



City of Whitefish Newsletter

November 2015

Keeping Whitefish Strong

Mayor John M. Muhlfield

Autumn is a wonderful time of year to be residents of Whitefish, Montana. While the beauty of our community comes into sharp focus with the fall colors, the strength of Whitefish is predicated on the people who live here and the businesses that give it a sense of place.

Recently I attended the Affordable Workforce Housing Summit hosted by the Whitefish Chamber of Commerce, Montana West Economic Development, and the City of Whitefish. The most resonating point of this meeting is that we have a serious housing issue and we need to address it now. We have reached that crisis point to either deal with it or start seeing a serious deterioration of our community and the character of it. No one argues that.

The biggest action item that came out of the meeting is the establishment of the Workforce Housing Task Force.

Our first meeting is set for Monday, Nov. 2, from 9 -11 a.m. in the downstairs meeting room at National Parks Realty (601 Spokane Ave. in Whitefish). Task Force members will include staff from the City of Whitefish, the Whitefish Chamber, the Whitefish Housing Authority, Habitat for Humanity, local businesses, and others. We need some smart people to help, so take this opportunity to step up and help your community with this difficult challenge.

Speaking of stepping up, I'd like you to think seriously about your shopping habits in the coming months. Our locally-owned businesses are the backbone of Whitefish and allow us to be able to invest in the amenities that define our community by collecting our resort tax. Local spending means that everyone who shops and dines here is

safeguarding drinking water, outdoor recreation, and the spectacular scenic backdrop of Whitefish—not to mention assisting with road repairs, our local parks, and keeping property taxes down. Purposely spending dollars in Whitefish enhances the quality of our special town.



Autumn and the coming holiday season is also a time of coming together. For the past three years we've been gridlocked with the county government over the extraterritorial planning area. The city accepts the court's decision related to the planning jurisdiction and it's time for a new chapter. Both the city and the county have areas of mutual interest and there are opportunities to work on common grounds that include highway corridors, water quality, and job creation. I look forward to forging a new relationship with the county commissioners in the coming months.

As always, your thoughts, suggestions, and comments are welcome. I can be reached at jmuhlfield@cityofwhitefish.org.

Greetings from The City's New Public Works Director

Craig Workman

My wife Tigrr and I moved to town in August with our five children (Tait-15, Wylee-13, Tallory-11, Witney-8, Trinity-3) and we are delighted to be new Whitefish residents! I graduated from the University of Colorado in 1996 with a degree in Civil Engineering and I am a licensed Professional Engineer. After working for the State of Colorado for several years, I spent the last 15 years as a Public Works Director in southeastern Wisconsin. A career in Public Works has provided me a chance to truly contribute to people's daily lives. I look forward to putting this passion to work in Whitefish, making this an even more amazing place to live, work, and play.

Public Works Update: Here is a quick rundown on a few of the projects that will keep me busy in the coming year:

Skye Park Bridge Project

Nearly Complete

This project involves the construction of a new footbridge spanning the Whitefish River just upstream of the train trestle. The bridge will be installed this fall connecting the pedestrian path from the City Beach area to a new path on the east end of Birch Point Drive. Completion of this project will accomplish a major element of the City's overall master plan by linking these areas. Another goal that will be attained is to provide emergency access, as the Skye Park bridge has been designed to hold the weight of an emergency vehicle. The bridge will span 180 feet across the river with a shorter 40-foot span bridge along the bank of the south side of the river.

West 7th Street Project - Just Begun

The City is completing its final review of the construction plans for this important project which will reconstruct W. 7th Street from Baker Avenue to Fairway Drive. Maintaining the culture of the neighborhood was important during the design of this job and several public meetings were held with local residents. One of the highest priorities of this

job are the improvements to pedestrian safety that will be realized by the path and sidewalk construction. Northwestern Energy has begun the gas line relocation for the project this fall. Bidding is anticipated to take place in early 2016 with construction slated to begin in the spring and summer of next year. The cost of the project is estimated at \$2.4 million and will be paid with resort tax funds.



Wastewater Upgrades

Beginning Design/Development

The City of Whitefish is continuing to work with our engineering team to optimize the City's wastewater treatment plant and collection system in anticipation of a costly wastewater plant upgrade. These efforts are mandated by a discharge permit with stringent new wastewater regulations that went into effect in August of this year. Both the wastewater collection facilities and the treatment plant will require improvements in order to comply with these new standards. I will be working diligently on pursuing grants and low interest loans to cover the costs of the new wastewater treatment plant, which will be the most technically advanced and expensive Public Works project in the history of Whitefish.



**CENTRAL RECYCLE SITE
COMING SOON AT
RAILWAY STREET AND
COLUMBIA AVENUE!**

The Ongoing Legacy of The Whitefish Trail

Maria Butts, Parks & Recreation Director

The Whitefish Trail has become an incredible community asset for our town. The City of Whitefish Parks and Recreation Department works with numerous community partners to create and manage the Whitefish Trail and the key to its success has been community involvement and partnerships.

