

MEMO FROM EMMETT MAYOR GORDON W. PETRIE

SUBJECT: WHEN COLLUSION IS A GOOD THING

I confess: I recently colluded on behalf of the city. Now, before someone calls the Attorney General's office or the FBI, let me explain. I colluded in a good way. If one objectively looks from whence the words "collusion" or "collude" came, one discovers a Latin root literally meaning "to play together"—*colludere*, i.e., from *com* meaning "with", which becomes *col* in the word's formation, plus *ludere*, meaning "to play." How many times does one hear "Why can't they just learn to play together," when addressing governmental entities fighting amongst themselves, say, for example, the House vs. the Senate vs. the President? If they could simply learn to play together, (*colludere*) things would be better.

So how did collusion get such a bad name? It seems that dirty rotten scoundrel Geoffrey Chaucer is to blame. For baby boomers forced to read *Canterbury Tales* in the Middle English, it seems fitting to blame the precursor of the Bard as the perpetrator of painting an otherwise benign and suitable word with such outrageous fortune and ominous colors. Chaucer did so by simply referring to a "vile collusion" in his poem, *Lack of Steadfastness*. Although Chaucer may have correctly nailed the human condition generally—taking great pleasure in creating dissension and making life miserable for others (all before Facebook!)—he did so by sentencing forever an otherwise perfectly useful word to the dung heap of nefarious activity.

Emmett recently received a \$220,000 fully funded grant from the state for our "12th Street Pathway", our children pedestrian safety program. This project is part of the Safe Routes to School initiative Public Works and I developed four years ago. For nay-sayers claiming publicly or privately that not all the funds will be used on that project, be assured: the city must account for

every dollar spent. Moreover, I will never declare an emergency to shift those funds...not that I ever could. Landing this grant was a great Team Emmett effort!

Doricela Millan-Sotelo, aka, Dori, the heart and soul of the Public Works Department, facilitated the coordination and collection of all requested information from our intrepid engineer, Justin Walker, of Keller Associates. She collected strong letters of support from me, the Gem County Commissioners, Chief of Police Steve Kunka, School District Superintendent Wayne Rush, Carberry Elementary Principal Greg Alexander, and Shauna Davis, the School District's Transportation Coordinator.

Dori and Mary Lake, another Public Works employee, obtained accurate traffic and pedestrian counts near Carberry Elementary. After Dori submitted all of this information to Justin Walker, he put together a 27-page packet that garnered the third-highest rated program in the state. While sixty-five Idaho cities applied for money, the state fully funded only seven (another four receiving partial funding). Hence, making the third highest score shows the importance of what we are trying to accomplish to improve the safety of our young people getting to school.

If we reduce traffic congestion on 4th and 12th Streets resulting from our Elementary and Middle School students walking or biking to school (parents cease driving them), we accomplish several goals. First, we improve their health (and academic performance) because we make them active before they hit the school grounds. Second, we improve the quality of our air: less automobile traffic. Finally, we can be thankful we did the right thing for our youth: all due to collusion!