

# City of Colstrip Newsletter

Summer/Fall 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*

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

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These continue to be challenging times for all of us. While we individually may have different ideas regarding our future, we all need to be collectively supportive of one another. I, as much as anyone, feel the pain and frustration of dealing with those that either directly or indirectly threaten the quality of life we have in Colstrip. Ideally, ten years down the road Units 3 & 4 will be operating with coal from the Rosebud Mine. We will have diversification of energy sources on the transmission lines and other types of economic diversification within our community. Let's all continue to work together.

The City of Colstrip is moving forward in support of NorthWestern Energy's acquisition of additional ownership in Unit 4. I have prepared testimony in support of the discovery process and look forward to its presentation with the Montana Public Service Commission. I would like to share this information with you as part of this newsletter (see pages 2 & 3).

During the early 1980's the Montana Power Company donated a small parcel of land to Rosebud County for the development of a Colstrip Cemetery. This parcel is located at the end of Zane Grey Road. It is a very beautiful location ideally situated.

Nolan Fandrich was given the task of developing and coordinating the construction of the cemetery. Nolan was the Town Manager for Western Energy. Nolan had the high school kids help build the arch over the entrance and Fischer Construction did the brick work. Evergreen Construction of Miles City did the ground work and the irrigation system. More recently, the "Est. 1982" sign was prepared by Talen Energy. The sign was painted by Dan Becker and hung by our City Public Works Crew.

The first occupant of the cemetery was Lisa Olsen, a young lady that passed away from leukemia. She has been followed by her mother, father and brother. Shortly after Lisa passed, Charlie Myers was also buried there. Charlie was the First Superintendent of Units 3 & 4. There is some wonderful history of Colstrip residents who have passed away in a beautiful location. Thank you Lloyd Gange for getting the "Est. 1982" sign and helping me put this information together.

The City Council Meeting/Public Hearing held on July 28th was eventful with comments both for and against granting a Conditional Use Permit and Height Variance for the transmission line from the windfarm into our City and connecting to a substation adjacent to the power plants. The Conditional Use Permit was granted with the following conditions as part of the motion:

*(continued on next page)*

## Mayor's Message Continued

- A) A commitment to a portion of the impact fee to be received by Rosebud County to be distributed to the City of Colstrip.
- B) The recommendations proposed by KLJ Engineering in their technical memorandum of May 27, 2020 be incorporated. This includes items such as requiring a schedule of structures and styles to be used and a traffic control plan during the construction stage.
- C) Documentation of agreements with the power plant owners for easements, construction plans and use of the transmission line.
- D) Disclosures as to whether NextEra will maintain a presence in Colstrip such as for office and provisions for operation and maintenance of the wind generation project.
- E) Payment of required fees such as the city's engineering cost and legal fees.
- F) NextEra make best efforts for consideration to route the electrical transmission lines across Area D as an alternative route.

The City of Colstrip's official position regarding this windfarm has never been one of opposition to its construction or its existence. We do recognize the value of this project. This project has grown from the early projections of a 450 million dollar/300 megawatt windfarm to now a billion dollar/600 megawatt project.

The City of Colstrip's opposition has been against the 50% tax abatement that was granted by the Rosebud County Commissioners. The City feels that the decision should have been referred to the voters within the county due to such a large project with the many financial considerations. Part of the purpose of a special election is to get factual information out to everyone for them to make an informed decision.

## Mayor Williams Testimony for the Montana Public Service Commission regarding NorthWestern Energy's Acquisition of Additional Capacity in Unit 4

Question 1. Does the City of Colstrip support NorthWestern's application?

Answer: Yes. NorthWestern's application is in the best interests of the Montana public and certainly the Colstrip Community. These power plants and the associated mine are the major employers in Colstrip. Everyone living in Colstrip is either directly affected by the plants or mine or indirectly affected through services that are provided.

Question 2. What has the Colstrip Steam Electric Station meant to Montana?

