

## Association of Idaho Cities Annual Conference

Garden City ID, June 25-27, 2008

Notes submitted by Nancy Chaney, Mayor

**Overview:** *My favorite part of this year's conference was the networking, with many opportunities to interact with elected officials, staffers, exhibitors, agency representatives, presenters, old friends and new, and others. It was a chance to compare Moscow to other cities, to be reminded that we're not alone, to gather good ideas and resources, to regain perspective by hearing so many compliments about Moscow from counterparts around the state, and being able to share best practices with them. I particularly enjoyed the mobile workshop to the Boise WaterShed Environmental Educational Center adjacent to the West Boise Wastewater Treatment Facility. The 2008 City Achievement Award Program features a number of programs that Moscow is doing too. We excel in so many ways, but haven't done a very good job of "tooting our own horn."*

Wed 6/25

- General Session: **"Issues and Challenges of the American West"** *Governor Otter* spoke about the \$240m annual shortfall in transportation funding in Idaho. The good news, he said, is that they've found the money. The bad news is that it's still in our pockets. It was my impression that he is motivated to fund this as an economic and public safety necessity. **Katherine Aiken, Dean of the College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences at UI** did Moscow proud when she spoke about the history of politics in the state, the choices we've made and the choices we have yet to make that will determine Idaho's future. She noted that Idahoans don't consider ourselves urban and we don't advertise the state as an urban destination (Quite the contrary!), but most Idahoans do live in cities. **David Tuthill, Director of IDWR** talked about the challenges of balancing available water with demands of competing users.
- Workshop: **Transportation Funding Roundtable** *Clete Edmunson of the Governor's Office* said, "This (Transportation funding) is the Governor's number one priority." **Pam Lowe, Director of ITD** told us that we will not have sufficient state funding to match federal funds and will have to turn away federal dollars. One of five Idaho highways is rated poor. Half of Idaho's bridges will soon reach their 50-year design life. The cost for liquid asphalt has increased significantly, going from \$175/ton in 12/07 to \$430/ton in 6/08. Director Lowe predicts a bail-out from the General Fund in '09, but that "donor" states like AZ and CA that pay into the transportation fund in excess of their costs will prevail over "donee" states like Idaho in 2010. **Jay McRae of CH2M Hill** agrees with Director Lowe that ITD will receive rollover funds from the feds in 2009 but that 2010 will be a different story. Check example in Oregon, where DOT and county government share equipment and staff to avoid redundancy. McRae recommended Matt Garrett as the OR contact...
- Workshop: **Improving Stormwater Management** *Introduction by Elaine Clegg, President of Boise City Council, AIC District 3A representative, and member of Idaho Smart Growth. Boise Stormwater Program Coordinator Johanna Bell* confirmed that Boise's Phase I permit has been extended. Boise/Garden City, Pocatello/Portneuf River drainage, Idaho Falls, Lewiston, Coeur d'Alene, and Ada and Canyon Counties are regulated as Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems, or MS4s. She recommended Steve Burgos of Brown and Caldwell as a resource concerning cities working with contractors. She said that goals for new development include reducing flooding, increasing water quality and improving property values. They have implemented design review and inspections (both covered by building permit fees), outreach, operations and maintenance requirements. Go to [www.PartnersForCleanWater.org](http://www.PartnersForCleanWater.org) "Compliance Corner" then "Boise Drainage Control Program." Cities are considered co-permittees, along with contractors, so bear some liability. (She gave the example of ITD's being

