lack of clarity as to why, "We did that!"

Until next week...