

City of Colstrip

June 2013

Mayor's Message



- Mayor Rose Hanser
- Tom Jankowski
- Lawretta Miller
- Evan Stewart
- John Williams

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 Department</i>	2
<i>Tree Board</i>	3
<i>Bicentennial Library</i>	4
<i>SHAC</i>	5
<i>Building/Zoning/Code</i>	5
<i>Volunteer Fire Department</i>	6



The calendar tells us that summer is on the way, and thankfully with more moisture than last year. In the month of May we were blessed with desperately needed rain. After last year it is so refreshing to see lots and lots of green. Of course that means lots and lots of weeds and mowing and gardens! School is out, summer activities are starting, vacations nearing, building projects moving, and budgeting for the City of Colstrip. You notice I named all the fun stuff first. No one likes budgeting, but everyone benefits when it is done well.

Your City Council Members and I are beginning the process by looking at the water and sewer funds first. Water and Sewer funds are enterprise funds, not funded through the mill levy; but through fees. The City is required to provide the maintenance and operational costs of the water and sewer systems along with bond payments and covenants, through fees-rates that users of the system pay. The City had avoided increases nearly 10 years in order to keep the fees as low as possible. Therein lays part of the problem. How many of us can purchase the same groceries for the same dollar as we did even a couple of years ago? A rhetorical question really, none of us can. So too, with the cost of providing clean safe drinking water and sanitary sewer systems.

The other part of the problem is unfunded mandates from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). Water and wastewater standards are being changed; further upgrades in systems are required due to pressure from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This is not an isolated problem; all over the state communities are being pressed, regardless of cost or ability to fund these mandates. Most of these are expensive changes/upgrades with little perceivable value. Large fines are charged to the City if we do not comply within a specified time frame. As with most communities in Montana, the water is just as safe as it was last year and the year before; the discharge water is just as clean as it was in previous years. But, the MDEQ has issued newer, higher standards requiring costly upgrades, engineering, studies and in some cases, entirely new systems.

I know that all of us are busy taking care of our families, jobs and life. However, if you object to the costly regulations being imposed upon the state and local governments, contact MDEQ as well as your elected representatives at the county, state and national level, share your concerns.

Please know that the City's Public Works Department employees work hard to provide clean water, responsible treatment of wastewater, reuse of water and quality service to our customers.

Have at least one cook-out, one slice of watermelon or one good splash in the water this summer and remember to be thankful for what you do have!



Police Department

Cory Hert, Chief of Police



We at the Colstrip Police Department hope that you all have an enjoyable summer. We are working on several items that will hopefully increase safety for our community and our residents.

First, we have partnered with the Rosebud County Sheriff's Office to reorganize our Crimestoppers Program. The board members have voted to change the name back to Rosebud County Crimestoppers, we are hopeful that this new partnership will be better served by utilizing available resources throughout the entire county and look forward to working together to reduce crimes and increase prosecutions for those committing them. Crimestoppers is also looking for a couple of new board members, if you or someone you know might be interested in serving on the board, please contact myself or Sheriff Randy Allies. We are currently doing a fundraising raffle to raise funds for reward payouts. We are raffling off a 2013 Polaris Sportsman four wheeler. Only 1000 tickets will be sold at \$10 each, the drawing will be held July 20th at the Rosebud County Fair. Tickets are available at Colstrip City Hall, Colstrip Police Department, the Rosebud County Sheriff's Office, Colstrip Senior Citizens Group and at Rye Park during Colstrip Days.

Secondly, we are working on resigning the truck route on Willow Ave. The current signage can be misleading so we have had new ones made which will direct all commercial and contractor deliveries to use Power Road. This will make it easier for our officers to enforce violations, leaving no confusion as to what routes deliveries should utilize. We are awaiting approval from the Department of Transportation to install the signs on HWY 39.

Lastly, but certainly not least, our Early Warning System is up and running. We will begin our regular testing on July 6, 2013. We hope that we never need to activate this system for a real emergency, however, it will be very beneficial to our community and citizens should the need arise. Listed below is some information regarding the Early Warning System as well as activation and testing procedures.

Again, we hope all of you have a safe and enjoyable summer!

The Colstrip Emergency Siren Activation Policy is on page 3.

