

# City of Colstrip

June 2017

## Mayor's Message



- **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.

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Although we weren't successful on a number of issues before the legislature this last session, we are going to continue with a positive outlook on the future of our City as we move forward. We have many challenges and projects before us to further enhance our City and the services we provide our residents.

We recently had a favorable ruling from the Montana Supreme Court regarding Larry Reinlasoder, the former City of Colstrip Police Chief.

This case has been very long and arduous. It began in May 2012 when Mr. Reinlasoder was terminated for misconduct and other issues. Reinlasoder appealed his termination and a jury trial was held in May 2015. The jury ruled in his favor and awarded him \$300,000 plus other costs. The city appealed this ruling and eventually this ruling was overturned in the city's favor. The City then filed a claim for reimbursement of certain costs on this case. The adjusted amount for these costs was \$5,354.50. This issue just went through an appeal process and was ruled in favor of the City. The City has prevailed on all the issues associated with Mr. Reinlasoder's termination. Although my summary on this case has been short, the case has lasted over five years involving many hours of litigation, appeals and volumes of paperwork.

The success of this case is a result of excellent teamwork with our city's employees, City Attorney Ryder, City Council, former Mayor Rose Hanser, Montana Municipal Interlocal Authority (MMIA) and Attorney Michael Lilly who represented both MMIA and the City of Colstrip. Congratulations to you all on a job well done and also thank you to our residents for your support.

The City will also be starting the Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvement Project later in May. This is a \$2.4 million dollar project. The funding for this project will come from the following: \$500,000, Coal Board Grant; \$1 million through bonding; and the remainder from the Sewer Fund and a Capital Contribution from the city's General Fund.

The Wastewater Treatment Plant was built in 1977 with wear and tear due to its age and use it is in serious need of replacements and improvements. A little history on this plant is the original construction cost was funded through the Coal Board. It was owned by Rosebud County and operated by Colstrip Community Services under an operating agreement with Rosebud County. It was not funded by the power plants as they have implied in their Senate Bill 338 questions and answers.

Although none of us are in favor of raising taxes or spending more money on gasoline, I did testify in support of House Bill 473. This was the increase in Gas Tax Bill to assist cities/counties and the state for highway infrastructure and law enforcement. This bill had my support because of the



*Mayor's Message cont. page 6*

# Public Works Department

**Bryan Swan, Public Works Director**



I hope everyone has been enjoying the weather we have been having this year. The temperatures have been fairly typical and we have had just enough precipitation to keep things green. I hope our good weather continues and doesn't surprise us with any more damaging hail like we have had the last couple years.

	<u>Average Highs/Lows</u>	<u>Precipitation</u>
January	28.5 - 8.5	.70
February	39.7 - 18.9	.31
March	49.9 - 28.3	1.55
April	56.5 - 35.2	2.28

I always include weather data in my newsletter article because of the long history I have had maintaining "official" National Weather Service Records for Colstrip. In the 1970s a weather station was kept at the Western Energy Mine office and the daily readings were taken by various WECO staff. Due to the need to consistently provide readings even on weekends the weather station was moved to the WECO office in town and then to the Wastewater Treatment Plant in 1982. Having the weather station there worked out well because the operators could take the weather readings daily. In the 1990s the weather station was moved to the Water Treatment Plant where it is today. The City of Colstrip continues to provide this service and the readings are still read and recorded daily with the National Weather Service. A few years ago, an automated weather station was purchased to provide real-time weather data for the City website. Although, the data on the website is not the official NWS record for Colstrip the readings usually run close to the official record.

This summer we are making two major upgrades to our infrastructure. On May 15th the Willow Avenue Reconstruction Project began. CMG Construction will be the general contractor on this job. The project will include replacement of the water main that runs from Highway 39 to Park Street. There will also be some repairs to the existing sewer main. The project will also include replacement of the pavement and subgrade. The medians will be replaced and most of the sidewalk and gutters will be replaced. New lighting will be provided along the corridor with new lighting and landscaping around the new "Welcome" sign. Although we will do our best to provide access to all residences and businesses along Willow some delays can be expected. Please use an alternate route whenever possible. I would like to thank our residents for their patience and cooperation during this much needed project.