*fined, along with the contractor on the Mica Bay project, resulting in stepped-up staff training, contractor certification and audits.) Boise is developing a construction contract template that we might use as a model. Senior Environmental Coordinator John Sigler told us about challenges they face in Pocatello. Their permit was issued 12/06. (Check DEQ 401 certification requirement. Ron said that DEQ helped them meet requirements. He and others went to Seattle to meet with EPA. Their estimated cost for compliance was \$14m and the region simply couldn't do it. EPA invited Pocatello's input in re-writing regulations.) Equipment they use to monitor stormwater includes: Level sensor (Milltronics), Datalogger CR800, ISCO 6700 pump sampler, cellular radio modem to datalogger and a Microsoft software program. Systems monitored include the Halliday Drainage that requires an 84" discharge for up to 6,000GPM (including part from ISU). Their Day Street-NC Park involves a constructed wetland in a system that stores up to seven acre-feet and includes an easement for a paved greenway. (Printed materials from this session provided to Moscow Public Works Dept.)*

Thurs 6/26

- General Session: **“Strengthening Cities” ICRMP Executive Director Rick Ferguson and Board Counsel Jerry Mason** addressed risk management by cities.
- Workshop: **The Budget Monster...Navigating the Employee Benefits Conundrum** This was the only session I attended that had an overflow audience. Moscow compares favorably to other cities in terms of employee benefits. The VEBA program was highly touted, and we already offer it. Presenters **Jim Hammond** and **Michelle Sandberg** encouraged other things we're already doing too: Employee surveys, paying high proportion of premiums (100% for employees and 50% for dependents), generous and desirable benefits, pay for performance and implementing transparent GASB accounting principles. Ideas to consider include: Using VEBA for such medical procedures as LASIK and to negotiate with provider to decrease cost; discourage use of debit cards with VEBA due to predisposition for overspending (Emphasized desirability of having patients see their bills); make sure that employees understand how much employer contributes to program to increase their buy-in and appreciation; severance pay could be folded into the VEBA plan but needs to be in writing as an across-the-board policy (Note: It is permissible to do different VEBA plans for identifiable groups such as PD); premium costs are desirable because they demonstrate value; presenter **Michelle Sandberg of SYNC by Smith Sandberg** uses Monopoly money to demonstrate comparative value of VEBA and cost-savings to individual employees.
- General Session: **“Better Cities...Better State: Hot Topics; Major Policy & Legislative Issues”** Program featured **Senator Brent Hill**, who spoke on “A matter of principle...” and personal integrity.
- Mobile Workshop: **Boise WaterShed: New Hands-on Education Center**  
[www.BoiseEnvironmentalEducation.org](http://www.BoiseEnvironmentalEducation.org) 11818 W. Joplin Rd. (adjacent to the West Boise Wastewater Treatment Plant). The City of Boise partnered with the non-profit Boise WaterShed Exhibits, Inc. founded by Public Works Commissioner Donna-Marie Hayes (H: 208-345-9863). The tour was guided by Environmental Education Coordinator Cindy Busche (208) 938-8093 x 3605. It featured impressive public art, including large-scale metal installations made of donated plumbing components by Irene Deely (sp?) of “Women of Steel” on Chinden Blvd in Garden City. Enviroguard Award winners' names are engraved on metal laves of the pipe tree sculpture in the courtyard. Local artist Amy Westover designed a stained glass window image of the Boise watershed, and the work is being fabricated in Germany for installation in early Aug. Similarly, a pattern will be laid in recycled flooring demonstrating the watershed. The 6,500 sf building is built to LEED silver standards. The effluent runs through a heat-exchanger for temperature control in the building and is also used to flush toilets. (They also use waterless urinals.)

Partners included Eco (Chicago), CH2MHill, New Media Magic software developer (Portland) and the City's Public Works Dept. The 501(c)(3) funded all of the hands-on educational exhibits (\$1M) and they continue to fundraise to make the place even more stimulating and inspirational. The City contributed \$2,200,000 for balance of facility that includes a theater, library, hands-on interactive exhibits, distribution of environmental literature, public art, green building, K-12 educational programming, docent training, free public tours, public works training and destination opportunities for the whole family. I have long aspired to add such elements to Moscow's Wastewater Treatment Plant. We have an ideal situation with the engagement of University students, faculty and staff, the proximity to the Paradise Path/Chipman Trail, our Health and Environment Commission, a Sustainability Internship, Moscow's Green Building Program and regional interest in education, conservation and sustainability. Let's investigate grant and partnership possibilities, as well as ways we might leverage resources associated with the anticipated improvements to the WWTP, the requisite 1% for the arts, UI's ongoing Women in Science wetlands project/s, and connections with such organizations as PCEI, the Evergreen Foundation, AmeriCorps, etc. With increasingly stringent rules from DEQ, DOE and EPA, the timing of a project like this is logical.



