

City of Colstrip Newsletter

Spring 2026



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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Mayor's Message

Mayor John Williams

Colstrip - You do shine - Both as a community that offers a valued quality of life for its residents but also, very importantly, as a community that has played a pivotal role in the future energy picture for our entire state and, most importantly, now and into the future.

I recently attended a meeting hosted by Brian Bird, CEO with NorthWestern Energy. Brian described what his company was doing in its planning for Montana's electrical energy future. Colstrip was mentioned many times - the importance of these generating units, the importance of coal (this valuable resource) and the role it plays into the future. And yes, also natural gas and nuclear energy, which is further planned for our area in and around Colstrip. These are solid, reliable and dependable energy sources. So important to us and, of course, our state.

In my preparation of this newsletter, it was only a week ago that we had 8 inches of snow. Now we are back to Spring. I am excited for the future of our city and we welcome the Spring that is upon us. Spring is the perfect time to refresh, recharge and look forward to the challenges before us as we enter into the beginning of the construction season. Most of this year's efforts will be toward our streets. We are into the third year of the plan we developed when we initiated our Pavement and Surface Evaluation Plan (PASER). This plan was developed to identify all the roadway conditions in our community and prioritize the improvements that are needed. The last two years have been crack sealing and chip sealing. This was intended to preserve the good streets and to ensure their remaining life. Now we are shifting gears and attacking the roads that need rebuilding and reconditioned. When we first took on this process, the total cost projection was \$6.2 million dollars. Since then we have added additional costs to address the replacement of water service lines on Chisholm and Primrose. The service lines in this area have become very problematic the last several years. This has added an estimated \$400,000 to the project cost. We just recently went out for bids on this phase of our PASER Plan. The estimated cost is approximately four million dollars. It is further broken down into four schedules. Based on the prices we receive in the bids it may be split into a two year project. We are hopeful for some good numbers and, thus far, have generated good interest from contractors in doing the work.

Financially your city is in a good position and with the help of some significant grants your city has been able to set aside funds in anticipation of the road work that needs to be done. The financial highlights addressed in our management discussion and analysis in our annual financial report indicates that the net position of our business type funds increased by \$739,575 and in governmental funds by \$2,362,985 resulting in an increase of total net position of \$3,102,560. This is an 8% increase of our net position. The year ending governmental activities net position was \$21,503,161 and the year ending business type activities net position was \$12,646,360 for a cumulative net position of \$34,149,521. *(continued on page 2)*

Mayor's Message Continued

Your city has been blessed with many opportunities that we have been able to take advantage of since our incorporation.

Regarding our water supply future, we are almost there after many meetings and discussions on the revisions to Representative Parry's House Bill 368, the Colstrip Water Bill, revising laws relating to the Colstrip Water Infrastructure Mitigation Account. The short explanation on this bill is to fund the construction or conveyance of a water infrastructure system to supply a community that is solely dependent upon water from coal-fired generating units. The funding for this infrastructure will come from the coal severance tax. Two million dollars will be set aside every year in an interest bearing account for this use. The funds will be administered by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality. The revisions to this bill will be heard by the Energy and Technology Interim Committee. I have great expectations this committee will pass the revisions. This has been a very long process beginning over six years ago with Senator Duane Ankney.

The city continues its extensive involvement with Southeastern Montana Development Corporation (SEMDC). The economic development diversification study that was completed in 2017 is in the process of being updated. The update will be funded by a \$30,000 grant from the Montana Coal Board. The information obtained from this study was the main catalyst for receiving federal funding from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) for the construction of the Business Innovation Center (BIC). As I have previously reported, the City of Colstrip and SEMDC have entered into a partnership of joint ownership and operation of the BIC. The BIC, while located in Colstrip, is designed as a regional facility serving all of southeastern Montana. The construction of the BIC is almost complete. The grand opening of this facility is scheduled for April 22nd. The public is cordially invited to attend.

