

Councilmen reflect on their tenure

Councilman David Johnson



How to upgrade roads and other city infrastructure projects during the meanest recession since the Great Depression? That was a question that that City Councilman Dave Johnson did not intend to dodge after the economy took a dive in 2008.

“There’s no doubt we have experienced pain here in Twin Falls,” said Johnson, who after six years is leaving the Council on Dec. 31. “We have diminishing property tax values and building permits are at an all-time low.”

But at the same time, in order for a city to thrive it must be attractive and safe. That includes good roads, Johnson said.

“I think by shifting our attention to the need for better roads over the past six years, we have made real progress,” he said.

Johnson said the reason that he chose to leave the Council was that he didn’t want to be a “lifer.” But before he made that decision, he wanted to see more accountability and transparency in the city budget. With some direction from the Council, city staff has made immense progress in that area, he believes, citing several examples of on-line access to city expenditures. He also said he pushed for a Citizen Finance and Planning Committee that would include city staff and volunteers from the private sector finance experience.

“I’ve wanted that for a long time,” Johnson said. “They’re just getting started , but I can already see that this has a lot of promise. It’s going to make a big difference down the road.”

Councilman Trip Craig

Twelve years ago Trip Craig was elected to the Twin Falls City Council. What prompted him to run was a bit of turmoil in the police department, which had been authorized by the City Council to destroy seized guns. The public let it be known that the guns should be auctioned off to the public, and thus began Craig’s dozen years on the Council.

For many years, Craig was always known as the “no” guy on the Council. On almost any issue of controversy, Craig’s tendency overwhelmingly was to vote no.

But it wasn’t contrariness that prompted Craig to appear to be the odd man out; it was more his conservative political views that ruled have shifted more to the middle path among council members. He says it’s not because his views have changed, but that “the rest mostly came around to my way of thinking.”

In terms of what Craig thinks of what his votes helped accomplish, he lists improved streets and city infrastructure without having to increase staff size to get it done.

In addition, Craig says since the beginning of his tenure on City Council he’s been a proponent of encouraging business development. Craig was also one of those who drove separating Twin Falls from SIRCOMM for 911 services.

“Since then, things have moved a lot smoother,” he said.



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Utility Billing Department Supervisor Sherry Jeff retired on Nov. 30



Jeff's first day with the City of Twin Falls was Sept. 8 1975. She started as a meter reader and before long moved into the sanitation department. Eventually, Jeff became the utility services director.

Having worked under three city managers, Jeff has seen Twin Falls grow from a small rural town to today's the bustling center of business and health for over 200,000 people. During her tenure Jeff said she witnessed majestic two-and three-story homes on Blue Lakes Boulevard give way to big box stores, shopping centers and chain restaurants. And during the same past three-and-a-half decades, farmland inside and surrounding the city was converted to numerous subdivisions. The population doubled from around 22,000 to a little over 44,000 people.

During the mid-20th century, concern for the environment wasn't a much of concern for many in southern Idaho. It wasn't uncommon for people to throw their trash in the barrow pit and even off the canyon rim.

But that has changed, and Jeff got to have a hand in the recycling revolution. Along with other city staff, she helped encourage recycling of household trash in Twin Falls and also leaves and wood waste. In addition, she helped develop Twin Falls' water conservation ordinance.

"One question I always ask customers as they sign up for utility services is, 'Why did you pick Twin Falls to move to?'" Jeff said. "The answer is usually the same: It's such a clean friendly town. I think I have had a hand in making Twin Falls a clean and safe community in which we live."

Chobani gets national attention

Besides write-ups in at least a dozen trade journals, Chobani's move to Twin Falls is also getting some play in mainstream media outlets.

For example, Twin Falls recently was listed as a hiring hotspot among U.S. cities. Fiscal Times' 10 Best Places to Find a Job list:

... There are other places (besides Fort Wayne, Ind.) with help wanted signs offering jobs with high wages. They're places like Wichita, Kansas; Worcester, Massachusetts and Twin Falls, Idaho.

In addition: the Nov. 30 issue of Fortune Magazine showcased the yogurt company as among 100 up-and-coming U. S. companies: Chobani's 40-year-old founder, Hamdi Ulukaya, has grown his company in just a few short years into a \$257 million business. It is now No. 3 among all yogurt brands (see chart at bottom), just after Yoplait and Dannon, and tops the booming Greek-style yogurt niche, which grew 200% last year. In November, Chobani (pronounced cho-BAN-ee, meaning "shepherd") broke ground on a new \$100 million plant in Twin Falls, Idaho, to help fuel its U.S. expansion, and it recently purchased a dairy in Australia....