

City Business
“An Explanation”
by Michael Leamons

One day last week after going home it dawned on me, I owe you an explanation regarding a recent purchase.

The City owns two 2001 Jeep Cherokee Sports. They were originally used by the Hico Police Department, and were sometimes used in off-road settings. Both have had hard use. One has a leaking head gasket, leaking plastic radiator, brake problems and front end problems. The other has intermittent A/C service, problems with engine over-heating and transmission problems. One is used in Water and Wastewater operations and the other is used by our Code & Animal Control Officer-Development & Special Projects Manager. To keep his vehicle on the road our Wastewater Treatment Operator pours water into the radiator three times each day. And, much to my embarrassment, for most of the summer in the conduct of day to day business the multi-titled gentleman referred to above has been using his personal vehicle at his own expense.

Reluctant to spend a lot of money repairing these two apparently worn-out vehicles, I asked the operator of the one with the leaking head gasket and radiator to keep adding water to see if it wouldn't make it through until the new budget was put in place.

I had hoped not to belabor budget matters again, but it needs to be done. As you know balancing the 2010-2011 budget has been a chore. It has no provisions for truck or major equipment replacement; hence, the dilemma. Upon becoming aware of the hard realities of next year's budget, I began re-examining the current budget to see if somehow enough could be pulled together to purchase replacement trucks. These funding sources were discovered: \$10,000 which hadn't been used in hiring part time summer help; an unexpected \$8,000 rebate on the electric bill for taxes which shouldn't have been paid; and, \$30,000 savings realized by not filling the Public Works Director vacancy.

Based on these and other findings, the City Council amended the current budget to provide for the purchase of two new work trucks and to reduce the scheduled draw down of the reserves from \$90,000 to \$69,105. Through a purchasing cooperative the City belongs to, two 2010 F150, V-8, long bed trucks with automatic transmissions and a receiver hitch were purchased for \$16,081.82 each. Doesn't it make more sense to buy a new truck with a 50,000 mile warranty for the above price than to spend four or five thousand dollars each patching up worn-out, 10 year old vehicles?

The timing of these purchases isn't the best, but with the current fiscal year ending on September 30th, it had to be done now unless the practice of drawing down the reserves was carried over into the new budget. As far as the dollars in the bank is concerned, the result would be the same, but wouldn't it be better to start 2010-2011 with a new pattern?

May God bless the City of Hico.