May 22nd is the start date for the Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade Phase 1. This project involves repairing or replacing much of the 40 year old equipment at the sewage plant. Making these upgrades will optimize the treatment processes which will in turn help protect the health of our citizens. This reclaimed water is not discharged to Armells Creek but is used for irrigation of the Ponderosa Butte Golf Course. This project is partially funded by a \$500,000 Coal Board Grant. Karnath Contracting is the general contractor on this project.

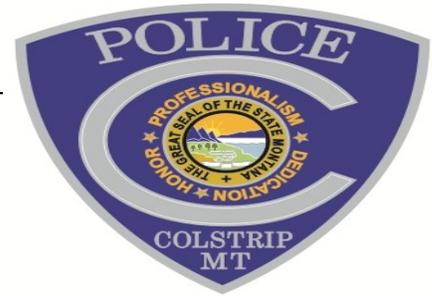
The Zone 3 Water Tank Replacement Project is still in the planning phase and includes replacement of the leaking water storage tank that supplies water to the City west of the highway. The High Service Pump Improvement Project is proceeding but acquiring or leasing a suitable piece of property on which to construct the new tank has proven to be a challenge. The City is working with Rosebud County and Talen Energy regarding the feasibility of two potential locations.

The Public Works Department has been fixing or replacing the hundreds of street signs that are broken, damaged or outdated with new signs that will meet new standards. Last winter was especially hard on pavement so the department will be repairing potholes that have been appearing in our streets. Winter was also hard on water mains so we will be repairing the excavation sites from several water main breaks.

Recently you might have seen Pace Construction out cleaning sewer mains. They are working on the second phase of our Sewer Collection System Maintenance Program. This program which started last year will help insure that the City meets its goal of cleaning all of the sewer mains in town at least once every three years. We try to do everything we can to prevent sewer backups but unfortunately many times sewer problems are beyond our control. Sometimes backups are caused by things being flushed that shouldn't be (you would be surprised at some of the things we see). Backups can be caused by objects thrown into manholes and many times tree roots will cause problems. Shifting or settling of the ground can break lines or cause problems with the slope. In some cases the main will need to be replaced like recently in the Alder Court area where the main was partially collapsed underneath the railroad tracks. Last

# Police Department

Cory Hert, Police Chief



We hope that you are all enjoying some much needed warm weather, after what seemed to be a very long winter it is a welcomed change! With the nice weather and the winding down of the school year we will see an increase of youth and adults out and about skateboarding, biking, walking etc., please be mindful of these youngsters and adults as you are driving through and around the community. Though bikers and skateboarders are “supposed” to follow the rules of the road, more often than not they don’t and occasionally they dart out in front of vehicles without regard for oncoming traffic. Again, keep an eye out for these individuals as I am sure none of you wants to be involved in any accident, let alone one involving an adult or child engaged in non-motorized modes of travel.

I am sure you are all aware of the Willow Avenue Construction Project by now. There will be an abundance of traffic signs around this area over the next couple of months while the project is being completed and we ask for your cooperation in obeying them. We understand there will be some inconveniences experienced during this construction, we are going through them as well and the signs and routes are for the safety of all of us as well as visitors to our community this summer. Also, please be cautious when driving around the construction area as there will be lots of trucks and heavy equipment coming and going and we do not want any of you to be involved in an accident with one of these pieces of machinery.

The Police Department has purchased body-worn cameras for every officer and we hope to have the support equipment installed and have them up and functional by the end of May. Once operational, these cameras will give us the ability to video record all interactions between our officers and members of the public during traffic stops, investigations, disputes and all other types of incidents. The body cameras were purchased not only to protect our community members, our officers and visitors, but can also be utilized as an investigative tool by administrative personnel to sustain or exonerate allegations made against an officer while interacting with a citizen during the performance of their duties. It is my belief that all law enforcement agencies throughout the country will be mandated sooner or later to issue and utilize these types of cameras in the near future so we will just be ahead of the game so to speak.

