

# City of Colstrip

September 2008

## Mayor's Message



- Mayor John Williams
- B.J. Ellison
- Susan Hert
- Rick Harbin
- Dan Becker

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

Court is in Session:  
Tuesdays and Thursdays  
10:00 a.m.

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When our City Hall Task Force developed their vision what parameters the Colstrip City Hall should encompass; they envisioned a city hall facility that would meet the community's multiple needs and one that would demonstrate Colstrip's community pride by its attractive appearance. It should be accessible for all Colstrip residents and it should be a representation of the distinctive community characteristics and the economy of our city.

I believe this vision is well on its way to being met with the completion of our Colstrip City Hall. The contract completion date is October 19, 2008.

It is a city hall that every resident in Colstrip can take pride in, the same pride we all share in all our public facilities in our community. The facility will be very accessible to our community. The City Council chambers and city courtroom is being constructed as a multiuse facility available to the community as a public meeting area that can also be used for receptions or reunions. This is on the south half of the facility that opens into a court yard that will blend into the old Colstrip fountain, which is owned by the park district. The city and the park district plan on renovating the fountain to once again make it a distinctive and beautiful part of our city.

**The Grand Opening for our city hall and the ten year anniversary celebration for the City of Colstrip is scheduled for November 7th beginning at 1:00 p.m. The public is cordially invited to attend this very special event!**

At the writing of this newsletter we have just about completed our budgeting process for the year 2008-2009. It has been particularly challenging this year with the city hall expenditure. The City Council made the decision that we should fund city hall from available cash and revenue rather than borrow a portion of the cost. Through the efforts of our department heads and delaying some capital expenditures until next year we will be able to accomplish this. The preliminary budget has been approved and by the time this newsletter is printed we will have finalized the budget. Although it was necessary to curtail many of our capital projects this year, we were able to fund those projects that had a very high priority. Our fire department replaced the twenty plus year old extrication device. The police department replaced its vehicle video equipment. The public works is installing a UV Disinfection System at the sewer plant, in addition to some small street maintenance that includes work at the overpass to remove the settling bump that has plagued us for years.

The preliminary budget in the general fund for total resources required, including reserves, is set at \$4,638,800. Property taxes make up \$1,957,975.11. The remainder of \$2,680,824.89 is from non-tax revenue.

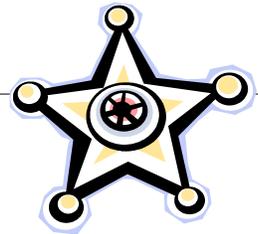
An interesting point as we prepare for our ten year anniversary, our first year as a city our property tax assessment was \$2,003,854 versus the \$2,057,799.78 preliminary budget for this year. The preliminary budget may change depending on reserve that is established by the City Council.

We are all very fortunate including the large corporations, on the low levies that are set to operate all the local government units and districts in Colstrip. We all have the advantage of the use and quality services at a very low cost.



# Police Department

Larry Reinlasoder, Police Chief



I want to use this edition of the City newsletter to inform you of a citizen driven Crime Prevention initiative we are involved in here in Colstrip. The Colstrip Police Department and the Montana Board of Crime Control, through the Montana Crime Prevention Council (MCPC), are working together in a partnership to develop a community crime prevention response to identified problems within our community. Colstrip is the first pilot site in Montana to be chosen to work with the Board of Crime Control in this initiative. Colstrip will be the model for what we hope is a state-wide crime prevention response. We have met twice as a planning group with the MCPC and during the first meeting nineteen (19) community members, including police officers, clergy, school staff, social workers, business people and concerned citizens came together as a group. In June the group identified about twenty issues of concern in our community ranging from substance abuse to child abuse to vandalism to domestic violence. We met again on August 27<sup>th</sup> and narrowed our list of issues to three main problem areas that we thought needed to be addressed first. The issues were domestic violence, underage drinking/substance abuse and a general lack of respect shown to others in our community, including their individual rights and their property. We developed an action plan including goals and tasks to help us address those problem areas. It is a desire of the MCPC that Colstrip report on our progress at a state-wide crime prevention seminar to be held in Helena, Montana on September 9-11, 2008. As I stated before the MBCC and MCPC see Colstrip as the model for the rest of the state. We as the Colstrip Crime Prevention Group will also be working on implementing programs and other responses to the identified problem areas. If you have an interest in being involved with this engaged and committed group of Colstrip citizens please contact the police department and speak with me. I can be reached at 748-2211, or by e-mail at [policechief@cityofcolstrip.com](mailto:policechief@cityofcolstrip.com). We welcome your interest and encourage Colstrip residents to get involved with us in making this a great place to live. I will keep you updated on our progress.