Colstrip Days 2026 will be a special celebration this year recognizing the 250-year Anniversary for America. This is also recognized with the theme that has been selected "Stars-Stripes and Coal Power". See the connection between the two celebrations? It links both the national celebration of the country's 250-year anniversary and our own civic pride and cultural legacy. This year's Colstrip Days provides a platform for our residents to honor the national history while enjoying a vibrant family friendly event in Colstrip USA - You Shine Colstrip!

Have you seen the City of Colstrip's redesigned website? It includes fillable forms that can be completed and sent electronically to us. You can also pay court fines and utility bills by following the link on the top of the website's home page at www.cityofcolstrip.com.

The City of Colstrip offers our customers the option to pay their utility bill by automatic ACH payment. There is no fee for this service. You can also have your utility bill emailed to you. Forms are available at Colstrip City Hall and online at www.cityofcolstrip.com to sign up for these options.

Schoolhouse History and Art Center

Kayla de la Ossa, Executive Director

The Schoolhouse History & Art Center held our annual All Student Art Show, featuring talented young artists from across Rosebud County. This much-anticipated exhibition celebrates the creativity and dedication of students participating in arts education through our local K–12 schools, SHAC's in-house classes, and our traveling outreach program. The show highlights a wide range of media and artistic voices, reflecting both the strength of arts education in our community and the imagination of the next generation. The exhibition's closing reception was on March 31. This special event offers community members the opportunity to view the artwork, meet the student artists, and recognize the importance of creative expression in rural education. Your presence helps affirm the value of arts programming in our schools and community.

In April, SHAC is pleased to welcome Butte-based artist BT Livermore to our revolving gallery. Livermore's practice reflects a commitment to traditional craftsmanship and design. As described on the artist's website, "BT's professional skillset these days includes traditional sign painting and gold leaf work, other handmade lettering, illustration, logo design, and also screen printing and letterpress printing. Beyond that, BT also dabbles in woodworking, furniture construction and restoration." This exhibition celebrates hand-skill, precision, and thoughtful design, offering a compelling reflection on craftsmanship within contemporary life. SHAC is excited to present work that honors both tradition and innovation. Please watch for additional information regarding an artist talk planned for late April or early May.

Meanwhile, SHAC's outreach program is fully underway. We continue to offer arts education opportunities for learners of all ages, both in our facility and throughout the region. Current class offerings are posted on our website and Facebook page, and we encourage community members to explore upcoming workshops and events.

Planning is also in progress for our Summer Art Program. A full schedule of classes will be announced soon, and we look forward to another season of creative exploration for children, teens, and adults.

Looking ahead to July, we are delighted to announce that Montana Shakespeare in the Parks will visit Colstrip on July 6. While the featured production has not yet been announced, this beloved touring company consistently delivers high-quality performances that bring accessible, live theater to communities across Montana. We are excited to welcome them back and encourage everyone to mark their calendars.

As always, we thank our community for supporting SHAC's mission and we look forward to seeing you at the gallery and at upcoming events.

Public Works Department

Pat Zent, Public Works Director



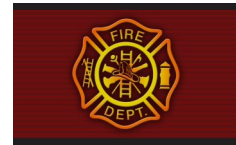
Summer is around the corner. We had a mild winter this year. We have been lucky on sanding and plowing the streets. The guys have been able to tear down some equipment and start rebuilding them.

We are going out for bids on four differing phases of street and/or water line repairs. The big one will be replacing the service lines on Chisholm and Primrose and redoing those streets. The bid cost of this project will determine what else we will be able to do this year. We hope to redo Laramie Circle and Sweetgrass Drive if the bids let us afford to do these.

We replaced the water main that runs between the railroad track and the sewage lagoons in town last November. This was an old ductile iron water main that needed to be replaced. We had some delays with the railroad permitting to move forward with the project, but we finally got it done.

