

City of Colstrip Newsletter

Spring 2025

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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Happy Spring Greetings!!

This is my favorite time of the year—new beginnings!! As your city welcomes the warmer weather we will be concentrating on our street projects as outlined in our Pavement Management Plan that was approved last year. This will begin with the continuation of the crack sealing and new chip sealing. The city solicited bids and recently opened them with Harddrives being the lowest bidder at \$1,860,743.50, which is in line with what we budgeted. We look forward to City Council's approval of this bid with construction to begin this spring.

Another sign of spring is the recently completed audit. Thanks to City Clerk/ Treasurer Michelle Richards for your hard work. I am anxious to report to our residents your city is well positioned for our financial future with the projects that we have outlined in our budget and capital improvements plan. I invite our residents to take a look at our financial management report that is prepared along with the audit. A question to address is “Is the city as a whole better off or worse off as a result of the year’s activities?” In reviewing this report you will see that the government as a whole total net position ending June 30, 2024 was \$37,529,310 versus \$34,149,521 the previous year.

Overall your city is well positioned for our future as we build our finances even though we have successfully funded some very large water and sewer infrastructure projects the past few years. This is largely because we have been successful with obtaining various grants: State-Local Infrastructure Project Funds (SLIPA), American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Economic Development Administration (EDA) and, of course, the Montana Coal Board. These large projects included: North End Water Loop \$1,072,128; Water Filter & Clarifier Building Improvements \$741,032; Water and Wastewater Controls System \$735,394; and the Cedar/Wastewater Treatment Plant Water Line, estimated at \$798,725 (This project has not started yet until right-of-way is obtained). These are all large dollar projects and with the successful grant utilization it has allowed your city to continue the current rate structure for water and sewer for over ten years now. The credit for this goes to our staff and City Council along with the assistance of Southeastern Montana Development Corporation (SEMDC). We are also working in partnership with SEMDC on the Business Innovation Center (BIC). This facility will replace the current SEMDC office and assist in the diversification of our economy for our future. It will be located where the SEMDC office is now and will be funded with a combination of EDA, Coal Board, Colstrip Community Foundation and Avista Funding. A contract for the construction was recently awarded to TW Ridley of Billings.

Another very important part of our city that is scheduled for improvement is our Colstrip Cemetery. The City Council approved the Cemetery Plan that was

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Mayor's Message Continued

developed by the Cemetery Board. This plan will be implemented in two phases. The first phase will include signage and paving the entrance road and the loop around the burial lots. We anticipate going out for bids this spring. Additionally we are implementing a software program to administer all the burial plots and locations.

The Schoolhouse History and Art Center (SHAC) will also be going through some facility improvements thanks to it's Executive Director Kayla de la Ossa. Kayla was able to garner enough grant money to completely fund new siding for the building and refinish the hardwood flooring. The total cost of these improvements is \$177,440. Thank you to the Community Investment Fund (Grid United), Colstrip Impact Foundation and Avista. Great job, Kayla, and everyone else involved.

This past February we had an exciting first time celebration at City Hall. While we all recognize the value of energy and coal production here, our most important achievement or aspect of value deals with families. We had the opportunity to witness the pinning ceremony of Colonel Pete Ankney, United States Marine, a young man that grew up here in Colstrip. It was a powerful, special event. It was attended by our newly elected Congressman Downey and also a young lady that grew up in Colstrip who is the congressman's Montana Field Representative, Zoey Stroop. I had a great visit with them both and it is great to have this type of representation in Washington, DC.

As a city, we look forward to a general change in attitude toward fossil fuels and more particularly to the energy of coal and our city's future. Colstrip - Tomorrow's Town Today

Don't forget about the annual Colstrip Days Celebration, June 25-29, 2025. The fishing event for the kids is going to be outstanding again this year.

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.

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.

Schoolhouse History and Art Center

Kayla de la Ossa, Executive Director

“What good is the warmth of summer, without the cold of winter to give it sweetness.” — John Steinbeck.

While we share Mr. Steinbeck's sentiment, we couldn't be more excited for the arrival of warmer weather! This winter has been a season of growth and progress at SHAC, with many exciting developments taking place.

