

# City of Colstrip Newsletter

Spring 2020

## 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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As I begin this newsletter it will be on a positive note with assurances to our residents as we deal with the issues associated with coronavirus. We all need to work together with the assurance that this too will pass. Your City will continue to work effectively in all areas of our responsibility for the services that we provide to our residents. There will be no shortcuts or issues of non-compliance with any of the services that we provide.

The City has responsible supervisors in all areas that are knowledgeable and efficient and will provide the safeguards for the protection of all our residents. You have assurance from me that I will perform the duties of my office that I have sworn to uphold. We all need to work together, not panic and be supportive of one another.

In other important matters that I will include in this newsletter is the action the City is undertaking regarding NorthWestern Energy's Application with the Montana Public Service Commission (MPSC) regarding additional ownership of unit 4. The City has filed a petition with the MPSC to intervene in this filing. Our petition to intervene has been accepted by the MPSC and the points of this intervention are as follows:

1. The City of Colstrip is a Montana municipal corporation located in Rosebud County. Colstrip is the location of Colstrip Units 3 and 4, two coal-fired electric generation facilities. The current owners of these plants are Avista Corporation, NorthWestern Energy LLC, PacificCorp, Portland General Electric, Talen Energy and Puget Sound Energy, Inc.
2. Puget Sound Energy, Inc. has proposed to sell 185 megawatts (MWs) of Colstrip unit 4 to NorthWestern Energy Inc. (NorthWestern). NorthWestern has requested the Public Service Commission approve that transaction by October 2020.
3. The City of Colstrip supports the NorthWestern application for approval of the purchase of the 185 MWs from Puget Sound Energy, Inc. Colstrip submits that the proposed transaction provides the most practical and economically viable proposal for the

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## Mayor's Message Continued

continued operation of Units 3 and 4 of the Colstrip Electric Generating Plants.

4. The continued operation of Colstrip Units 3 and 4 also serve the public's interest. Montana customers will continue to have a reliable and proven energy source in a region that endures sub-zero temperatures.
5. The NorthWestern proposal will also allow the continued use of the Colstrip transmission lines for a proposed electric wind-generation project by NextEra Energy to be located in Custer, Garfield and Rosebud counties in Montana.
6. The continued operation of Units 3 and 4 are essential to the City of Colstrip as a vital community in the region. Colstrip is a safe, educated and stable community with a reliable work force and has a strong economic impact throughout southeastern Montana.
7. The City of Colstrip public water supply is also dependent upon the operations of Units 3 and 4. The current raw water transportation agreement between the Power Plant operator and the City is based upon the continued operation of the Power Plants.

A full copy of the petition to intervene is available at City Hall.

Another important matter that is before us is the request from Clearwater Energy Resources to build a high-voltage electric transmission line through our City to connect to the 500 KV transmission line that originates at the power plants. The request is a conditional use permit and zoning variance that will be placed before the Zoning Commission and the City Council.

This transmission line is from the wind farm to be located in Northern Rosebud County, 85 miles to the north of Colstrip. The proposed plan is in the preliminary stages and will involve a public information meeting and public hearing prior to any action by the City. The public will be kept informed and the process will be very transparent.

As we move forward with the many challenges in our future I would like to end this article with our mission statement. It is very positive and we need to keep our attitude positive.

### City of Colstrip Mission Statement

**To build upon the City's slogan of 'Tomorrow's Town Today' by enhancing the high quality of life of our residents through improvement of provided services and upgrading our infrastructure, fostering pride in our Energy Resource Heritage and developing a vibrant, diverse economy by proactively planning for our future.**

# Public Works Department

Bryan Swan, Public Works Director



We have had typical weather in Colstrip this winter. In light of the winters we have had the last couple years I was really hoping for a “banana belt” winter and we got what I consider normal for this area, which wasn’t too bad. We didn’t get as much snow and cold which is great from a Public Works perspective. The following are the official weather readings manually read and reported to the National Weather Service from our weather station at the Water Treatment Plant. We also have a second weather station that uploads data to our website in real time at [www.cityofcolstrip.com/weather](http://www.cityofcolstrip.com/weather). It also uploads to [wunderground.com](http://wunderground.com) and [weatherforyou.com](http://weatherforyou.com). These sites display Colstrip’s real data. Most other weather sites display conditions from either Billings or Miles City.