Answer: The Colstrip Steam Electric Station (CSES) has been one of the largest most significant economic engines in Montana. And perhaps in many ways underappreciated throughout the state. It has provided hundreds of those good, high paying jobs with benefits that all elected officials campaign on. CSES has created the ultimate value-added product that we (Montanans) all need and require - electricity. CSES has provided reliable, resilient and affordable electricity. That **base load power** that all states need, all cities need, all businesses need and all **HOMES** need. CSES has converted the fuel (coal) that has been mined into a portion of the \$1.1 billion currently in the Montana Coal Permanent Trust Fund (this is 50% of the total collection of Coal Severance Tax collected). This means another \$1.1 billion has been spent or invested throughout our state since the mid 1970's. Every corner of Montana has benefited; this is just one tax, the Coal Severance Tax. CSES is owned and operated by different ownership groups. Only one of those six companies is a Montana company, which is the purpose of this testimony. NorthWestern Energy truly has the best interests of Montana, its residents and its customers in this resource acquisition. That is the purpose of our support, to recognize and identify the value of this resource acquisition. Not just to our community of Colstrip, that has played such a significant role in its successful operation, but in its true value to our state.

## Mayor Williams Testimony for the Montana Public Service Commission regarding NorthWestern Energy's Acquisition of Additional Capacity in Unit 4 Continued

Question 3. What has the Colstrip Steam Electric Station meant to the greater region?

Answer: The electricity generated in these units have and will provide a source of reliable, resilient and affordable electricity throughout the region. As mine mouth units, they are by far the most resilient form of electrical generation. A proven energy source in a region that endures sub-zero temperatures. The NorthWestern Energy acquisition will also encourage and facilitate the continued use of the Colstrip transmission lines across our state. Currently there is up to a billion dollar windfarm being proposed by NextEra Energy that will be located in Northern Rosebud County. They will need access to the 500 KV line and substation located in Colstrip.

Question 4. What are the concerns of the community, including the uncertainty of what will happen?

Answer: The community is genuinely worried about what the future holds for them. There is the fear of uncertainty and doubt. The fear of uncertainty has a greater hold or impact than the actual closure that has already occurred with the shuttering of Units 1 and 2. These include:

- \*Economic Anxiety
- \*Small Business Stress
- \*Loss of Jobs
- \*Low Home Values
- \*Possibility of Relocation
- \*Split-up Families
- \*Threat of Quality of Life Due to Loss of Services
- \*Threat of an Unavailable Municipal Water Supply

The City of Colstrip is completely dependent upon CSES for its supply of water through a Raw Water Transportation Agreement. Groundwater is not an available option.

Question 5. Is there precedent for offering Community Transition Funds?

Answer: Yes. The transition funding in the Avista agreement was not tied to a retirement date of any of the Units. It was intended as a good-will effort and in the public's interest for the City of Colstrip to support a sales transaction between Avista and Hydro One. Additionally, Avista also verbally supports the community as a supporter of activity to promote economic diversity.

Question 6. How do Community Transition Funds help a community?

Answer: Transition funds will be utilized to support the community goals and objectives that have been identified through numerous planning documents. These include:

- \*The City of Colstrip's Growth Policy, Updated in August 2019
- \*Economic Development Strategy
- \*Colstrip Economic Diversification Strategy
  1. Community/Public Infrastructure Repair & Replacement
  2. Displaced Worker Retraining/Assistance
- \*There are currently five (5) projects from the Colstrip Diversification Strategy underway in the community

The funds could be administered through the Colstrip Impact Foundation or NorthWestern Energy could develop an agreement with the City of Colstrip for administration of transition funds that would be a public process with Public Service Commission oversight.

Question 7. What does the City of Colstrip desire?

