

# City of Colstrip

## Mayor's Message

June 2016



- **Mayor John Williams**
- **Tom Jankowski**
- **Greg Koczur**
- **Jolene Verlanic**
- **Mike Esser**

Council meetings are the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month unless rescheduled for a holiday.

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

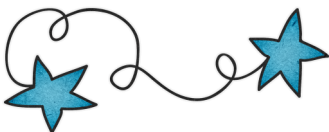
**Court is in Session:**  
Tuesdays and Thursdays  
10:00 a.m.



*Celebrating  
17 Years*

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Dear Residents,

It has been a very hectic and also rewarding first six months (almost) as your Mayor. Hectic with the unwarranted attacks on our City but also rewarding with the support I have received from our residents and city employees.

I had attempted to get our newsletter in the mail during our first quarter; however, because of the logistics of mail permitting and printing this newsletter will be our first since my returning to office. We have expanded the newsletter and I hope you find it interesting and informative. It will also continue to be available online. Several of the new informational articles are the addition of Colstrip United, Southeastern Economical Development Corp. (SEMDC), and the Rosebud County Public Health.



Photo: James Woodcock/Billings Gazette

Something I need to stress to you, our residents, is my availability. The coffee pot is always on at city hall and I welcome your visits. I can also be reached by phone at city hall 748-2300 or cell 749-6009. I do send and receive texts and also will respond to email. My email address is: mayor@cityofcolstrip.com. Please don't hesitate to contact me with issues or concerns or if you just want to visit. I welcome your contact, of course our city staff is always available to you. One sure way of squelching rumors is to go directly to the source. Unfortunately, we all have a desire for sometimes turning rumors into fact.

The City has two Coal Board applications that will be presented to the Coal Board at the Billings meeting on June 16, 2016.

The first application request is for \$138,000 to assist in the engineering of the replacement of the Zone 3 water storage tank. This 650,000 gallon tank will be replaced with a smaller elevated 400,000 gallon tank. This will improve both the taste and odor problems with this tank and by increasing the elevation will increase the water pressure in that area. This tank replacement is a 2.2 million dollar project. Though not a part of this project, we are also in the process of taking the two Zone 1 tanks off line and combining with Zone 2. The Zone 2 tank has recently been rehabilitated. We have for years been combating the issues associated with an overbuilt poorly designed water storage system that was to accommodate a population of 5000 residents.

The other Coal Board application is a request for the development of an Economic Diversification Strategy. The amount requested is \$25,000. This request will be coupled with money from the Big Sky Sate Trust Fund (coal money) and \$50,000 from Economic Development Administration Power Grant (EDA). The city will be working with Southeastern Montana Development Corp. (SEMDC).

Colstrip Days celebration is scheduled for June 25th and 26th. Let's all work together to make this celebration special this year because of all the issues we are dealing with. Our Grand Marshalls are Ashley Dennehy, Lori Shaw of Colstrip United and Senator Duane Ankney.

*Mayor's Message cont. page 7*

# Public Works Department

**Bryan Swan, Public Works Director**



Colstrip’s weather in 2016 started out mild which was good for the Public Works Department. Much less plowing and sanding was needed with about 200 tons of sand/de-icer applied to the streets. This was about 30 percent less than the previous season. We had hoped to get an early start on projects this spring but abundant April and May showers ended up delaying some of our plans.

	<u>Precip</u>	<u>Snow</u>
February	1.14	5.0
March	.90	.5
April	4.29	1.0
May	3.37	Trace (as of May 27th)

We have been spraying for mosquitoes with all areas of town being done at least once. The City was able to purchase a new mosquito fogger late in the season last year. Its use was limited last year so we didn’t have much time to judge its effectiveness. Since this new fogger is about three times the size of the old machine we are hoping to see an improvement in our spraying program and fewer mosquitoes.

We have gotten a good start on spraying weeds with all of the bare ground areas of the City’s right-of-ways already completed. We will begin spraying streets and gutters soon. We are using a new product this year that should be more effective allowing us to go longer between treatments.

The two “Welcome to Colstrip” signs on the outskirts of town have been replaced. The new signs are a big improvement over the old ones which were showing their age. The purchase of these signs was partially funded by a CTEP grant.

The 2015 Consumer Confidence Report has been completed. This is an annual report that details the quality of our drinking water. This report is designed to inform our customers about the quality of water we deliver to you every day. Our constant goal is to provide you with a safe and dependable supply of drinking water. I am pleased to report that our drinking water is safe and meets all federal and state requirements. This report is available by request and will not be mailed. It is available at City Hall and is also posted on our website [www.cityofcolstrip.com](http://www.cityofcolstrip.com).