We're thrilled to announce that we've been awarded funding for two significant projects: new exterior siding and historic floor refinishing, with the siding work set to begin in late spring. Our deepest gratitude goes to the generous donors who made these projects possible.

The Montana Community Foundation, established by Grid United—the organization behind the North Plains Connector, a transmission line connecting the U.S. eastern and western electric grids in Montana and North Dakota—has been instrumental in supporting our work. They are dedicated to partnering with communities in Rosebud, Custer and Fallon Counties, fostering innovative projects that improve quality of life and strengthen the region. We also thank the Colstrip Impacts Foundation, in partnership with the Avista Corporation Rosebud County Endowment, for their commitment to supporting the people, businesses, and services essential to the future of the Colstrip region. These two important projects wouldn't have been possible without the support of these incredible groups.

In the gallery, SHAC is excited to present Windows and Doors, a solo exhibition by Bozeman-based artist Meghan Speilman, opening in April. The show will feature striking diptych and triptych pieces woven on a computerized dobby loom. We're also planning to host a speaker event in conjunction with this exhibition, with details to be announced soon.

Additionally, SHAC is pleased to announce the upcoming release of a catalog for Vessels of War & Recovery, an exhibition curated by our executive director. This powerful show, presented at SHAC in October and November of 2023, highlighted the journey of redemption of one combat veteran, as told through the artist's own words: “the long road home.” The catalog will include three insightful essays, one written by our executive director, and will be available at SHAC starting in June for those interested.

We're incredibly grateful for your continued support as we move forward into an exciting new chapter for SHAC!

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.

Public Works Department

Pat Zent, Public Works Director

The Public Works Department has been busy with the 18 plus inches of snow we received during February. The guys tried to keep up with the snow plowing. We had some bitter cold weather, -30 degrees, on top of the snow that was hard on the equipment and the frozen water lines for home owners that we had to respond to shut the water off to their homes.

The North End Water Loop was connected and put on line the first week of March. COP Construction struggled to bore the line underneath the railroad track and Highway 39. They will be back this spring to do some reseeding around the golf course that they dug up. We are waiting on BNSF for permits to start the water main replacement along the lagoon to the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

We will be opening bids to accept a contractor to do our Crack & Chip sealing project scheduled for the spring and summer. We are repairing the streets that need less work on them to maintain the integrity of the street. We ask that if you see the crews working in your area, please remove any vehicles out of their way so that they are not wasting time trying to find the owners to have them moved.

The City of Colstrip has been doing a Surface Water Treatment Report (SWTR) for the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) for the last twenty years. The data that we gather and send to them has been approved and verified by them. DEQ is now telling us that we are not in compliance in how we are reporting our data to them even though we haven't changed how we report our data to them. They came and inspected our treatment plant and all of our records on a three-year rotation for the last twenty years. They have never told us or even hinted that the City was reporting things incorrectly to them. They are telling us that we need to change some things in our reporting data. This in no way affects the quality of water that we are delivering to the city. Our operators are running the plant so that we are delivering good quality water to the residents of Colstrip.



Fire Department

Tony Reda, Fire Chief



As always things are in perpetual motion at your local fire department. We have some exciting new equipment, tools and a lot to share with the community this quarter.

The most exciting thing happening is the arrival of our new engine. It's been two years since we ordered the new truck, and we are super excited she is here. We custom ordered a Rosenbauer Commander to replace our 2001 Pierce engine and we are in the process of trading out the old engine with the new. Engine 1 has served the City of Colstrip well over the past 24 years and it will be missed. Side note, when I joined the Fire Department in 2006, all of the trucks were DuPont safety green. Engine 1 is our last green truck and after it's gone, most of our trucks will be some combination of red, red/white and red/black. And I'm ok with that.

In May we are sending four firefighters to Cody Fire school to further their knowledge of the fire service. This is a great weekend of training with firefighters from Cody, Denver, LA and many more large city departments. Good luck and be safe fellas.

We just received our new state-of-the-art auto extrication equipment. Our old Jaws of Life was approaching 20 years old and has been replaced with a battery powered cutter and spreader. They should complement the new engine nicely.

