

# City of Colstrip

February 2010

## Mayor's Message



- Mayor John Williams
- Rick Harbin
- Dan Becker
- Evan Stewart
- Tom Jankowski

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.

### Inside this issue:

<i>Police Department</i>	2
<i>Public Works</i>	3
<i>Code Enforcement</i>	3
<i>SHAC</i>	4
<i>Bicentennial Library</i>	5
<i>Volunteer Fire Dept.</i>	5
<i>Tree Board</i>	6



I'm sure everyone is as tired of winter as I am unfortunately we still have a couple more months to go.

This year the City started the use of a different de-icing agent that we mix with our sand to make our streets safer to drive on in winter slippery conditions, it's called "ice slicer". This is a naturally occurring product that's mined in Utah. We use a 75/25 mixture with sand. The material serves a two fold purpose, first as a de-icing agent and then as a dust control agent as our streets thaw and dry out. This agent also adheres to the paving as a thawing agent as more snowfall occurs. Thus far we have been very satisfied with this product.

As we approach a new year, your City is faced with several challenges that may affect the cost of operating our water utility which in turn affects our water rate change. The first issue has been ongoing since the City took over the water utility from Colstrip Community Services a subsidiary of Montana Power Company. This involves the water that is discharged back into Castle Rock Lake after it runs through our filtering system as a backwash cleans our water filters.

The process we use is the same as was initiated when the water plant began its operation in 1981. The issue is our inability to consistently meet the turbidity limits that are required in our discharge permit with the state within the defined limitations of the state's mixing zone parameters. The City is currently working with DEQ with the assistance of our engineer to re-establish an appropriately sized mixing zone and to run tests in that zone with the goal of ultimately providing logical evidence that turbidity within the mixing zone meets discharge limits.

If the City is unable to meet those limits then we have two options available to us. One would be to construct a larger backwash pond near our water plant, the other option would be to construct a pipeline and discharge the backwash water to our sewer lagoons. Both options require significant expenditures that would need to be recovered through our rates.

The other issue that we are working through is the renewal of our Raw Water Transportation Agreement with PPL Montana and the other power plant owners. The City has a two cubic feet per second water right for the Yellowstone River water. This water is pumped here through the PPL Montana pipeline and we are charged for the transportation of this water by PPL. This charge makes up a large part of the rate our residents are charged for water. Any impact will also be felt by our large water users which are the school district and our park district. We are currently in negotiations with PPL Montana for the renewal of this agreement and at a reasonable rate.

We, along with the other taxing authorities in our City, continue to be affected with protested taxes. Although we are not as impacted as the school district this remains an issue. Our largest taxpayer, Puget Sound, has begun protesting their taxes and currently this protest involves approximately \$183,000.

On the bright side of things, our Colstrip Volunteer Fire Department was recently awarded a \$23,244 grant from the Coal Board for the purchase of a compressed air foam system. This unit



*Mayor's Message continued on page 6*

# Police Department

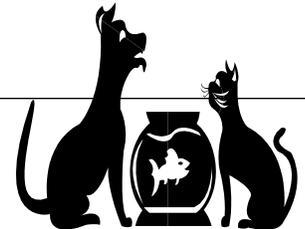
Larry Reinlasoder, Police Chief



One of the goals of the Colstrip Police Department has been the encouragement of citizen involvement to keep our community safe. The police and citizens restarted the Colstrip Crime Stoppers program in 2005. Crime Stoppers has its own phone number (748-3050) and a separate phone, which means calls are not recorded and phone numbers are not traced. There is no caller ID. When we say that “All Callers Will Remain Anonymous” that is exactly what we mean. People with information about a crime are urged to call Crime Stoppers, if they are not comfortable in meeting in person with the police. Of course it is always better if people get involved as witnesses and give the information to the police, but we can investigate incidents using anonymous tips. Crime Stoppers can be used to report drug activity, illegal alcohol parties, information on thefts and burglaries. Any crime information can be taken over the Crime Stoppers number. You should be prepared to give specific and detailed information. The more information you can give means that it is easier for the police to act without actually being the witness to the incident themselves. If you call Crime Stoppers be prepared to give detailed information to the call taker, who will give you a code number for future reference. You can call back and give more information or follow up on what action was taken on your tip using the number you are given. You never have to give your name. If the case you are calling about is successfully cleared by police you will be eligible for a cash reward of up to \$1000.. Remember Crime Stoppers can be reached at 748-3050. A caller can use Crime Stoppers to report suspected drug houses or drug dealers, to report information on underage drinking parties, or any other criminal conduct. All we ask for is detailed information so that we may act on the call.