Answer: Approval of NorthWestern Energy's application and community transition funds recognizing that the City of Colstrip is a vital stakeholder to NorthWestern's application and is an integral point of public interest. The City of Colstrip wishes to be an active leader and partner in economic opportunities to ensure the stability of our community and residents well into the future. The City of Colstrip's Mission Statement is "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 good weather in Colstrip this spring and summer albeit a little dry. But with the good weather something had to come along and spoil the party. Covid-19 has definitely put a damper on some of our much needed summer activities.

On July 15th the new Zone 3 Water Tower went online. It replaces the old Zone 3 Water Tank located above Blackhawk Circle. The old tank was springing a new leak every few weeks and because of its elevation residents in those neighborhoods would see low water pressure. Because of the old tank's design only the top 25% could be used which would lead to stagnation, taste and odor problems and higher disinfection by-products levels. The new tower is smaller, taller and includes a system to keep the water in the tower mixed and lower the level of disinfection by-products. It is also a new home for the City's logo. This new water tower is a great asset to the City's water system which should serve the community for many years to come. The City received a Coal Board grant for much of the engineering on this project.

As I had mentioned in my last newsletter article, winter and spring was hard on our Water Distribution System. Several more water breaks kept the department busy recently. Almost every break has been on residential service lines or on abandoned lines. I think that much of the pipe used during construction was questionable and the methods used for bedding and protecting the plastic pipe during installation has directly caused or contributed to most of the breaks.

We also replaced several fire hydrants this year that were broken or not working well. With over 200 fire hydrants in town you will often see Public Works personnel flushing, testing and maintaining them. This ensures adequate water flow is available to firefighters, residents and businesses. It also helps maintain the City's water clarity and quality by clearing iron and mineral deposits from the water mains (distribution pipes). This year we also participated in an ISO (Insurance Services Office) survey with the Fire Department. This is used to evaluate communities to assure that existing public fire protection is available to individual property owners. The insurance classification number developed by the evaluation is one of several elements used in developing property insurance premium calculations.

Phase 3 of the Wastewater System Upgrades is in the design phase and has been submitted to the DEQ for review. Phase 3 includes additional aeration to improve the efficiency of the treatment process and to add redundancy which will help insure compliance with the regulating agencies. Phase 3 also provides shelter for maintenance of the UV Disinfection System. Much of the funding for this project will come from a DLA (Delivering Local Assistance) grant.

This spring we re-advertised for the construction of a sand/salt building. We received some good bids with a Bright-Span tensioned fabric building by Greystone Construction being the low bid. We chose an open air tensioned fabric building because it is cost effective and this type of construction will better withstand the corrosiveness of the deicer. I would like to thank Talen Energy for the SEP (Supplemental Environmental Project) funding which covered much of the cost of the building. These funds will definitely be put to good use.

We will not be doing any large street projects this summer. Most of the street work will be small repairs from the water breaks and some cracks, potholes, painting cross walks and fixing street signs. After the repair of some of the non-functional water valves we hope to do some overlays in the Orchard/Current neighborhood. We are also planning some work in the Acreage Tracts and some improvements to the turnaround at the end of Castle Rock Lake Drive.

Our Mosquito Abatement Program has been going full force with applications being done at the maximum dosages allowable. Applications are made twice a week in most areas. Weed spraying has been completed in most areas with spotted knapweed to be sprayed in the fall. Most of the City properties and right-of-ways are looking pretty good but for an eradication program to be successful it requires all home owners and businesses participate and remove the invasive noxious weeds from their properties.

## Fire Department

**Rob Pontius, Fire Chief**



This year, we have had a bit of turnover in our officer ranks. We've lost several good firefighters to employment elsewhere. Our new officers are Assistant Chief Tony Reda, Captain Ethan Gardner, and Captain Trina West. I have the greatest confidence in these individuals. They will continue to serve Colstrip at the same level that we all expect.

This year the staff at the Colstrip Volunteer Fire Department put in a lot of hours serving our community. We had a total of 988 hours of training, 322.5 hours of community service, and we had 169 responses to 18 calls.

