



City of Leavenworth

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City Council

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April 9, 2020

Community Members,

One of the fruits of this pandemic is that, even when we are tackling the same business as we would have been doing without the coronavirus, there is a change. It simply is not “business as usual” anymore. If I would put a name on it, I would say that even business is taking on a more human dimension. I’ll give you an illustration of what my experience has been.

One of the things that we are moving forward on is the upgrade to our Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). This has meant that we have had preconstruction meetings with the contractor, our engineering firm, Varela, located in Spokane, and Rural Development, the funder of the project. Like all such meetings in this time of social distancing and limited travel, these are video meetings. Normally, this would be a roughly two-hour, very professional, straightforward detailed look at the project, at various responsibilities, schedules, etc. And this one was, nothing out of the ordinary there, except it was not in person.

But shortly after the meeting, I got an email from the project supervising engineer from Varela. He told me a story that he was reminded of by one of my letters to the community that he had read. When he was a boy, in the 7th grade, one of his grandfathers died. He remembers at the funeral that there were many wonderful stories about his grandfather that he never knew. That made him curious. What didn’t he know about his other grandparents? He started asking them to tell him stories about their lives, and asked for their help to fill out the family tree. As a result, to this day he has a series of wonderful, hand-written letters written by his other grandfather, his grandmother, and a great aunt. It filled in so many pieces of their lives, even included sketches of the sod hut they had lived in as children!

Now that he has grown up, he has been coaching a local wrestling club for 11 years, getting really invested in the lives of these kids. He has taken them backpacking each summer in Montana to “unplug” and talk about life, and the hard subjects like drugs, porn, alcohol, and God. During this time of the pandemic, he has been encouraging these boys to do what he had done growing up. Call their grandparents and invest time in asking about their lives. Record their stories. This can be a rewarding experience for both parties in this time of disconnect!

Another great example of an idea to make something memorable out of this time! And an example of how this time of deep pain and struggle has found us connecting in ways that might not have occurred in “normal” times. Would I have ever heard about this from our engineer if we weren’t in the middle of this pandemic? Probably not. Would I have been missing something, something very humanizing about this individual? Most definitely! I’d like to think, that even when we return to “normal”, we will keep some of these humanizing experiences going forward. That the connections we are making to one another, we will want to continue to strengthen. That is my hope. Hang in there. Make connections, just from a distance for now! Stay safe!



Carl J. Florea, Mayor

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