

# City of Colstrip Newsletter

Winter 2022



## Mayor's Message

Mayor John Williams

City Council meetings are the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month unless rescheduled due to a holiday.

City Hall Open  
9:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m.  
Monday thru Friday,

**City Court Office Hours:**  
Tuesdays and Thursdays  
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

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It has been a while since our last newsletter so I would like to begin by recognizing employees that have retired this past year. Tana Pippin retired as Deputy City Clerk with over twenty years of service with our city. Public Works Director Bryan Swan retired with over 22 years of service and Assistant Public Works Director Dan Becker also retired with over 22 years of service. Lead Shop-Streets Operator Brad Purdon retired with over 22 years of service in the city's Public Works Department. Thank you Tana, Bryan, Dan and Brad!

Please welcome our new Public Works Director Pat Zent. Pat brings with him thirteen years of experience with the City of Forsyth as its Director of Water/Wastewater and most recently worked for Rosebud County as the County Road Foreman. Pat is an experienced and state certificated operator in all areas of water and wastewater and we are very grateful for his work experience. Welcome Pat! Pat certainly has his work cut out for him as the City of Colstrip is taking on some very large important projects in addition to working with some new employees in a new environment.

One of our large projects is the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition System. This \$700,000 project is to replace the current water and wastewater control system. Colstrip Electric is the contractor and the project will begin after the first of the new year. It is being funded with a \$345,000 Economic Development Administration Grant and American Rescue Plan Act money.

Another large project is the Water Treatment Plant and Clarifier Building Improvements. Colstrip Electric is also the contractor on this \$663,340 project. This project will be funded with a \$367,875 Coal Board Grant and Rosebud County has agreed to transfer a portion of their American Rescue Plan Act funds in the amount of \$280,000 to assist with this project. Thank you Rosebud County!

We are also working on a very large project called the North End Water Loop. This project will connect the water mains in the north part of Colstrip, requiring an interconnection across Highway 39 and the railroad tracks. This is a \$764,400 project that we anticipate will be funded with the assistance of a \$232,179 Coal Board Grant with the remainder of funds coming from American Rescue Plan Act funding. The grant request will occur at the Coal Board's December 8th meeting.

We will also be requesting a grant from the Montana Coal Board to help purchase a replacement pumper/tanker for our Fire Department. This is

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## Mayor's Message Continued..... from page 1

a \$750,000 vehicle to replace a 21-year old piece of equipment. The grant request is for half of the cost or \$375,000.

For a major portion of this year, the City of Colstrip has been working with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Dowl Engineering and Talen Energy on a Water Feasibility Study. This study was mandated by the last state legislative session to develop a plan that will ensure a local government (like Colstrip) will be able to access water rights and related infrastructure in the event of closure of its coal-fired generating units. The study has been completed and it is a very thorough study of the existing water supply system. It provides very valuable information addressing the existing and future water supply system. However, there are certain aspects missing from the study that pose a question regarding our future water supply system. Most notably, details concerning the existing condition of the water pipeline from the Yellowstone River. It does not address a transition plan for when the power plants cease to exist and there are other issues such as:

- \* The power plant owners' responsibility into the future.
- \* The owners need to develop a plan of their responsibility to the community.
- \* What are their transition plans?
- \* What are they willing to do or not willing to do to ensure there is a continuing water supply for the City of Colstrip? This needs to be addressed so that the City of Colstrip, Montana Legislature, etc know where the power plant owners stand on this issue.

Another major concern is the ongoing escalation of costs associated with the Raw Water Transportation Agreement that impacts the cost of water to our residents and businesses. A copy of the Water Feasibility Study is available at Colstrip City Hall and I encourage anyone interested to please read it. I would like to thank our committee of residents that have participated in this study. Also a special thanks to Senator Duane Ankney for his bill.

The City of Colstrip is also working with the Quality of Life group in preparation of our Centennial Celebration that will occur during the Colstrip Days celebration this coming year. This will also be our 25th Anniversary of the incorporation of the City of Colstrip. It's hard to believe that over 25 years ago a group of our residents got together and decided that we would be better off to become incorporated and have a say in our future. They were absolutely correct, although we felt very unsure at the time. I would like to recognize those individuals that took it upon themselves to move our community forward. They include: Mark Stevens, Jim Obland, Nancy Brennan, Marita Novasio, Larry Miller, John Jutila, Dennis Davenport and myself. I hope I didn't miss anyone. I would also like to recognize our City Attorney Gary Ryder. Gary was our attorney during these years of development of our city and has continued to provide valuable legal advice over the years. Gary will be retiring this next year. Much of the credit of our success goes to Attorney Ryder. Thank you Gary. We have been through some challenging times; someone should write a book.

