

# City of Monmouth

## City Manager's Report

*A Report on City of Monmouth News, Happenings, Successes and Other Items*

*August 9, 2018*

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### **Highway 99 Project**

Utility work is basically complete for the Highway 99 reconstruction project. Next up is ODOT moving their contractor into place to install storm drains, curbs, sidewalks and landscape strips. You will see the roadway get wider during this phase. Temporary paving will be installed this year, with the major asphalt work done in 2019.

ODOT will start their work around September 1. There will be rolling traffic impacts during construction. Temporary detours and lane changes will occur, but the intent is not to have significant delays during busier traffic times.

ODOT staff and their public relations contractor will do their best to keep the public informed about the project and traffic impacts. The City will provide links to the ODOT project page on our website and we will be using social media and other avenues to keep you in the loop. Please remember to frequent Highway 99 businesses during construction. They will be open and would love your business.

### **MINET Expansion**

The Monmouth-Independence Networks (MINET) has been providing services to our two communities since 2006. While it provides great services and operates very efficiently, it hasn't been able to fully cover all of its expenses. A very difficult burden has been servicing the debt that was used to build the MINET system.

MINET continually adjusts its services and looks for new revenue opportunities. MINET just inked

a new deal that should greatly help its balance sheet. MINET will be partnering with a private company to provide service to Dallas. The private company will put up all the money to build and maintain the system. MINET's sole responsibility is to serve as the system's operator.

MINET's staff should be praised for locating and finalizing this deal. It was approved by the MINET Board and the Cities of Independence and Monmouth. They are hoping to start providing services to their first Dallas customers by the end of the year.

### **Recycling Surcharge**

It's rare that something in China directly affects Monmouth. This just happened, however, with our recycling program. Most recycled materials from the United States and other countries were sent to China for processing. China was not happy with contamination levels (food on paper, non-recyclable materials) in the recycled materials, so they quit taking them. This has thrown all recycling markets into a state of flux.

Brandt's Sanitary, our local solid waste provider, has been caught by this disruption. The financial hit to the company has been significant. In addition to losing revenue it used to make on recyclables, it also has to pay more landfill fees for the extra trash that now has to be thrown out. Monmouth and Independence recently authorized Brandt's to charge a small fee to offset some of the losses from the recycling change. We'll have to see if the market finds a solution that would allow more recycling.

## **Public Policy is Difficult**

The City Council's recent meeting highlighted how difficult it is to make decisions for a community when they usually feature multiple options, multiple (and varying) impacts and clashing values. The City has some easy decisions, but most are very complicated and end up being a tough choice rather than a "no-brainer".

On the agenda was the issue of portable basketball hoops. On one hand, they are a great and convenient form of exercise. They also, however, can block streets and sidewalks. Placing 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade chairs is an amazing local tradition. However, they also block access to businesses. Wouldn't it be awesome if all sidewalks in town were easily walkable? It would; but who pays for them? - private property owners or the City (which is you).

Each of the above requires some mental rassing on the part of City Councilors. This is pretty typical for most City business. And to make it even more challenging, they are making decisions on behalf of the community when they many times aren't really sure what people think. Citizen input and engagement is a challenge. I figure we can solve the citizen input issue when we connect Monmouth resident's brains to our mainframe and can get accurate input anytime we need it. There may be a few technical and social (ethical, political...) issues to address before we get there.

## **New Power and Light Building**

We had a groundbreaking ceremony for our new Power and Headquarter today. The building will be located on Ecols St. S, near our substation. It has been a grueling process to get to this point. Prices for construction exploded, which increased the cost of the project and required a lot of redesign work. We were also hit with a whole bunch of permit requirements that were not anticipated and didn't seem reasonable. We are hoping to move in by January 2019.

## **Large Multi-Family Housing Project**

Right next door the new Power and Light facility will be a 119 unit apartment complex. This is a lot of activity so close together. The apartments are being developed as a low-income housing project with support from a State housing program. This will hopefully address needs for more affordable housing options in our area. The project will be exempt from property taxes, which is unfortunate for the entities that will be providing services to the complex.

## **Events and Activities**

The City of Monmouth sponsors a variety of events during the year. Some are community focused like the Chamber Awards Banquet and the WOU New Student Feed, while others are more focused on tourists. Major tourist draws during the year include the 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade and festival, Music in the Park and Zimfest (going on right now). The City is partnering with other local governments to promote tourism. More events will likely be developed in the near future.

If you have any questions about items in this report or anything related to the City, please call me at 503-751-0146 or e-mail me at [smcclure@ci.monmouth.or.us](mailto:smcclure@ci.monmouth.or.us).

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