- Workshop: **Protecting Idaho's Drinking Water** (Note: The speaker for this program was a no-show, but informal discussion among similarly interested attendees was interesting nonetheless.)

*By happenstance, I discovered that a fellow seated by me was James Bledsoe, an engineer working on the on-site wastewater treatment project for the Hawkins Stateline Project.)*

- **District 2 Caucus John Currin (Lewiston)** was re-elected to his third two-year term and newly-elected Council member **Mike Peterson (Grangeville)** was elected to serve the one year remaining in the seat left vacant when Joe Pippinger (Orofino) decided not to run for reelection in 2007.

Fri 6/27

- Networking breakfast
- Keynote: **“Eyewitness to Power: The Essence of Leadership” David Gergen**, author, former presidential advisor and commentator. **Dr. James Weatherby** from BSU moderated. Mr. Gergen observed that Idaho is not just about agriculture, etc, but is now about the tech sector. In the context of election and news coverage, he said the media focus on personalities and superficiality and that the public isn’t inclined to address sacrifice, substance. He enumerated several challenges before us: 1) Get our own house in order- e.g. Social Security, Medicare, energy efficiency/Pass Energy Bill, reform schools for quality education and worldwide competitiveness; 2) Nuclear proliferation; 3) Climate change; 4) Rise of Asia (Read *The Rise of the Rest*), China, India, Japan gaining power relative to the U.S. He paraphrased economist Charlie Schultz, who said that America is not so good when termites are gnawing in the basement, but responds better when wolves are at the door...
- Workshop: **The EFC Financial Dashboard: Visualizing Decision-making for Sustainable Infrastructure** Contact **Bill Jarocki, Director**, EPA Region 10 Environmental Financing Center, 1910 University Dr., Boise ID 83725-1036, phone (208) 426-4293, fax (208) 426-3967, cell (208) 340-2216, [bjarock@boisestate.edu](mailto:bjarock@boisestate.edu), <http://efc.boisestate.edu> Free password-protected framework to provide decision-makers with clear and immediate feedback for rate-setting, budgeting and capital planning. Training on this new program is available on demand. (Handouts provided to City Administration). This program looks like it could be beneficial for manipulating various financing scenarios before implementation.
- **“Creating Quality Cities” General Session & Business Meeting** It is noteworthy that AIC has only two women on its 14-member Board of District Directors and that there are no women on the eight-member Executive Board. I was encouraged to see so many young women among the youth delegates, however. Mayor Sean Larson, Chair of the AIC Legislative Committee, is receptive to our sending him copies of proposed State legislation on safe passing of bicyclists and on replacing missing council members for his Committee’s consideration and possible endorsement. Mac Pooler, Mayor of Kellogg, was elected AIC President, replacing outgoing President Mayor Lance Clow from Twin Falls.

#### **Exhibitors/Networking:**

Reunited with **Amanda Hess**, formerly Latah County’s representative to Moscow Transportation Commission, now a planner with **Sunrise Engineering** in Meridian ([www.sunrise-eng.com](http://www.sunrise-eng.com)). The firm recently added two planner positions and uses GIS extensively. Contact: Cell (208)440-3509 or (208)884-0306 or [ahess@sunrise-eng.com](mailto:ahess@sunrise-eng.com) or Amanda’s colleague, Planner Pamela Hall: [phall@sunrise-eng.com](mailto:phall@sunrise-eng.com), cell (208)870-9983.

