



# 2014 Spring Newsletter

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## Message from the City Manager

*By Susan Nicosia, CPA-MPA*



Greetings and happy spring to all Columbia Falls residents! The City invited the public to participate in a Community Needs Survey and Dog Park Survey. We received good participation and the results provided valuable information for the Council and Manager for future planning. The goal of the Community Survey was to provide necessary information for community development grant requests in the coming year. The 2014 survey responses were very similar to the 2001 survey. The survey results will be used and shared throughout the year. Of the 94 responses to the Dog Park Survey, 90% supported a Dog Park in Columbia Falls. As the Council develops the 2015 goals and priorities, they will consider a Dog Park. Visit the website for information regarding the City including Council meetings and hearings, Planning Board meetings, new Resolutions and Ordinances and view/share the community video. If you cannot attend a meeting, you can send your comments via the "Contact Us" section on the City website. My door is open and I welcome public comments and questions.

## Message from Mayor Barnhart

*By Don Barnhart*



Hello to everyone in the great City of Columbia Falls! I want to take this opportunity to thank you for everything you do to make our City a wonderful place to live, work and play and particularly for participating in the recent community surveys and public hearings. The Council and I will use this information while planning for the future. Please attend a Council meeting and get involved with your City. Over the winter, the City reviewed and reworked the cross connection (back flow prevention) program and reviewed the landlord/tenant utility account provisions. Please see inside the newsletter for the updated information. We are currently working with the City Manager on our annual goals and objectives for the 2015 fiscal year.

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*"Congratulations to Public Works Director Grady Jenkins on his promotion with the City. We wish him the very best in his new position with the City"*

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## Messages from Fire Chief Hagen and Police Chief Perry

*By Rick Hagen and Dave Perry*

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*“Please remember that City Ordinance does not allow open burning in the City limits”*

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**Message from Fire Chief Hagen:** Please make sure you have working smoke detectors in your home. You should test your detectors once a month and change the batteries at least once a year if you use standard alkaline batteries. Testing your detector by pressing the test button only tells you the detector makes noise, not whether it will sense smoke. That is why any smoke detector older than 10 years should be replaced with a new one and why you should have more than one smoke detector in your home. For families that have children, Columbia Falls Fire Department has a supply of free smoke detectors if you can't afford them. We will install them as well.

Another very important detector you should have in your home if you burn fuel, natural gas or propane for heating or cooking is a carbon monoxide (CO) detector. Carbon Monoxide detectors should be replaced every 5 years. Don't let you or any of your family members become one of those fatalities. If you have any questions regarding smoke or CO detectors or fire safety in general please call the Columbia Falls Fire Department at 892-3911.

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*Use of handheld devices while driving in the City is strictly prohibited*

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**Message from Police Chief Perry:** The Chief would like to remind you that the use of handheld devices, such as cellular phones, laptop and notebook computers, PDA's, smartphones, Blackberries, etc. while driving is strictly prohibited in the City. The Ordinance states "No person shall use or have in their immediate physical possession a handheld electronic communications device while operating a motor vehicle, motorcycle, quadricycle, or a bicycle on a public highway as defined in Montana Code Annotated section 61-1-101(23) within the City limits." Individuals found violating this Ordinance may be subject to a \$100 penalty. The ordinance permits the use of a "hands free device "but please do so cautiously. The Council adopted this Ordinance in 2012 to reduce the risk of distracted drivers and increase public safety.

Also to increase public safety, the City invested in an electronic traffic cart that reminds drivers of the speed limit and their speed. The cart is moved each week to another high traffic area. The cart provides detailed hourly information on the number of vehicles and speed of each vehicle. If you have a concern about the speed of traffic in your area, please contact Chief Perry and he will make the necessary arrangements to have the traffic cart set up in your neighborhood.

Remember to roll up car windows and lock your car to avoid theft of personal items!

## Important Information for Residents



Public Works Director Grady Jenkins officially began his duties on Monday, January 13, 2014. Grady previously served as a Columbia Falls Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator and has an extensive background in the Public Works Department. Grady lives in the North Valley, with his wife Petee and their two children, George and Libby. Stop by and see Grady if you have questions and concerns about the City Public Works Department or call 406-892-4430 or email: Grady at [jenkinsg@cityofcolumbiafalls.com](mailto:jenkinsg@cityofcolumbiafalls.com)

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*City  
Promotes  
New Public  
Works  
Director*

**NEW GREEN BOX HOURS:** We asked and the County listened - The Flathead County Green Box site located on Best Way near Columbia Falls will be open **9 am - 6 pm from May 16<sup>th</sup> - September 30<sup>th</sup>**. This is a change from 8 am to 5 pm to better allow residents to get to the site outside of regular work hours.

