

Wednesday, August 29, 2007

City, county seek common ground

We live in one community, although we have multiple government entities. As elected officials, it is our duty to never lose sight of the greater good.

City officials, mayor and council, represent only those folks within our boundaries. County officials represent those same city dwellers — as well as those in the unincorporated areas of the county.

There is much good to report about city-county cooperation.

County Commission Chairman Terry Cram and I together spearheaded establishment of the Sheridan Community Land Trust, which seeks to preserve agricultural lands, promote recreation areas, historic preservation and affordable housing.

It is a new concept for this community, but not new in the experience of other communities. We have not yet realized the dividends that it will ultimately deliver — patience and time will tell.

The city and county, along with the Conservation District, have collaborated on the Septic Tank Study in an effort to clean up and protect the Goose creeks.

The city and county help, along

with local businesses, to fund Forward Sheridan. Though in the middle of a boom, we know how rapidly that can dissipate to bust.

We need now, while times are good, to lay the groundwork for economic diversification and not rely solely on a mineral-based economy. Forward Sheridan is doing that.

The city and the county are jointly funding and working together on a flood plain study. Our current flood plain maps are out of date and must be modernized.

This is critical for our comprehensive plan and to provide the real-time information developers need to determine where it is safe to build.

A transportation plan, for areas of Sheridan and for miles around, is being jointly funded by the city and the county. Current jokes about a “rush minute” rather than a “rush hour” may turn out to be not so funny one day if we don’t plan now for the future.

A Community Affair

Dave
Kinskey

Planning for Sheridan's economic development.



Sheridan is growing, and we need to be able to avoid bottlenecks that will degrade our quality of life.

The county is working rapidly to update its comprehensive plan. The city is doing the same. We, the two entities, are also coordinating our

efforts on this issue.

In the one-mile area surrounding the city, which the state mandates be a joint planning area for the city and the county, we are working together as well.

Commissioner Cram and I continue to refine the memorandum of understanding to eliminate regulatory red tape and overlap. We are in the process of developing a single set of city and county building codes and streamlining the subdivision process.

The city and county also stepped back on receiving CBM impact funds so that new fire halls could be built in Story and Clearmont.

There are many tough issues, issues

on which reasonable minds may differ. That is as it should be — that very discourse is the hallmark of civilization.

The fact that it is hard work to come to agreement on tough issues should come as no surprise. Nor should it be taken as a sign that city and county “don’t get along.”

The process of dialogue, discussion and — on occasion — conflict — is healthy for our community. Issues cannot be ignored. Change is here, like it or not. We must respond and we must plan.

I don’t expect everyone to agree with everything I or the City Council or the County Commissioners do.

The key is this: At the end of the day, I think we have managed to stay focused on building and planning for a better future.

Dave Kinskey is mayor Sheridan.

“A Community Affair” is a weekly column from citizens who support Forward Sheridan, a professional business organization of invested partners whose purpose is to develop and maintain a sound economy in Sheridan County. Philippe Chino is president/CEO of Forward Sheridan.