We had a change recently to our recycling program. Our recycler has informed us they will no longer accept newspaper. They will accept aluminum cans and cardboard only. The recycling containers are available to the public and are located in the Rosebud Foods parking lot just across from City Hall.

Two Public Works construction projects are underway. First is the Willow Avenue Reconstruction which includes new pavement from Highway 39 to the railroad tracks. Sidewalks, new water main, new lighting and a welcome sign are also part of this project. We will be breaking ground on this project sometime this summer.

The other big construction project is the Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade Phase 1. The Wastewater Plant is nearly 40 years old and has not had any major upgrades since it was built. Most of the original equipment is worn out. A second clarifier will be built and once online will allow refurbishing of the existing clarifier. A new mechanical bar screen will help protect downstream processes from large debris entering the plant. This upgrade will also minimize the plant operator’s exposure to sewage on a daily basis. The City has been working with the MDEQ to work out some issues concerning the long term use of the three lagoons cells which has delayed this project. The City of Colstrip has received a \$500,000 grant from the Coal Board to help fund this project.

If you have noticed Pace, Inc. in your neighborhood checking sewer lines it’s because we have contracted with them to assist us with our Sewer Preventative Maintenance Program. We have taken this step to help us keep a check on our sewer lines to avoid problems in the future.

# Police Department

Cory Hert, Police Chief



The Police Department would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a safe and fun filled summer! With the summer season fastly approaching, please be mindful of the possibility of severe storms throughout our region. As a reminder CPD tests the city's early warning system the first Saturday of each month at 12:00 P.M. If we have an emergency situation be it weather or fire, the sirens will be activated to notify the public. The following is an explanation of each tone:

**Steady Tone:** 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)

**Intermittent Tone:** 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)

Emergency information will be provided by the National Weather Service when possible.

We will be working on a couple of projects this summer to improve the safety of our community and citizens. We are currently working with the Public Works Director to redo the school zone/speed limits signs around FBMS. There will be new signs erected on Olive and Box Elder to notify motorists of the school zone times and speeds. The current signage is unclear and does not signify times that the speed zone is enforced and the new signs should clear this up.

We are also working to install a complete upgrade to our 911 system. The new system has the capabilities for some improvements to quicken officer response times as well as those of our emergency services. There are two important functions associated with the new system that we are excited about; first we will have the capability to use reverse 911. Everyone knows to call 911 in the event of an emergency. Reverse 911 is a warning to the citizens about a developing emergency so that you can take the necessary steps to protect yourself, friends and family members. Secondly we will be installing a text to 911 option; text to 911 will enable users who may not have enough cell phone signal to call 911 to report an emergency or other situation via a text message. Texting during an emergency can also be helpful if you are deaf, hard of hearing, have a speech disability or if a voice call to 911 might otherwise be dangerous or impossible. The installation process for this new system will begin in July and we will update the community when the new functions are available for operation. The cost of this upgrade will be paid for through local 911 funds and not out of the city budget or general funds.

CPD would also like to thank the Rosebud County Public Health Department; RCPH has generously agreed to utilize current grant funds to purchase an AED (automated external defibrillator) for each patrol vehicle owned by the City. Their generosity will not only save precious time during medical responses to our citizens in need of this equipment, but will save the City over \$5000 had we purchased the AED's ourselves. All of our 911 dispatchers and police officers are currently certified to operate the AED's.

This is a brief overview of some of our upcoming improvements to increase our service to the community over the next few months. We are continually seeking opportunities to improve the safety of our community, our citizens and to provide the type of service you deserve.

Again, we hope you all have a safe, enjoyable and fun filled summer with family and friends!

# Schoolhouse History and Art Center

Lu Shomate, Director



The kids will be out of school and roaming through the neighborhoods. Watch out for our little community members – they will be everywhere. SHAC’s Summer Program will kick off June 8th – we have classes for children between the ages of 5-10; a Teen Program for ages 11-16; and our Adult Program for everyone young at heart and older than 16. You will need to sign up for these classes and class space is limited. If you are a member of the Schoolhouse classes are free, otherwise you will need to pay \$10 per class. Family memberships are \$35. We offer six classes per group in the Summer – so get your membership and save some money while you enjoy some fun at the Schoolhouse on Wednesdays starting June 8th.

