

# City of Colstrip Newsletter

**Spring  
2024**

## Mayor's Message Mayor John Williams

**City Council** meetings  
are  
the 2nd and 4th Tuesday  
of the month unless  
rescheduled due to a  
holiday.

City Hall Open  
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
Monday thru Friday  
*except on Holidays*

**City Court Office  
Hours:**  
Tuesdays and Thursdays  
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.



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Greetings Colstrip!!

Happy Spring, my favorite time of the year. A fresh new beginning. As I begin this newsletter I will describe the importance of the Local Government Review process that I mentioned in the previous newsletter. Both the City of Colstrip and Rosebud County have prepared resolutions as required by statute that puts the issue before you, our residents, the question of conducting a Local Government Review and establishing a Study Commission to do so. In Dr. Ken Weaver's words "This is arguably one of the most important innovations in modernizing the performance and accountability of local government in the twentieth century" (and beyond). Dr. Ken Weaver, now retired, was the head of the Local Government Center at MSU-Bozeman.

Colstrip residents will have the opportunity to vote on both the city and county resolutions that will be held at the primary election in June 2024. If you are not an absentee voter, the election site for Colstrip residents will be at Colstrip City Hall.

The city's Resolution No. 2024-03 asks you to vote either 'for' or 'against' the review of the government of the City of Colstrip and the establishment of a Local Government Study Commission consisting of three members to examine the government and submit recommendations on the government. If the residents vote in favor of this review to occur, then those wishing to serve on the study commission are required to file for election, which will occur on November 5, 2024. Rosebud County's Resolution No. 1190 also calls for the question of conducting a local review and establishing a study commission of three members.

As city and county residents we have the opportunity of voting on both of these review resolutions and, if they pass, serving on the study commissions. The purpose of the study commissioners will be to review the existing form and powers of the local government, both city and county, and compare them with other forms available under the laws of the State of Montana. The study commissioners will prepare a report with their recommendations of any changes to the local government structure. These reports are then presented to the registered voters for approval or rejection. This will occur no later than November 3, 2026. This whole process is coordinated and facilitated by the Local Government Center at Montana State University. They will also provide the training for the study commission. I encourage all our residents to give this process your consideration. What a unique opportunity to become involved with

our

*(continued on page 2)*

# Mayor's Message

## Continued

governmental level. You can make a difference! Copies of these resolutions are available at City Hall and I would be glad to address any questions you may have.

The city recently completed its audit for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2023. As part of the audit, a Management Discussion and Analysis for the year was completed. I would like to touch upon some important aspects of that report. Financially your city is well positioned for the anticipated requirements into the future. Our assets and deferred outflows of resources exceeded liabilities and deferred inflows of resources by \$34,149,521. Total net position at the end of FY 2022 was \$31,196,223 and at the end of FY 2023 it was \$34,149,521. The \$2,953,298 increase in the city's overall net position is mostly due to an increase in cash and reserves in the governmental funds and an increase in construction in progress in the business-type funds. **Ru**ncern is the continuing escalation of costs in the operation of our enterprise funds. All three funds experienced operating losses totaling \$115,133. We will continue to monitor these costs and make adjustments as necessary.

The city continues to be challenged with the threats of closure of the electric generating station. NorthWestern Energy made the announcement in January 2023 of acquiring Avista Energy's 15% ownership in units 3 and 4 and to our knowledge this is scheduled to occur in 2025.

Additionally the company known as Grid United has completed land acquisition to build an electric transmission power line beginning in Colstrip and going east through North Dakota, connecting with other transmission lines going east. The line is estimated to cost \$305 billion. A portion of that cost will be for a high voltage substation located in or near Colstrip. The cost of the substation is estimated to be \$500 million.

A continuing concern for Colstrip is the supply of domestic water and the cost of this water to the city. We are in on-going discussions with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and the power plant ownership on this water supply and commitment.

