

**MEMO FROM EMMETT MAYOR GORDON W. PETRIE**

**SUBJECT: DOES EMMETT WANT OR NEED A FERAL CAT ORDINANCE?**

It's hard to believe this month's memo is the 12th one of the year. We began our year with an explanation of the city's Broadband Initiative, which continues, if even at a glacial pace. We are a little slower than surrounding communities with similar initiatives because we have limited funds. Our deployment of the fiber is carefully planned and piggy-backed with concomitant digging and construction of other projects. In other words, we are accomplishing the deployment out-of-hide. Yet, the good news is this means no increase in taxes or servicing of bonds. The potential payoff, however, should be worth it.

Strong, reliable broadband is what makes today's commerce work. Towns without adequate broadband will soon become bedroom communities with no real jobs for children or grandchildren coming along. Supporting local schools will become increasingly harder as will simply taking care of municipal infrastructure. Sound familiar?

In this memo, however, I want to end the season not so much with new information, but with a request to obtain information from the good people of Emmett. This month in your utility bill, you will receive (if not already) a survey asking a simple question: Do you want the Emmett City Council to consider a Feral Cat Ordinance?

In some Emmett neighborhoods, this has become a white-hot topic. Well-meaning and kind-hearted folks—regrettably—enable feral felines to breed indiscriminately by feeding and watering them as they come around their houses to demonstrate how “down and out” they are. Perhaps with strains of “Hey, buddy, can you spare a dime?” playing in their heads, the enablers regularly put out the food and water these poor miserable creatures need to survive. We know

what happens next, don't we? Momma cat is now better able to take care of her last litter of kittens, all the while preparing for the next batch to come along in the spring.

However, because no owners are taking proper care of these cats, e.g., taking them to a veterinarian for regular checkups, shots, and the other things for which we take our pets, they soon become diseased, particularly as it gets colder. Because they are not receiving medicine to mitigate or cure their diseases, they pass them around, even to otherwise, well-cared for domestic cats. Frankly, those cat owners are getting tired of the cycle. They expect the city to do something about the problem.

Now, we've all heard the phrase, "Government can't legislate morality!" Whereupon government then goes off to spend time, energy and resources attempting to do that very thing. It seems by observation over the years, that any government will work only if there is a "buy in" by the people being governed. Accordingly, that same buy-in notion necessarily follows with 1) actually passing a feral cat ordinance, 2) educating the people about its passage and how important it is for the health and safety of real pets, not to mention their owners (I hated that ring-worm thing in the first grade) and 3) finally enforcing its provisions.

As mentioned, in some neighborhoods, this is a much discussed topic. Rather than being cursed in the dark, it seems appropriate to this administrator that we put some sun-shine on it and see what the people want. Please respond to the survey. It is important to know what you think about this matter. May you have the Merriest of Christmases and the Happiest of a New Year. Thank you all for your kind words of encouragement over this last year. I truly appreciate them.