

Council and Mayor

March 12, 2024

First, do no harm. I wish the Hippocratic Oath for medical practitioners also applied to politicians.

Some Council actions, though well-intentioned, are hurting the local economy: Scout Wave, excessive STR Tax, paid parking downtown. Times are already difficult without added obstacles.

But what about the seemingly forgotten Poncha Springs vs Salida lawsuit? By refusing new sewer line connections, Salida has effectively blocked new residence construction in Poncha since 4/6/22. Two years! Simply put, Salida signed a contract with Poncha to provide wastewater services and infrastructure, but is not fulfilling the terms. Poncha offered to negotiate and pay some of the costs, but this was rejected. (tinyurl.com/598swd3y) The only winners are attorneys billing hourly to kick the can down an endless road.

The architect of this disaster was former City Administrator Drew Nelson. There is so much at stake. Isn't it time for a reset, a thorough examination of the details?

Housing is supposedly the #1 issue. Most of the attainable housing in South Chaffee used to be built in Poncha Springs but is now stalled by City of Salida action. Why isn't this the primary focus of council? Why aren't CHA and BETCH raising hell?

What can the good people of Salida do to help? A recent resignation left an open council seat, to be filled by council vote on March 19. This creates an opportunity to change the dynamic.

Fortunately, we have one applicant with the perfect blend of knowledge and experience: longtime Salida resident Jackie Berndt. Recently retired as the bookkeeper at Murdoch's, Jackie has pledged to devote full-time effort if appointed to Council.

Brokering a deal with Poncha was part of Jackie's recent Council bid. She will be relentless in pursuing an equitable settlement.

Jackie would also provide needed diversity to council. As a lifetime Salida resident of Salida, she has deep roots. Perhaps the 20+% of Salida's retirement-age population would feel better represented. Jackie's long experience as a Paramedic and firefighter would enhance council with streetwise experience of the harsh realities now confronting Salidans. Jackie could serve as a liaison between council, first responders and the public; bridging issues that divide us.

I request Salida residents write to city council. Urge them to appoint Jackie Berndt to the open seat in Ward 3. Please attend the council meeting on March 19 to speak on Jackie's behalf. Help Jackie make Salida a better place.

Vince Phillips, Salida