Reunited with **Angie Sanchez**, formerly of EES (that helped develop Moscow’s tiered water and sewer rate structures), now Senior Project Manager for the **FCS Group**, Redmond Town Center, 7525 166<sup>th</sup> Ave NE, Suite D-215, Redmond WA 98025, [www.fcsgroup.com](http://www.fcsgroup.com), tel (425) 867-1802 x230, [angies@fcsgroup.com](mailto:angies@fcsgroup.com)

I happened upon **Dennis Porter** of **Idaho Department of Commerce** and told him about some of the exciting things going on in Moscow, particularly having to do with Legacy Crossing Urban Renewal.

**Ted Maestas**, Regional Manager, **Mountain States Lighting**, 609 Krista Ct., Murray UT 84123, (801)268-4879, mobile (801)673-5289, ted@mountainstateslighting.com Printed materials RE historic-look LED fixtures forwarded to Moscow Community Development & Engineering.

**Daren Fluke**, Planner & Project Manager for **JUB Engineering** inquired about status of Moscow's WWTP and consideration of a reservoir. 250 S. Beachwood Ave., Suite 201, Boise ID 83709-0944, ph (208)376-7330, cell (208)869-3903, dfluke@jub.com, www.jub.com

**Lana Servatius**, **ITD District Right-of-Way Supervisor**, emphasized need for compliance with roadside signage regulations, including by municipalities. Lana.servatius@itd.gov or (208)334-8343. (Note: Highway beautification programs that don't comply with permitting requirements for signage risk having reimbursement decreased by 10%. This includes municipal signs.)

**Special Olympics World Winter Games** will be in Idaho in 2009. Education Director **Mary Gervase** is looking for "Host Town" places for small groups of athletes to room and train. (I emailed her 7/4 with names of local contacts.) Contact cell (208)720-6327, office (208)726-7533 or mary.gervase@2009worldgames.org or visit www.2009worldgames.org or HostTown@2009WorldGames.org

I had a chance encounter with **Tom Pippin** of **BBC Research & Consulting** who was presenting with his colleague Anne Wescott of Galena Consulting on the subject of best practices in municipal budgeting. Tom remains upbeat and willing to continue Moscow's discussion of impact fees. (Coincidentally, I spoke with the chair of Priest River's new URA, and learned that the City Council there recently implemented impact fees totaling ~\$2,100 per unit, to cover new costs for water, parks and streets. They anticipate a 1,000 acre annexation for a proposed 600 homes and an 18-hole golf course, apparently not deterred by the imposition of impact fees.

**Deanna Smith**, Administrator for **IDAHO Smart Growth** introduced herself, and reiterated what I've heard from Executive Director Rachael Winer and former Co-Directors Elaine Clegg and Jon Barrett about what good work Moscow is doing in the areas of Smart Growth (deanna@idahosmartgrowth.org, 208-333-8066).

With apparently common interests, I repeatedly encountered **Scott Fitzgerald**, enthusiastic new **Council member from Victor** and owner of **Fitzgerald's Bicycles** in Jackson (info@fitzgeraldsbicycles.com, (307)734-6886, 245 W. Hansen St./Box 1206, Jackson WY 83001). The slogan on his business card reads, "Fitzgerald's exists to grow CYCLING, the FORTUNE of our PEOPLE, and respect for the PLANET." He is an advocate for bike trails and Smart Growth and could be an excellent resource and ally in those endeavors.

I enjoyed conversing with **Boise Mayor Dave Bieter**, who expressed interest in Moscow activities. His **Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Ross Borden** is an outreach contact: (208)433-6522 or cell (208)559-2069 or office (208)384-4420, rborden@cityofboise.org, 150 N. Capitol Blvd., P.O. Box 500, Boise ID 83701-0500, www.cityofboise.org