Soon the 37th annual Juried Exhibit: Traveling Collection art show will be in our Gallery for the month of June ready for you to enjoy during Colstrip Days. Colstrip Days will be June 24-26th. The “Rosebud Story” will be in the Gallery from August through September and maybe even October depending on how well this will be received. We want to have stories and history from many of our families on Rosebud Creek – we hope we have great participation.

Many of you have been to the Schoolhouse for many of our classes, either through the CPRD After 5 Program, our Home Schooled Group, or maybe our Outreach Program in Lame Deer, Colstrip, and Forsyth – if you have – you know our Education Director, Tammy Venne. Tammy is leaving Colstrip the end of May to join her family in Missoula. We will miss this amazing instructor, friend, and staff member. We will continue our classes – they might look a little different, they might seem a little simpler, but I promise we will continue to bring smiles and memories to each of our students. Good Luck to Tammy Venne on her new life adventure!

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!

# Bicentennial Library

Mary Kay Bullard, Director



One of the big pushes now in library land is collaboration. Bicentennial Library is so fortunate that CPRD is collaborating with us on this year’s Summer Reading Program. We are also receiving wide support throughout the community. If you have not heard yet this year’s theme is “Get in the Game, Read.” This sports based theme has been a great opportunity for us to open our library doors and look to the people of Colstrip for collaboration and support. We have so many businesses and individuals to thank this year that we will be designing a thank you poster that highlights them all.

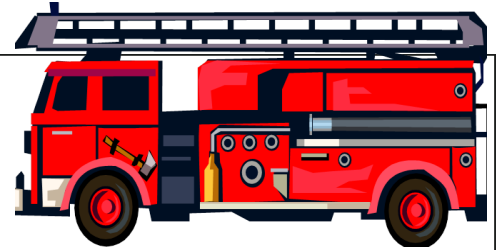
Bicentennial Library has collaborated with SHAC for years and did again this year at the kickoff event on May 26th. SHAC is responsible for the fantastic t-shirts that were created at the event. As I mentioned earlier, CPRD will be very involved in this year’s Summer Reading Program providing not only a venue for some of the library’s weekly activities but also additional promoting and help for the weekly activities. The Moose Lodge will provide the location for the final event, discounted pizza and French fry cards.

The program requirements have changed a little, we are not going to have graduated reading levels anymore. We are asking all our participants to try and read twenty minutes a day. This is not as much as it sounds, when you consider that audio books count as reading, comic books count as reading, reading the newspaper or a magazine counts as reading. The total weekly goal is 100 minutes a week, again this may sound like a lot, but when you stop and think about all the times during the day that you read, twenty minutes a day really is not as much as the number first suggests.

Tracy has a signup sheet for any and all young adults middle school age and up that are hungry for an afternoon snack. We would like you to please visit the library and sign up at the front counter so that Tracy can have an idea of how many kids she is buying food for. You may also call in your reservation or message on Facebook. Please remember though that unless you receive a message back, it may not have been read yet.

# Colstrip Volunteer Fire Department

## Fire Chief, Rob Pontius



It is time for Colstrip Days and Fourth of July. That means fireworks. The Colstrip Fire Department would like to take this time to remind you to be safe with fireworks. In the state of Montana, there are three types of fireworks that are outlawed. Sky rockets, roman candles, and bottle rockets are all illegal in this state. Do not buy them, and do not light them.

Here are 10 fireworks safety tips to keep in mind while enjoying your Fourth of July celebrations:

- 1) Fireworks packaged in brown paper are made for professional displays- avoid purchasing them
- 2) Always have an adult supervise fireworks activities, especially sparklers.
- 3) Back up a safe distance immediately after lighting fireworks.
- 4) Never point or throw fireworks at another person.
- 5) Keep a bucket of water or a hose to douse used fireworks and in case of fire.
- 6) Never allow young children to play with or ignite fireworks.
- 7) Never carry fireworks in your pocket.
- 8) Never try to relight or pick up fireworks that have not fully ignited.
- 9) Never place any part of your body directly over a firework device.
- 10) Never light fireworks off in a metal or glass container.

Keep these tips in mind and you will have a safe celebration. Remember, if a fire does start, call the fire department.

The Colstrip Fire Department is accepting applications. An application can be obtained from any Colstrip Firefighter. The qualifications to be a firefighter include passing a background check, passing a physical, and being physically fit. All firefighters who complete twenty years of service are eligible for a pension. Life insurance and AFLAC are also provided for all firefighters in good standing.