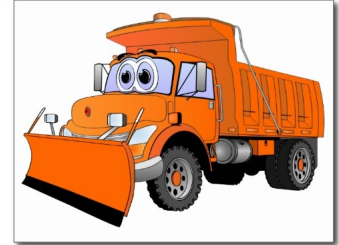
The City of Colstrip has completed its negotiations with the Montana Federation of Public Employees, the union that represents our Administrative, Public Works and Police Department employees. The contracts have been approved by the City Council and I am pleased with the outcome of the negotiated wages. I feel the city has a very competitive wage and benefit program. It recognizes the valuable services that are provided by our employees. Thank you to everyone for your continued support to our city.

I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a safe and Happy New Year. God Bless.

# Public Works Department

Pat Zent, Public Works Director

What is new at the Public Works Department? Lots of things! First off, Pat Zent is the new Public Works Director. Pat has thirteen years experience working for the City of Forsyth in their Water/Wastewater Department, with ten of those years as the Director. The City of Colstrip has hired three new Utility/Maintenance workers in the Public Works Department: Brandon Siemers (who was working as summer help this past summer), Liam McDougall and Trace Larkin.



The City of Colstrip purchased a new garbage truck that we have been using this year. We also purchased a new street sweeper that will be arriving in the spring of 2023.

The City of Colstrip has two major projects going on. The first project is the upgrade to the Water/Wastewater Control System. We have started doing some of the preliminary ground work for the upgrade and hope to have it done by early Spring of 2023. The second project is the Clarifier Building at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. The work on this will start sometime in April of 2023. We also will be going out for bids on a Sewer Main Rehabilitation project on Olive Drive after the first of the year. We will be going to the Montana Coal Board in December to ask for some assistance in doing a North End Water Loop upgrade that will tie the systems into each other.

I look forward to serving and being a part of the City of Colstrip's future.

In January of 2002, Ordinance No. 2001-06 went into effect requiring all dogs and cats within city limits to be licensed. The license requirement is to ensure pets have current rabies vaccinations and to identify animals when they become lost, stolen, etc. If you have a dog or cat that is not licensed, please have the animal vaccinated and bring the rabies certificate to City Hall.

All 1-year Animal Licenses for dogs and cats issued during 2022 expire on January 31, 2023. In order to renew your dog and/or cat license, the license fee and proof of rabies vaccination must be submitted to City Hall. If you have lost your rabies vaccination certificate you will need to contact your veterinarian to request a duplicate copy.

License fees are as follows:

1 Year Neutered/Spayed Dog or Cat	\$5.00
2 Year Neutered/Spayed Dog or Cat	\$10.00
1 Year Intact Dog or Cat	\$10.00
2 Year Intact Dog or Cat	\$20.00

A \$5.00 late fee will be charged per animal if the license is not renewed before March 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Police Department

Cory Hert, Police Chief



The City of Colstrip is taking applications for (one) full-time Police Officer. The successful candidate must be able to work 12-hour shifts to include nights, weekends and holidays. Candidates must also be able to successfully complete the Montana Law Enforcement Academy Basic Course within one year of hire, a pre-employment drug screening and background check, psychological examination, pre-employment fitness test, a mandatory 1-year probationary period and enroll with the Montana Federation of Public Employees-Colstrip Police Bargaining Unit. Must be 18 years of age with a high school diploma or equivalent. Starting wage DOE but no less than \$27.50/hour. Applications can be obtained at the Colstrip Police Department, Colstrip City Hall, in writing at P.O. Box 9 Colstrip MT 59323 or by emailing [policechief@cityofcolstrip.com](mailto:policechief@cityofcolstrip.com). This position will be open until filled.

The Colstrip Police Department would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a safe and happy New Year!

## Fire Department

Tony Reda, Fire Chief



Hello Colstrip! As fall ends abruptly and we jump right into winter, there are a few things I would like to mention. If you haven't done so already, test those smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Make sure they are functioning properly and change the batteries if necessary. Three beeps for smoke detectors and four for carbon monoxide detectors. If you don't have any smoke or carbon monoxide detectors, please consider investing in some, they could quite possibly save your life.

Next up, if you are burning wood in a woodstove or fireplace, inspect your chimney at least every other month or monthly if your wood is not seasoned. Chimney fires are a common occurrence during the winter months, but are easily avoided with a little maintenance. An excellent product for cleaning chimneys is Creosote Sweeping Logs. They are easy to use and are very effective at removing creosote from a chimney.

