

Mayor's Report
28 October 2022 – 7 November 2022
Larry Jacobsen

Greetings, Boss. Here is my status report with some of my recent Nibley activities.

Nibley Wellbeing Survey

How do you feel about living in Nibley? Dr. Courtney Flint with the USU Extension Office - with support from the Utah League of Cities and Towns – summarized results from a recent Wellbeing Survey at our previous City Council meeting. The complete results are at the location below, and I encourage you to have a look. Lots of good stuff in there.

<https://www.usu.edu/utah-wellbeing-project/reports/2022/nibley-wellbeing-survey-findings-2022>

From the summary, Nibley had 457 respondents and “Overall Personal and Community Wellbeing in Nibley were above average among the 33 study cities.”

For me, I was impressed with how our citizen’s feeling of wellbeing is associated with recreation and nature-based activities. In the past 12 months, 83% of the survey respondents recreated in Nibley parks, and 85% enjoyed wildlife or birds in their yard or in the neighborhood. In addition, landscape features influence the respondent’s wellbeing. From the survey, “Natural landscapes including mountains, rivers and streams, city parks, and trails were found to have an overwhelmingly positive influence on wellbeing.” While it's difficult for Nibley City to build mountains and streams (plus, that is already well taken care of outside of Nibley), we can continue to work on parks and trails.

I am pleased that the survey results align with anecdotal accounts to show that our city parks need variety that goes beyond manicured turf. While turf is important for athletic fields (yes, we need more of those too), Nibley City owns an increasing amount of park area that, because of ground water, is better suited to natural space than manicured turf. That makes me happy. These natural spaces are important to residents as well as the local ecology. These important natural spaces are less expensive to develop and maintain than manicured parks. However, these natural spaces are not unmanaged; they are managed differently. As a city, I look forward to gaining focus and expertise with our city staff to manage these important natural spaces. I know that other cities in Utah are realizing the importance of natural spaces and the importance of managing natural spaces. I believe that Nibley – with collaboration with other cities – can be a leader in this area.

Bear River Association of Governments (BRAG)

I have mentioned previously that I found myself on the Governing Board of Bear River Association of Governments, or BRAG. From their website, “Brag provides a wide array of services for low-income households, seniors, persons with disabilities, and provides community and economic development technical assistance to local governments.” Much of the funding for these efforts comes from the federal government. On the last point from the above statement, it is important to put economic development in the current context. Throughout the three counties that make up BRAG, I believe we have been too successful at creating jobs. We have done so well that we have created other concerns. Those concerns include rapid growth, unobtainable housing, and threats to open space.

A recent initiative from BRAG is to recommend to the three County Governments a consolidation individual economic development effort into a single BRAG team. To be frank, I'm not sure that guarantees anything beyond being better able to compete for jobs against the Wasatch Front. However, the good news during this discussion is that the BRAG Board understands in our current context, economic development must tie closely with quality of life rather than just create jobs. We must preserve the reasons that people want to live in Northern Utah to fill those jobs.

Here is an example of how economic development must mean more than creating jobs. I recalled at the last BRAG Board meeting the Stokes Nature Center receiving nearly \$2M in funding from the Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) to build an outdoor classroom on their property in Nibley. When I researched Stoke's application, I was surprised to learn that the EDA put \$2M into a project that will create less than ten jobs. Even the Federal Government seems to understand that developing an outdoor classroom helps economic development in Cache Valley. Certainly, community development must accompany job creation. I don't have all the details needed to balance economic and community development figured out, but I will keep working on it. If you are thinking about it as well, please let me know. What I do know is that my driving motivation is to make Nibley a place where our citizens are proud to live.

2600 South

You are probably wondering, "Still? He's still working to get the privately owned 2600 South open?" Yes, I am. At this point, I am eager to give the City Council a chance to weigh in on a proposal at our meeting this week that the landowner, myself – and now a third party – have been negotiating for some time.

Given the results from the Wellness Survey, I will sign off with a modified version of a favorite quote from Garrison Keillor and the Prairie Home Companion...

That's the news from Nibley City, my adopted hometown, where all the women are strong, all the men good looking, and all the children above average.

Thanks for reading, boss. Please call, text, or write anytime.

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