We need more volunteers to step forward and be willing to be involved with the police to protect our children and the community as a whole. I would ask our community to consider that neighborhood watch programs and the community oriented policing philosophy are what today’s Homeland Security Program is built around. Community policing is actually the fore-runner of Homeland Security. Colstrip has the distinction of being vitally important to the entire Northwestern United States as far as electricity production is concerned. We do not question the need to secure that resource. At the same time we should realize that being involved in neighborhood watch programs not only assists in the security of the power plants, it also ensures the safety of our neighborhoods. We need to practice homeland security as a way to secure our property, and our neighbors’ property, so that we continue to enjoy the great quality of life that we have here in Colstrip. However, Neighborhood Watch, McGruff Safe Homes, and Crime Stoppers reporting are all dependent on citizens willing to be involved. Please call 748-2211 for more information or visit the CPD on the web at [www.colstrip.police.com](http://www.colstrip.police.com).

## Animal Control



Once again it is time to license our dogs and cats with the City of Colstrip. The fees are nominal and are lower for animals that have been spayed or neutered. Licensing your animal is less than half the price of a citation if your animal is not registered.

Registration is quick, easy, and painless. All you need is your checkbook or cash and PROOF that your animal has been vaccinated for Rabies and if appropriate, proof of spay and neuter for each animal. No animal without proof of rabies vaccination will be allowed to register. NO EXCEPTIONS.

No animal under the age of 16 weeks can be vaccinated for rabies. ONLY a State Board certified vet can administer a rabies vaccination. No wolves or wolf hybrids can be legally registered.

All animals living in the city limits of Colstrip must be registered. **Colstrip City Code 5-4A-2 Possessor and Harborer Defined:** Any person who shall permit a dog or cat to remain upon or about his/her premises for the time of fifteen (15) days shall be deemed a possessor or harbinger of said animal and for all purposes herein shall be treated as the owner of said animal. Furthermore, **Colstrip City Code 5-4A-3 License and Vaccination Required:** Nothing herein contained shall excuse the owner, harbinger or possessor of any dog or cat within the corporate limits of the city from having vaccinated and licensed such animal, regardless of where or how they are kept or maintained within the city limits.

**License and Registration Fees:** One year license spayed or neutered dog/cat \$5 per year. A two year license for a spayed or neutered dog/cat is \$10 for two years. A one year non-spayed or non-neutered dog/cat license is \$10 per year. A two year license for a non-spayed or non-neutered dog/cat is \$20 for two years. A duplicate tag to replace a lost tag is \$2 for either a dog or a cat. A \$5 late fee is assessed for each tag purchased after March 1st. New residents have thirty (30) days to purchase dog/cat licenses before late fees are assessed. Dog/cat licenses are available at Colstrip City Hall Monday thru Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

## Public Works Department

John Bleth, Public Works Supervisor



This fall and winter has been colder and snowier than the past few winters. We have already had several water breaks this winter. We have put down just over 100 tons of sand. The good news is we are going into the final months of winter and very much looking forward to spring.

Speaking of spring, our Phase II of the Sweetgrass Project will go out to bid in April. Construction should begin the first part of July. The streets involved this year are Appaloosa Drive, Sweetgrass Drive, and Prairieview Drive. The last two streets only go up to the top of the hill crests. This project does not include any of the scoria streets. After this project is awarded I will send residents in this area a letter and a public information meeting will be held at City Hall. This meeting will have our engineering firm, the contractor, and the Public Works Department. At that time you can ask questions or voice any concern you may have.

We still have a turbidity issue with backwash water returning to Castle Rock Lake. The Department of Environmental Quality, our engineering firm, and the City are now finalizing one of two options if needed. These options both cost a substantial amount of money. We are still trying to use the original mixing zone at the lake, a 100 foot radius of the discharge. This item was taken out of our newer permit renewal in 2005. The parameters in the permit were lowered to make it not feasible to meet the requirements. In my spring newsletter I should be able to update all of you more accurately.

