

May 1, 2024

Stress and how we handle it

First day on the new format!

We all deal with stress in our lives, and, to be honest, under normal circumstances, I eat it up and spit it out as I find it motivates me to get through my work and thus put those things that stress me, behind me and on to better and more productive uses of my time and energy. Even in my role as “Mayor” I have been able to do just that, until now.

The ongoing dealings with the Montana DNRC and FEMA concerning the pending changes in our Flood Insurance Rate Maps, (FIRM) are becoming my Achilles Heel when it comes to dealing with stress.

We as a community are beyond blessed to have knowledgeable and well spoken individuals out there who are advocating for the City of Choteau and pushing these entities hard to explain to us all, in laymen terms, the rationale behind the proposed massive increase in the floodway and floodplain within our city limits, let alone within Teton County as a whole. Yesterday, April 30th, there was a 2 hour meeting with Montana DNRC at the Teton County Annex. I was unable to attend in person, so I chose to join by Microsoft Teams and listen in and participate. The members of the public, including Joe Haas, Ross Salmond, Harold Yeager, Peter Fritsch and others offered up relevant information and questions concerning the data being used, how the formulations work, the regressive format of the equations and the speculative numbers used rather than actual data, since some data is unattainable to use. Myself as your “City” elected official as well as Teton County Commissioner’s Dellwo and Snellman, and Teton County Planner Colesworthy also made their opinions known and expressed due concern about the data as well.

What this whole process is teaching me, and each day is a learning lesson, is that we need to come together as a community and demand transparency and simple, yet concise answers to our questions. If these two entities cannot explain to us and show us the data used, and they tried yesterday but were questioned vehemently on the validity of their data, we must decide how we as a community want to react to this program.

May 29, 2024, is the formal OPEN HOUSE here in Choteau where Montana DNRC and FEMA will be here at the Choteau Pavilion from 5:30 - 7:30 pm to present to you their findings and to answer questions and concerns from

you as citizens of the City of Choteau. Whether you live in the current floodplain and floodway, or you will be brought into either of these areas with implementation, it is important that you attend. For those of you who are going to be removed from the floodplain under the map, you too should attend, because unless these maps are adopted, you will continue to stay in the floodplain under the guise of "Best Available Information".

I will be working with our City Council and the Teton County Commissioners to formulate a strategy going forward. I will also bring this topic up at my Montana Executives Forum next week to see how other communities as well as the Montana League of Cities and Towns are working on this statewide issue. We won't let you down.

Stress be damned, together we are stronger.

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