

# City of Colstrip

February 2018

## Mayor's Message



- Mayor John Williams
- Greg Koczur
- Jolene Verlanic
- Mike Esser
- Lori Shaw

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

City Offices open  
8:00 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>Public Works</i>	2
<i>Police Department</i>	3
<i>Planning/Zoning/Code</i>	
<i>Schoolhouse History and Art Center</i>	4
<i>Colstrip United</i>	5
<b>SEMDC</b>	6



I would like to begin this message by wishing all our residents a most joyous, happy, safe and prosperous New Year. We are looking forward to a New Year with a renewed vim and vigor and opportunities of serving our residents.

Thank you to all our city employees, City Council members, and volunteers for their work and dedication to our city.

Thank you to Tom Jankowski for his eight years of service as a City Council member. Tom provided a lot of insight and common sense to issues that we worked through in city government. Particularly in areas of employee relations and understanding the value of employee relations.

I would like to welcome Lori Shaw to our city government as she takes on her new role as a Colstrip City Council member.

With the recent completion of our yearly audit a Management Discussion and Analysis is prepared for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2017. This report offers a financial review and narrative overview of the financial activities of our city. It provides the financial highlights of our city's business activities and a history comparison. Most importantly, it also gives readers an indication of the city's financial health and the direction the city is moving toward as it relates to its financial health.

As this document is read, it's interesting to go back in time to review our past and how far we have come in our 18 years as an incorporated city. Beginning in 1999 with newly elected officers, new employees and borrowing \$60,000 to begin our city operations.

The city continues to be challenged with discussion and threats of closure Units I & II at the generating station which are destined for closure in 2022. Over 75% of the jobs within our city are directly related to the energy industry and our tax base depends upon the coal powered steam electric units within our city limits. The ever changing requirements and regulations add to the instability for industry to move forward with long term planning along with valuable research and development at local, state and national levels.

Looking toward the future the financial health of our city remains strong and continues to improve. When I look at our last year's activities with the question, are we better or worse off the answer is we are much better off. With the continued support of our employees, city government officials and backing of our residents I am very optimistic of our city's future.

The Management Discussion and Analysis along with the city's financial statements are available to the public and I encourage your interest.

As a result of the recent Puget Sound Energy Rate Case settlement with their regulating commission \$10,000,000 has been set aside for Colstrip community impact. The Governor has created a Colstrip Community Impact Advisory group to develop a plan to guide the disbursement of the \$10,000,000. I will be part of this committee along with other state and local officials. The first meeting is scheduled for January 29, 2018 at Colstrip City Hall. The city will be hosting this first meeting.



ZingerBug.com

# Public Works Department

**Bryan Swan, Public Works Director**



When I sat down before Christmas to begin writing my newsletter article I had begun with some comments about how mild the weather has been so far this winter. But fast forward a week and now as I look out at a sea of white my observations are a sobering reminder about how quickly Mother Nature can change her mind. We got hit the last few days of the year with over a foot of snow, wind and bitterly cold temperatures which is great for polar bears but not so great for humans. For the Public Works Department we are out braving the storm and digging out the streets from under all this white stuff. I would like to thank all residents and let you know we really appreciate your patience and understanding as the Public Works Department performs these duties.

	Average Highs/Lows	Precipitation	Snow
October	59.5 – 32.3	.72	T
November	45.8 – 25.3	1.06	5.0
December	34.4 – 16.8	2.24	14.5

The City fields many questions and complaints about snow and ice in Colstrip. I want to share the following information with the community as a whole.

### When will my street get plowed or sanded?

The Public Works Department does not have a “street crew”. Taking care of the streets is one of the many duties that are performed daily which include refuse collection and the operation and maintenance of a large water and wastewater treatment infrastructure. The City has over 22 miles of streets covering 6 square miles. The City simply doesn’t have the resources to keep all streets clear at all times during snowfalls. Many times there are vehicles parked on the streets which create a safety issue for the public as well as the Public Works crew. This causes delays in plowing some of these areas and some may simply not get plowed at all. Because our resources are limited, hauling snow away from our streets is not an option. And because the equipment required in taking care of our streets gets worked hard, keeping equipment maintained and running during these storms can be a challenge and some delays are simply caused by mechanical breakdowns.

