

City of Colstrip Newsletter

Fall 2021

Mayor's Message

Mayor John Williams

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

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

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



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Greetings Everyone and Happy Thanksgiving! I would like to recognize and give thanks and appreciation to all the men and women that have answered the call to serve our county as we have just recently celebrated Veterans Day. This is one day we should all stand united as we honor our Veterans.

The recent city election results are in for the two open positions on the City Council. Congratulations to Rose Hanser as a new Council Member. Rose has experience in city government as our city's Mayor. Greg Koczur was successful on his reelection as a City Council Member. Congratulations Greg. I very much appreciate Dan Becker for his service as a city council member. Dan has been filling in on the City Council after Pat Campbell resigned to become the city's Assistant Public Works Director. Dan always came prepared for the council meetings and provided valuable insight with his experience in our Public Works Department. Thank you Dan!

I would like to share with everyone some major successes recently achieved. Phase III of the Wastewater Treatment Improvement Project was completed. This project included construction improvements to the wastewater oxidation ditch and UV disinfection system. This was a \$1,002,825 project that was partially funded with a Delivering Local Assistance Program grant in the amount of \$415,000. Thank you SEMDC for your assistance in obtaining this grant.

We were recently notified by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality of the successful permit renewal of the discharge permit for our wastewater treatment plant. This allows the city to continue to discharge our effluent to the Ponderosa Butte Golf Course during the summer months, which is extremely important for the continued operation of the golf course. We were also recently notified of pending approval of our discharge permit into Castlerock Lake from our water treatment plant. We discharge water into the lake after it goes through our filtering system that is cleaner or has less sediment than the water we receive from the Yellowstone River.

The City is aware of several recent issues regarding deer and personal or pet safety. The Police Chief and I met with Game Warden Captain Todd Anderson for advice and support regarding deer issues. The City does have a Deer Management Plan in effect regarding the harvesting of deer, primarily through archery hunting with cooperation of land owners within city limits and the surrounding area. We will be setting up a meeting and

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Mayor's Message *Continued*

involving the public for their input. This meeting and discussion will be scheduled after the close of the hunting season and will be publicly noticed. In the meantime, residents are encouraged to contact the Colstrip Police Department if a situation occurs threatening either personal safety or threat of the safety of your pet. The police department will respond to these calls accordingly and deal with the situation, which may require the removal of the deer.

The City is currently in discussion with the Department of Environmental Quality and power plant owners regarding a Water Feasibility Study for Colstrip. This study was legislated through Senate Bill 87. This is Senator Duane Ankney's bill for a continuing water supply for the City of Colstrip. This bill was heavily lobbied against by the Pacific Northwest owners of units 3 and 4.

Other legal matters involve our continued support of Senate Bills 265 and 266 regarding the operation of units 3 and 4. The Pacific Northwest power plant owners are all united in their opposition. The City also continues to support the Area F expansion of Westmoreland's mine to supply coal. This continues to be opposed by the Sierra Club, Montana Environmental Information Center and others.

The City has successfully completed its budgeting process and also the completion of a 5-year Capital Improvement Plan. This information is available for anyone's interest at City Hall. Some of the major capital components within the budget include:

- 1) Replacement of our Solid Waste Collection Truck - This is a \$381,000 purchase. The City has made application for partial funding of this truck and the grant application will be presented at the December 9th Coal Board meeting in Billings.
- 2) Fire Truck Replacement - This is a very large expenditure. We have \$750,000 budgeted for a newly used unit. We will be pursuing funding assistance for this expenditure.
- 3) Olive Drive/Plum Court Sewer Line Replacement - We are estimating the cost for this line replacement to be \$300,000. We are currently preparing to go out for bids on this project for construction next year.
- 4) Water & Wastewater Controls System - This \$690,000 project is the supervisory control and data system for our water and sewer operations. We have obtained a partial grant of \$345,000 for this project through the Economic Development Administration thanks to SEMDC. We are currently in the design phase and preparing to go out for bids.
- 5) Street Sweeper Replacement - This is a \$280,000 capital item that we are currently in the bidding process for. We will also be pursuing a partial grant request for this piece of equipment.

These are some of the major budget items and, as you can see, with all of the projects before us I am anticipating a very busy year. I continue to solicit advice and support from our employees, city council and all the members of our great city as we approach a new year.