As I close out my portion of this newsletter, I remain very optimistic about the future of our city. While we have many challenges before us, there also remains the opportunities toward future improvement of service to the residents of Tomorrow's Town Today. Thank you everyone for your continued support, Residents, City Council, and very importantly our city's employees.

### **DUTY TO REMOVE WEEDS/OFFENDING VEGETATION**

In accordance with City of Colstrip Code 4-2-2, the existence of weeds and offending vegetation constitutes a public nuisance. It is the duty of every owner of a developed parcel of land to cut, destroy or remove all weeds/offending vegetation in excess of nine (9) inches in height growing thereon to a height of four (4) inches or less and includes one-half (½) of any road, street or alley abutting the property.

It is the duty of every owner of an undeveloped parcel of land to cut, destroy or remove all weeds/offending vegetation in excess of twelve (12) inches in height to four (4) inches or less.

Failure to cut/destroy/remove the weeds and/or offending vegetation may cause the City of Colstrip to provide for the cutting/removal and charge the cost thereof against the property owner together with an administrative cost equal to 25% and a penalty of \$25.00 for the first cutting/removal; \$50.00 for the second cutting/removal; and \$75.00 for the third and subsequent removal. Failure to pay this charge within sixty (60) days shall constitute a lien on the property and placed on the tax rolls as a special assessment.

## Schoolhouse History and Art Center

Spring at SHAC is a wonderful time of year. It is when the ground comes alive and we are all drawn back outside. In front of SHAC is a wonderful flowerbed. It is full of all different types of perennials donated by many different folks through the years. In early March, we were lucky to have two amazing community members volunteer to clean it out and prepare it for the new season. Jolene and Devon Verlanic dedicated much time to completing this project; we are so grateful! A huge thank you to them.

Also in March, Kayla de la Ossa, Executive Director, was invited to present at the Museums Association of Montana Conference in Lewistown, MT. This was a great way to network and learn more about other cultural institutions in Montana while also showing the big things happening in Colstrip. We have many events coming up this Spring as well as some great exhibits.

In April, SHAC is hosting works by Michelle Osman, titled, "Silver Linings." Osman creates large realistic paintings of sky scenes inspired by the vastness of the big sky. This show will be on view from April 15 through the end of May. Also at SHAC in May is our annual May Tea. The theme this year is Fairy Garden. This event features a tea party with drinks, small bites, crafts, and photo opportunities and it is a great way to spend an afternoon with your family. This year, May Tea will be on May 5th. RSVP to join us by calling 406-748-4822.

Remember, SHAC is open late on Tuesday nights until 7:00 pm. Be on the lookout for pop-up classes on those evenings. Follow us on Facebook for updates about events and please join us where you can!

## Planning, Building, Zoning & Code Enforcement

We live in a community of laws and ordinances. When a person buys or rents property within the city limits of Colstrip, they agree to live by the laws that dictate the use, confines, and appearance of that parcel of land.

Several lots in town have accumulated an assortment of trailers, junk vehicles, and debris. This creates an issue with being out of compliance with City Code. The collection of junk, as well as RV's, boats, trailers, snowmobiles, and anything else that lays around gathering weeds underneath them are unsightly and infringe upon the rights and valuations of neighboring property owners.

RV's and other recreational vehicles are not to be stored on public streets but on off street parking spaces. Those spaces must be accessible from a public street, must be located on the same lot as the dwelling, and may not be located in any front yard except in the driveway.

Streets are designed for motorized travel. Non-motorized trailers are not to be parked on the streets except for unloading purposes. Motorized vehicles may not be parked or left standing for a period of longer than five days.

Code compliance is simply a part of living in a community and ordinances are to be enforced. The Police Department will begin to ticket vehicles stored on the streets. Code Enforcement will send letters to property owners in violation of the other ordinances. Property owners who fail to comply with the letter will be referred to the police department. This non-compliance will be a main point of emphasis for Code Enforcement in the upcoming months.