## Building, Planning, Zoning and Code Enforcement

Jan Morgan



Have you ever noticed how hard it is to find a location in town by its street address? Many locations do not have the numbers posted so they are readily visible. Others are located on a corner lot with the house facing the wrong way. Some numbers are out of sequence, others are located on the wrong side of the street, and some have no number assigned for the location at all. I noticed because I deal with street addresses but most people don't pay any attention to things like that until there is an emergency or they are trying to give directions to a location.

In January a request was brought to council regarding a numbering system for homes and businesses within the City of Colstrip. They proposed that no system was in place for the numbering of new homes and that numbers were not always posted on residences and businesses within the community.

The council determined that for the purpose of neighborhood improvement, public safety, emergency responses and the delivery of goods and services it would be beneficial for the citizens of the City of Colstrip to establish a uniform system for the numbering of houses and businesses in the community. So in February a new ordinance was passed.

The ordinance simply establishes that the Public Works Department will be in charge of assigning numbers and street addresses within the City of Colstrip. Home owners will be asked to post their address in numbers of at least three inches in height and of a contrasting color so that the number is clearly visible from the street.

It goes on to state that an owner may be asked to change an address to one selected by the Public Works Department in such cases where the existing number is out of sequence, indicates that the structure should be found on the other side of the street, or identifies a house on a corner lot as being on one street when it actually faces the other street.

To make the transition easier for residents, the council also determined that generic numbers would be available at City Hall to all residents for the first sixty days after the ordinance was adopted.

What does this mean to you or me? For most of us there will be no change. We already have a number of at least three inches in a contrasting color posted by our door or clearly visible from the street. For some of us it may mean we will need to put the numbers of our address up so that it can be seen. For a few it may mean we have a new address that truly reflects our existing location and we will need to change the number we currently have posted.

Whatever the case may be, it is my hope that you recognize the purpose for the change. Emergency response vehicles need these numbers to get to an area quickly. A housing numbering system that is uniform makes sense and is known by all involved is paramount.

# Schoolhouse History and Art

**Lu Shomate, Director**



A new decade, it's kind of like moving into a new home. There appears to be new fresh possibilities, I'm going to love 2010.

At the Schoolhouse we have diligently worked the last four years to do some updating in the building. Our fundraising finally reached the goal we needed to accomplish this enormous possibility. Without our faithful members, the City of Colstrip, and the many donations that have filtered in these last few years this wouldn't have come to fruition, without all of you we wouldn't be able to share our news. This past year we were able to purchase new chairs for the main gallery, new folding chairs on a roller, and we had our wood floors resurfaced. This historical building appreciated the hand me downs from the bank and Montana Power, but now we own brand new chairs that will no longer scratch our floors. The gallery looks absolutely stunning, I'm sure you will appreciate the uniformity this has brought to the building. We shouldn't have to replace the chairs, and if we keep up with the floor they tell us we won't have to resurface them again. This was a rewarding project that included many volunteer hours to complete. Thank you everyone that lent their time and sore backs to the Schoolhouse.

We have come a long way these past four years. We are offering classes on Wednesday evenings through the help of Colstrip Community Education and Colstrip Schools. Our state of the art pottery room has brought many new students to the facility. Our fused jewelry classes have been a hit and the opportunity for anyone to try their hand at glass artistry. Our gift shop continues to bring in new artists to display their talent, and our Gallery shows are booked through July 2011. We had close to 4000 signatures in our guest book for 2009, we hope you were one of them. If you haven't had an opportunity to view this wonderful historic building put us on your list for something new to do in 2010. And to our faithful volunteers and donors, without you we wouldn't be able to operate and bring culture to our area.

We have collaborated with Alberta Bair for the opportunity of taking Colstrip to the theatre. On Friday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, Cirque Works – Birdhouse Factory is playing. If you are interested in busing to Billings to see this show please contact us at 748-4822. We need 20 paid seats by March 1<sup>st</sup> to make this happen. Ticket prices for members are \$39.00, non-members are \$49.00. Crystal Gale will be playing April 3<sup>rd</sup>, and the comedy act of Second City Touring will be May 11<sup>th</sup>. Why not take in these shows and let someone else do the driving. Colstrip Schools have partnered with us to make this a reality. We look forward to more additions such as these in the future.