The Public Works Department has set up a priority system, however, the time required to clear the roads also depends on conditions such as the snowstorm timing, intensity, duration and temperature. The city’s priorities are based on school bus routes, emergency services, and the most heavily used streets.

**Priority 1** are the City’s main arterials, which include Pine Butte Drive, Power Road, Willow Avenue, Olive Drive, Homestead Boulevard, Castle Rock Lake Drive, Lakeview Court and Main Street. When we have storms with large amounts of snow these streets can be plowed several times during the day.

**Priority 2** streets are next, which include Cherry Street, Currant Drive, Spruce Street, Box Elder Avenue, Poplar Drive, Browning Drive, Cimarron Drive, Laramie Circle, Piedmont Drive, Vista Drive, Chisholm Drive, Chinook Drive, Prospector Drive, Zane Grey Circle, Appaloo-sa Drive, Cheyenne Drive, Sweetgrass Drive, Prairieview Drive, and Antelope Drive. All remaining streets and cul de sacs are plowed as time allows which may be 2 or 3 days following a snow event.

### Why does the City plow snow onto my sidewalk or driveway when I’ve already cleared it?

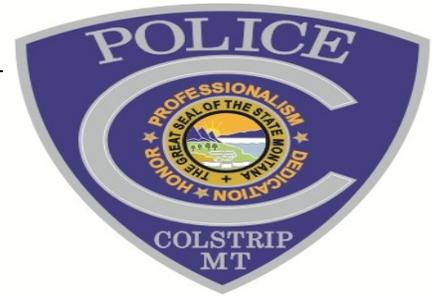
We understand that this situation frustrates residents when it occurs. Rest assured, we do not do this intentionally. We always try our best to keep from blocking driveways and sidewalks but to clear snow from the streets it must be moved to the side. Although many residents shovel their sidewalks early, our plows often come through after that time especially in residential areas, based on our priority system. Clean up and widening operations may take place for several days after a storm depending on the severity of the weather. We’re sorry for the inconvenience, but hope you appreciate our efforts to keep the roads passable.



**Public Works Department cont. page 7**

# Police Department

**Cory Hert, Police Chief**



The Police Department hopes you all had a safe, relaxing and enjoyable holiday season with friends and family and we wish you all a Happy and Prosperous New Year!

The City has partnered with the Colstrip School District to provide a School Resource Officer in the District. This will be on a trial basis of 20 hours per week for the remainder of this school year. The officer will rotate his time through all 3 schools within the district with most being spent at the high school. We are eager to implement this officer within the district to increase and foster a safer learning environment for our youth as well as district employees. It is our hope that this partnership will be the stepping stone to an excellent working relationship between our two entities where we can work hand in hand to not only keep students and employees safe, but to prevent and alleviate drug/alcohol use and other criminal activities within the district through both enforcement and education.

With both entities working toward the same goals we will be able to have a better understanding of the needs within the district as well as exposing our youth to positive law enforcement activities. I feel this is a win win situation not only for the member partners but for the entire community!

The trial basis of 20 hours per week will have minimal to no affect on the budgets of the City or the School District. At the end of the trial period in May/June this year, City and District administrators will meet again to evaluate the SRO program. Options at that time will include continuing on a part-time 20 hour per week basis, increasing to a full-time 40 hours per week position if necessary or discontinuance of the SRO program. I do not foresee discontinuance, I truly believe this partnership will be beneficial for the entire community. Should we decide to move to a full-time position, then we will have to work out funding options between both entities at that time.

We hope you continue to enjoy your winter activities while they last and again we would like to wish all of you a very successful New Year!

# Planning, Zoning & Code Official

**Kami Egan**



With this time of year comes snow and with everything else being buried, so are our sidewalks. We need to be aware, stay concerned, and help out by shoveling the sidewalk in front of our homes. Not only is it the neighborly thing to do, it is the Property Owner's responsibility.

Clear sidewalks make it easier and safer to get around. They are important for everyone using sidewalks, but they are especially important for seniors, people with disabilities and children. Snow or ice-covered sidewalks force people to walk in the street and that is unsafe.

Please remember that after a snowstorm it is the property owner's responsibility to remove accumulated snow and ice from the sidewalk within a reasonable period of time. Failure to comply may cause the city to remove the snow at the owner's expense.

Thank you and be considerate of your neighbors, as we all help keep Colstrip a Strong Caring Community!