	High	Low	Precip	Snow
November	62	1	1.22”	9.5”
December	58	2	.42”	6.5”
January	57	-11	.43”	4.0”
February	59	-8	0.81”	12.0”

Snow removal hasn’t kept the department as busy this winter but keeping our equipment running has. What’s the phrase, when it rains it pours? We had our Sewer Jet Truck, Garbage Truck and Sander (twice) towed to the repair shop. Then the oil pump went out in one of our work trucks and damaged the engine beyond repair. It’s good the weather has been fairly mild because that lessened the impact of the breakdowns on the department. Constant maintenance and repair is normal on equipment that gets worked very hard but these breakdowns can put a real crimp in the operation. Not having our jet vac truck in operation leaves us more vulnerable to sewer backups. The jet vac truck is showing its age and since it is so important for the maintenance of our sewer collection system we decided to replace it. We applied for a Coal Board Grant last year and were awarded \$300,000 to help toward the purchase of a new Jet Vac/Hydro Excavator truck which should be delivered this summer.

Winter is not only hard on our streets it is also hard on our water distribution system. The movement of the ground from freezing and thawing puts stress on the water lines. We had a handful of broken service lines within a short time including one beside City Hall that feeds the fountain. The City and CPRD share responsibility for maintaining the fountain and we recently renewed a 10 year shared agreement with the Parks District for fountain maintenance.

We are currently finishing up some construction projects and have a couple in the works. The Wastewater Treatment Facility Upgrade Phase 1 has reached substantial completion after setbacks due to the original contractor abandoning the job. The improvements in Phase 1 have increased the quality of the water treated substantially. The addition of a second clarifier adds equipment redundancy to help insure the facility can continue to operate efficiently and stay in compliance during maintenance and equipment breakdowns. The improvements done to the plant headworks removes most of the untreatable debris coming into the plant that can damage downstream processes and also helps to limit exposure of the plant operators to the biological hazards of the wastewater. Aerators were also added to the sludge storage lagoon to cut down on odors produced during the summer.

# Public Works Department

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The City applied for a State Delivering Local Assistance (DLA) Grant that will give us the additional funding needed to complete Phase 3 which will be the final phase of the Wastewater System Upgrades. I am happy to report that the City received a grant for \$415,000. The total estimated cost of the project is \$625,000. Phase 3 will include redundant aerators in the Oxidation Ditch and a new building over the Ultraviolet Disinfection System to keep it out of the weather and to provide an area to perform maintenance to the system. I would like to thank Southeastern Montana Development Center and Kadrmas, Lee and Jackson for their help in acquiring the DLA grant.

The Zone 3 Water Tower project is in winter shutdown but the mild weather has allowed the electricians to continue working and have now completed most of the electrical work. The general contractor should be able to hit the ground running this summer when the weather gets warm enough to do the painting. The painting, insulating and control system are the last parts to be completed before the new water tower can be put online sometime this summer.

The 2019 Road Reconstruction will be finishing soon. There is some landscaping and other punch list items to complete in the Homestead and Main Street areas before this project can be wrapped up. We are not currently planning any major street projects this summer but hope to do one next year. We will continue to do smaller repair jobs which will include the acreage tracts and the Orchard/Currant Drive area.

We are currently advertising for bids on a deicer storage building. This 50 x 120 foot building will be tensioned fabric and will be constructed on the same site the old "locomotive shed" occupied before it was demolished a couple years ago. This economical type building should be large enough to store deicer and other materials and be better able to withstand the corrosiveness of the deicer. The City switched to using 100% deicer on the streets this winter which has been very effective. Its use will cut down on the amount of dust created and the labor required for street cleaning when using sand.

The City of Colstrip accepts credit/debit cards for payment of water and sewer bills. There are three easy ways to pay your utility bill with a credit or debit card:

- 1) Come into City Hall at 12 Cherry Street with your card;
- 2) Go to the City of Colstrip's website at [www.cityofcolstrip.com](http://www.cityofcolstrip.com) and click on the "Pay Your Bill" link at the top of the home page; or
- 3) Go to <https://Paygov.us> and select Make a Payment.

Paygov will charge you a 3% convenience fee for this service (minimum \$1.00). Fines and other court related payments cannot be paid with a credit or debit card.