In this newsletter there is an article written by Becky Miller about a Colstrip Beautification Program. A small group of residents are getting together to develop a beautification program for our community. If you would like to become involved in this program, please contact Becky or myself. We would be glad to have your ideas and involvement. We should all be looking at ways to spruce up our town and develop neighborhood pride.

Planning, Building, Zoning and Code Enforcement

Kami Egan

Winter will be arriving soon and with it comes accumulated snow and ice on city sidewalks and streets.



In Colstrip, the city plows the roads so that citizens can maneuver on the streets within town during those times we have snow on the ground. That means that when snow storms are in the forecast, it would prove beneficial to all if citizens would make sure to park off the streets whenever possible. Snow and garbage removal becomes a problem when plows are required to go around vehicles stored on the city streets bottlenecking traffic and creating unsafe conditions.

Clear sidewalks also make it easier and safer to get around. They are important for everyone who uses sidewalks, but they are especially important for seniors, people with disabilities and children. Snow, ice-covered or blocked sidewalks force people to travel 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. In addition it is illegal for the snow and ice removed from the sidewalk to be deposited in the streets.

Be considerate of your neighbors. Clear the sidewalks and streets to make our community a safe place for all those who walk or drive in these winter months upon us.

PAY YOUR UTILITY BILL BY ACH

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 to sign up for this service or send an email to cityclerk@cityofcolstrip.com.



**Sign up for
Auto Pay**

Fire Department

Tony Reda, Fire Chief



I would like to start this quarter's newsletter by introducing myself as the new Colstrip Fire Chief. During my 15 years as a member of the department I have served as a training officer, captain, department president, assistant chief and now chief. I am very honored to be filling this role and believe me, these are big boots to fill. As we strive to provide the best service possible for this great little town, my membership in the department continues to be one of my favorite parts of living in this community.

October means Fire Prevention Week and this year's theme was "Learn the Sounds of Fire Safety". This concept helps people better understand the different sounds smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms make in order to identify maintenance issues and ensure they remain in working order. A few key takeaways from this year's theme are: When a smoke or CO alarm sounds, respond immediately by exiting the house. If the alarm begins to chirp, it may mean the batteries are low and need replaced. Test all smoke and CO alarms monthly and remember, three beeps for smoke alarms and four beeps for CO alarms.

I would like to recognize Rob Pontius for his 20 years of dedication to the fire department and City of Colstrip. His commitment and continuous work behind the scenes kept everything running smoothly for us. He truly was/is a tremendous asset to the fire department! If you see Rob, thank him, he deserves it.

Lastly, I would also like to thank our fire department crew members for the outstanding job they did this summer. We had a couple busy months fighting wildfires started from lightning, fireworks and of course, the Richard Spring Fire via a burning coal seam. We have a young department in terms of experience, but they all performed exceptionally well while facing these adversities. We currently have a full roster of 31 Firefighters and since July 1st, collectively, they have 297 training hours and 203 responses to 16 calls. If you know someone on the fire department, thank them for their hours spent away from home and loved ones.

Thank you and please don't hesitate to call the fire department if you think you need us. We enjoy the lights and sirens more than you know.....



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.

Police Department

Cory Hert, Police Chief

With the winter months approaching, please remember to remove your campers, trailers and vehicles from the streets, this allows easier access for snow plowing and safer travel for our school bus routes.



In August, the Police Department celebrated our 17th year of service to our community and our citizens. We want to take this opportunity to thank all our community members and taxpayers for the generosity and support you have provided our department over the years; without you this milestone would not have been possible!

There have been a lot of new families moving into our community over the past year or so and though we have not had the opportunity to meet each one of you, I thought this would be a good opportunity to explain our operations and commitment to the community.

Our department is comprised of 12 employees; Police Chief, Assistant Police Chief, 5 Patrol Officers (one of which is also assigned as a School Resource Officer), and 5 Emergency 911 Dispatchers. We operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to ensure the safety of our community and citizens and we respond to approximately 2,000 calls for service each year.

Our employees are all certified through Montana Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) and have achieved numerous levels of certification. Certification ranges include Basic, Intermediate, Advanced, Supervisory, Command and Administrative. We currently have 3 employees at the Basic level, 2 at the Intermediate level, 5 at the Advanced level and 2 at the Administrative level.

All our employees attend Professional Development Training opportunities each year both in and out of the state in various law enforcement forums. Though it is impossible to prepare for every situation, we strive to be progressive in keeping pace with the ever-evolving law enforcement and communications fields.