## Animal Control

Colstrip has a leash law and as I see more and more people stretching the boundaries of it perhaps it is time that we revisit the law.

**Definition:** “At Large” means off the premises of the owner, harborer or possessor and not then and there restrained by a leash, cord, chain or otherwise under immediate control.

**Liability:** It is declared to be the policy of the city that no dog be off the premises of its owner, harborer, or possessor at any time, unless leashed or otherwise controlled and that the owner, harborer, or possessor shall be held strictly liable therefore, regardless of the circumstances which may contribute to or result in the violation.

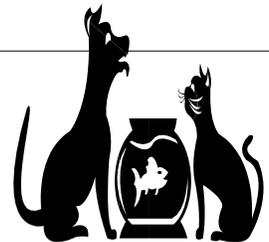
**Violation:** If any dog is found running at large within the city limits the owner, harborer, or possessor shall be guilty of violation of this article. It is no defense to a charge under this section that the owner, harborer or possessor of such animal was unaware the animal was at large or that such an animal was released from the owner’s premises by an overt act, error or omission on the part of any person. “Otherwise under immediate control” would mean that you could control your dog from crossing the street to greet another dog, chase a cat, fight another dog or run after a rabbit.

Walking your dogs off-leash and having them run through all the neighbors yards is not “otherwise under immediate control”. Immediate control would constitute your dog walking CONTINUOUSLY at your side within your reach at all times. This applies to the streets of Colstrip, as well as, trails and walking around the lake.

By using a leash you are a) obeying the law; b) protecting your dog; c) being a good citizen; d) protecting other members—both 2 legged and 4 legged—of the community. “Otherwise under immediate control” does not mean walking and yelling every 10 steps for your dog to return to you.

The leash law is about to become very real for Colstrip canine companions.

Carrying a baggie to scoop the poop (also a Colstrip Ordinance) is another chapter.



## Public Works Department

### John Bleth, Public Works Supervisor



Summer is quickly slipping away and we're heading towards fall. Our new city hall construction is progressing nicely. Completion is expected to be around the first of October, of course this depends on material shipments arriving on time.

The city has two projects starting this month. The first one is the installation of a new UV Disinfection System at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. This project was awarded to two local businesses, CEI and Sagebrush Industries. The construction should be completed in about a month. With this new unit going online, the city will have no gaseous chlorine in the system. A lot of towns and cities are doing this to eliminate the hazard of chlorine for safety and liability concerns.

Our second project is the repainting of the city's Zone II water tank. This project will take about six weeks to complete. All residents affected by Zone II will receive water from the Zone III tank on the west side of Highway 39. During this time residents may see lower pressures than normal. Zone III tank is smaller than Zone II and farther away, thus creating some lower pressures.

This fall you will notice new flashing lights installed on Pinebutte Drive for the school zones. This will clear up the dilemma we had with the other school zone signs.

As of August 18, 2008 the precipitation total for the year is at 14.59 inches. We are over our yearly average by one half inch.

## Schoolhouse History and Art Center

Lu Shomate, Director



Are you feeling the need to be creative? The kids are back in school, things are slowing down and you might find you have a little time on your hands to do something for yourself. Our Pottery Studio is waiting for someone just like you to come in and spin the wheel, play in the mud, and meet some new friends; all the while you can be creative. This summer we offered programs that brought students in to try something new and different in their idea of art. We had one stroke painting, explosion boxes, stain glass, gourd painting, skull painting, and that is just the tip of the iceberg. With gas getting so expensive, why not check out what we have at SHAC, I'm sure you will be pleasantly surprised. Why not start a class this Fall, Community Education will be offering a pottery class soon. These classes are limited, if you are interested you might want to sign up right away. When you are in the Post Office, check out the message boards, we will have signs up with any classes we are hosting. SHAC is a four letter word for fun—there is no such thing as too much fun, so add us to your list!

In October we are going to have a "Community Art Show". What will be unique about this is—you can bring in a piece of art that you have made or you can bring in a piece that you own that you would like to see hung in our gallery. What a neat way to see good art from members within our own community. If you are interested in hanging a piece please contact me at 748-4822. All pieces will need to be ready to hang and if you are interested in selling the piece, make sure it is named and a price is attached. I'm excited to see what this show will bring.

It won't be long and we will be hosting our 29th Annual Holiday Arts, Crafts, and Gift Fair. The dates are November 7th and 8th. If you are interested in getting a booth, contact us, we will send you an application. This year we are including gifts, so if you are interested in selling something that isn't hand made, you can join us this year. It's hard to imagine Thanksgiving and Christmas already, but it will be here sooner than you think.