# Police Department

Cory Hert, Police Chief



The Police Department has had a busy winter, we have hosted and attended numerous training courses over the past few months. These trainings provided our officers and dispatchers the opportunity to improve upon current skill sets as well as developing new ones to better serve the citizens in our community.

The most significant training was provided to our 911 Dispatch Staff; all our 911 Dispatchers attended a weeklong training on Emergency Medical Dispatch. **Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD)** refers to a system that enhances services provided by [Public Safety Answering Point](#) (emergency) call takers, such as municipal emergency services dispatchers. It does so by allowing the call taker to quickly narrow down the caller's type of medical or trauma situation, to better dispatch emergency services, and provide quality instruction to the caller before help arrives.

Based on specific question-and-answer logic trees ("systematized interrogation"), the dispatcher can determine a problem type and priority for the call, and use that information to:

- provide systematized Pre-Arrival Instructions, including
  - Dispatch Life Support (DLS), which gives phone instruction to aid the patient until help arrives
  - provide other information to the caller
- activate appropriate protocols
  - dispatch the call to the appropriate resources
  - dispatch using the appropriate modes (emergency mode or normal driving)
  - activation of secondary protocols, such as notifications

The dispatch effort guided by EMD may indicate call severity, resource type ([basic life support](#) or [paramedics](#)), declaration of a [multiple casualty incident](#) (MCI), responder emergency mode (e.g., permission to use lights and sirens), call priority, and hospital or health department notification.

The on-phone instruction effort guided by EMD may help the caller or other bystander to perform [CPR](#) or other lay basic life support, provide instruction on how to aid the responders to reach the patient, evacuation instructions, or other forms of care or safety instruction.

All our 911 Dispatchers are now certified to perform the EMD duties. We met with the staffs from the Colstrip Medical Center as well as our Rosebud County Ambulance crews and provided them with an overview of the program so they would have a better understanding of how this process works and what to expect when being dispatched to medical calls. It is our hope that the training and certification will enable us to better assist our community members experiencing medical issues and traumas prior to arrival of EMS personnel. Time is critical in these instances and this will hopefully give us the opportunity to improve or at least increase recovery rates for those in need.

We initiated this service on March 1, 2020 and look forward to continuing to provide quality service to our community and our citizens. Thanks to all our citizens for providing the funding and opportunities for our department each year that allow us to improve our services!

# Bicentennial Library

Mary Kay Bullard, Director



Stacey Craig and Stephanie Gregg are your children's programming leaders this year. Stacey will lead Lego Club and Stephanie will lead Story Time. Lego Club is Monday at 4:15 pm. Story time is Tuesday at 4:15 pm and Thursday at 11:15 am.

Writing a resume, cover letter or interviewing for a job may be a pretty stressful process. Bicentennial Library does offer mock interviews and resume writing help by appointment only. We want to give you the time and attention you need, so please call us at 406-748-3040 if you are interested in this service.

Bicentennial Library has some great meeting and study spaces. I have seen the spaces utilized by individuals looking for a place to focus and learn and private tutors looking for a place to meet and teach their students. Since we reorganized some spaces in the library, I have noticed that our back-meeting table is fairly constantly in use by the individuals who discover it. Bicentennial Library also has a desk hidden next to the audio book collection that is affectionately called Lisa's Office. This little corner of great studying space is a great place to focus.

Please keep in mind that Bicentennial Library is open concept, meaning no closed doors. Upstairs from the library, the Human Services Department has access to two rooms that are available to the public. These rooms are by reservation only, please contact them at 406-748-2800 if you are interested in a more private setting for your meeting.

Bicentennial Library has a wonderful lounge area. The lounge is equipped with comfortable leather chairs that are just the right amount of softness. The library carries the Independent Press and the Billings Gazette for local papers. We also carry a wide variety of magazines that our patrons may checkout and take home with them or sit and enjoy in the lounge. Bicentennial Library's lounge also features display quilts from the local quilters club and an impressive display of fossils on loan from Dr. Tim Dove.

I think Bicentennial Library has a pretty inclusive and exceptional collection. However, we do not have everything that you, our patrons, may want. Because of this, we offer two services that we hope will help you find what you are looking for. We offer a partner system with many Montana Libraries that allow you to borrow items from their collections. Bicentennial Library also participates in Inter Library Loans. This system allows you to borrow items from any library that is a member of OCLC, so you could be borrowing an item from as far away as Florida. Although, that has rarely happened.