Membership to the Schoolhouse is very reasonable. Family memberships are \$35.00; Single memberships are \$25.00 just to name a few. Stop in and see what membership affords you. Don't forget about our "Buy a Brick" program. Have a brick in our patio to honor someone special.

In Our Gallery: February we have the annual Gone to Pieces Quilt Show. March – Student Art Month, local school children from around our surrounding area will have beautiful works of art for you to review. This is like looking into the future. April and May will host American History Prints brought to us through the Montana Historical Society and MAGDA. June will be the Traveling Art Collection with at least three Colstrip artists as part of this tour. July and August will display China Marks, art in cloth, a show brought to us through the Montana Art Gallery Directors Association (MAGDA). September we will be hosting Ben Steele. Ben is a survivor of the Bataan Death March, Ben will be showing some of his art depicting life during his experience as a POW. October and November will be Visual Poetry another MAGDA show, and December we reserve for the Colstrip Medical Center annual Wreath Auction. In December we will also have a Santa's mail box for all the little children at SHAC. They can drop their letters in the mail box, and each letter will be answered by our own little elves. We look forward to visiting with you when you stop by, our Gallery enjoys your company.

Our gift shop is becoming very popular in our community. If you haven't had an opportunity to visit, stop in to see what we are all about. We regularly go to market, so we have the latest and greatest at prices you can afford. If you are a local artist and would like to have a place to sell your artwork, stop in and talk to our Gift Shop Committee, we would love to share our shop with you.

As always, the Board and Staff at SHAC thank you for your patronage, your contribution through volunteering, and your financial support through membership and donation. Because of you and your participation, we can offer wonderful educational programs, speakers, and Gallery Shows to our communities.

## Bicentennial Library



Ten years into the 21<sup>st</sup> century seems hard to believe, how fast a decade went by. Bicentennial has set up a display called "The Best of a Decade". Jill Hanson and I put together this display based on past reviews over the last ten years. This display will be up through the end of February and will change as books are checked out so please stop by and see what was great from 2000-2009.

The sixth annual Talent Show was a huge success. We very much enjoyed the talented members of the community and the friends of the library thanks you for your generous donation of time and money. The talent show was held February 2<sup>nd</sup>, and as in previous years did very well.

In our display case right now and through the month of February we will have another unique fossil display put together by Tim Dove. Tim really enjoys fossil hunting and putting together these displays for our community. The display case is open so far for the month of March so if you have an idea of something that you would like to display in the library display case please come down to the library and talk to me about it. I will be happy to set you up with no less than a months worth of time.

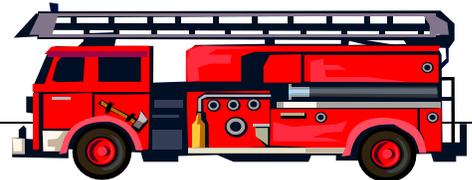
As many of our patrons know we are now members of the partnership program. This program has been used in Colstrip since September. Have you checked out our website lately at <http://bicentennial.library.googlepages.com>. Click on the search catalog button and see what partners has to offer you. By participating in this program you can place holds on any item of any of the participating libraries. So please log onto our web page and place those holds, place many holds, and then enjoy the new and classic material that you now have access too.

I know this may be beating an old dead horse but I think it is always good to review the library's hours of operation and contact information at the beginning of the year so here we go: Monday, 12 pm-5pm; Tuesday, 10 am-5 pm and 7-9 pm; Wednesday, 10 am-5 pm and 7-9 pm; Thursday, 10 am-5 pm and 7-9 pm; Friday, 12 pm-5 pm' and Saturday, 10 am -1 pm. Library's phone number: 748-3040 Fax number: 784-2133 Email address: [colstriplibarymk@gmail.com](mailto:colstriplibarymk@gmail.com)

Thank you for your continuing patronage and support. The staff at Bicentennial Library looks forward to serving you at the checkout counter.