Fire Department

Tony Reda, Fire Chief



Hello from your favorite local fire department! I guess we get that title because we're the only one you have...

There's always something going on at the station or training center to keep this group of volunteers busy. Many of our members also double as maintenance men and women in their free time—working on the trucks, performing preventative maintenance on our equipment and gear, and taking care of our facilities. All of this helps ensure that we're ready to respond at any time, day or night.

Another thing a group of us focused on during the first two months of the year was ourselves. Fire-fighting is a very physically demanding activity. When you add the weight of our protective clothing and SCBA (air bottle) to the mix, fatigue can set in quickly. There's no doubt that physical fitness is an integral and important part of being a firefighter, so we've been working on just that.

Each of us set individual goals at the start of the year and have been working toward them ever since. In addition to individual workouts, we met once a week to exercise together. There's nothing like a little pain and suffering to bring a group together! At the end of our 10-week "meltdown," we weighed in and crowned our Biggest Loser. If I remember, I'll post the results in next quarter's letter.

With summer right around the corner, I'd also like to remind everyone that if you're out cleaning up your yard and plan to burn some brush, please take 30 seconds to call it in to the police department. That way, if a concerned citizen sees the smoke and calls it in, the police department will already be aware of the burn.

Lastly, we are always looking for new members. If being part of the fire department sounds like something you might enjoy, get in touch with me or a member you know and come observe a training to see if it's something you'd like to be part of.

Planning, Building, Zoning & Code Enforcement

Kami Egan

As a part of the ongoing fight against noxious weeds in Montana, a task force of local area agencies meet to review weed identification and weed locations within the city limits. These agencies have worked together for several years to identify areas of concern and to take responsibility for spraying.

While checking properties for weed violations during the summer months, I have noticed several private property owners with infestations of Spotted Knapweed and Canada Thistle within the city limits. It is against the law to allow noxious weeds to propagate and it is the property owner's responsibility to get rid of all such weeds. Since many residents are unaware of the issue of weed control, the county offers many services to help land owners in the identification and elimination of noxious weeds. The city also has some booklets that may be of help to residents. Just stop by the office and pick one up.

Also, please remember that although it is sometimes difficult to keep the grass or weeds under the four inch (4") height as stipulated in code, it is the property owner's responsibility and letters will be going out to owners found in violation of this code.

Now is the time to start clearing those lots that have started to accumulate an assortment of trailers, junk vehicles and debris over the winter. These accumulations of junk, as well as RV's, boats, trailers, snowmobiles and anything else that lays around gathering weeds underneath it instead of being properly put away or stored, are unsightly and infringe upon the rights and valuations of neighboring property owners. Letters will be going out to those property owners found in violation to remind them of the city codes that prohibit such accumulations.

Please be aware that RV's and other recreational vehicles are not to be stored on public streets but on off street parking spaces. Those spaces by code must be located on the same lot as the dwelling, and may not be located in any front yard except in the driveway.

The city receives many complaints concerning the above violations every year. Many more go unreported because people do not wish to complain or cause other people problems. Be considerate of your neighbors. Code compliance is simply a part of living in a community. Call if you have any questions or concerns. Monday through Thursday. If I am not in please leave a message at 748-2300 ext. 2305 so I may return your call.

DUTY TO REMOVE WEEDS/OFFENDING VEGETATION

In accordance with City of Colstrip Code 4-2-2, the existence of weeds and offending vegetation constitutes a public nuisance. It is the duty of every owner of a developed parcel of land to cut, destroy or remove all weeds/offending vegetation in excess of nine (9) inches in height growing thereon to a height of four (4) inches or less and includes one-half (½) of any road, street or alley abutting the property.

It is the duty of every owner of an undeveloped parcel of land to cut, destroy or remove all weeds/offending vegetation in excess of twelve (12) inches in height to four (4) inches or less.