Bicentennial Library is very proud of our children's librarian Stephanie Gregg. Stephanie will be a presenter at this year's Montana Library Association training (MLA). Stephanie's very popular story time methods will soon be shared with children's librarians around the state. Stephanie will be joined at the training by Stacey Craig and Ann Hills. Stacey is our library assistant, this is her first library training and Ann is a member of BLAB (Bicentennial Library Advisory Board), and is chairperson of the county library board.

Bicentennial Library is open Monday-Thursday, 11:00am-7:00pm, Friday 12:00pm-5:00pm and Saturday 10:00am-1:00pm. If you are not currently a library user, please come visit us at 419 Willow Ave and see what wonderful features our library has for you.

## PAY YOUR UTILITY BILL BY ACH

The City of Colstrip is pleased to announce that beginning April 1, 2020, we will begin processing requests from our utility customers to pay their utility bill by automatic ACH payment. There will be no charge for this service. Forms will be available at Colstrip City Hall and online at [www.cityofcolstrip.com](http://www.cityofcolstrip.com) to sign up for this service or send an email to [cityclerk@cityofcolstrip.com](mailto:cityclerk@cityofcolstrip.com).



## Schoolhouse History and Art Center

Tyler Egan, Executive Director



Spring is the busiest time of year for us here at SHAC. February was a wonderful time to bring some color back into the building and the ladies from the Gone to Pieces Quilt Club knocked it right out of the park again this year. I'm amazed at how many times I can look at these works of craftsmanship and notice a new detail each and every time. Can't wait to see what they bring to us next year!

The All Student Art Show in March is one of the most rewarding exhibits we get to install. The imaginations of our local developing artists is truly exciting to see. The best part of all is the pride that beams from these little creators upon finding their work on the walls of the gallery. Showing off to friends and family is the cherry on top so bring the whole family in to enjoy the closing reception April 2<sup>nd</sup> from 5-7 PM.

In April we will be unveiling a new offering from the Evelyn Broadus Collection thanks to grant monies provided by First Interstate Bank of Colstrip. This is a fantastic photography exhibit we are sure everyone will appreciate. We will be hosting the Mother-Daughter May Tea again this year so give us a call for reservations at 748-4822.

The Juried Art Exhibit from the WaterWorks Art Museum will be in our gallery through the month of June so if you are coming in for our Summer Art Classes please stroll on upstairs to take a look.

Thank you to all of our members, donors and the City of Colstrip for providing the funds to operate the Outreach Program and all of our other community services.

# Southeastern Montana Development Corporation

Jim Atchison, Executive Director

jatchison@semdc.org

Colstrip based **Southeastern Montana Development (SEMDC)**, a regional non-profit economic development group, was established in 1997 to encourage economic activity in the four (4) counties of **Rosebud**, Custer, Powder River, and Treasure. SEMDC continues to work with the private, public (City of Colstrip / Rosebud County) and the nonprofit sectors to help create/retain jobs and improve the economic base within this region. Here's a couple of updates:

1) Overall, **Small Business Activity and Investment Remains High** in the Colstrip and Rosebud County area. Numerous small businesses are asking for assistance such as Business Plans, Financing Options, Workforce Needs, and General Counseling. Existing and startup businesses are looking for buildings to expand into, general financing to improve cash flow, and qualified employees. We all hope this trend continues throughout 2020.

2) Unfortunately, and as we all know, both **Colstrip Power Plant Units #1 and #2 closed** in early January. While some opponents to the coal industry and Colstrip use the term "Transitional" in-order to create doubt about our future, there remains numerous diversification opportunities available. I feel that if "Common Sense" had a vote in all this, Units #3 and #4 would be operating and providing Affordable and Reliable Electricity for many years. Yes, things will be changing at Colstrip, but We Are NOT Shutting Down!

3) The **Colstrip Economic Diversification Strategy** was a major effort by SEMDC that was released in 2017. The objective was to develop a strategy to help diversify the economic base of Colstrip. Six (6) Goals with 17 Strategies within those Goals were noted. Since then, SEMDC has been very busy with the Implementation Phase as we hired a coordinator to facilitate the many opportunities considering expansions into Colstrip. This includes everything from major energy projects, technology/innovative based firms to smaller service businesses who are interested. The strategy has also allowed SEMDC to contact and discuss respective situations with 5-6 other communities in the western US. The entire strategy with the Goal Recap can be found at [www.semdc.org](http://www.semdc.org).