# Schoolhouse History and Art Center

Tyler Egan, Director



I recently had the opportunity to sit back and really reflect on all of the events from this past year and was pleasantly surprised to realize that I was not only very grateful but also content. From welcoming a newborn into the mix to a new career out of the blue it was just easiest to put my head down and deal with each day's dilemmas as they came. It didn't take long before one day bled into the next and everything simply became routine. Looking back now I am thankful that I was allowed to trip and fall where I did and to have had the opportunity to learn and grow from it. It seems like such a small snippet of time but there are many things that I am very proud to have planned and participated in. Now each passing day helps to stoke the fire of motivation as I can't wait to see what exciting new changes are in store for the future.

Here at the Schoolhouse History & Art Center we will be closed for the month of January as we do every year for annual maintenance and painting. Before you know it February will be here and SHAC is pleased to announce we will once again be hosting "Gone to Pieces" the Colstrip Quilt Club all through the month so please stop by for a visit and vote for your favorite masterpiece. The closing reception and awards ceremony will be held on Sunday February 25th and the Schoolhouse History & Art Center would love to see you bring the whole family along for a wonderful experience everyone can enjoy.

As always, the Board and Staff at SHAC thank you for your patronage, your contribution through volunteering, your financial support through membership, your kind words when you stop in and your partnership in making Colstrip a wonderful community. Because of you and your participation, we can offer wonderful education programs, speakers, share our history and offer Gallery Shows to our communities for many years to come. Thank you Colstrip!

# Bicentennial Library

Mary Kay Bullard, Director



You may be surprised to learn that more than half of Colstrip residents use the Bicentennial Library every month. Half! That's about 1,155 people a month who come to our library for services. Most months we serve more than 1,155 people. The downturn in Rosebud County revenues has hit us here in the library. Our budget, which was pretty close to the bone already, has been cut by \$4,800.00 from our 2016 budget.

You might say, "I'm not really a reader, I don't use the library."

You should know our patrons come to us for so much more than books. One in three library users at Bicentennial depend on us for internet access. If you have heard of the 'digital divide', this is it. 20.6% of Rosebud County lives in poverty, higher than the national average of 14.7%. The majority of those in poverty are women and girls.

Library patrons need to use our computers and free wifi for school work, job search, email, gameplay, word processing, and information on every topic you can imagine from Chevy's to colonoscopies. Think of what you use your computer for. We are closing this divide for residents who don't have a computer or internet. We also provide support for those who need help with computer related searches.

Bicentennial Library endeavors to offer programming for all ages, bringing us together as a community and inspiring lifelong learning.

Our children's programming is designed to inspire children to love books and reading. The summer reading program keeps kids and adults reading during the school break and engaged in fun learning activities. Doctors are finding a lifetime of reading may help to prevent diseases like Alzheimer's, helping us to develop a cognitive reserve that may re-enforce our memories as we age.

Families gather at our "public living room" to watch movies, play games and to interact with friends and neighbors. We offer a safe place for older kids to work on assignments after school. We have free DVD's for no cost family entertainment. You can request to borrow a book from another library in Montana or ask that a book be purchased for our library. Folks come to read the daily newspaper and a wide variety of periodicals.

*Bicentennial Library cont. page 7*

# Colstrip United

Lori Shaw, Co-Founder & Director

## #MiningMatters

Happy New Year Colstrip!

The Colstrip United Movement is nearly 2 years old! January 21st marks the day when our community decided to start standing up and speaking out in defense of our way of life back in 2016. Looking back on the last two years, we are SO grateful for all of the love, support, and encouragement we have received not just from our town, but from supporters all across the state and country. These people have made everything that our organization does possible!

### Overview of Colstrip United:

MISSION: Inform, Promote, Inspire.

We strive to educate the public about the importance of coal and coal energy and to fight the negative stigmas surrounding coal with positivity and solid facts.

Colstrip United is a movement that is entirely run by volunteer labor. None of the volunteers are paid for their efforts--not even the director. We are a true grassroots organization. Colstrip United is a non-profit organization under the 501-c-3 umbrella of the Quality Of Life Corporation, a non-profit based in Colstrip and registered with the Secretary of State.