We secured a Coal Board grant to purchase a used aerial ladder platform truck to replace our 1970 55' snorkel truck. Once the grant was secured, we began an online search for an apparatus that would fit our needs. We located a 2009 Crimson Spartan 105' aerial ladder platform in Huntsville, Alabama. I flew out and inspected it in December. It was a perfect fit for our department, and the \$350,000 coal grant covered the entire cost of acquiring it.

In June we had our ISO review. ISO stands for Insurance Services Office. They are the organization that rates a community's ability to respond effectively to fire calls. Our training program, training hours, number of firefighters, type and condition of our equipment, city infrastructure, and a great deal of other factors are taken into account. The ISO rating is used by insurance companies to set homeowners insurance rates. We currently have an ISO rating of four. That is a pretty elite rating. It is one of the best in the state of Montana. We should maintain that rating after this review, with a slight chance of dropping it to a three. If we accomplish that, we would be the only city in the state with that rating.

Our ISO review went well. The City of Colstrip has amazing infrastructure. The city has also provided us with the best possible equipment to use at a fire scene. What we lack are firefighters. The Colstrip Volunteer Department is 100% volunteer. We average about 24 active firefighters. We can have up to 30. For ISO purposes, we only get 1/3 credit for each volunteer firefighter. So when we have 24 people on the roster, ISO gives us credit for 8 firefighters. We need your help. If you have ever thought about becoming a firefighter, we can help you achieve that dream. We provide all training and gear to make you into a firefighter. All we need is you! We have fire training the first and third Thursday of every month at the Boese Training Center. I would encourage anyone interested to come to a training and see if firefighting is something that you would like to do.

Have a safe summer. It's really dry and fires are spreading quickly. Be safe with fire!

## Police Department

**Cory Hert, Police Chief**



We hope you all have been enjoying your summer activities (as much as possible with the current pandemic and restrictions). With the craziness around the country we are thankful to live and work in a community where our citizens and community members are supportive and display more common sense than most larger communities during these times. Thank you!

The Police Department is fielding new AED's for all patrol vehicles. The new AED's are an upgrade from our current ones and much more user friendly. This was made possible through a grant from the State and there is no cost to the City or our taxpayers. Allowing each officer to have access to an AED increases life-saving efforts when time is crucial while responding to emergency medical calls from our citizens. Though we hope we never have to use them, they will be available if necessary.

We hope you enjoy the rest of your summer and we look forward to (hopefully) a normal upcoming school year and athletic season for our youth!

# Bicentennial Library

Mary Kay Bullard, Director



Bicentennial Library's Summer Reading program looked different this year. The changes, however, did not stop our readers. I want to start by thanking you for your kindness and patience this year. None of this situation has been easy.

This year for Summer Reading Program, we had over 191,000 minutes read! Summer Reading Program winners for the first week were Liam Gregg for 0-4, Kimberly Arneson for 5-9, Aron Grafton for 10-14, and adult Ann Hills. Week two winners included: 0-4 Isla Kluver, 5-9 Logan Patton, 10-14 Brand Melin, 15-18 Teresa Longacre, and Adult Ann Hills. Week 3 winners include Zalena Watson 0-4, Aria Robinson 5-9, Carly Quiroz 10-14, Teresa Longacre 15-18, and Ann Hills adult. Week 4 winners include: 0-4 Zaylena Watson, 5-9 Logan Patton, 10-14 Lillie Crook, 15-18 Teresa Longacre, and Adult Ann Hills. Week 5 winners include: Zay Watson 0-4, Chasyn Melin 5-9, Brand Melin 10-14, Teresa Longacre 15-18, and Ann Hills Adult. The top two readers from each age group are: 0-4 Age Group: Liam Gregg - 2780 minutes, Zaylena Watson - 1567 minutes, 5-9 Age Group: Logan Patton - 5040 minutes, Aria Robinson - 4945 minutes. 10-14 Age Group: Brand Melin - 4320 minutes, Noah Longacre - 4114 minutes. 15-18 Age Group: Teresa Longacre - 5760 minutes, James Craig - 1720 minutes. Adult: Ann Hills - 23490 minutes Rachel Grafton - 9520 minutes. We want to thank you for your participation this year. Your librarians are so proud of all our patron's efforts.