4) The **Colstrip Impact Foundation (CIF)** continues to work towards creating a framework to receive and distribute \$10 million in impact funding from PSE. The local 7-member group has met numerous times throughout 2019 and 2020 and recently partnered with an umbrella foundation (Montana Community Foundation-Helena). The partnership will help the CIF with eligibility criteria and setup a funding request and distribution framework for those that are being impacted by the loss of Units #1 and #2. Currently, the CIF is looking at three areas to distribute funds: **a) Community Development**, **b) Economic Development** and **c) Workforce Development**.

5) NorthWestern Energy recently filed to purchase an additional 185 megawatts in Unit 4. The MT PSC has received the **Application for Approval of Capacity Resource Acquisition from NWE** and has started their regulatory review. The City of Colstrip, Rosebud County and SEMDC applied for and were granted Intervention Status by the MT PSC in support of the NWE application and effort. This process should take most of 2020.

6) **The Clearwater Energy and NextEra Wind Development** continues to move forward in Rosebud, Custer and Garfield Counties. A plan to bring the wind generated power into Colstrip for access to the 500 KV Power Lines also continues. Construction on the wind farm should start in mid-summer in the northern Rosebud County region.

7) The MT Department of Commerce recently announced their **Delivering Local Assistance (DLA) Grant Awards** for 2020. The one-time impact and infrastructure funds were highly competitive

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# Southeastern Montana Development Corporation

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state-wide for a limited pool of bonding dollars. The City of Colstrip (\$415,000-Wastewater Phase III), Colstrip School District (\$747,500-School Remodeling), Rosebud County (\$211,000-Courthouse Repairs) and the Ashland Public School (\$126,500-School HVAC Upgrades) were all successful applicants.

8) The MT Small Business Administration (SBA) recently announced that there will most likely be **low interest disaster assistance loans** available to small businesses that are experiencing impacts from the Coronavirus outbreak. More details to follow or click on [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov).

9) There are numerous **Projects/Studies/Planning Documents** in the works or recently completed such as:

a) SEMDC conducted Seven (7) Town Input Meetings this past fall for our annual **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)** planning process. A final CEDS Recap for Colstrip and the other six communities are now available online at [www.semdc.org](http://www.semdc.org) or at our Colstrip Office.

b) Additional **Small Business Revolving Loan Funding** was recently awarded to SEMDC by the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA). The \$250,000 grant will be matched with bank funding and will also improve access for low-interest loans for the small business community. Now is a good time to refinance that business debt as rates are dropping.

c) **Colstrip Community Recruitment/GIS Software Mapping Project** is underway as SEMDC has hired an engineering firm to complete this infrastructure mapping/recruitment project by the end of September 2020. Both major employers and small businesses including the city, county, education, technical and healthcare professionals will benefit from having this technology available soon.

d) **Energy / Industrial Park Study** in the Colstrip area has also been contracted out by SEMDC to a qualified contractor to complete this \$100,000 study in 2020. A handful of potential commercial and or industrial firms that are already interested in relocating to the Colstrip/Rosebud County area will now possibly have a turn-key site available.

e) **Regional Marketing & Rebranding Project** for the four (4) county region that SEMDC serves will be starting in March as SEMDC hired a qualified marketing firm for this \$100,000 study. It will focus primarily on Colstrip and Rosebud County with a secondary focus on the other three counties that SEMDC serves. It will feature the numerous Business/Commercial, Ag, Tourism, Historic, Native American, and Quality of Life Benefits that we have. A regional Advisory Committee will also assist the marketing firm and SEMDC as this process evolves this year.

f) **Colstrip Fiber Optics Business Plan/Survey** was recently funded by the MT Coal Board. Both the City of Colstrip and SEMDC are actively engaged with a firm (VPS) and Range Telecommunications on this opportunity. The \$27,000 grant will fund a Fiber Optics Business Plan and Community Survey for Colstrip. This would be Step 1 of 3 Steps to expand Fiber Optics/Broadband Connectivity to the entire community. This was noted as the # 1 priority in the Colstrip Economic Diversification Strategy and would assist our small businesses and recruitment possibilities as well.

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