## Planning, Zoning & Code Official

### Denise Sisson

It's that time of the year to be on the lookout for NOXIOUS & INVASIVE WEEDS as they tend to take over. It has come to my attention that some of these weeds---especially Thistles and Spotted Knapweed are thriving in Colstrip yards.

Many weeds are toxic to various animals and cause difficulties for people with sensitivities. It takes all of Colstrip working together to keep NOXIOUS WEEDS at bay. Not only do your neighbors appreciate your considerateness, but Colstrip City Code requires this compliance. Your attention and help to rid your yard of INVASIVE WEEDS is greatly appreciated by all.

Should you need help in identifying your crop of NOXIOUS INVASIVE WEEDS, the Colstrip City Hall has copies of a booklet "MONTANA'S NOXIOUS WEEDS" by Monica Pokorny & Jane Mangold. It includes pictures and details of each of Montana's NOXIOUS WEEDS. Also our Montana County Weed District provides helpful information and can be reached at: telephone 406-346-7608, and address: PO Box 962, Forsyth, Mt. 59327.

The city receives many complaints concerning NOXIOUS WEED violations every year. Many more complaints go unreported because people do not wish to complain or cause other people problems. Be considerate of your neighbors. Code compliance is simply a part of living in a community. A special note of thanks and appreciation to our city public works crew, Talen Energy, and CPRD crew for the ever living job in this war against NOXIOUS WEEDS, a job often over looked.

*Planning, Zoning & Code Official cont. page 6*



# Rosebud County Public Health

Please join us for our 1st Annual Ice Cream Social on Tuesday, June 28th from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Held at Colstrip Public Health on 417 Willow Avenue.

Free ice cream with lots of toppings! Everyone is welcome.



## Bicentennial Library cont.

The Italians have a very small simple word to describe something every inclusive, like everybody. The word is Tutti, T. U. T.T. I. When we discuss library services, we are talking about tutti. You do not need to be certain gender, age or race to use a library. You just need to be human. We have parents bringing in babies some times that are only a few days old. We have people using our library that are in the twilight of their lives. We have girls and boys, your ethnic background is not going to gain you more services or cause you to receive less service. All the resources in the library are available to absolutely tutti.

If you are not a library user, you are missing out on some very cool and valuable resources that you already contribute to. Books are just a starting point; we also have e-books, magazines, newspapers, Wi-Fi, public computers and dvds. We offer programming throughout the year that is both fun and educational, and sometimes just silly. We have two ongoing book sales that you really should check out, because the prices that we offer items at are so incredibly low, they are almost impossible to beat.

## Planning, Zoning & Code Official cont.

Once again we have a wet spring in Colstrip. Sometimes it is difficult to keep the grass or weeds under the four inch (4") height as stipulated in code but remember it is the property owner's responsibility and letters will be going out to owners found in violation of this code.

I have noticed recently that several lots in town have started to accumulate an assortment of trailers, junk vehicles and debris. These accumulations of junk, as well as RV's, boats, trailers, snowmobiles and anything else that lays around gathering weeds underneath it instead of being properly put away or stored, are unsightly and infringe upon the rights and valuations of neighboring property owners. Letters will be going out to those property owners found in violation to remind them of the city codes that prohibit such accumulations.

And finally, please be aware that RV's and other recreational vehicles are not to be stored on public streets but on off street parking spaces. It is allowable to park on the streets for the short duration of 48 hours or 2 days. Safety becomes a problem when children on bikes or on foot dart in and out between parked cars and recreational vehicles etc. right into oncoming traffic.

If I can be of further help, please call 406-748-2300 ext. 2305. I am in and out of the office and if absent, please leave a message and I will get back to you as soon as possible.

Again, thanks for taking prompt attention of helping to control our NOXIOUS & INVASIVE WEEDS.

Working together keeps Colstrip strong.

# Colstrip United

**Co-Founders: Lori Shaw & Ashley Dennehy**

Thank you for your support of our Colstrip United Movement. We are so appreciative of all of the people who stand with us to win the War on Coal. We are thankful that we have been given the opportunity and the means to set out on this venture. Without support like yours we wouldn't have been able to reach over 3.5 million people in just a few short months. We are working tirelessly, day in and day out, to come up with new and innovative ideas to reach more people and to open up their eyes to how important energy really is.



Our mission is quite simple:

- To inform and inspire the citizens of Colstrip.
- To bring us together toward the goal of protecting our way of life.
- To inform the outside world about Colstrip, coal mining, our power plant and to fight the lies and ignorance surrounding coal with positivity and solid facts.