### City Website

Please visit the City's website at [www.cityofcolumbiafalls.org](http://www.cityofcolumbiafalls.org) for information about the City including meeting agendas, minutes, resolutions, ordinances, department information, business license applications, building permits, and important announcements.

### Backflow Prevention

The City Council spent all winter updating the cross connection program, also known as backflow prevention. A backflow prevention device keeps contaminants and chemicals from "back flowing" into the City's drinking water. If you have an underground irrigation system, a water based heating system or other applicable system; you are required to have an appropriate testable backflow device. The device must be tested each year by a properly licensed and certified tester.

**Changes as of this year:** The City is contracting for a certified tester to complete the residential customer backflow tests. The cost of the test will be added to the residential customers' bill the month after receiving the test. If requested, the cost of the test will be split over three (3) months. Commercial, governmental and industrial customers must contract for their testing to be completed and submitted to the City by the August 1<sup>st</sup> deadline.

The City's goal is to have 100% compliance with the backflow requirements. To that end, the City adopted a three month amnesty period where utility customers can report to the City their cross connection and backflow device. If you have not received notice regarding the testing of your backflow device in the past, your account needs to be updated. Please contact the Utility Department at 892-4392 to update your backflow information. After June 17<sup>th</sup>, you may be subject to a \$100 penalty for failing to report your cross connection/backflow device. Please contact Grady Jenkins at 892-4430 or stop in City Hall if you have any questions on backflow devices or testing.

### Summer Sewer Rates

Now that Spring has arrived and Summer is just around the corner, we want to remind homeowners that when watering lawns, gardens, and washing cars, that the City establishes a winter sewer average based upon December, January, and February's water usage. Summer sewer rates (based upon this average) begin with the May meter reading (usage beginning April 19<sup>th</sup>) and continues through the October reading (usage ending October 18<sup>th</sup>). Regardless of how much outdoor water you use, you will only be charged for sewer usage up to your winter average. If you have questions about summer sewer rates please contact Vickie Ott at [ottv@cityofcolumbiafalls.com](mailto:ottv@cityofcolumbiafalls.com). Similar provisions apply to qualifying commercial or multifamily units.

**Landlord Agreement Changes**

The proposal to have accounts in the owner's name was not passed by Council after hearing from owners and tenants but Council also recognized the need to update the landlord agreement. The property owner is always responsible for the utility bill. The City will send the owner a copy of past due bills and final bills to keep the owner informed of any delinquencies and amounts outstanding. The new landlord agreement will be available on the City website on June 1, 2014. All previous landlord agreements need to be replaced with the new agreement. Notification will be sent to landlords in the near future and must be returned by July 1, 2014.

**Park Hours & Rules**

Please remember all City Parks are open between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. City Ordinance restricts the use of City Parks after these hours. Additionally, in all City Parks, all pets must be kept on a leash and pet owners are responsible for removal of any waste deposited by their pets. Please be responsible and clean up after your pet in all parks and on the public trails and sidewalks. Failure to comply with these rules can result in a fine a fine.

**Dog Licensing**

We encourage City residents to license their dogs through the Flathead County Animal Shelter. The link to the website is [https://flathead.mt.gov/animal/dog\\_license/](https://flathead.mt.gov/animal/dog_license/)

**Swimming Pool**

Check the website for information on the swimming pool, including vacancies, rates, passes, and lessons. The City Pool will open on June 9<sup>th</sup>. No lessons will begin until June 16<sup>th</sup>. Fees and rates have not changed from the prior year.

**Pool Hours:**

|                       |                              |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| Public Swim Session 1 | 1:30 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. M-Sat |
| Public Swim Session 2 | 6:30 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. M-F   |
| Lap Swim Session 1    | 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m. M-F  |
| Lap Swim Session 2    | 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. M-F   |



Correct Back Flow Device (Testable)



Incorrect Backflow Device (Non-Testable)



## Contact Us

Send us your feedback on City services, safety concerns, new ideas, etc. Go to the website [cityofcolumbiafalls.org](http://cityofcolumbiafalls.org) and click on CONTACT, call us, or email the City Manager and/or Department heads.

Susan Nicosia, CPA, MPA  
David Perry  
Rick Hagen  
Grady Jenkins  
Tina Gordon  
Barb Torres  
Todd Watkins  
Vicki Ott

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Fire Chief  
Public Works Director  
City Judge  
City Clerk  
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