

Our Community in the Times of COVID 4-20-20

Daily we each deal with COVID-19 in the manner that we have to. Yet, many parts of life and City business must continue as best possible. Believe it or not we have an election next month on May 19th. And, on that ballot is a matter that you as voting members of the City of American Falls can directly affect and I am asking for your support on the matter.

Since last December 18th I have met numerous times with various community groups, citizens and representatives of various taxing districts to discuss the potential creation of an Urban Renewal Agency (URAs). This March the City Council voted unanimously to create an Urban Renewal Agency. Now the ball is in your court. As I have written before, the URA is not a multi-tool or Swiss Army Knife, it is more like a #2 Phillips head screwdriver – it has a very specific fit and purpose; and while I have seen it used as a hammer and pry bar that is not the intended use of a #2 Phillips screwdriver. The operator, in this case the City, needs to know how and when to use the URA tool as defined by statute, common sense and good judgment and I intend to appoint an administrative board that will do the same.

While it has been created the URA has NO authority. A majority vote by you the citizens of American Falls must give the URA the authority to act and make recommendations to the City Council for their final approval. As Mayor I am in the process of appointing the commissioners of the Urban Renewal Board and the Council will vote on their potential approval. City representation on the Board has to be less than a majority as stipulated by statute. Terms on the Board once initially established would be four years. To date those community members who have agreed to serve on the Board are listed below:

Mayor **Marc Beitia:** January 2022 - Next election date November 2021
Council Person #1 **Rebekah Sorensen:** January 2022 - Next election date November 2021
Council Person #2: **Lillie Wright:** January 2024 - Next election date November 2023
County Commissioner **Ron Funk:** January 2025
Other Taxing District Representative:
Kryst Krien American Falls Library January 2023
At Large #1 **Jesalee Smith:** January 2024
At Large #2 **A Financial Person:** January 2023
At Large #3 **Mike Ferguson:** January 2025
At Large #4 **Gilbert Hofmeister Sr.:** January 2021

Should the citizens of American Falls vote to give the Agency the authority to vet potential projects, I see that vetting process looking something like this as described in the adopted City Ordinance:

All business and activities of the American Falls Urban Renewal Agency and its Board of Commissioners shall comply in all respects with Idaho Law, including without limitation the Idaho Urban Renewal Law (Idaho Code Title 50, Chapter 20) and the Local Economic Development Act (Idaho Code Title 50, Chapter 29). In conformance with these statutes, the American Falls Urban Renewal Agency may in its discretion consider and study any preliminary proposal for an urban renewal project for an urban renewal area. In the event that the American Falls Urban Renewal Agency may cease its consideration and study of a preliminary proposal if it determines that the preliminary proposal is not viable under the Idaho Urban Renewal Law (Idaho Code Title 50, Chapter 20) and the Local Economic Development Act (Idaho Code Title 50, Chapter 29) or otherwise not appropriate for the City of American Falls. Following completion of a study report for a preliminary proposal, the American Falls Urban Renewal Agency may vote to approve said report and to present to the City Council of American Falls for consideration and a determination that the proposed renewal area is a deteriorated or a deteriorating area or a combination thereof and designation that such area as appropriate for an urban renewal project. Upon the adoption of such a resolution by the City Council of American Falls, the American Falls Urban Renewal Agency may prepare or cause to be prepared an urban renewal plan, or any person or agency, public or private, may submit such a plan to the American Falls Urban Renewal Agency. When the urban renewal plan is completed and approved by the American Falls Urban Renewal Agency, it shall be submitted to the City Council of American Falls. The urban renewal plan must then be submitted to the City's planning commission for review and written recommendations as to its conformity with the general plan for the development of the City as a whole. Upon completion of the review by the City's planning commission, the City Council of American Falls shall hold a public hearing on the urban renewal project, after public notice thereof by publication in a newspaper of general circulation in the City of American Falls. Following this public hearing, the City Council may approve or deny an urban renewal project and the plan therefor consistent with the requirements of the Idaho Urban Renewal Law (Idaho Code Title 50, Chapter 20) and the Local Economic Development Act (Idaho Code Title 50, Chapter 29).

Again, I am asking for your support and vote regarding the Urban Renewal Agency. As we get closer to the May vote the City Council and I will be hosting a Video Open House where your questions and concerns can be addressed. I hope to see you there!

As COVID-19 continues its path through our community, State, Nation and world so too does our City try to continue conducting essential business. This week we will be trying to bring the new irrigation systems on line at Lee Street and both City Parks, maintain water and waste water infrastructure and do the best we can to keep our streets drivable and maintained. Lastly, and I don't mean to add something to an already full plate but if you are a parent please be mindful of what your children are doing and when they are doing it. Incidents of curfew violations and vandalism have soared since school went on line. Thank you very much.

Until next week...