We believe in Coal and Colstrip and it is our sincerest hope that someday there won't be a "War on Coal" and that people will appreciate the things that coal does for Montana and the USA. There truly is coal behind every dollar in Montana and every dollar in this country.

We believe that energy can power us into an even brighter and more prosperous future. One where everyone has access to reliable and affordable energy. A world where a quarter of the World's population will have access to electricity. We believe that people in the energy sector are some of the best and brightest and that they can lead us into the future.

In Colstrip we have the 2nd largest coal fired power plant west of the Mississippi and we also have an incredible amount of coal located on the Western Energy Company's Rosebud Mine. Colstrip has an amazing quality of life. We have been coal miners and power plant workers for generations and we take great pride in the jobs we all do. We responsibly supply reliable power to over 1.5 million homes and are proud to keep the lights on. We are also proud to keep Montana's economy strong.

Please continue to be a part of our movement by liking our page, sharing it with friends, and helping spread the word about just how important coal is to our way of life. Colstrip United is more than just to save a town of 2300 people. It's about saving the way of life for all those that work in the industry. For all of those families that have great paying jobs.

We've enclosed a few items for you to help, "spread the word." People like yourself are some of our best ambassadors and we need you to help us with this. We are all in this together and we are stronger together.

Thank you again for joining us. We are Colstrip United!

Keep the Faith.

## Mayor's Message cont.

The personalities and the strength of these individuals is so reflective of what makes our community so special—Congratulations to them.

In closing my part of our newsletter, I would like to thank all that participated in the Governor's visit. Everyone that participated with their presence and all comments that were made had significant value. My heartfelt thanks to you all. I am very proud of all our residents.

These are very difficult times for us all—Keep the Faith, we are all in this together!

# Southeastern MT Development (SEMDC)

Jim Atchison, Executive Director

As you may know, Southeastern MT Development (SEMDC) is a regional non-profit economic development group that was established here in Colstrip in 1997 to stimulate and encourage economic activity in the four (4) Counties of Custer, Powder River, Rosebud and Treasure. Today, SEMDC continues to work with the private, public and non-profit sectors to help create and retain jobs in these counties and thus improve the economic base. For the past 15 years, I have had the privilege to serve as the Executive Director of SEMDC and live in Colstrip.

As you all are aware, there have been and will be a flurry of activity on coal related issues and thus impacts to our local economic base are coming. Our local economy is simply a "one horse town." The economic stability of Colstrip, Coal Country and in some ways, Montana, is being threatened by the "War on Coal", election year politics and misinformation / legal campaigns by radical environmental groups.

As I see it, there are currently Seven (7) Major Issues impacting Colstrip and Coal Country in different degrees:

- 1) Federal Clean Power Plan (Mandated CO2 reductions of 47% in MT - highest in the US),
- 2) Coal Lease Moratorium on Federal Land (Three years to study current process),
- 3) Washington and Oregon State Legislative Action on Coal Fired Power & Colstrip Operations,
- 4) Loss of State Revenue on the Otter Creek Coal Tracts (Billions of tax revenue - Schools, University Systems, etc.),
- 5) Increasing Legal Actions by Radical Environmental Groups,
- 6) Increasing favoritism of Renewables that requires taxpayer funded subsidies over Traditional Energy Resources and
- 7) Market supply of Natural Gas (The only item on this list that is a fair competitor)

While this list might seem unfair or unsolvable, there are still numerous benefits to living, raising a family and doing business in Colstrip and Rosebud County, such as:

- \* We enjoy a superior Quality of Life verses most, if not any other Montana City or Town,
- \* We have a Trained and Highly Educated Work Force,
- \* Colstrip benefits from having Four Productive Tax Districts:
  - City of Colstrip
  - Colstrip Medical Center
  - Colstrip Parks and Recreation District and
  - Colstrip School District,
- \* Public Infrastructure that is the envy of the state,
- \* An Abundant Fuel Source in the region - Coal,
- \* Transmission Lines, that are unique and highly desired,
- \* Industrial Site Development Opportunities:
  - Land, Water, Work Force, Rail and Power and
- \* Local Elected Officials and Community Leaders that are active and highly Respected.

Yes, storm clouds are on the horizon and change is probably coming but as a community, Colstrip still has numerous advantages and benefits to living and doing business here. Others recognize that as well. We, as residents just need to remember that, be active and tell others about our great community. As always, my staff and I are open to old and new ideas concerning our economic future. Feel free to stop by or contact us at 748-2990.