School starts in Colstrip on August 20<sup>th</sup>. Bicentennial Library is going to take a couple weeks off at this point with programing and try to come up with what our fall programing is going to look like. We will have a plan up and ready by the first week of September. Our goals are to offer you really great library programing as safely as we can, so our fall programing may look different as well.

Bicentennial Library is very active on our Facebook Page, Bicentennial Library of Colstrip. We post updates about happenings in the library and our community every day. We also answer the two most popular questions every day. We tell you when we are open, and we promote different ways to communicate with us. If you are on Facebook, please consider liking and following our page.

Due to COVID-19 our Friends of the Library, that normally host the Spring Fling Craft Bazar, had to cancel the event. With our budget consistently being reduced, \$2000.00 more this year, Bicentennial Library has come to depend on our Friends group for our big-ticket items, such as our public computers. This fantastic group of ladies also fund a scholarship. Please consider donating to our Friends of the Library. We would not be able to serve you the way we do without them.

Montana Library 2go is a great service that we pay an annual membership for. This program is e-books and audio books that are available to any Bicentennial Library patron. If you are not a patient person, there are always e-books and audio books that are available without a wait. If you are willing to wait for what you want, all you must do is place your hold and wait your turn. For more information about Montana Library 2go, please call us 406-748-3040 or stop by the library.

## Planning, Zoning and Code Enforcement

**Kami Egan**

As school starts, foot traffic along city sidewalks increases. Please be aware of the increased use and make sure that the sidewalks in front of our homes are clear. Make sure garbage containers are placed off the sidewalks and into the streets for pickup. Check the area behind any vehicles parked in driveways to make sure the sidewalk is not blocked or impeded by hitches sticking out into the foot traffic area. Cleared sidewalks make our community safe for all walkers, especially our children.

According to local noxious weed experts, September and October are the most effective months to spray those infestations of Spotted Knapweed, Canada Thistle and Field Bindweed. Remember it is against the law to allow noxious weeds to propagate and it is the property owner's responsibility to get rid of the weeds. The county has provided us with weed information booklets that help identifying weed problems. Just stop by my office and pick one up. Or call the Rosebud County Weed Control Official, Amy Adler, for help identifying noxious weeds on your property and the most effective sprays to use in your area.

If I can be of further help, please call 406-748-2300 ext. 2305. Please leave a message and I will get back to you as soon as possible. Again, thanks for taking prompt attention helping to control our noxious weeds and sidewalk safety.

## Schoolhouse History and Art Center

**Tyler Egan, Executive Director**



Our summer art classes are always a blast and this year was no exception. We are very thankful to have been able to hold them on our beautiful front lawn and the shade of Signe's Garden in the rear. Our heirloom Ox heart carrots are just beginning to flower and should reseed themselves by this fall. We are very grateful for the ladies from First Interstate Bank who will be volunteering their time with us on September 9<sup>th</sup> in the perennial gardens. There will be lots of thinning to do and there is talks of having a plant sale so mark your calendars and come support the Schoolhouse.

SHAC's current offering in the gallery comes to us from the Deweese School in Bozeman. The "Communities West IX" exhibit will be with us through the month of August and we hope the whole community can find a minute to stop by and treat themselves to this amazing print show.

SHAC's Annual Golf Tournament Fundraiser will be held September 19<sup>th</sup> at Ponderosa Butte Golf Course so get your team together and go grab an application from Glenn.