Not including Basic Academy Course requirements, our employees combined have over 6,500 hours of continued professional training.

Most of our employees have experience with other agencies besides this department and we have a combined 150 years of service and experience in law enforcement and telecommunications that we rely on to continue to provide a professional service and response to our citizens and community.

I hope that this provides the new community members as well as the older ones with a brief understanding of our department and our structure as well as the commitment we have to serving our community!

Bicentennial Library

Mary Kay Bullard, Director



Bicentennial Library offers programs for children promoting early literacy and education and fine motor skills. Additionally, these programs are a nice opportunity for the caregivers of these children to socialize and get to know one another.

Bicentennial Library has restarted Lego Club for our library. Lego Club will meet every Monday afternoon at 4:30pm. Please plan on joining Camille for some Lego Fun! Story time will be at 4:15pm on Tuesdays, and until we can find a replacement children's librarian, we will not be having the 11:15am story time on Wednesdays. We are open to feedback regarding all programming, so if you have suggestions or a request, please talk to us.

The starting wage for the Children's Librarian position is \$13.50 an hour. This position does come with benefits. Rosebud County offers paid vacation and sick leave for this part-time position. We are looking for someone who is very comfortable working primarily with children. Our children's librarian is responsible for programming for children ages birth to 18. The most consistent program is Story Time, and the annual Summer Reading program. This 20-hour a week position is Tuesdays-Fridays, with one to two Saturdays a month, depending on the month. We are requesting a resume highlighting experience working with children. For more information, please call us 406-748-3040, or stop by the library front desk.

Our hotspot lending program has quite the wait list. So, we are asking you to please return the hotspot on your due date, so that the next person, who is waiting, may check it out. When you return your hotspot, you can go right back on the holds list, if you want. Please do not hoard the hotspot. If you choose to anyway, the librarians will turn off the hotspot, and your magical Wi-Fi will be lost. Additionally, you may not be able to checkout a hotspot for two additional weeks. So, the benefit of hoarding the hotspot will be completely lost to you. My best advice is just return the hotspot and get right back on the list so you can keep using them, and we can keep checking them out to you. Then everybody wins.

Do we have what you want in the library? If not, don't be shy about asking us about adding it to our collection. If that's not going to work for whatever the reason, we can borrow it from another library. We have two ways of doing this. You can place holds through partners. Partners library consortium in Montana loans items between the partner libraries, or you visit the library and place an interlibrary loan. Interlibrary Loans covers the United States, including libraries that do not participate in Partners. We do require that you visit the library to place an interlibrary loan, as there is paperwork that you are asked to fill out.

Rachel Grafton, formerly of Bicentennial Library, will offer mental health programming in the back of the library. She is calling her program "All the mental health things you didn't think you wanted to know."

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

Schoolhouse History and Art Center

Kayla de la Ossa, Executive Director

Isn't there something so special about this time of the year? The holiday season is always such a great reminder of everything we have and all the ways we can be good people. As we gather with family and give thanks, Schoolhouse History & Art Center would like to give thanks to all of you. The hard-working spirit of this community is something to truly be proud of and I know SHAC would not be where we are today without it.

SHAC will be hosting the Christmas Bazaar at Frank Bratton Middle School on December 4th from 9 am to 4 pm. There will be vendors selling many different goods, including jewelry, crafts, food, and woodwork, so please stop by or sign up as a vendor.

December is also time for Santa's Workshop here at SHAC. We will be decking the halls and having classes to spread holiday cheer. Santa will be stopping by too, so keep a look out for him.

The annual Gone to Pieces Quilt Show will be up in February. The love and dedication put into those quilts is evident and always a spectacle to behold. With that show, there is always a fantastic silent auction as well as a quilt raffle. The quilt for the quilt raffle will be displayed during the show and tickets will be available around town and at our building. Make sure to come in and vote on your favorite piece!

In March we host the Annual All Student Art Show, featuring students from all over Rosebud County. The art produced by these young minds is always a breath of fresh air.

Everyone is invited, and welcome, to come into SHAC anytime. If you have an idea, we would love to hear it. I hope to see all of you soon.

"It is the life of the crystal, the architect of the flake, the fire of the frost, the soul of the sun-beam. This crisp winter air is full of it. "

Colstrip Beautification Program

Becky Miller

A community beautification program has begun in Colstrip. A group of citizens are putting together a plan to help spruce up our town, starting next spring.

