

Member's Voice – Dickinson

Dickinson has the infrastructure in place, now it's filling it in. City Administrator Shawn Kessel said that the number of building permits issued by the city in the first six months of 2017 tops the number of permits issued in all of 2016. "We're seeing more single-family dwellings being built in areas where the infrastructure is already there. I call it "in-fill", Kessel said.

"More families who moved here for temporary work are deciding to stay. They're building homes here," he said. He anticipates that with the population growth, there will be continued development of retail and business areas such as in the western edge of the city near the new hospital.

Maintenance

"Our real push now is maintenance," Kessel said. With many more road miles in town, the city is focusing on maintaining those roads rather than build new ones. That's not easy with the limited funds the city has for roads: one half of the city 1-cent sales tax. This summer's budget meetings of the City Commission will look at ways to come up with additional funding such as special assessments, a surcharge on utility bills to businesses and residents, or maybe even raise the city sales tax. Kessel said the Commission will begin budget discussions in August, followed by public hearings.

Schools

The additional families in town means school needs are increasing. This year a new middle school on the northwestern edge of town will open for grades 6, 7 and 8. More growth is expected. Kessel said the graduating class this year had around 200 students. It's expected nearly 500 students will enter kindergarten.

On the downside, the region is entering a bit of a potential economic slowdown caused by the drought. Though the city has ample water, thanks to the Southwest Water Authority bringing in water from Lake Sakakawea, the drought is severely impacting the income of the region's farmers and ranchers. "There will be long-term impact from the drought, Kessel said. "This fall, we'll feel the impact in lower sales tax collections and less money spent in town."