Colstrip Days is approaching quickly and we are already planning and preparing for the festivities this summer. Fireworks have been ordered, slip-n-slide at the soccer field the Sunday of Colstrip Days, fire trucks in the car show and we hope to have trucks available for viewing with some demonstrations of our tools including our new extrication equipment.

As always, we are looking for new recruits. If you are interested, please don't hesitate to contact me and come observe a training to see if it might be something you would be interested in. Thanks!

Police Department

Cory Hert, Police Chief



The winter months have been busy with our employees attending trainings both in and out of the state. Most notably, Officer Scott has been attending the Basic Law Enforcement Academy in Helena and is scheduled to graduate mid-April. Officer Tod is scheduled to begin his Basic Training at the end of April and conclude mid-July.

Other officers and 911 dispatchers have attended trainings or are scheduled for some in the upcoming months. These professional development trainings provide the education and skills necessary to keep up with the ever-changing demands the officers and dispatchers face every day and enable us to continue to provide a professional service to our citizens and the community.

Cara Warner was hired as our part-time 911 Dispatcher; Cara held this position previously and left for a short stint to pursue other things. We are excited to have Cara back and know she will do a great job. She completed her Basic Training when she was here previously so she is completely certified in the position.

The department is once again fully staffed and employees are looking forward to some well-deserved vacations and time off in the upcoming months after covering vacant positions over the past year.

We hope all of you have an enjoyable and safe spring/summer months wherever your activities and travels may take you and we look forward to continue providing our citizens with both timely and professional service throughout the community as needed.

We would also like to take this moment to thank you all for your continued support and let you know that we are dedicated as a department to continue being fiscally responsible to you, the tax-paying citizens. We understand the hardships the current economy has placed on everyone and we appreciate living and working in a community that can provide the necessary training and equipment needed for day-to-day operations, and I assure you we do not spend frivolously or take our budget for granted! Thank you all and stay safe!

2025 Municipal Election



A Municipal Election is being held in 2025 for the selection of two City Council Members for four-year terms. Candidates must reside for at least one year preceding the election within the city limits of the City of Colstrip. Council members are elected at-large (no wards) and elections are nonpartisan.

Candidate filing opens Thursday, April 17, 2025 and closes Monday, June 16, 2025 at 5:00 pm. The deadline to file as a write-in candidate for the primary election is Monday, July 7, 2025 and Tuesday, September 2, 2025 for the general election.

Municipal Elections are administered by the Rosebud County Clerk & Recorder's Office. The Municipal Primary election will be held on September 9, 2025, if the Election Administrator determines that a primary election needs to be held. The Municipal General election will be held on November 4, 2025.

Bicentennial Library

Mary Kay Bullard, Director



Amy and Camille would really like for their afternoon programs to see more attendance. The librarians would also like to see more children checking out books in the library. If you or your child can not make it to a program exactly on time, we would still like you to attend. "Lego Club" is at 4:15pm on Monday, and "Story Time" is at 4:15pm on Tuesday.

Bicentennial Library is a comfortable and safe place for all our patrons and staff. Individuals who choose to be unkind, rude, verbally, or physically abusive to anyone in the library, will be directed to leave for the day. These individuals are welcome to come back the next day to try again. Everyone has bad days.

Even with the majority of people switching to streaming services, Bicentennial Library still gets a modest supply of DVDs. DVD checkout is for two weeks.

The library also has free WIFI available at anytime that we are open and six public computers. The library does charge for printing. Black and white copies are .15 cents and color copies are .25 cents a page.

Ann Hills frequently displays beautiful quilts in the library's lounge. Her quilts are for sale and are priced as marked. The quilt display rod is open to anyone who wishes to display their quilting art. The lounge also boasts a very nice fossil display that is maintained by Tim Dove. These are Tim's fossils that he wants to share with the Bicentennial Library users and is frequently a main attraction to people new to Bicentennial Library.