The summer heat and changing weather patterns brings opportunity for severe storm possibilities as well as fires throughout the region, as a reminder we do have a very good siren system in the community to alert citizens when a danger to the community exists and when it may be necessary to seek shelter. I am enclosing a copy of our Emergency Siren Policy below, if you are new to the community or have never seen it before please familiarize yourself and family members with it and note the evacuation shelters nearest to you:

## 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:***

***Police Department cont. page 6***

# 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 Registration will begin May 3rd. Classes will begin June 6th – we have classes for children ( Creative Kids) 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. New this year is Pre-K (2-5 year olds) class. There will only be three classes for this age group and Parent/Caregiver must attend each of the classes. 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 for the rest of the age groups in the Summer – so get your membership and save some money while you enjoy some fun family time at the Schoolhouse on Tuesday for the Tweens & Teens; Wednesday for the Creative Kids; and Thursday for the Adult Classes beginning June 6th. For further information you can view our website at [www.colstripshac.org](http://www.colstripshac.org) and click on the classes tab.

Soon the 38th 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 23-25th. The Summer months will be filled with lots of fun and excitement this year.

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, Stacy Batey. Stacy's Outreach Program will begin again in September while she concentrates on all the Summer classes offered at SHAC.

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



Bicentennial Library is amping up for the Build A Better World Summer Reading Program. Signup began May 19th at Pine Butte Elementary School and Bicentennial Library. Some activities you can look forward to are snow cones in the park and a visit with the founders of Colstrip United. We will be making Birdhouses at SHAC, have a special evening showing of Zootopia at Colstrip City Hall and we will be ending with a BBQ. The Summer Reading Program will run the month of June.

How important is daily reading? Would you like to be exposed or have your child exposed to 1.8 million words a year? Exposure to reading is important in developing vocabulary for fluency and comprehension. Students who scored 90% better than their peers on reading tests, read for more than **20 minutes a day – exposing them to 1.8 million words a year**. So what counts as reading? Reading a book, a magazine, listening to an audio book, reading an article online etc..... We are again going to promote the idea of reading 20 minutes a day. Or 100 minutes a week for the minimum. We are not going to have different reading goals for age levels. Autumn initiated this standard for last year's summer reading program and it works. We had more people sign up and stick with the summer reading program than we had in years past.

Another idea that was new last year and will be returning for this year's summer reading program is an adult reading program. Last year one of the top readers for the summer reading program was an adult. The top reader for last year was a middle school age boy. The staff and I will be excited to see who the top reader is this year.

The cookbook club met May 22nd at 6:00pm. They prepared recipes that they have found in novels. Please call Rachel at 406-748-3040 for more information about the cookbook club.

I really hope the word is out that Bicentennial Library lost our first Facebook Book Page. We are easier to find now. Just search Bicentennial Library of Colstrip and follow our business page. Sadly we have lost all the years of pictures that we had accumulated since Sue McKamey started the page in 2011. We would like if you have some library related pictures if you could share them with us. I believe that is the hardest

# Planning, Zoning & Code Official

Kami Egan



Once again we have had a wet spring in Colstrip. While I know the moisture is a welcome relief to many, it also means that the grass will need to be mowed more frequently. 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.

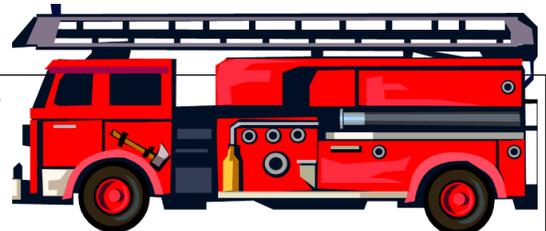
I have noticed recently that several lots in town have started to accumulate an assortment of trailers, junk vehicles and debris. These accumulations of junk, as well as RV's, boats, trailers, snowmobiles and any thing else that lays around gathering weeds underneath it instead of being properly put 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.

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

The city receives many complaints concerning the above violations every year. Many 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. Call if you have any questions or concerns.

## Colstrip Volunteer Fire Department

Fire Chief Rob Pontius



Warm weather is here! That means it's time to fire up the grill. Grilling food is one of the most popular ways to cook. But a grill placed too close to anything that can burn is a fire hazard. Nationally fire departments respond to over 7900 home fires involving grills annually.

Follow these few simple safety tips, and you can avoid becoming a statistic.

- \*Propane and charcoal grills should only be used outside.
- \*The grill should be placed well away from the home, deck railings, and out from under the eaves of the house.
- \*Keep children and pets away from the grilling area.
- \*Never leave your grill unattended.
- \*Check your propane grill's hoses for leaks before using it the first time each year.
- \*Keep charcoal lighter fluid out of reach of children.
- \*Only use charcoal lighter fluid to get your grill started.