Police Department cont. page 3

Public Works Department

John Bleth, Public Works Director



The new city shop construction was started at the end of March. Excavation and replacement of the proper material took a month. Next, we had a three week delay. Digging the footings was completed on May 23rd. Concrete was poured for three sides of the footings on May 28th. Since then the rain has been falling and the project is at a standstill. The original completion date was going to be mid-August; however, we are already one month behind on the project. We are hoping to move in before fall.

The phase two portion of Pinebutte Drive Overlay Project will begin the first part of July. The city received five bids with JEM Construction out of Billings being the low bidder. The project is supposed to be substantially completed in 50 days. This does not include weather delays or other unseen occurrences. The cost of the Pinebutte Drive Overlay Project including engineering is \$728,168.

The city's Department of Environmental Quality Mandated Backwash Rehab Project is progressing. We are beginning the design phase with bidding in the fall and construction to start the first of the year. The project must be complete by August 2014.

Police Department cont.

COLSTRIP EMERGENCY SIREN ACTIVATION POLICY

A. General Information:

The outdoor warning system (sirens) installed in 2013 in Colstrip will alert the majority of the citizens. This system for alerting is a preparatory step in alerting the public. **The EAS system needs to be activated first to provide information to the public via the radio stations.** The sirens and the EAS must both be used to alert the public of a disaster. Siren controls are located at the Colstrip Police Department and will be initiated by the on-duty 911 Dispatcher. All 911 Dispatchers need to become familiar with the operation of the siren controls.

B. Specific Instructions for Activation

If the emergency is weather related, the National Weather Service (NWS) must be contacted for verification prior to any activation of the siren system. Working in conjunction with the NWS, a decision will be made as to whether an EAS warning and sirens will be activated. This decision will be made by any one of the individuals or methods listed below.

If the emergency is not weather related, the NWS must still be contacted and given the appropriate information to activate the EAS for broadcasting to the public via radio prior to the sirens being activated. An EAS Non-Weather Emergency Message Activation form is available from the NWS to ensure a clear and concise message is forwarded to the NWS.

Activation of the sirens can be authorized by the following individuals:

- a. Colstrip Police Chief/Assistant Chief
- b. Rosebud County DES Coordinator
- c. Mayor of Colstrip
- d. Rosebud County Commissioners
- e. Rosebud County Fire Chief
- f. Colstrip Fire Chief/Assistant Chief
- g. On-duty Colstrip Police Officer
- h. On-duty Rosebud County Deputy
- i. Rosebud County Sheriff/Undersheriff
- j. Citizen report verified by NWS, Law Enforcement or other citizen reports (see Citizen Report Questionnaire)

C. Siren Tones

- a. The **Steady Tone** will be used to inform the public to **Shelter in Place** **(This means preferably in a basement if you have one or one of the following designated shelters nearest your location)**

*Colstrip High School
Frank Brattin Middle School
School House History and Art Center (SHAC)
Colstrip Parks and Recreation (CPRD)*

- b. The **Intermittent Tone** will be used to inform the public to **Evacuate**. **(This means you may need to evacuate the City limits due to the impending nature of the incident/occurrence)**

D. Siren Testing

- a. The sirens will be tested on the first Saturday of each month at 12:00 p.m. (Noon)

Tree Board

The City of Colstrip celebrated Arbor Day in May. The city received the Tree City USA award for the 8th year in a row along with a \$750.00 grant. The Tree Board sponsored an open house at City Hall on May 1st with a tree planting demonstration, tree door prizes and cookies. On May 4th the Tree Board had an Arbor Day Program at Pine Butte Elementary School. Bill Neumiller, President of the Tree Board, read some tree facts and showed the kids how big the largest tree in the world was. At 37 feet in diameter and 191 feet around, all of the kids in the gym nearly fit in the marked circle that represented the tree's circumference. Bill Neumiller also read the Arbor Day Proclamation and planted a tree at Pine Butte Elementary also. PPL Montana sponsored an Earth Day/Arbor Day poster contest. There were 201 posters that were displayed at the Bicentennial Library. After the program the students and staff from Pine Butte Elementary and Frank Brattin Middle School picked up trash and enjoyed treats from Western Energy Company.