Bicentennial Library has had a few of the patrons who are on the banned patron list try to reserve a hotspot. If you are banned from checking out hotspots, that is a permanent status. You are welcome to use the library for other services, but no, you are not going to check out a hotspot again. When an attempt is made, the librarians will remove the hotspot holds that are successfully placed, or tell the banned patron that they are banned and they no longer have access to this service. If this is you, let me explain to you why: You broke the hotspot policy three times or you kept the hotspot so long, that it needed to be turned off. You made the decision to keep something that you were borrowing longer than the library allows, demonstrating to the library staff that the responsibility of borrowing such a scarce resource as a hot spot is too much responsibility for you. The library staff need to protect this very limited resource.

Bicentennial Library does not have enough hot spots to meet the demand. Someone is most of the time on the waiting list. Bicentennial Library has 7 hotspots. We serve Colstrip, Lame Deer, and Ashland with 7 hotspots.

Bicentennial Library is open Monday-Thursday 11:00am-7:00pm, Friday 12:00pm-5:00pm and Saturday 10:00am-1:00pm.



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.

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 met to review weed identification and weed locations within the city limits. These agencies have been working 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, Canada Thistle and Field Bindweed 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. If I am not in, please leave a message at 748-2300 ext. 2305 so I may return your call.

Colstrip Beautification Project

Spring is a busy time for beautifying our community!

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. 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 either April or May. This is a great help to residents who aren't able to haul large items to the dump on their own.

Knapweed eradication will kick off later this spring. The Colstrip weed management group has met for their spring meeting and have plans to continue hitting knapweed hot spots around town.

2025 will be our fourth year of having flower pots outside businesses during the summer months. We invite area businesses to take part in this endeavor. The pots of flowers are a cheerful way to welcome visitors to our town and a source of pride and beauty for local citizens.



Southeastern Montana Development (SEMDC)

Jim Atchison, Executive Director

For the past 23 + 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 with a few brief Updates:

A) Business Innovation Center (BIC) Building Construction:

- 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 project was recently awarded another federal grant of \$1.3 million. Total now at \$4.3 million.
- SEMDC / City of Colstrip received Six (6) Bids in February with favorable Budget Bids.
- The BIC Building Construction will now start in April 2025 at the current SEMDC Colstrip site.

B) Public Input Surveys – Limited Time – Need your Input:

- Annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Survey for Colstrip community
- On-Line Survey – Limited Time to Respond – Check out www.semdc.org or SEMDC Colstrip office
- Findings / Recaps / Projects are Shared with the Public & Stakeholders via SEMDC website

C) Small Business Interest and Growth:

- Record Financing Requests at SEMDC with the area Banking Community in past four months
- Regional Growth and Expansion Opportunities for Business Purchases and Equipment is Significant.
- SEMDC received a \$500,000 grant for Low-Interest Loans to qualified Small Businesses in the area.

D) Grant Awards Continue to be Invested in Community:

- Fiber Optics Installation continues with Range \$10 million investment. Will be operational spring 2025. Added broadband capacity was the #1 Need identified in the SEMDC Colstrip Diversification Strategy.
- SEMDC worked with the State and Rosebud County on a multi-million federal TSED Grant Award for Transmission Line Impacts in Rosebud, Custer & Fallon Counties. More details are coming in 2025.
- SEMDC has received a \$50,000 US DOE grant for Energy Outreach activities in Rosebud County.

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

- Media / Industry Visits & Presentation Requests Continue at Fast Pace – Lots of Interest in Colstrip!
- SEMDC spoke on Coal Community Impacts at the recent national BRECC Leadership Conference.
- Interviewed on Fox Business Channel again as to national Coal Trends with new DC Administration

F) Value-Added Energy Commercialization Opportunities:

- Two (2) of the four Value-Added Energy Commercialization Technical Studies completed in 2023 are now attracting significant investments from venture capitalists – Flue Gas and Rare Earth Elements
- Federal Technical Study on Small Modular (nuclear) Reactors (SMRs) is done. Public Hearing Soon.
- Grid United continues to move forward with their 400-mile Transmission Project from Colstrip into ND. This "North Plains Connector Transmission Line" has started the MT permitting process.
- SEMDC continues to evaluate and promote other Value-Added Energy opportunities & projects (4-5)

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!

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PRSR STD
ECRWSS
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
EDDM Retail



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Colstrip Days Celebration
June 25-29, 2025

COLSTRIP, MT