Failure to cut/destroy/remove the weeds and/or offending vegetation may cause the City of Colstrip to provide for the cutting/removal and charge the cost thereof against the property owner together with an administrative cost equal to 25% and a penalty of \$25.00 for the first cutting/removal; \$50.00 for the second cutting/removal; and \$75.00 for the third and subsequent removal. Failure to pay this charge within sixty (60) days shall constitute a lien on the property and placed on the tax rolls as a special assessment.

Bicentennial Library

Mary Kay Bullard, Director



Bicentennial Library is open Monday-Thursday 11:00am-7:00pm, Friday 11:00pm-5:00pm and Saturday 10:00am-1:00pm.

Bicentennial Library has a patron lead program Tuesday evening. The Stitch Society will meet from 5-7pm Tuesday evenings. This program is for adults who like to crochet and knit.

Jill Hanson will retire at the end of April. She has served Bicentennial Library as the reference librarian for 17 years. Alicia Moreno will move into the reference librarian position when Jill retires. This will open the clerk position for Bicentennial Library. The clerk's position is a great way to find out if library work is for you. The position is 10 hours a week, plus at least one Saturday a month. For more information, give me or any of the other librarians a call at 406-748-3040.

Amy is hosting a contest that is linked with Bicentennial Library's 50th birthday. For half a century, our library has served as a cornerstone of knowledge and community, and we plan to mark this milestone with a celebratory trivia contest for all ages. Trivia contest will be every Tuesday. You must visit the library to submit your answers. Honestly, we want you to come into the library and see what we have available, along with playing the trivia game.

Are you familiar with Montana Library 2go? If not and you are into electronic books and audios, you are missing out on a great service. Bicentennial Library pays for a membership to this service. Anyone who has a Bicentennial Library card is welcome to checkout e-books and audios for free. Many new and popular titles are available to place holds on, and the service has an available now feature if you are not in the mood to wait.

Some upcoming programming at Bicentennial Library includes Jill Hanson "Chicken March". This program will run from March 2nd-March 14th. You will decorate a plastic chick. Voting will be March 16th. Alicia will have some teen programming event. March 19th will be "Decoding Picture Frames", March 26th will be Diamond Painting, and April 9th will be "Photo Card Key Chains". Alicia's programs are geared more towards teens 12 years old to 18 years old.

Regular weekly programming will continue. Camille will host Lego Club every Monday afternoon at 4:15pm. Amy will host two story times. Elementary age story time is at 4:15pm on Tuesdays, and pre-school story time will be Wednesday Mornings at 11:15 am.



Colstrip City Code requires all dogs and cats within city limits be licensed and vaccinated against rabies. To license your animal bring proof of current rabies vaccination and the appropriate license fee to City Hall. The rabies vaccination must be current. Please check the date on your pet's rabies vaccination certificate or contact your veterinarian if you are not sure or have lost your vaccination certificate.

Colstrip Beautification Project



Spring is upon us again, therefore it is time to spiff up our community for the summer.

April/May is clean up time in town; keep an eye out for dates and times that we will be going around town picking up garbage. We encourage everyone who can to pitch in and help. The more volunteers the better, so think about lending a hand. The schools were a huge help last year and we hope to get their help again this year.

Plans are also being made for a junk pick up day in late April. This is a great help to residents who aren't able to haul large items to the dump on their own. There will also be a free day in late April for folks to drop off items at the landfill without paying extra for large loads.

Knapweed eradication will kick off later this spring. The Colstrip weed management group has plans to continue hitting knapweed hot spots around town. So much progress has been made the past few years, so keep an eye out for any knapweed plants as it is a noxious weed and spreads easily.

2026 will be our fifth year of having flower pots outside businesses during the summer months. We invite area businesses to take part in this endeavor. We will be contacting businesses in April to prepare for planting in May. The pots of flowers are a cheerful way to welcome visitors to our town and a source of pride and beauty for local citizens.