We want to welcome our new board members Donna Rogers and Betty Grinsell. They will be joining our wonderful board comprised of Evelyn Broadus, Tom Crippen, Les Mahon, Paula Peplow, Tammy Venne, Mark Stevens, Scott Egan, Joe Oberth, Sue Neiman, and Marilyn Watson. This crew is amazing; they are committed to our organization and always manage to find time to serve their community. Many of you serve on boards and volunteer in our community—Good Job—you

*Schoolhouse History and Art Center cont. on page 7*

# Building, Planning, Zoning and Code Enforcement

Jan Morgan

Licenses and permits are required for public safety and well being. Some of the common permits and licenses required within the city limits are listed below.

**Zoning Permits** are required before any building or structure (including fences and signs) may be erected, placed, moved, expanded or structurally altered. These permits are required to ensure setback requirements are met and to protect public safety and property values.

**Building Permits** are required before any building or structure is erected, constructed, moved, expanded or structurally altered within the city limits. All construction must be checked to make sure it complies with the International Building Codes thereby protecting residents from potential structural problems that may arise during construction.

**Excavation Permits** are required for sidewalk and driveway construction or any vehicular access on any public right of way within the city limits. This is to ensure that the design and concrete mixture shall conform to the standard specifications of the public roadways within the city.

**Business Permits** are required for all businesses operating within the city limits. The city permit is for your protection. It is designed to protect you from a fly-by-night operation that will take advantage of your trusting nature. Ask for the city's business permit whenever you contract to have work completed in your home.

A table that follows lists some common improvements property owners complete within the city limits and the type of permit that is most generally needed to complete the work.

**Dog/Cat Licenses** are required. All licenses expire January 31st. There are one and two year licenses available.

## DO I NEED A PERMIT?

Improvement	Zoning	Building	Additional Information
Placing a Propane Tank	x		R-4 Trailer court may be excluded
Walls & Fences	x	Sometimes	If over 4 foot in front variance will be required
Move Trailer onto Lot	x	x	Camp trailers in the R-4 Trailer Courts may be excluded
New Home	x	x	
Additions	x	x	
Porches	x	x	
Garages	x	x	
Sheds under 120 Square Feet	x		
Sheds over 120 Square Feet	x	x	
Patios & Decks	x	Sometimes	Enclosed patios and decks or those 30" above ground may also require a building permit
Portable Garages	x	x	Usually Not Allowed
Remodeling requiring Structural Changes	x	x	
Driveways/ Concrete Work	x		Some work may also require an Excavation Permit
Commercial Construction	x		Commercial Building Permits are issued by the State
Advertising Signs for Businesses	x		A city Business Permit is required for businesses to operate within city limits.

**\*\*When Applicable Electrical and Plumbing permits may also be required.**

## Bicentennial Library

Welcome back to school students! We are looking forward to seeing you in the library picking up copies of our Accelerated Readers. Mrs. Shirley Mead has been diligently working on this project matching books that we have on hand with the tests available in the school district. Each book is marked with a sticker indicating it is an Accelerated Reader and what level it is. We also have the list of tests with the titles we have.



As regarding our adult distance learners the library now has two laptop computers available for in-library use. The purpose of them is for folks who need to take their tests in QUIET may do so in the back of the library away from the busier computer, children's, and circulation areas. You must be 18 or over, have a library card and a valid ID. One of the laptops was provided by Friends of the Library.

For those of you mulling over what you want to be for Halloween this year, the Friends are putting the rental costumes up for rent and/or sale. What that means for costume shoppers is that there is a plethora of great possibilities right here in Colstrip to rent once or buy and let the kids play in them all year long. Have a look starting October 1st.

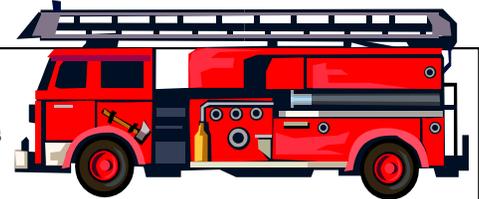
Also, after Halloween, how about donating your costumes for the Friends to rent or sell next year. You don't have to store them and a worthwhile organization benefits.

Speaking of Halloween, the wee ones are invited once again to participate in the library Halloween party held Tuesday, October 28th at 2:00 p.m.

