

STATE OF THE CITY 2015

As we review the city finances early in the year 2014 and beginning 2015 we find the city finances in a good, positive condition. The Association of Idaho Cities recommends that cities maintain a rainy-day reserve fund equal to 25% of the current year's operating budget for both the general and utility accounts. I am happy to report that we have approximately 78% of our general fund and 83% of our utility fund in the so-called rainy-day account.

Our office employees are well qualified people doing exceptionally good work. Likewise, our public works employees are well organized and filling their assignments very effectively. The city equipment is in good condition and well maintained. We will always have extensive repair and upkeep. Our public works employees should be commended for their efforts in keeping the equipment and the shop area in good condition. The addition of our 40' x 60' storage shed this past year has provided storage for sand used on our winter roads and has greatly enhanced our ability to store and care for our machinery.

The city parks are in excellent condition. We are frequently complimented on how nice the parks look by our citizens and often visitors just passing through. Heritage and Neibaur Parks are well used, not only by children playing but the picnic shelters are scheduled nearly full time in the summer months. Quite often two or three groups are scheduled throughout the day, especially on holidays and Saturdays.

Our law enforcement/police protection remains under contract with the Madison County Sheriff's Department on a 24/7 coverage. This arrangement has been proven to be very satisfactory and financially beneficial to Sugar City. Captain Cameron Stanford is our direct contact with the sheriff's office.

The city received a DEQ grant to do a study of our existing water system and needs. Four different companies submitted proposals to do the engineering work required for the grant. After careful consideration and evaluation, the council chose The Dyer Group to provide this service. The study will likely take the better part of two years and is now under way as a detailed plan has been developed. A new water line has been installed on the north side of Mayors' Park, which corrected a problem with the existing water line to the fire hydrant on the northwest corner of the park.

Most of our road and street maintenance budget comes from the state highway users tax. This tax comes mainly from the tax on gasoline. This tax has not increased since 1996 and has directly affected the amount of money that the state provides for the cities. At the same time, the budget needs for street maintenance has increased more than 50%. In view of this information the council has appropriated an additional \$50,000 from our general fund to the street maintenance budget. The additional funding has allowed us to do additional road work which we have not been able to keep up with because of the state funding. We continue to follow our plan of crack sealing and chip sealing for as many roads as we have funding for. This past summer, we have done extensive repairs on the junction of North Front and Center Street. With this additional funding, we have almost caught up on our road repairs and

maintenance. The chip sealing is a cooperative project between the city and the county. The city supplies the oil and the chips. A special thanks to Madison County Road and Bridge for donating the machinery, man power, and expertise in applying the oil and chips.

We have also constructed a dog pound located on city property located next to the sewer lift station. This dog pound allows us to have access to care for any dogs that may be impounded. The building was constructed by our own city employees with only a material cost of approximately \$2,500. We took out the dog pens from the former dog pound located near Moody Creek Produce and used as much of the materials as possible. Incidentally, the previous dog pound was located on Moody Creek business property, not on city owned property. The city does own property near this site.

For a number of years, Smith Park with its lighting facility has been used three nights a week for softball league games. However, last summer this facility has been used extensively by the little league baseball association. The sled hill and the recreation areas of Smith Park are also well used. Heritage and Smith Parks have provided practice fields for football and soccer groups. These groups are requesting modifications of the existing facilities, which are modest in number and not too expensive. Plans are underway for another successful Easter egg hunt in April as well as a very successful, well-attended community breakfast July 25.

The demolition and burying of the debris of the grain silo was completed during the summer. Considerable top soil was brought in to help cover the silo debris. The area where the silo stood was beautified, helping to make a very attractive city entrance.

The facade on the front of the city building has been completed, including an attractive city building sign. This completes our plan to remodel and improve City Hall. It started 10 years ago. We began by enclosing the area between the new shop and the back of the city building. Our next step was to clean out the back end of the city building which was at one time used for a city shop and full of junk. We began by creating a fireproof vault room to preserve necessary city documents. The next step was remodeling the council room and enlarging it by 10 or 12 feet and seating the council on an elevated platform. This was a courtesy to the visitors so that now they can hear the council comments as they discuss the various issues. After the council room was remodeled, we remodeled the existing offices, creating a new work station in the front office. The back of the building was then transformed into three offices and a small conference room. New carpet was laid throughout and considerable remodeling in the clerk's office. We secured a grant to update the heating system and provide air conditioning throughout the whole entire building.

I have one additional thought regarding the city building that has not been accomplished, to consider converting the garage area that was so needed by Sharon, into a public works office. This would provide the public works director more convenient access to the front office and the privacy needed for much of his work. At present, there is considerable storage area in the garage and, as much as possible, needs to be preserved or transferred to another location such as the enclosed area between the buildings. Also, I would like to see a "Welcome to Sugar City - Home of the Diggers" sign installed at the corner where 3rd N intersects Hwy 33 on the corner of the Kershaw Elementary School. This sign would not need to be as expensive as the ones on

Center Street and the south entrance of Sugar City. The High school would be interested in sharing some of the cost of the sign.

The Planning and Zoning Commission is in the process of working with the county to increase our impact area. They are viewing early construction plans for River Bend Ranch and are constantly bombarded with difficult decisions regarding the growth of the city. The Planning and Zoning Commission will have additional challenges as Old Farm Estates and Toscano have the potential to develop.

The Tree and Beautification Committee continues to enhance our city streets with flower displays, weeding in the parks, and continually working on projects to enhance the city. Most recently they are looking at a new street lighting system.

A nice sign for the Business Park has been planned and approved and installation will be completed in 2015. The location is at the south entrance to the Business Park and the west entrance to the city. The county has completed the base for the walking path around the Business Park. In the spring of 2015, we hope to get the funds to lay the asphalt and complete this project. We do have a \$1,000 grant from the Northwest Credit Association to create a nice rest area for the walking path, including a picnic bench on a concrete base and trees for shade. We applied for a grant to lay the asphalt on the walking path. Our project was not accepted. We will try for another grant; however, the project needs to be completed in early 2015 to make the best use of the base for the path that the county has developed. If we do not get a grant we feel that the existing budget could possibly be adjusted to cover the cost of the asphalt.

Our Treasurer and City Clerk, Wendy McLaughlin, has been innovative in developing new ways for paying our utility bills and other payments. Citizens now can:

- Pay by MasterCard, VISA, Discover, checking or savings
- Pay 7 days a week, 24 hours a day
- Pay immediately, schedule a payment or set up Auto-Pay for recurring monthly payments (you will receive email reminders about 3 days prior to your payment)
- Find your balance due by going online, viewing the app or using the automated phone payment service
- View your current bill as well as past bills and view your electronic payment history

Viewing bills and balances due are FREE services. Convenience fees apply to electronic payments: \$1.00 for checks and 2.75% (+50 cents if under \$100) for credit cards.

Sugar City has selected Payment Service Network (PSN) to process your payments because of their high level of security and the convenience they offer. PSN has been awarded a Level 1 Certification, the highest security possible, by the credit card industry.

Sincere, devoted, well-qualified men fill our council positions. They work well together and accomplish worthwhile projects. They spend city tax money wisely and with great concern.

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