Some of the ideas we have formulated are:

- Community-wide clean up week
- Knapweed information campaign (let's eradicate knapweed)
- Tree information campaign (let's save our trees and plant new trees)
- Flowers in front of businesses next summer
- A community mural

A community beautification program can build neighborhood pride and ownership, improve the quality of life of the residents, and help attract new residents and new businesses.

We are excited to carry out these plans to enhance our great town with community support. There are many things to be proud of here and we want to build upon them. We will be reporting on beautification events in each city newsletter, along with the Independent Press and social media.

Southeastern Montana Development Corporation

Jim Atchison, Executive Director

jatchison@semdc.org

As 2021 winds down, I want to say that “after 20 years at SEMDC, I have never been more excited about upcoming opportunities and the future of the Colstrip community.” As many of you know **Southeastern 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 mid-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 COVID, 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 Cares Act and ARPA funding are also adding significant economic activity. I feel these positive trends will continue as we close out 2021 and move into 2022.

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.

3) Some of the numerous **Colstrip Projects / Studies** that were recently completed are as follows:

a) The **Colstrip Energy / Industrial Park Study** was contracted out by SEMDC to a qualified engineering firm who completed this \$100,000 study in March 2021. A handful of potential commercial and/or industrial firms that are already interested in relocating to the Colstrip / Rosebud County area will now possibly have a turn-key site available. The property owners can now decide if and when they would like to construct such a site to enhance economic opportunity in Colstrip.

b) **Regional Marketing & Rebranding Project** for the four (4) county SEMDC service region is now complete. 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. A Regional Advisory Committee assisted the marketing firm and SEMDC the past two years. A major Campaign Launch was announced on June 24th with the theme of “***Montana Made Possible.***” This website will also link up with the Governor’s recruitment site - www.comehomemontana.com. Check out our material and videos on www.montanamadepossible.com. If SEMDC can assist anyone (including people and companies) to relocate to Southeastern Montana, please let us know.

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Southeastern Montana Development Corporation Continued

c) **Colstrip Fiber Optics Data Survey / Plan** has been completed. Both the City of Colstrip and SEMDC engaged the VPS firm and Range Telecommunications on this opportunity. The \$27,000 Coal Board grant funded a Fiber Optics Data Plan and Community Survey for Colstrip. 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. Phase II of this Plan was done in May. We are now applying to the MT ARPA Broadband Commission for up to 80% of this major investment into our community. More details to follow in early 2022.

d) **Colstrip GIS On-Line Site Selector / Listing Project** is also complete as SEMDC hired an engineering firm to complete this real estate listing / recruitment project in May. Both major employers and small businesses including the city, county, education, realtors, technical and healthcare professionals will benefit from having this technology available. Contact SEMDC for more details.

e) An effort to build a **Business Innovation Center** (BIC) in Colstrip has also been a major undertaking this year as SEMDC hired an architect to complete the \$160,000 Preliminary Architectural Report (PAR). 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. A local Advisory Committee assisted the architect and SEMDC during this process which was completed in July. The next stage has been locating the \$3 million construction budget by the end of 2021. SEMDC did receive a funding commitment from the CIF in July for \$225,000. SEMDC and the City of Colstrip did also receive a \$2.4 million EDA grant in late September for this project. To date, SEMDC has commitments of 88% of the construction costs.

4) The **Colstrip Impact Foundation (CIF)** has created the framework to accept / distribute funds from the \$10 million in impact funding from Puget Sound Energy. The local 7-member group continues to meet and has partnered with an umbrella foundation (Montana Community Foundation-Helena). The partnership has helped the CIF with eligibility criteria and establishing a funding request and distribution framework for those that are being impacted by the loss of Units #1 and #2 and other coal related impacts. CIF has created three (3) areas to distribute funds: **a) Community (tax district) Assistance**, **b) Economic (small business) Assistance** and **c) Workforce Assistance**. The CIF is now operational and is accepting applications to assist those in the Colstrip community with coal related impacts. Check out www.mtcf.org for more details.

5) A major infrastructure improvement will be made soon to the **City's SCADA Water & Wastewater Treatment Equipment**. A \$345,000 grant from the federal EDA, which SEMDC wrote and submitted for the City, was recently approved.

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 1st Interstate Bank). Contact us at 748-2990 or www.semhc.org

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HAPPY

Holidays