# Public Works Department

Pat Zent, Public Works Director



Winter arrived to Montana and it brought along with it, water breaks! We repaired serv on Roundup Court, Cherry Street, Olive Drive and Willow Avenue to name a few. We als a couple of main water line breaks on Chisholm Drive and did a couple of repairs on the main line that runs next to the lagoon. We did fairly well with the minus 30 degrees cold snap that we had in the middle of January. There were only a few call-outs for homes freezing up.

Christian Kappel is a certified Water Treatment Operator as of December. All of the guys have been attending water and wastewater training classes put on by Montana Rural Water and Midwest Assistance Program. These programs help them study and prepare for the exams they take to become certified operators.

We have also been doing some Safety Training. The City recently held a Defensive Driving class and a CPR & First Aid Class that we attended.

CEI and In Control have been working on upgrading our Water & Wastewater Controls system for the Water Treatment Plant and Wastewater plant. We have had some minor hiccups along the way, but we were able to always pump and treat our water as was needed for the city. They should be wrapping this project up by the middle of April.

We are currently waiting on CEI to finish the upgrade to our heaters and lights in the Water Treatment Clarifier building.

KLJ Engineering has been working on what we call the North End Water Loop. This project will bring a main line from Highway 39 across the Highway and railroad tracks and go around the golf course and tie into the water main on Pine Butte Drive by the high school. This will help us supply water to the north side of town and have another line to feed that side. KLJ is hoping to go out for bids for construction this spring. KLJ also did a Pavement Management Study for us to prioritize where we need to do our street maintenance. This is a major goal of ours to concentrate on the street repair and maintenance for the next 5 to 7 years.

We have started a pilot study with Great West Engineering to help us determine what we need to do with the sludge that is accumulating in our lagoon.

We received our new street sweeper this past winter. We will be rolling it out here this spring to get the town all cleaned up for Colstrip Days.

Have you seen the City of Colstrip's redesigned website? It includes fillable forms that can be completed and sent electronically to us. You can also pay court fines and utility bills by following the link on the top of the website's home page.

The City of Colstrip also offers our customers the option to pay their utility bill by automatic ACH payment. There is no fee for this service. You can also have your utility bill emailed to you. Forms are available at Colstrip City Hall and online at [www.cityofcolstrip.com](http://www.cityofcolstrip.com) to sign up for these options.

# Police Department



With the warmer weather, we would like to take this opportunity to remind our citizens of a few issues we normally see this time of year.

**Cory Hert, Police Chief**

**Animal Complaints;** these calls typically increase when the weather gets nicer as people tend to let their dogs out longer and more frequently than they do when it is colder outside. Please be responsible when letting your pets out to exercise and such and ensure they have plenty of fresh water and adequate containment to keep them within your property boundaries. Dogs running at large and nuisance animals can result in the owner being cited and if we have to pick them up, the owner can also be responsible for impound fees as well.

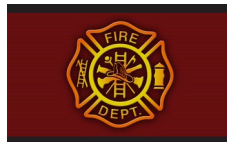
**RV's/Campers/Trailers;** as the weather becomes more suitable, people tend to start enjoying their "toys" more often as well they should! Please remember we have City Ordinances to follow regarding the parking and storage of these items along the streets and City Right-Of-Ways. We receive numerous complaints regarding these types of parking issues especially during the Spring and Summer months.

Also, please be mindful of the increased youth activities around the community, warm weather brings biking, running and playing around the neighborhoods so be careful and cautious while travelling throughout the city. Bikers and runners don't always conform to the rules of the road so please watch out for them!

We currently have two openings at the PD; one for a full-time officer and one for a part-time 911 dispatcher. These positions are open until filled and at the time of this newsletter we are still taking applications.

We hope you all have an enjoyable and safe Spring/Summer with whatever activities you and your families have planned!

# Fire Department



**Tony Reda, Fire Chief**

There is not a lot to report on the Fire Department front. The biggest thing we as a department are looking forward to is our new fire engine we ordered a year and a half ago. The delivery date has been pushed back from its original date, but they have assured me we will have it by the end of the year. I was hoping it would make its debut at Colstrip Days, but I just don't think it will happen.