Another thing to mention is winter driving and road conditions, especially for you new drivers out there. Be sure to give yourselves a little more distance when stopping, turning or following someone. Even if the pavement looks clear of snow, it can still be icy. And please, stay off your phone while you are driving. It's a dangerous distraction while on the road. Lastly, check and restock your winter survival kit for your vehicle. Premade kits are readily available for purchase, or you can build your own. There are many great websites (such as the Old Farmer's Almanac at [www.almanac.com](http://www.almanac.com)) for reference if you need help creating a kit. Be safe out there!

# Bicentennial Library

Mary Kay Bullard, Director



Leia wants to know what days would work for you, for a mommy and me program. The two days she would like you to consider are Wednesdays and Thursdays. Leia would like to start a program that focuses on mommies and their infants. If you are interested in this program please respond to Leia via our Facebook poll. If you are not a Facebooker, and are interested in the program, please give Leia a call at the library. Bicentennial Library's phone number is 406-748-3040.

Stephanie Crook will continue her "Stitching Thursdays". Stephanie is an accomplished knitter; however, she is overall pretty crafty, and would enjoy working with you on your crafting projects. "Stitching Thursday" is every Thursday from 5:30pm-6:30pm.

Bicentennial Library would like to thank Ann Hills for being a library champion for both libraries in our county. Ann Hills sits on the Bicentennial Library Advisory Board, and the Rosebud County Library Board. She attends events in both Forsyth and Colstrip, and makes her love for public libraries known where ever she goes. We appreciate you Ann, you are one in a million.

We would also like to highlight Debbie Siemers. Debbie is a member of two boards that directly impact Bicentennial Library. She is a member of Bicentennial Library's Advisory Board, and Bicentennial Library's friend's board. We appreciate her warm and friendly smile, and her enthusiasm for Bicentennial Library.

Bicentennial Library is grateful for our Friends of the Library. They volunteer at multiple events throughout the year; they supply refreshments for these events. They purchase ALL our DVDs, they have bought us new computers, and they pay for the prizes that patrons win for the reading contest. Basically, if it's outside the library budget, they find a way to make it happen for our patrons. They deserve our gratitude for that. As librarians we are able to host more, do more and offer more because of this group. So....thank you friends, for being our Friends!



**Sign up for  
Auto Pay**

The City of Colstrip is offering our utility customers the option to pay their utility bill by automatic ACH payment. There is no charge to our customers for this service. Forms are available at Colstrip City Hall and online at [www.cityofcolstrip.com](http://www.cityofcolstrip.com) to sign up for this service or send an email to [cityclerk@cityofcolstrip.com](mailto:cityclerk@cityofcolstrip.com).

# Beautification Committee

Becky Miller

The Colstrip Beautification Project is an ongoing effort to enhance and improve our community. So many great things happened in our community this year.

1. Clean up week in April and again in October were a great success. We also had a clean up day the weekend before Colstrip Days.
2. To honor Arbor Day last spring, small blue spruce trees were given out free of charge to the community.
3. Flower pots: Several businesses participated in our flower pot program by having them in front of their business this summer. The pots of flowers were a welcome sight for the businesses and our town.
4. Knapweed had a great summer, unfortunately, but the good news is we've formed a group to tackle it. This group is made up of businesses and citizens from throughout the community and will target areas each year for the foreseeable future to eradicate knapweed in Colstrip.
5. A community mural was done on the north wall of Rosebud Foods. Rebecca Neiman and Kayla de la Ossa were the artists who did a beautiful job of brightening up our town. Special thanks to Rosebud Foods, CEI and CPRD who helped sponsor the mural.
6. Red Rock 4-H Club purchased and designed a bench for the public to use on the bike path near the car wash. The club wrote grants and raised the money for the bench, which is a wonderful addition to our town.
7. One thing we've tackled this year is looking at code enforcement around town. This means looking at areas of town that need help, either in the form of getting rid of junk vehicles or mowing tall weeds/spraying knapweed, etc. These are things homeowners hopefully take care of themselves, but unfortunately not always. The City has codes for unsightly or dangerous conditions around properties and is working on enforcing those codes.

2023 is the Colstrip Centennial and the Beautification crew have a lot of plans. We hope everyone will do their part to make our town shine during the centennial year. If we all do a little, it will add up to a big result: a beautiful community for all of us and our visitors to enjoy.