Let's keep our town beautiful!



Attention Colstrip Area Veterans!

As we are celebrating our nation's **250th Birthday**, we would like to recognize & honor our local veterans.

Please call or drop off your service information at City Hall - 406-748-2300 ext. 2300 & 2301, 12 Cherry St.

This information may be included on the **Veterans float** for Colstrip Days 2026.



Southeastern Montana Development (SEMDC)

Jim Atchison, Executive Director

For the past 25 years, I have served as the Executive Director of Southeastern Montana Development Corporation (SEMDC), a regional non-profit economic development group serving the four counties of Custer, Powder River, Rosebud, and Treasure, including the Colstrip community. Today, I can honestly say that I have never been more excited about the future of Colstrip than I am today. Here's why:

A) Business Innovation Center (BIC) Building Construction nearly Complete:

- The BIC concept was identified in the 2017 Colstrip Diversification Strategy as an Option to assist the region with diversification efforts through a "One-Stop Shop" Entrepreneurial / Development Facility.
- The BIC Building Construction was started in June 2025 & will be completed in early April.
- Units # 5 and # 6 (Stacks on BIC Roof) were installed on February 4th & are 100% EPA Compliant.
- Video Team coming to do Special on the BIC this Summer – Nationwide Interest on the BIC as Colstrip is one of just a handful of US Coal Communities that will survive and most likely thrive in the future.
- Check out "What is the BIC and Why does it Matter" Public Relations Fact Sheet at www.semdc.org.

B) CEDS Community Input Surveys:

- Annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Survey for Colstrip community.
- Thank you to those of you who submitted your On-Line Surveys to SEMDC in February. This Helps!
- Findings / Recaps / Projects are Shared with Stakeholders to Support Investment \$ into Community.
- Check out the Final Colstrip CEDS Recap at www.semdc.org or SEMDC Colstrip office in April.

C) Strong Media Interest in Colstrip and Rosebud County Energy Projects:

- Media / Industry Visits & Presentation Requests Continue at Fast Pace – Lots of Interest in Colstrip!
- NorthWestern Energy, receiving a Majority Ownership Share of Units 3 and 4, was Big News.
- Seattle Times runs article on Colstrip community impacts by Washington State shutting off coal power.
- BYU and MSU-Bozeman Classes will also be conducting their own Community Planning Projects soon.

D) Value-Added Energy Commercialization Opportunities Continue to be Interested in Rosebud County:

- The award-winning Colstrip Diversification Strategy, released in 2017 will be Updated this year.
- Two (2) of the four Value-Added Energy Commercialization Technical Studies completed in 2023 are attracting significant investments from venture capitalists – Flue Gas, Coal Ash & Rare Earth Elements.
- Federal Technical Study on Small Modular (nuclear) Reactors (SMRs) is posted at www.semdc.org.
- Additional federal study on Data Centers and Nuclear Power will be released this year.
- Grid United continues to move forward with their 420-mile Transmission Project from Colstrip into ND. The "North Plains Connector Transmission Line" has started the MT and ND permitting processes.
- NextEra Solar & Battery Storage Facility (\$1.8 Billion) is still on track in northern Rosebud County.
- SEMDC continues to evaluate and support other Value-Added Energy opportunities & projects.

Like Value-Added Ag – we feel that by adding value and creating beneficial use opportunities with energy, it would be tremendous for all parties and thus create economic diversification for our community. One can see the tremendous opportunities to supplement our outstanding coal reserves, mining and power generation workforce, quality of life benefits and infrastructure capacity, already in place. Thus, Value-Added Energy Commercialization Opportunities are certainly possible as Colstrip diversifies itself into an Energy Hub.

Colstrip is Changing - - - Not Closing!

CITY OF COLSTRIP
12 Cherry Street
PO Box 1902
Colstrip, MT 59323

Phone: 406-748-2300

Website: cityofcolstrip.com



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