## Volunteer Fire Department

**Fire Chief Ryan Reid**



The best fire is one that doesn't happen. Most fires are preventable. The thing about fires is that the indirect costs of a fire can be eight to ten times higher than the damage caused by the fire. Indirect costs are things like temporary lodging, lost business or work time, medical expenses, psychological damage, and clean up of keepsakes. Losses from fire in the United States cost more than floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, and other natural disasters combined. This leads us to the subject of this column.....Fire Prevention.

Fire prevention is not just for kids. We have a Fire Prevention Program, lead by Chris Scheese, which does a great job of teaching kids about fire prevention, but we need to pass on information to parents and adults. The leading causes of house fires are 1-cooking, 2-heating, 3-intentional, 4- candles, and 5-smoking material. It is interesting to me that kids playing with fire is no longer in the top five causes.

We would encourage you to get a fire extinguisher and know how to use it. You can get them for under twenty dollars and it is the cheapest insurance you can get. Be sure to get one that would work for grease fires and you have a great start on stopping cooking fires.

Heating is always a problem this time of year. Please clean your stoves and pipes. We get more calls for wood stoves than any other type of heating product. Most people burn their stoves on high when it is cold and the creosote is burnt off. When it is not as cold, people tend to burn their stoves on low which causes creosote build up and chimney fires. The hot ash from coal and wood stoves burns down at least two to three dumpsters a year. Be sure to put

*Volunteer Fire Department continued page 6*

## Tree Board



The City of Colstrip Tree Board recently met and has tentatively set Arbor Day for May 7, 2010. The largest project the Tree Board will be working on this spring is the 2010 DNRC Grant. Tana Pippin applied and was awarded a \$15,387.00 matching grant.

This grant will include three parts. First the Tree Board and City of Colstrip are excited to be involved in offering a couple of educational classes through the Adult Education Program at the high school. We will be having a very dynamic speaker, Mike Garvey doing a presentation about trees. He will cover everything from choosing trees, planting them and taking care of them. Duane Cole will offer a tree pruning class. The second part of the grant involves funds that will help hire a temporary employee for one month to complete the tree inventory in Colstrip. A tree inventory is a very valuable tool for the community to identify trees that are in need of trimming, removal or possibly replaced. A tree inventory only involves trees that are on public not private land.

The third and most visible part of the grant will be a new tree planting project on Main Street. We will be having a drip system placed on the East side of the road between the road and the sidewalk. We will then be planting 45 trees on that entire block. At this time we have the FFA students, Tree Board Members, City of Colstrip Employees and Boy Scouts that have agreed to help us with this project. If any other groups or organizations are interested in becoming involved in this beautification project please contact Tana Pippin at 748-2300 x2 or [tpippin@cityofcolstrip.com](mailto:tpippin@cityofcolstrip.com). We will be beginning this project as soon as the weather allows.

Just as a public reminder! Remember to protect your trees from the deer!

## Mayor's Message cont.

will be mounted on a truck and will upgrade our ability to fight wildland fires improving upon the capabilities of our fire department. We have a significant amount of open areas within the city in addition to the outside areas that are covered with agreements with Western Energy and PPL.

Next month our Public Works Department will become involved with going out for bids on our next street project which cover Appaloosa Drive, Sweetgrass Drive,, and the paved section of Prairieview Drive. We anticipate a June/July start date.

We will also be working on upgrading or renovating our animal shelter that is located next to our sewer plant. Once again we are planning on a busy summer as we work to upgrade or improve upon the services that are provided to you, our residents.

## Volunteer Fire Department cont.

ashes in a metal container for 3-5 days before you put them in the dumpster. It may save you the \$350 the city charges for a replacement dumpster.

Candles do start fires. Candle warmers are a great option here. They still get the smell of the candle but don't use a flame. Please do not leave a lit candle unattended. As always be careful with smoking materials.

To sum up, even small fires are costly and devastating. The fire damage is the least expensive cost. Water damage, smoke damage, and loss of your home use add up to much more than the fire does. You really don't want a fire. Small steps like checking your smoke alarm and getting a carbon monoxide detector are steps that can give you early detection and can save your life. A few more small steps like those mentioned above and maybe we can stop most fires. It is a thought.

We hope to see you but not at your house.

City of Colstrip  
PO Box 1902  
Colstrip, MT 59323

Website: [cityofcolstrip.com](http://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 11 years**