Following these simple guidelines will help you to avoid having one of the 5000 grill involved fires outside, or the 2900 structure fires attributed to grills. Remember June and July are the peak months for grill fires.

If you do have a grill fire, promptly call 911. The quicker you call, the quicker the fire department can stop the fire and prevent a disaster.

## Mayor's Message cont.

benefits we will all receive with additional available funding for our roads, streets and highways. Every city, town and county will more than double the funds currently received through the existing allocation.

Colstrip currently receives \$45,947 based on the 1983 allocation. In 2018 this allocation will increase by \$40,179 which is a partial increase. In 2019 this will increase by \$47,630 or a new total of \$93,577. In 2023 when the tax is fully implemented Colstrip's allocation will be \$109,276. This is a tremendous benefit to our City and residents.

The Willow Avenue Reconstruction Project has begun. The award on this project went to CMG Construction. This project is a \$1.8 million dollar project which includes engineering fees, this project is long overdue. It was important for us to set aside funds over the last few years for us to be able to afford it. This project will also involve sidewalk restoration and some water and sewer reconstruction and replacement. The project is expected to be completed in 90 days from the start.

On behalf of the City of Colstrip, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Representative Geraldine Custer, Senator Duane Ankney and Senator Jason Small for their work in this past legislative session. They truly reflect the values of dedicated public servants working on behalf of their constituents. We are extremely blessed to have these three talented knowledgeable representatives working on our behalf in Helena.

## Police Department cont.

1.
  - 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)
  
- E. Further Notifications
 

Upon completion of activation of the sirens, the on-duty 911 Dispatcher will call and notify the security office at TALEN Energy. This will be done so they can activate their siren systems on site to alert personnel inside their facilities that may not be able to hear the City notification. TALEN will also be notified on the testing days as well (First Saturday of the month at 12:00 P.M. (Noon) so they can test their equipment in conjunction with ours.

We hope you all have a safe enjoyable summer and we look forward to working with all of you toward the continued success of our community and the safety of our citizens!

# Southeastern Montana Development Corp. (SEMDC)

Director Jim Atchison

Colstrip based Southeastern MT Development (SEMDC) is a regional economic development group that was established to encourage economic activity in the four (4) Counties of Custer, Powder River, Rosebud and Treasure. Today, SEMDC continues to work with the private, public (City of Colstrip and Rosebud County) and non-profit sectors to help create / retain jobs and thus improve the economic base.

As we all know, 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 disinformation / legal campaigns by radical environmental groups. Here's a couple of Major Updates that have occurred recently:

1) **The Montana Legislative Session** (January-April 2017)

a) 12 Bills were introduced that directly impacted Colstrip / Coal Country. Of the 12 Bills, 5 were Tabled / Killed. The remaining Seven (7) were passed by the Legislature and Six (6) of those were signed into Law by the Governor. As of this report, only One (1) remained on the Governors desk.

b) Breakdown of the Bills that were Passed / Signed into Law:

\* HB - 3: General Supplemental Bill - Had \$1.9 million in Coal Board Funding awarded in the last Biennium. This Bill awarded Colstrip a fire truck and Miles City with a portion of an ambulance.

\* HB - 22: Set aside funds for the State of MT to intervene with the Puget Sound Energy Rate Base Case in Washington State. The MT Department of Justice now has a budget to represent Montana before the Washington Public Service Commission. The supply availability and cost of replacement power from the retirement of Units #1 and #2 would be heard before the Commission with MT involved.

\* HB - 209: Extended Coal Board Funding at the current rate of 5.8% for another 2 years. Without HB-209 passing, the Coal Board Funding would have probably been about 1/2 of the previous two years. This was a major victory for Coal Country.

\* HB - 585: Allows the Colstrip Power Plant owners to apply for low-interest loans from the Coal Trust Fund. Loans could be available for \$10 million per year up to 5 years.

\* SB-140: Senator Ankney wanted to give the City of Colstrip the option (if needed) to apply for low-interest loans from the Coal Trust Fund. This would ensure any loss of tax revenue from the early retirement of Units #1 and #2 to be offset with a loan in-order to pay any debt service from outstanding bonds / financial obligations. As of this report, SB-140 was not yet signed into Law by the Governor.

