

## **MEMO FROM THE MAYOR**

**SUBJECT: We Have Much for Which to Give Thanks, Part 2 and Final**

### **At a Glance:**

- **This final memo of the year informs our community about our remaining excellent departments: Building and Zoning Fire, Library, Public Works, and City Clerk.**

### **Building and Zoning**

For Brian Sullivan and his Building and Zoning duties, technology has helped his two-person shop like no other year. In conjunction with the city clerk's office, credit card processing has been implemented along with the installation of permitting software. Now, an efficient generation and tracking of building permits is firmly in place! Since the first of the year, 232 building permits issued, garnering the following fees: Water Hook-Up Fees \$555,744; Sewer Hook-Up Fees \$578,305; Building Permit Fees \$319,505.77.

### **Fire**

In 2020, Fire Chief Curt Christensen's department developed a "look forward" for 2021 goals. The department selected four: (1) establish a PTSD/PTSI program; (2) establish a training facility; (3) deploy on Wildland Deployments; (4) establish a School Safety Program. While achieving most of the goals, the department also accomplished much more.

EFD participated in a joint Critical Inside Stress Management group since mental health comprises a growing problem for first responders. The last two years have made it evident that being a part of a team that helps one another must be our future and met the department's first goal.

The EFD training facility is now established, meeting the second goal. Chief Christensen explains, "We can't wait to 'fire it up!'" Public Works generously donated help with achieving the goal. Currently, the metal building operates as a "live fire" simulator in the configuration of a two-room building, but EFD plans to add rooms in future years. Grant dollars with no cost to the city funded this project.

In conjunction with the Emmett Police Department and the Gem County School District, EFD initiated a standardized School Safety Program based upon the Idaho Standard Command

Response for Schools. While EFD comprises but one piece of this plan, it hopes it will only be used for training purposes and not for real.

Continuing public safety, EFD possesses an aggressive smoke detector program. For those homes missing smoke detectors, the department provides them. This year-to-date, the department has assisted with 51 replacements or installations of smoke detectors. Also, EFD actively taught fire safety to hundreds of school children either at the department or at their schools.

### **Library**

After successfully over-coming last year's challenges, Alyce Kelley and her crew at the Emmett Public Library comprised one of the first libraries in the state to fully open in 2020. A quick review of 2021 statistics showcases its remarkable achievements:

- Increased library card holders by 19.6%;
- Increased overall circulation of library materials by 34.3%;
- Increased services to families by 189% this year over 2020 (expected) but even at that, increased services by 18% over 2019, which also comprised a record year!

The library's summer reading program offered resources to 368 students reading over 317,416 minutes in the 7-week program. This helped students overcome the summer slide so often experienced. The library also helped to build STEM skills with 1,400 STEM "Take & Make" distributed to library families.

This year, thanks to volunteer Lynn Reinig, the library published a children's book: *Hyperbole Stories (Tall Tales)* by Summer Readers 2021.

The library always pursues additional funding (donations, grants, and in-kind contributions). This year, it generated a high of \$36,519.00. The library also absorbed its growth with the same number of staff hours utilized for years. But it could not do so without the 3,000-plus volunteer hours (Friends of the Library). Indeed, your Emmett Public Library is a great place to meet, gather and learn.

### **Public Works**

Having just escaped the trials and tribulations of completing the eight-year project on South Johns, and doing a yeoman's job of wrangling federal, state and private contracting entities, from general to subs to "quality-control-consultants", Clint Seamons and crew had an active 2021.

Public Works completed the \$1,472,050.00 Twelfth Street Booster Station Project for a mere \$372,050.00—predominantly in engineering costs. The city saved a load of money by self-

performing the project. The department also upgraded the water and sewer infrastructure on Johns Avenue prior to its makeover. Originally estimated to cost \$1,566,000.00, the city's total cost for the upgrades came to only \$402,000.00.

Accordingly, the department saved rate payers \$1,164,000.00. This is why, when appointed mayor in 2015, I insisted Public Works be builders, not maintainers. When the department becomes the general contractor, rather than outsourcing, we save significant money. In fact, Public Works has two less staff members now than when I assumed leadership in 2015—proving we can do more with less, provided we try. Accordingly, water/sewer usage rates have not been increased since 2014.

Here are some other quick wins for Public Works in 2021:

- The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality and Environmental Protection Agency, found the City of Emmett has no deficiencies in the water system.
- The city has new radio meters making meter reading and data collection more efficient.
- The South Johns Avenue Rehabilitation Project from design, to right-of-way acquisition, to construction, cost Emmett taxpayers only \$325,000.00.
- The department installed a Wastewater Treatment Plant Influent Screen in April of 2021 with an engineer estimate of \$625,000.00. Once completed, the project cost only \$178,500.00, saving \$446,500.00 of rate payer money.
- The department extended sewer services on Johns Ave from north side of HWY 16 to south of HWY 16 by a private developer. The city received \$50,000.00 in grant monies from Idaho Department of Commerce to cover the cost of boring under Hwy 16 to extend city fiber at the same time the developer extended the sewer.
- Chip sealed 4th Street and S Substation Rd within city limits in collaboration with Gem County Road and Bridge who was chip sealing county portions of 4th St. and South Substation.

### **City Clerk**

Finally, we look at the office that glues all of this together.

- In March, the Clerk's office re-arranged job assignments allowing transitioning of the utility clerk to the Building Department to assist the administrator with building permit applications and processing.

- City Clerk uploaded many fillable forms to the website. One used daily serves new utility customers. The customer now submits online instead of making a trip to the City Hall. We will continue the process of updating forms until most forms are fillable for customer convenience.

This mayor is thankful for a great team whose sole focus is to get better every day in the service it provides.