Whitefish Legacy Partners was created during the development and implementation of the Whitefish Area Neighborhood Plan in 2002 and is the driving force behind the trail, as well as conservation efforts in our community. Our land use plan allows Whitefish to be involved in the management of the public lands surrounding town and ensures the lands stay open for the public while being managed by the State.

After a citizen committee initially developed a trail Master Plan, the Whitefish Trail opened in 2010, offering six miles of natural surface trails. The City and Whitefish Legacy Partners then received key trail easements, a significant donation from Michael Goguen, and a \$500,000 grant from the state, which helped the Whitefish Trail grow. The trail system has become enormously popular and the recreation amenity is a huge boom for our local economy. The Whitefish Trail now offers more than 36 miles of year-round, multi-use trails with a community vision of a 55 mile recreational loop trail around Whitefish Lake.

This year, the City worked in Spencer Mountain with Flathead Fat Tires to legalize historical freeride trails and with Legacy Partners to license an eight mile loop of the Whitefish Trail. Additionally, we are working to build new trails, offering incredible lake destinations, wonderful family hiking, and even more breathtaking bike riding options in the Beaver Lakes area. The City and Legacy Partners are also collaborating with F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Company to establish a five mile trail and two new trailheads on the west side of Haskill Basin—all easily accessed right from town.

The City and Whitefish Legacy Partners work together to manage and construct the Whitefish Trail. Whitefish Legacy Partners funds 100% of the Whitefish Trail costs through the Whitefish Trail Endowment Fund, community donations, sponsorships, and grants. The Endowment Fund currently provides 60% of the annual trail maintenance and operation expenses, including trail license fees and trail infrastructure expenses, such as plowing, cleaning, signs, and dust and noxious weed control. Trail maintenance is managed 100% by volunteers through the Adopt-A-Trail Program, Bike Patrol, and community work days.

The Whitefish Trail Operations Committee meets once a month and is made up of members of the City Council, City staff, and Whitefish Legacy Partners, with input from the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and other local partners. Let us know how we're doing—attend a meeting or email your feedback to the City Parks and Recreation Department at pradmasst@cityofwhitefish.org.



Driving a Diverse Whitefish Economy

Jen Frandsen, City Councilor

The vibrancy of the Whitefish community can be attributed to the diversity of our economic base. While tourism is a vital foundation to our economy, the railroad, timber, construction, health care, and increasingly professional services are also key sources for jobs and economic activity. When our economic underpinnings are not based on just a few employers or a single industry, our community fabric is better able to withstand the inevitable downturns that might affect a single industry or company.

Our goal as a community should be to grow quality jobs that can support families. The richness of our town's amenities, its character and our natural landscapes are the primary drivers of our tourism economy. If our community policies do not promote and protect those qualities, our economy will suffer. Those exact same qualities, however, are also driving the increase in the number of professional and service jobs available in our community. Examples of these jobs include software developers, engineers, scientists, architects, legal advisors, logistics, financial professionals and many others. Many small to medium sized companies have chosen to grow their business in Whitefish because of these key drivers. Whitefish will only continue to diversify its economy if we maintain the ability to attract talent based on this great place to live.

A vibrant tourism economy also feeds a vibrant construction economy. As we build the businesses that service the industry, we also build housing for those who choose to make this place their home. Whether it's a family looking to get away from the city in search for a better quality of life, or a seasonal worker looking to take root in a community steeped in courage and kindness, or simply providing a quality home for one of the many hard-working teachers, nurses, cooks or police officers who care for us every day, the economic diversity and vitality we all enjoy in Whitefish can be threatened if there are too few affordable places to live in Whitefish. The key problem that the City and the private sector together will need to resolve are strategies to encourage and promote affordable housing. We want a community with an economy that stands on

many legs and that provides quality family jobs. But we also want the people who are working those jobs in Whitefish to be able to live in Whitefish.

This won't be an easy challenge to solve. A distinct quality of Whitefish is that we are able to get difficult things done together as a community. I am confident that together we'll also tackle the need for more affordable housing.

Haskill Basin Conservation Easement

Angela Jacobs, City Attorney

The City, in cooperation with F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Company, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and The Trust for Public Land, is coming close to concluding the process of negotiating a Conservation Easement and Multi-Resource Management Plan for the Haskill Basin Watershed. City officials recently concluded meetings in Helena and the easement is now in a review period.



Approximately 90% of the source drinking water for the City is derived from the Haskill Basin Watershed. In conjunction with the conservation easement, the City has negotiated a municipal water system and road access easement with F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Company. The municipal water system and road access easement will ensure delivery of the City's drinking water and will allow the City to maintain, repair, and replace its water system infrastructure in perpetuity.

The City is also currently working with Whitefish Legacy Partners, Iron Horse, Whitefish Mountain Resort, and Stoltze on the future managed recreation trails of the land, as well as the trail head access that will be built on Reservoir Road.

The City will host a work session on November 2 at the interim City Hall starting at 5 p.m. to discuss the project and update the public on the status of the easement. The meeting is open to the public and we encourage public participation.