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Bicentennial Library



About once a week Jill Hanson, the find it, library clerk and I treat ourselves to coffee from one of the espresso shops in town. Between the two of us, we spend about \$7.50 to \$7.75 on our coffees. As residents of Rosebud County we spend less than that a year on our library services. Bicentennial Library is funded fully by your county taxes. Out of pure curiosity I called the County Clerk and asked her what I spend each year on library services, she told me to call the treasurer's office and ask them, but while I was at it look hers up as well. I have a very nice fixer-upper in Colstrip. This is the nicest house I have ever owned. I pay \$2.61 a year for library services. The County Clerk has 20 acres of land and a nice home. Her property is valued at \$260,000.00 and she pays \$3.21 for her library services. Some residents pay more, some pay less, however most pay less than what Jill and I spend on coffees each week.

With your tax money you have access to so many services at Bicentennial Library; we are truly the best deal in town. Our Friends of the Library keeps us stocked in some great new releases. We are closing out on a wonderful grant opportunity called BTOP (Broadband Technology Opportunities Program). Through this grant we have all new public computers, the work station wiring and the Librarian Assistants full time hours funded for this last fiscal year. We received this grant because we are a library. Because of these extra hours for the library assistant we were able to offer some really neat programming this year.

Bicentennial Library's Assistant Librarian was able to maintain all our computers. Once he had all our computers behaving the way they should he has branched off into teaching people how to get their computers to behave. With the extra hours he is now teaching two Spanish classes that will run through the end of June. Sadly the BTOP grant will end and the hours to offer these programs will no longer be available.

The Bicentennial Library does not take a break from our reading programs. Both the Children's story time and the Young Adult story time will continue through the summer. So get ready to be read too.

Coming up quickly at the library will be the Summer Reading Program. The Summer Reading Program will go as follows for Bicentennial Library: Registration will be May 28th-June 3rd. Our afternoon activities will be a mine tour with Western Energy on June 6th, Dinosaur and Fossil Fun with Tim Dove on June 13th, Heiroglyph Hunt on June 20th, and Awesome Owl Pellets with SHAC on June 27th. Our awards party will be July 11th. The Friends of Bicentennial Library donated a Kindle Fire HD as the grand prize for this year's summer reading program.

This year's Summer Reading Program will run a little differently than what you are used too. We have lots of little extras; including naming a gnome contest, that you will need to stop in and check out.

Schoolhouse History and Art Center

Soon you should be seeing all sorts of activity around the Schoolhouse. We have successfully secured funding to repair and replace our foundation, handicap access, and our heating system. We thank our community, our grantors, First Interstate Bank, PPL Montana, WECO, and the Coal Board. Without our donations from our Capital Campaign, and our valuable long standing members, both old and new, this wouldn't have been possible. Work should begin on the foundation first, then the handicap area. As much as possible all work will be done by local contractors and material will be purchased from within our community. We are excited to complete these projects while ensuring the Schoolhouse for the future.



Soon the 34th annual Juried Art Show will be in our Gallery for the month of June. Beginning July 15th we will have a "Community" art show. Everyone is welcome to bring a piece of art work for our Gallery, either a piece you created, or a piece you just want to share with the community. In September we will have the work of Scott Egan, Clint McRae, Justin Bonomo and Barb Needham in the Gallery. Everyone is welcome at the Schoolhouse; stop in and see what we are up to this summer.

Our second SHAC Scholarship was awarded to Erin Timber. Five CHS seniors applied for our scholarship and their artwork was our Gallery display the month of May. Thank you Dayanara Eaglefeather, Stephen Round III, Virginia "Ginny" Logan, Molly Fedje, and Erin for applying for our Scholarship. Board Members have worked extremely hard to encourage and assist continuing education for a creative CHS Senior. The scholarship is funded through the dedication of our thirteen member board. Each board member sells raffle tickets and literally has worked in the soup kitchen at our annual Arts & Craft Fair to make this award possible. A Great Big Shout out to Scott Egan, President; Evelyn Broadus, Vice President; LaCinda Galloway, Secretary; Cathy Frank, Treasurer; Dan Schmidt, Sue Neiman, Joan Hantz, Donna Rogers, Tom Crippen, Paula Peplow, Patty Dunn, Barb Needham, & Betty Grinsell. Good Job SHAC Board!

SHAC will continue to bring positive choices to our community. The Board and staff are able to provide these services because of the generosity of the City of Colstrip, Montana Arts Council, our loyal members, and local businesses. Thank you for partnering with us! Through education we have been able to reach our youngest and our oldest community members. Each year our goal is to make our good better and our better best. We invite you to enjoy the opportunities at the Schoolhouse; you will always be a treasure to us!

