

Yankton County Chatter
Chairman Todd B. Woods

It seems we are at a time in society where it is easy to be negative. Too often we overlook the positives because a decision or negotiation didn't go our way. For instance, the comment of "crumbs" from the new tax reform but those "crumbs" are more money in our pockets. Could it be more? Yes. Could it be less? Yes. Negativity creates more negativity and I will stay positive and talk about the successes.

I would like to thank former County Commission Chairman Bruce Jensen for his question on why the county committed \$1 Million to West City Limits Road (WCLR). We all agree WCLR is in need of repair. The SD DOT traffic count shows 5,471 vehicles use it each day. The heavily traveled road is utilized by our Yankton High School students/staff, Lewis & Clark Lake visitors, and many residents.

WCLR has been a deeply debated topic spanning multiple city and county commissions. Why you ask? The 2 mile stretch of road spans both City (60%) and County (40%) ownership. Original estimates to replace it exceeded \$5 Million, the County's share would have been \$2 Million. City of Yankton residents/businesses pay property taxes, wheel taxes, and license plates fees like all Yankton County residents.

County and City Leaders worked together to solve this long standing problem. The City of Yankton now has full ownership of the road and will be responsible for all future maintenance. To pay for this Yankton County transferred \$1 Million from a designated "Fleegs Bridge Repair" account to remove WCLR from Yankton County's ownership. The money was in a "Designated Account" since 2013 earning little to no interest (State law only allows investments in US Backed Securities). Annual engineer's inspections have reported the bridge is in good standing due maintenance, prolonging its life. When the time comes to replace "Fleegs" Bridge the cost will far exceed the original estimates and cost over \$10 Million. At that time we will apply for SD DOT Bridge Improvement Grants (BIG) to help offset expenses. The \$1 Million we spent for WCLR has solved one problem instead of prolonging multiple problems.

Yankton County is committed to its rural roads and bridges as the 2018 Highway Budget is \$4.3 Million, a historic high. Revenue (taxes) fails to cover the full amount so we supplemented the highway budget with \$1.1 Million of jail revenue, as in years past. The Highway Budget's main revenue sources totaled \$2.58 Million (\$370,000 Property Tax, \$475,000 Wheel Tax, \$1.6 Million License Plate Fees, and \$140,000 Secondary Road Tax).

In 2018 we are committing nearly \$2 Million of Yankton County funds (plus \$880,000 of SD DOT BIG grant) to major projects on rural roads and bridges. These projects listed below can be found on the Yankton County website Highway Department tab "2018 – 2022 Highway and Bridge Plan". <http://www.co.yankton.sd.us/Uploads/documents/25/5-Year%20Plan%202018-2022%20UPDATE%2092517.pdf>

- \$232,000 3 James River Bridge Rehabilitation Projects (plus \$880,000 SD DOT BIG Grant)
- \$465,000 2 Bridges Replacements (Turkey Valley Township)
- \$443,500 Chip Sealing 21.25 miles (Central, Utica South, & Zizkov South Townships)
- \$412,500 Double Chip Seal 8.25 miles 301st St (Phase 3 of Reclamation Project)
- \$180,000 Edge Repair – 12 Miles Walshtown Road
- \$28,000 Crack Sealing 5 Miles Mission Hill & Utica South Township
- \$192,500 Reclamation of 303rd 5.5 Miles (Phase 1)

The input from voters and Road and Bridge Task Force participants was to look for less costly alternatives. One of the solution is road reclamation, which is completed in several phases over a few years to strengthen the roads foundation to accommodate modern loads. Phase 1, indeed grinds up the existing asphalt along with additional gravel to build the road's foundation. Phase 2, the road sits through a freeze/thaw cycle to identify potential trouble spots which are addressed prior to Phase 3. Phase 3 is applying a chip seal or asphalt mat over the new foundation. The process takes 2-3 years to complete at a third of the cost of traditional methods. Once these roads have a strong foundation they can handle heavier loads and may not need to have the same spring load limits as other roads.

Finally in regards to economic development, Yankton County has set many records over the past three years. The Register of Deeds Office surpassed the 2015 record (\$103.4 Million) on real estate/land value sales at \$111.1 Million in 2017. The three year average (2014-17) is \$102.9 Million, generating an average of \$102,960 in transfer fees. The previous three years (2012-14) averaged \$83.4 Million. Planning & Zoning set records in permit fees for 2016 (\$50,559) and for building permits issued at 232 Permits in 2015. New construction/remodeling permits adds to our property tax base. Added fee revenue from building permits and real estate/land sales also increases our revenue. These are direct effects to the county but the indirect effects (contractors, lumber yards, electricians, etc.) have a greater impact to the entire community. One year could be an anomaly but 3 years indicates a trend.

I will continue to focus on the positives of our community.