## BE A COLSTRIP UNITED SPONSOR IN 2018!

### What is the money used for?

- **Travel expenses** are a large part of Colstrip United's budget. Over the past two years we have been invited by groups all over Montana and even in other states to share our story of activism and to make the case for coal mining and coal energy. We would never be able to spread our message at these engagements without help from our sponsors and supporters. We also traveled to Helena multiple times to lend our voice during the last legislative session, and when possible we plan to keep attending public comment hearings of any kind that deal with issues that will impact Montana's coal industry.
- **Sponsoring our posts on our social media** outlets is another large part of our budget. Our ability to sponsor our posts on Facebook is one big reason why we gained over 16,800 followers so quickly. By sponsoring our posts, we can make sure that more people see them.
- **Maintaining our website** [www.colstrip-united.org](http://www.colstrip-united.org), and keeping our domain name.
- **Maintaining our equipment** associated with creating and editing our informational videos and infographics.
- **Printing** our pamphlets, magnets, stickers, shirts, and the other things that have become well-known in every corner of the state.

### Donations can be sent to:

Colstrip United  
PO Box 2083  
Colstrip, MT 59323

## What are Colstrip United's goals for 2018?

1. Attend and comment at public hearings on issues that will affect the Montana coal industry.
2. Continue creating videos and infographics that illustrate the importance of coal and coal energy.
3. Continue battling the misinformation that is put forth by anti-coal groups.
4. Create more alliances with other pro-coal organizations.
5. Create alliances with people in other communities that benefit from Colstrip power.
6. Seek out new, engaging ways to activate the general public, encouraging them to speak out on behalf of Montana's coal industry.

Want to help us? Have a question or suggestion? Email us at [colstrip.united@gmail.com](mailto:colstrip.united@gmail.com)

God Bless

# Southeastern Montana Development Corporation

## Jim Atchison, Director

Colstrip based Southeastern MT Development (SEMDC) is a regional economic development group that was established in 1997 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 the non-profit sectors to help create / retain jobs and thus improve the economic base within this region. Here's a couple of Major Updates that have occurred recently:



- 1) The **SEMDC 20th Anniversary Celebration** was held on December 19th at our Colstrip office. Special thanks go out to all of you that attended and helped us recognize and highlight those success stories that SEMDC was a part of since 1997. Over the past 20 years, SEMDC has been part of creating or retaining at least 1,027 jobs and over \$36.5 million in total investments within our economic base.
- 2) As many of you know, the **Colstrip Economic Diversification Strategy** was a major and productive effort by SEMDC that was completed and released on May 19th, 2017. The objective was to develop a strategy to help diversify the economic base of Colstrip. The need was reinforced and requested during the October 2015 Colstrip CEDS Town Meeting. In 2016, SEMDC was able to obtain three (3) grants and hired KLJ (Billings/Bismarck) as the independent contractor to produce the Strategy. When completed, KLJ noted Six (6) Goals with 17 Strategies within those Goals. Since June, SEMDC has been very busy with the Implementation Phase. Significant interest in Colstrip opportunities have been received from Washington State to Washington DC. Currently, SEMDC is working with 5-6 firms interested in Colstrip including additional Broadband capacity being installed by Range Telephone. Our Strategy contractor (KLJ) recently received a state-wide planning award because our Strategy. 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.
- 3) Our **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)** is a four (4) county economic development plan which is revised every five (5) years with consistent regional economic and community planning efforts. This CEDS Plan is actually a development roadmap with annual updates and was completed on June 30, 2017. Since then, SEMDC has shared numerous opportunities identified within our CEDS with stakeholders in an effort to move forward possible projects. Recently, our CEDS was nominated by the Denver regional Economic Development Administration (EDA) to be showcased nationally by the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO). Their five page highlight of the SEMDC CEDS Planning Document and Process can be viewed on the following Link: [www.nado.org/ceds-spotlight-semdc/](http://www.nado.org/ceds-spotlight-semdc/)
- 4) The **Colstrip Community Impact Advisory Group** was recently appointed by Governor Bullock and Attorney General Fox. The Group was formed as a result of a settlement agreement in Washington State with Puget Sound Energy (PSE) and other groups how best to mitigate economic and community impacts as Units #1 and #2 are closed out in 2022. I feel this process will play out over the next few years as the Group will try to minimize the impacts, yet maximize current and future opportunities.
- 5) **New SEMDC Board Director, Jack Standa** was officially appointed by the SEMDC Board of Directors during their December 19th meeting. Mr. Standa, General Manager of the Western Energy Rosebud Coal Mine, will represent the Major Industry Category and will serve a two year term.
- 6) A **Regional Cattle Feedlot/ Processing Facility** was recently proposed as part of a \$300 million deal with a Chinese firm to import Montana cattle over the next few years. The Feedlot / Processing Facility is a \$100 million investment and could be located within the SEMDC service region. Value-added Ag opportunities were also highly mentioned in the Colstrip Diversification Strategy noted above. It is unlikely that this cattle facility would be sited in Colstrip but sites in Custer, Treasure and Rosebud Counties would be an excellent choice.