## Volunteer Fire Department

**Ryan Reid, Fire Chief**

Fire prevention is upon us this time of year. It is when we send firemen to the schools to talk about ways to prevent fires. Most people have heard of the stop, drop, and roll. It is a success of the fire prevention program that teaches people especially children what to do in the event their clothes start on fire. This year the emphasis is on preventing home fires. The best fires are those that don't happen because of prevention.



Your home should be a safe haven. But do you regularly check for home fire hazards? If not, there is the potential for danger. Fire departments responded to nearly 400,000 home fires in 2006. That's why the theme of Fire Prevention Week 2008 is "**It's Fire Prevention Week: Prevent Home Fires!**"

From October 5-11, 2008, fire safety advocates will spread the word to their communities that, with a little extra caution, preventing the leading causes of home fires—cooking, heating, electrical, and smoking materials—is within their power. Some of the tips that will be sent home with the children are the following.

- Never leave a burning candle unattended. Blow out candles when you leave a room.
- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- Test smoke alarms at least once a month using the test button.
- Replace smoke alarms every 10 years.

Fire prevention is everybody's job. Even a small fire can cause a huge amount of damage between smoke and water damage.

One more thing, take time to thank all those involved in Fire Prevention for trying to keep our homes safe.

I hope we don't see you at your house.

# Colstrip Community Care Task Force

## Care Project Continues to Move Forward Colstrip Elderly



As most of you know, over the last 15 months, a determined group called the Colstrip Community Care Task Force (CCCTF) has been meeting to evaluate and determine the possibility of an elderly care facility in Colstrip. So why Colstrip and why now? “Looks like elderly care facilities could be a growth industry in Eastern Montana,” noted Jim Atchison of SEMDC. “Rosebud County alone is projected to see over a 170% increase in the 65+ age group in the next 20 years. The need is coming, how do we respond and prepare for it?” The task force has been busy looking at different ways to structure the project and of course, how to build and operate it in **Colstrip, Tomorrow’s Town ..... Today.**

The following is a recap of the major events to date:

\* **2006 / 2007 - CEDS Plan Identifies Housings Needs in Region:** To measure public interest and opinions on general economic development issues, SEMDC conducts seven (7) annual “Town Meetings” throughout the four county region. After these sessions, SEMDC creates an annual report called the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). In the 2006 and again in the 2007 sessions, major housing challenges were noted at all of the “Town Meetings.”

\* **Feb. 2007 - SEMDC Hosts “Housing Summit”:** Because of the housing need results identified at the CEDS “Town Meetings,” SEMDC hosted a “Housing Summit” in Colstrip. This session identified five (5) housing needs/opportunities in Colstrip. They were: Single Family Housing, Rentals, RV Park, Independent Senior Housing and an Assisted Living Facility. In order not to compete with private sector opportunities, future efforts would be focused on the two elderly care housing needs. Additional senior housing could free up much needed homes and assist in the recruitment of replacement labor for the large number of soon-to-be retirees.

\* **March 2007 – Colstrip Mayor Invites Public Participation and Creates the CCCTF:** Colstrip Mayor John Williams invited a group of community members to explore opportunities to develop an elderly care facility. A task force (Colstrip Community Care Task Force – CCCTF) was formed and is currently evaluating options to possibly build and operate an elderly care living facility.

\* **Mid - 2007 – Colstrip Survey Conducted:** The CCCTF needed to determine actual community need and support. A survey was created and conducted in May - June 2007 by the Small Business Development Center at SEMDC. All Colstrip Post Office box holders were sent the survey. After a tremendous return rate, results showed that 90% thought there was “some or high demand” for an elderly care facility. Over 73% stated that they would financially support such a facility if it were built.

\* **Fall 2007 - General Evaluation and Research Occurs:**

Next, the actual need had to be determined by an independent source. For this information, it was suggested that a Feasibility Study be conducted.

\* **Early 2008 - Grant to SEMDC from MT BSEDTE:** SEMDC wrote and was awarded a Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund grant through the State of Montana for \$20,000 to fund the Feasibility Study. The State funded 70% of the cost of the Study with the City of Colstrip and Rosebud County covering the remaining 30% as match funds.

\* **Spring 2008 - Feasibility Study is conducted and completed:** SEMDC searched and located numerous qualified consultants who were interested in completing the Study. An experienced consultant named Wilson and Company was selected by SEMDC to complete the Feasibility Study. As planned, the Study was completed on April 22, 2008 with a final presentation given by the consultant Keith Wilson. The Study helped the CCCTF make quality decisions on what course of action to take. The public can review the Study during normal business hours at the Colstrip SEMDC Office. The Study identified a Master Plan concept (growth phases over numerous years) and funding options to minimize the impact. One of these funding options was the MT Coal Board as the Colstrip City Council could sponsor the grant. A Coal Board grant application was earmarked for the estimated Architect and Engineering fees of \$120,000. SEMDC agreed to write the Application along with the administration of a successful grant award.