On another equipment note, our rescue boat for the surge pond has been replaced and we are in the process of equipping a new-to-us half ton pickup to hold all of our auto extrication equipment. This will give us the advantage of always having that equipment available and at the ready.

As usual, we are always looking for new recruits to join the department. For me, the fire department has been a wonderful way to serve and give back to this community in a multitude of ways. If you are interested or would like to tour any of the facilities, I would be more than happy to make that happen.

# Bicentennial Library

Mary Kay Bullard, Director



Weekly programming will continue: Camille will continue to host “Lego Club” every Monday that Bicentennial Library is open. Amy will host “Story Time” Tuesday’s at 4:15 pm, and Wednesday’s at 11:15 am. These programs are open to anyone who fits the age demographic. “Lego Club” is open to all elementary age children. The 4:15 “Story Time” is geared more towards elementary age children, and the 11:15 am “Story Time” is geared more towards pre-school age children. This library will not turn anyone away. All are welcome.

Amy has procured a fish tank for the children’s area of the library. This should be a fun addition to our library that I want nothing to do with. However, if you are into fishes, I hope you enjoy the new tank.

Bicentennial Library does take book suggestions from all our registered library patrons.

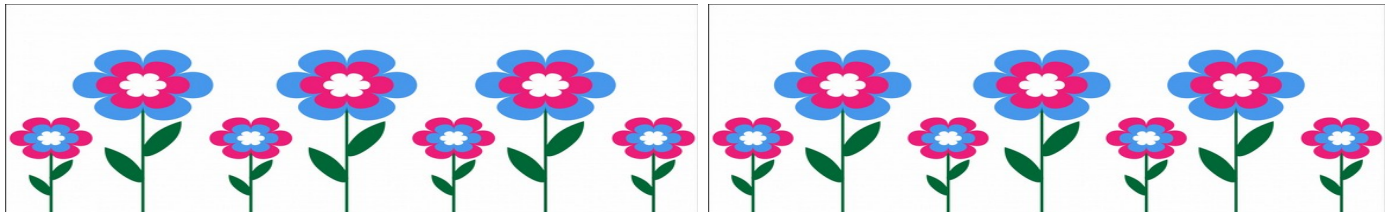
We have received our bound copy of the 2023 Independent Press. We encourage you to stop by the library and page through it. Bicentennial Library carries bound copies of local papers dating back to 1977.

Evan Stewart was the patron-hero for the library’s public computers. Evan was able to move all the public computers over to the new network and connect them. Camille was able to connect all the public computers to the deep-freeze program, and we are now able to offer public computers to our patrons the way we were before. Computer use time is one hour, unless you are working on something that requires more than an hour. Please visit with a librarian if you need more time. If you are using the public computers recreationally, computer use is one hour a day.

Bicentennial Library is pleased and grateful to announce that the library has four more hotspots.

These hotspots have been donated to our library by the Montana Community Foundation. The service to these hotspots is donated by the Montana State Library. This will bring Bicentennial Library’s hotspots up to 10. We need you to remember that due to the popularity of this service the hotspot policy and due date will be strictly enforced.

The library is open Monday-Saturday. Bicentennial Library is open Monday-Thursday 11:00 am-7:00 pm, Friday 12:00 pm-5:00 pm, and Saturday 10:00 am-1:00 pm. We update our Facebook page almost daily. This is a great way of keeping track of what is going on at the library.



Colstrip City Code requires all dogs and cats within city limits be licensed and vaccinated against rabies. To license your animal bring proof of current rabies vaccination and the appropriate license fee to City Hall. The rabies vaccination must be current. Please check the date on your pet’s rabies vaccination certificate or contact your veterinarian if you are not sure or have lost your vaccination certificate.

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**Colstrip Days Celebration**  
**June 28-30, 2024**