**The City of Colstrip has a redesigned website due to the assistance of Southeastern Montana Development Corporation (Thank You SEMDC!!!!). The web address is the same: [www.cityofcolstrip.com](http://www.cityofcolstrip.com). We are continually adding content to the website based on the needs and requests of our community. If you have any suggestions or ideas for the website, please contact City Hall at (406) 748-2300 or email [cityclerk@cityofcolstrip.com](mailto:cityclerk@cityofcolstrip.com).**

# Planning, Building, Zoning and Code Enforcement

**Kami Egan**

With this time of year comes snow. We need to be aware, stay concerned, and help out by shoveling the sidewalk in front of our homes. Not only is it the neighborly thing to do, it is the property owner's responsibility. Clear sidewalks make it easier and safer to get around. Snow or ice-covered sidewalks force people to walk in the street and that is unsafe.



Please remember that after a snowstorm it is the property owner's responsibility to remove accumulated snow and ice from the sidewalk within a reasonable period of time. Failure to comply may cause the city to remove the snow at the owner's expense.

It is unlawful for the property owner, operator, tenant, or other person in charge or control of any private property to blade, dump, or shovel, or to allow the blading, dumping, or shoveling of snow from the property into any public street, alley, or right-of-way.

Thank you and be considerate!

# Schoolhouse History and Art Center

**Kayla de la Ossa, Executive Director**

As winter approaches, we are getting ready for big things here at SHAC. In December, we are hosting Billings artist, Rob Mann. His eclectic paintings are vibrant and humorous, they will leave you with a smile on your face. Please join us for the artists reception, the time will be announced at a later date.

December 14<sup>th</sup>, SHAC will host a luminaria for the community to memorialize their loved ones. This special evening is truly beautiful. The candles light up the bags to create a serene presentation that is deeply moving. If you would like to purchase a luminary, forms are available online or at SHAC.

Another important thing for December is the Gift SHAC, our museum store. It is stocked full of creations by local crafters and artists. There are earrings, bags, cutting boards, bowls, soaps and much more. Each one of these items is a unique gift. By making purchases in our gift shop, you are supporting local people as well as supporting SHAC.

In February, the Gone to Pieces Quilt Club will be back to showcase all of their hard work. This group works all year to curate a fascinating show made up of quilts of all kinds. The Quilt Show is especially interesting, as the viewer can look at each quilt several times and always pick up on something different. The group sells raffle tickets for a large bed quilt that will be displayed at BLC, then SHAC. The tickets are available at the library and SHAC.

During the Month of March, we will have our annual All Student Art Show, which showcases work from Colstrip, Lame Deer, Busby, Ashland and other area students. This exhibit is always inspirational and demonstrates the importance of the arts in our children's education.

Besides our galleries and gift shop, SHAC is looking forward to this summer's centennial celebration. We will be hosting a centennial exhibition and creating a time capsule. SHAC is also trying to compile a list of every veteran that lives or has lived in our community. We are looking for the community's input in all of these projects. If you have something you would like to share on any of these activities, please contact Kayla or Leslie at 406-748-4822.

# Southeastern Montana Development Corporation

Jim Atchison, Executive Director

jatchison@semdc.org

As 2022 winds down, I want to say that “after 21 years at SEMDC, I have never been more excited about upcoming opportunities and the future of the Colstrip community.” As many of you know **South-eastern Montana Development** (SEMDC) is a regional non-profit economic development group, that was established in 1997 to encourage economic activity in the four (4) Counties of **Rosebud**, Custer, Powder River, and Treasure. Today SEMDC continues to work with the private, public (City of Colstrip / Rosebud County) and the nonprofit sectors to help create / retain jobs and improve the economic base within this region.

Here's a couple of updates as of late November:

1) Overall, **Small Business Activity and Investment continues to be fairly stable** in the Colstrip and Rosebud County area. Even with the stresses of higher Interest Rates, Workforce Needs and Coal Industry Ups and Downs, most small businesses seem to be in fairly good shape. But lack of Housing and Child Care continue to be challenges in not only Colstrip, but throughout Montana. SEMDC continues to receive calls / inquiries on small business investment opportunities. Numerous regional construction projects and federal ARPA funds are also adding significant economic activity. I feel these positive trends will continue as we move into 2023.

a) **Low-Interest Funding Available for Rural Small Businesses** – For rural businesses looking to expand, purchase equipment, refinance or launch their business, SEMDC would like to announce that low-interest financing is through the Montana Department of Commerce’s State Small Business Credit Initiative Loan Participation Program and administrated through qualifying economic development organizations like SEMDC. The objectives are to:

- \* Partner with small businesses, economic development groups and the banking community to create growth and stability;
- \* Expand jobs and economic opportunities in Montana’s rural counties; and
- \* As funds are paid back, those funds remain in the community for future lending.