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.

## Mayor's Message cont.

I would like to invite comments, ideas and interest from our residents into this process. I am very interested in what you have to say as this moves forward.

Recently, the city was notified Talen is protesting \$246,231.80 of its first half property taxes total \$359,007.43. It appears Talen is basing its protest on a disagreement of its property value assessment. The city's portion of the protested taxes is \$38,278.81. This protest of its taxes will have minimal impact on the city's finances. It is interesting that Talen is following its predecessor (PPL Montana) and Puget Sound Energy with a tax protest. Another interesting aspect of these tax protests is that these protested taxes have had minimal impact on our city's finances other than the additional administrative work involved.

The statutes governing protested taxes allows the taxing authority to recover adjustments to its appropriations from tax payers either through adjustment to its mills or through a special levy. I question the value or logic of what Talen is attempting to accomplish.

## Bicentennial Library cont.

Does a town the size of Colstrip, really need a library?

The library staff wants to talk to you about the impact the library has had on your life and any concerns you may have. Can we do without a service or diminish a service that half the residents in this community use? We would greatly appreciate your input, your solutions and your help. We want our library to continue being a vital part of Colstrip with your assistance, it will be.

## Public Works Department cont.

### What are my responsibilities regarding snow removal?

Property owners, including residents and businesses, are responsible for clearing their sidewalks of ice and snow after the snow has stopped falling. If the snow or ice is so hard it is difficult to remove, property owners may use sand or another abrasive material on the sidewalk to make it reasonably safe until the weather permits clearing the walkway. Residents may also need to clear snow from their driveways and curbs to make them passable.

### What if I have an emergency and my street isn't plowed?

As in any emergency, call 911. Emergency agencies are in contact with our public works staff during storm conditions and can ask to divert snow plowing equipment if necessary.

### What can I do to help?

There are several steps community members can take to help ensure their safety during winter storm conditions, including the following:

- Do not drive unless necessary.
- Snow is a fact of life in Montana so have your car adequately prepared with snow tires or chains.
- Drive at reduced speeds, brake slowly and leave extra space between vehicles.
- Maintain a safe distance from snow plowing equipment, pass plows with extreme caution, and watch for abrupt snow plow movements.
- Do not park along the main routes and in residential areas move vehicles off the street if possible.
- When possible residents should help seniors or physically challenged people who need assistance with snow removal. Help your neighbors to clear the snow in your area, and consider volunteering to help community members who are elderly or physically unable to clear their driveways and sidewalks.

## Public Works cont.

### **Does the City use salt on the streets?**

For the last few years the City has been applying deicer to the streets. We tried using a liquid deicer but the application of the product was difficult and it did not prove to be very affective. We began using a dry product called Ice Slicer that we mix at a 50/50 ratio with sand but we can apply it straight if needed. We have had good luck with this combination for its use has cut down the amount of time needed to clear the streets and intersections. It also cuts down on the time needed to sweep the sand off the streets in the spring.

Ice Slicer is an OMRI-certified organic blend mined from a halite deposit in Southern Utah. It is a blend of complex chlorides, with trace minerals like calcium, iron, magnesium, manganese, phosphorous, potassium and zinc. The chemical combination helps minimize the effects of sodium chloride on vegetation and the environment.

### **What about vehicles parked on the streets?**

City Ordinance No. 03-01 requires that from November 1<sup>st</sup> through April 1<sup>st</sup> snowmobiles, boats, recreational vehicles, campers, camper trailers, motor homes, utility trailers, sport vehicles, passenger buses, ATV's and overhead campers may not be parked on city streets or city property for a period longer than forty-eight hours (2 days). The storage of such vehicles on city streets impedes traffic and makes it difficult and unsafe for snow plowing, garbage collection and street cleaning.