Wonderfully talented local artist Laurin Kluver will be exhibiting her work in the Revolving Gallery this September and October. We are extremely excited to see what she brings to us in her first offering. We will be showcasing another Montana artist through our MAGDA connections this November and December. Jodi Lightner is an Associate Professor of Art at Montana State Billings where she teaches courses that involve pencils, paint and presses. It is going to be one unique show so do yourself a favor and come check it out.

Please remember to renew your SHAC Membership for 2020, many of the programs and services we offer are funded through your support.

# Southeastern Montana Development Corporation

Jim Atchison, Executive Director

[jatchison@semdc.org](mailto: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) 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 active 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. Currently, five (5) different projects identified in the Strategy are underway in the community. 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).
- 3) 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 and other coal related impacts. CIF is looking at three areas to distribute funds: **a) Community Development**, **b) Economic Development** and **c) Workforce Development**. CIF Meetings are open to the public. Call us at 748-2990 for the next meeting details.
- 4) 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.
- 5) 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 could start this Fall in the northern Rosebud County region.
- 6) 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 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. Work continues throughout the summer on these projects.
- 7) The MT Small Business Administration (SBA)** and the State of Montana continue to offer numerous small business and non-profit disaster assistance programs. These **low interest disaster assistance loans and grants are** available to small businesses / non-profits that are experiencing impacts from the COVID-19 outbreak. Hurry – dollars are limited. More details available at SEMDC or on [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov) or [www.covidrelief.mt.gov](http://www.covidrelief.mt.gov)

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# Southeastern Montana Development Corporation

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- 8) There are numerous **Projects / Studies / Planning Documents** in the works or recently completed such as:
- a) This Fall, SEMDC will conduct Seven (7) Town Public Input Meetings for our annual **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)** planning process. A final CEDS Recap for Colstrip and the other six communities will be available online at [www.semdc.org](http://www.semdc.org) or at our Colstrip Office soon.
  - b) Additional **Small Business Revolving Loan Funding** was recently awarded to SEMDC by the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA). The \$250,000 grant was matched with bank funding and has improved access for low-interest loans for the small business community. To-date, three (3) loans have been approved. Now is a good time to refinance that business debt as rates are dropping.
  - c) **Colstrip Community Recruitment / GIS Software Mapping Project** continues 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 is also underway 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 features / benefits that we all enjoy. A regional Advisory Committee has also assisted the marketing firm and SEMDC as this process evolves this year.
  - f) Phase I of the **Colstrip Fiber Optics Data Plan / Survey** was recently completed. Both the City of Colstrip and SEMDC have engaged a firm named VPS and Range Telecommunications on this opportunity. The \$27,000 Coal Board grant funded a Fiber Optics Data 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.
  - g) An effort to explore options to build a **Business Innovation Center** in Colstrip has also been a major undertaking this year as SEMDC hired an architect to complete this \$160,000 Study. This "One Stop" facility would feature class space, meeting rooms, equipment, and technology in order to assist entrepreneurs, businesses, government officials, and resource providers. This effort will also allow SEMDC and the school district to partner on possible site / building options. Once again, a local Advisory Committee has been assisting the architect and SEMDC during this process.
  - h) The **17<sup>th</sup> Annual Energy Open Conference and Golf Tournament** was held in Colstrip on Thursday, August 13th and Friday, August 14th. Our goal is "Showcasing the Economic Benefits of Responsible Energy Development" in Montana's Energy Capitol. More details are noted at [www.semdc.org](http://www.semdc.org) or stop by our Colstrip Office at 6200 Main Street.

My staff and I are always open to any ideas concerning our economic future in Colstrip. Hope these updates help or stop by our office at 6200 Main Street (next to 1<sup>st</sup> Interstate Bank). Contact us at 748-2990 or [www.semdc.org](http://www.semdc.org).

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ECRWSS EDDM  
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Colstrip, MT 59323



## PAY YOUR UTILITY BILL BY ACH

The City of Colstrip is pleased to announce that we are offering our utility customers the option to pay their utility bill by automatic ACH payment. There will be no charge to our customers for this service. Forms are 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).



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