Building/Zoning/Code Enforcement

Jan Morgan

It appears that home improvements in the Colstrip area are leaning towards sheds, retaining walls and fences this year. All require a zoning permit.

City Codes state that a zoning permit must be obtained before any building, structure or land may be used or occupied and before any permitted building or structure may be erected, placed, moved, expanded or structurally altered. That includes garden sheds, fences and retaining walls.

The problems encountered in this office are often related to property lines. Fences and retaining walls often follow along property lines. New fences, retaining walls or sheds must be within the property of the owner. This requires that the resident know where their property lines are located.

If you are not sure the City does have a copy of the amended plats that are filed with the county for each section located within the city limits. These amended plats are drawn to scale and have most of the lot dimensions listed. Through the use of these maps property owners are usually able to locate their lot pins and determine their lot lines.

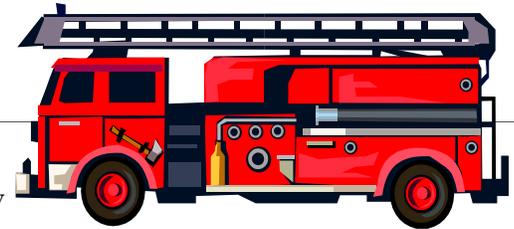
Fences and retaining walls along property lines are usually built at least six inches (6") within the property line. The exception is when two adjoining neighbors decide to share the cost and build on the line. The fence or retaining wall then becomes shared property. That can sometimes become a problem with maintenance or changes to the structure at a later date.



Building/Zoning/Code Enforcement cont. page 6

Volunteer Fire Department

Ryan Reid, Fire Chief



Spring in Montana is always unpredictable, this year is no different.

May was wet and has started the grasses growing. The tall grass will dry out and we will have a wildland fire season. So be careful with fires and fireworks. We are thankful that it is wetter than the record fire season of last year but we need to get ready for a fire season by keeping vegetation cut down around houses. A clear area around your house will give the firefighters a chance for defending it if fire does strike.

With the celebrations coming up, there will be fireworks. We respond to fireworks fires every year. Please be careful if you use fireworks. A lost house will ruin any celebration.

The Colstrip Volunteer Fire Department has 30 members and has booked over 3000 hours of training, fire response hours, accident response hours and community service hours. It has been a busy year. We are committed to making Colstrip a safer place to live. If not Volunteers then who?

With the summer comes backyard fires and grilling time. Please call 748-2211 to notify them if you are having a backyard fire, just so we don't respond to a fire pit thinking it is a uncontrolled fire. Also please be careful with gas grills. Gas grills were involved in an annual average of 7,100 home fires in 2006-2010, while charcoal or other solid-fueled grills were involved in an annual average of 1,200 home fires, according to a 2012 NFPA report on cooking fires. More than one-quarter (28 percent) of home structure grill fires started on a courtyard, terrace or patio, 28 percent started on an exterior balcony or open porch, and 6 percent started in the kitchen. Please be careful while grilling.

The volunteer fire department continues their fire training twice a month.

Building/Zoning/Code Enforcement cont.

Trees and shrubs planted near or along property lines can also cause problems with fence construction and maintenance. Such shrubs and trees may become shared property for the sections that grow across the property line. Responsible property owners carefully consider their options and possible future construction when planting.

When a person applies for a zoning permit they are required to draw a detailed map of their property. The application asks that the homeowner look at his lot and determine the best possible way to orientate the proposed change they have requested to meet local district setback requirements and still allow for possible future expansion. When positioning the structure they are asked to consider any plans for adding decks, porches or garages. They are then asked to draw all existing structures and the proposed change requested. Distances to property lines, between buildings, propane tanks or other structures must be indicated.

By reviewing these plans and checking out the site, the zoning officer seeks to ensure that the land uses of the community are compatible, provide for adequate space and privacy, protect existing property and property values as well as ensure public safety.

If you are planning on constructing a fence, retaining wall or any other building changes within your lot stop by to ask about a zoning permit. The review process is to help in making our community safer and the landowner code compliant. Be sure to call if I can be of any assistance. My hours are flexible but I can usually be reached Monday through Thursday in the afternoon. If I'm not in leave a message and I'll return your call as soon as possible.

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Celebrating 14 Years