\* **April / May 2008 - SEMDC Writes and Submits Coal Board Grant:** The CCCTF and SEMDC approached the City of Colstrip to sponsor the Coal Board Grant Application for the Preliminary Architectural Report (P.A.R.). SEMDC

*Colstrip Community Care Task Force cont. on page 7*

## Schoolhouse History and Art Center cont.

really make a difference, keep up the good work! Also, it's time to say goodbye to Terry Cashell, our bookkeeper. Terry did her magic at SHAC in our accounting area. Terry made a huge impact at SHAC, we will miss her, but she has decided to spend more time with her family—good luck Terry!! Let me introduce you to our new bookkeeper, Shannon Rust. Shannon has had experience with non-profits and also brings a huge amount of experience in the accounting arena, plus she is a huge crafter. I'm sure you will enjoy meeting Shannon and hopefully you will see her offering some classes soon.

Remember our "Buy a Brick" program. This is a cool program where you buy a brick and have it inscribed with the message you want for someone special. This is a gift that keeps on giving and will always have a home on our patio. We get lots of happy recipients in to see their name and inscription. When you don't know what to get for a wedding, graduation, or perhaps even a funeral, you can immortalize your friends and family in Colstrip uniquely at SHAC. Also, we have Colstrip postcards in our gift shop. I don't believe there are Colstrip postcards anywhere else. Stop in, check us out, I hope you leave with a smile on your face.

## Colstrip Community Care Task Force cont.

agrees to write and submit the grant application including the administration details for the City. The City Council approves request.

**\*June 2008 - MT Coal Board Awards \$120,000 for Colstrip Elderly Care Project:** The CCCTF makes a spirited and successful presentation to the Montana Coal Board in Billings. Numerous Colstrip residents participate in the presentation. The tremendous support shown by the community makes an impact as the Coal Board awards \$120,000 to fund the P.A.R. for the Colstrip elderly care facility.

**\*July/August 2008 - Preliminary Architectural Report (P.A.R.) Effort Begins:** The CCCTF, the City of Colstrip (Coal Board Grant Applicant) and SEMDC join forces to start and complete the following tasks:

- Scope of Work created for the Request for Qualifications (RFQ)
- RFQ advertising conducted to hire company
- Scoring criteria and committee created
- Two RFQ's received by City
- Committee scores the applicants
- CCCTF makes hiring recommendation to City
- City accepts the recommendation to hire TSP, Inc.
- City hires TSP, Inc. to prepare/complete the P.A.R.

**\*August 2008 - Possible Locations/Site Evaluations Become Challenge:** Several possible sites to locate the future Colstrip "Continuing Care Retirement Community" have recently become unavailable. The Feasibility Study determined that the project would need between 6-8 acres to house the three phase project. Each possible site has its own list of Pros and Cons. The CCCTF continues to evaluate sites and will work with property owners if sites become available for this community project. Currently, the Isabel Bills Community Learning Center has become the leading location for a possible site to house the Senior Center and the phased "Continuing Care Retirement Community." The CCCTF appreciates the willingness of the Colstrip School District to listen to and explore this potentially mutually beneficial community project.

The CCCTF is partnering with numerous groups like the City of Colstrip, Rosebud County, SEMDC, Colstrip Senior Citizen Club and the State of MT to help leverage time, effort and money. Other potential partners include First Interstate Bank of Colstrip, Colstrip Medical Clinic and Foundation, School District, Western Energy, PPL MT, Action for Eastern MT and the USDA. CCCTF members include Robert Shy Jr., Robin Shahan, Don Tapp, Tom Crippen, John Williams, BJ Ellison, Jim Atchison, John Poole, Kelly Vejtasa, Les Mahon, Rick Harbin, Dan Watson and Lloyd Gange.

The CCCTF meets at noon every Tuesday at Colstrip City Hall. The public is always welcome to attend and additional information is available by contacting SEMDC at 748-2990.

City of Colstrip  
PO Box 1902  
Colstrip, MT 59323

Website: [www.cityofcolstrip.com](http://www.cityofcolstrip.com)

Phone: 406-748-2300  
Fax: 406-748-2303  
Email: [info@cityofcolstrip.com](mailto:info@cityofcolstrip.com)

PRSRT STD  
PERMIT NO. 9  
COLSTRIP, MT

ECRWS  
Box Holder  
Colstrip, MT 59323

**Celebrating 9 years**