2) The **Colstrip Economic Diversification Strategy**, released in 2017, continues to be a major effort by SEMDC. The objective was to develop a strategy to help diversify the economic base of Colstrip. Six (6) Goals with 17 Strategies within those Goals were noted. Since then, SEMDC has been active with the Implementation Phase to facilitate the many opportunities / expansions into Colstrip. This includes everything from major energy projects, technology / innovative firms to smaller service businesses, many with a “**Value-Added Energy Commercialization**” theme. Five (5) different projects identified in the strategy were recently completed. The entire Strategy with the Goal Recap can be found at [www.semdc.org](http://www.semdc.org). Some of the many Colstrip Projects are as follows:

a) SEMDC continues to review and evaluate **Value-Added Energy Commercialization Opportunities** at various levels of assistance with five to six firms. Feasibility studies or actual construction projects are related to:

- \* Two (2) New **Transmission Lines, Hydrogen R&D Study / Facility, Graphene R&D Study / Facility, Rare Earth Elements (REE) Processing, major Wind Farm construction continues, and Flue Gas Capture and Processing.**
- \* RFP Notice for Feasibility Studies is being released by SEMDC on December 1st

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## Southeastern Montana Development Corporation Continued

**b)** An effort to build a **Business Innovation Center** (BIC) in Colstrip has also been a major undertaking this year as SEMDC finalized the project costs and hired an architect. This “One Stop” business development facility would feature workforce training space, zoom rooms, equipment, makerspace area and technology in-order to assist entrepreneurs, businesses, IT3 group, government officials, students and resource providers. The next stage will be to complete the Design Phases and go out-to-bid in Spring of 2023. SEMDC has commitments of 100% of the \$3 million project costs.

**c) Regional Marketing & Rebranding Project** for the four (4) county SEMDC service region continues to move forward. It has focused primarily on Colstrip and Rosebud County with a secondary focus on the other three counties that SEMDC serves. The goal was to note the numerous Business / Commercial, Ag, Tourism, Historic, Native American, and Quality of Life features / benefits that we all enjoy. Check out our theme of “**Montana Made Possible**” and videos on [www.montanamadepossible.com](http://www.montanamadepossible.com). If we can assist anyone (including people & companies) to relocate to Southeastern Montana, please let us know.

**d) Colstrip Fiber Optics Data Survey, Engineering and Business Plans** have been completed for awhile and awaits funding. Both the City of Colstrip and SEMDC engaged the VPS firm and Range Telecommunications on this opportunity. Expanding Fiber Optics / Broadband Connectivity to the entire community was noted as the # 1 priority in the Colstrip Economic Diversification Strategy and would assist our small businesses and recruitment possibilities as well. We have applied to the MT ARPA Broadband Commission for about \$8 million of this major investment into our community. More details and a decision expected to come soon.

**e)** As part of the Energy Open Conference Series, SEMDC and Senator Ankney held a Community Town Hall Meeting on October 20<sup>th</sup> to measure the community interest on possible **Small Modular Nuclear Reactors** (SMRs) being studied for Colstrip. This was the result of the MT Legislative Interim Committee Study (SJ-3) which was completed in September. The Study focused on the economic and political feasibility of SMRs being installed in Colstrip. Over 130 people attended including guests such as a team from the Idaho National Labs and NuScale.

**3)** SEMDC is requesting Public Comment on the Draft of the **5-Year Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)**. The five-year CEDS is a joint planning document that benefits Custer, **Rosebud**, Powder River, and Treasure Counties, including the member cities and towns in the SEMDC District. The CEDS represents the input SEMDC staff received from annual CEDS community workshops. In the fall of 2022, SEMDC completed the CEDS yearly Recaps for Colstrip plus six other communities. The annual CEDS Recaps are fluid documents that are updated and changed annually based on changing conditions and community needs. Projects are added or removed, and other changes are made based on community priorities. After a period of 30 days, all public comments will be added to the document, which will be finalized by the end of December 2022. Please go to [www.semdc.org](http://www.semdc.org) to view the document and make on-line comments.

**4) Day Care Needs** continue to be an economic challenge in the Colstrip community. Lacking both Location(s) and Operator(s) is slowing down opportunities. A SEMDC Survey (Spring of 2022) showed about 35 Children were waiting and about 19 Adults were not in the workforce. Any ideas – please reach out to SEMDC.

My staff and I are always open to any ideas concerning our economic future in Colstrip. Hope these updates help or stop by our office at 6200 Main Street (next to 1<sup>st</sup> Interstate Bank). Contact us at 748-2990 or [www.semdc.org](http://www.semdc.org)

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