

(For January, 2018)

## Around the City . . . . with City Manager David Thayer

The first taste of winter's harshness brings back instinctive memories of what could go wrong. The hope that the approaching driver's awareness of driving on the first snow requires extreme attentiveness to ensure that they can stop in a safe fashion and stay in their lane. The first sustained frigid temperature causes one to think if their water pipes will freeze. It is a worry added to the many worries I have as I try to keep moving the city forward.

We are monitoring frost levels carefully as we react to the potential freezing of our water mains. With our most recent survey, we found frost, on our heavily traveled arteries, at 42 to 48 inches. On lesser traveled streets, we found frost at roughly 30 inches. On snow covered non-street areas, we found frost at 10 inches. A rule of thumb is we need to start taking action when frost hits the 54 inch level. When we authorize a limited "let-run" water credit, we do so to ensure that our water mains do not freeze. The city's obligation for delivery of water service stops at the water main. The lateral going to the building is the responsibility of the owner. If the owner has concerns that the lateral may freeze, they may independently let the water run, however, without a water usage credit. Normally, when water line freezing becomes an issue, the interest of the city with the water main and the owner's interest with the lateral become the same, and the city's "let-run" authorization benefits both interests.

Our first action addresses those customers that are on dead end lines. Unlike a looped service area that has sufficient flow to keep the line from freezing, the dead end routes normally do not have enough flow to do the same. The second area is where the water main is installed to shallow and the ground temperature cannot keep the line from freezing. The third area of concern is where the water main crosses under heavily traveled streets that drive the frost down.

Except for certain areas with design issues, water lines do not freeze in normal cold winters. However, in late February/early March when the cumulative effect of cold weather has driven the frost to deeper depths, awareness of the possibility of freezing lines increases. During these last ten years, we have replaced miles of water mains at deeper depths and have increased the looped services routes.

When we issue a limited “let-run” order, we contact those affected personally. In extreme conditions when we issue a citywide “let-run” order, we publish it in the Iron County Reporter, provide the information to WIKB, and post it on the city’s website and Facebook page.

In 2000 when the cities first consolidated, the DPW had 17 members to tackle the removal of fresh snow on our 41 miles of streets and 23 miles of alleys. Today, we have 7 authorized positions with the same amount of streets and alleys to plow. We dispatch four large snowplow trucks to service the streets, and two pickup trucks with plows to the alleys when snow accumulates. Major streets are our first priority, followed up with local streets. Alleys that are heavier traveled and have access drives to homes are targeted first. Then the remaining alleys are plowed. The sidewalks that are the city’s responsibility are scheduled next, with city parking lots following. We always hope that we can clear the cycle before the next storm comes in. If we unable to do so, we stop where we are and start over at the top of the priority list.

We have had two mild winters in a row. Hopefully, this year will be like the norm rather than the exception.