\* SB - 339: Senator Ankney's Bill created the Coal-Fired Generating Unit Remediation Act. This major Bill would require the MT DEQ to work with the owners of Units #1 and #2 to ensure any and all remediation needs not already covered by clean-up bonding were adequately addressed at the sites.

\* SJ - 5: Created a joint resolution of the MT Legislature requesting an Interim Study to investigate threats to the mining and burning of coal in MT and the consequences of significant reductions in coal mining and usage. This would be Note: There were a couple of Bills Signed into Law that also helped the local school district positively.

Note: There were a couple of Bills signed into law that also helped the local school district positively.

2) SEMDC is involved with **Three (3) Studies** that have major findings and ties to Colstrip. The basic details are as follows:

a) The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a four (4) county or regional economic development plan which is revised by SEMDC every five (5) years. The objective is to remain certified with Federal EDA and State CRDC Programs with consistent regional economic and community planning efforts. SEMDC accomplishes this by conducting seven (7) Town Meetings to record public input via a SWOT analysis. The outcomes are then shared with key stakeholders for possible action, time frames and investment opportunities. This CEDS Plan is actually a regional development roadmap with annual updates and has a completion date of June 30, 2017.

## Southeastern Montana Development Corp. (SEMDC) cont.

b) The **Coal Country Coalition (CCC)** Study titled "The Changing Coal Industry: Regional Economic Impacts, Workforce Analysis and Transition Strategies" was a regional effort of four (4) economic development groups serving 15 Counties. The objective was to identify accurate coal revenues for Montana and identify/create a directory of workforce training opportunities for possible displaced coal industry personnel. Recommendations were made to the CCC and the State of Montana by the out-of-state contractor which completed the study in March.

c) The **Colstrip Economic Diversification Strategy** was a major and lengthy local effort by SEMDC. The objective was to develop a strategy to help diversify the economic base of Colstrip. The subject and need was reinforced and requested during the October 2015 Colstrip CEDS Town Meeting. SEMDC hosts these meetings in seven regional communities each year to gauge and record issues and opportunities within each community. In 2016, SEMDC was able to obtain three (3) grants and hired KLJ (Billings/Bismarck) as the independent contractor in November of 2016. The three grant awards consisted of a federal EDA POWER (1 of 2 grants in an 8 state region), MT Coal Board and the MT Big Sky Trust Fund grants. Community Input Sessions were held in December 2016 and March 2017 to engage the residents and allow for public participation.

The Strategy was released to the public at a local Press Conference on May 19th. KLJ noted Six (6) Goals with 17 Strategies within those Goals. The next step will be the Implementation Phase that will allow the community to participate in local Task Forces to champion specific strategies and move the opportunities forward. Each Task Force will most likely consist of local residents, private sector and public sector representatives. The entire Strategy with the Goal Recap and the Executive Summary can be found at [www.semdc.org](http://www.semdc.org) or stop by our Colstrip office at 6200 Main Street to view the documents.

As always, my staff and I are open to any old or new ideas concerning our economic future. Feel free to stop by or contact us at 748-2990.

## Bicentennial Library cont.

part of losing our first Facebook Page. We are still able to communicate with Facebook. Please feel free to message us for renewals or to submit minutes and hours read during the summer reading program.

The staff of Bicentennial Library looks forward to a great summer serving the wonderful people who live in and around Colstrip. Let's have a great summer!

## Public Works Department cont.

year the City purchased a new pipe inspection camera which will help us identify problem areas.

The City provides a recycling program. Containers are located in the parking lot north of City Hall. One container is for cardboard only and the other is for aluminum cans only. Although newspaper has been previously accepted Miles City Sanitation has informed us they will no longer recycle newspapers. They may not accept aluminum cans soon if newspaper continues to be put into this container. Please do not put paper in this container. There is a small building next to the containers in which to put articles of clothing etc. Please no dumping of appliances, furniture, mattresses etc. here. It not only looks awful but the City ends up hauling these things to the landfill. Please call Eastern Montana Industries at (406) 243-3740 to arrange a pick up for these larger items. The City will also accept used oil by stopping by City Hall.

The City has been spraying weeds with most of the bare ground areas (guardrails etc.) already finished with weeds along curbs etc. to begin soon. We will spray knapweed on City property and right-of-ways in the fall. We will also spray for mosquitoes throughout the summer. The whole town will be sprayed one to two times a week or as needed.