City administrator aims to revitalize Mitchell

Mitchell City Administrator Jeff Sprock remembers when his city had a lot more business activity – and he wants to bring it back

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It’s quite a change going from biology to public sector management, but Mitchell City Administrator Jeff Sprock is enjoying his new career path.

Since November 2015, he’s been working toward his city’s revitalization and continued growth – but his path to city administration included a number of turns.

Growing up in Casper, Wyo., Jeff graduated from Kelly Walsh High School. With both sets of grandparents living in the Chadron and Crawford area, he spent a lot of time in the Panhandle.

Majors in biology, political science

His diverse interests came from majors in both biology and political science at Ottawa University, a small liberal arts school in Kansas.

“I had a bachelor’s degree but didn’t know what to do with my life,” Sprock said. “I worked at a couple of grocery stores in Chadron. It was a real change when I ended up on a fishing boat in the Bering Sea off Alaska.”

His job was observer biologist for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. One of their programs monitors fishing to assure that fishermen stay within their catch limits.

“That was a short-term job, as I get seasick easily,” Sprock said. “It did give me a foothold into the biology world and I later became a biologist for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission in the Ponderosa Wildlife Area at Crawford.”

He also became involved with GIS, geographic information systems. After taking some classes, he realized he had a passion for mapping.

GIS coordinator

When a GIS position opened at the North Platte Natural Resources District, he moved to Gering to become its GIS Coordinator for nine years.

After getting married, the family eventually moved to Mitchell. Still, Sprock wanted to pursue more advancement. It came when he was accepted into the Master of Public Administration program through the University of Nebraska-Omaha.

When Ty Abernethy, Mitchell’s longtime city administrator, retired, he applied for the position. Nov. 1, 2015, became his first day on the job.

Community development

“I’m trying to work with the council on the community development process,” he said. “We’re working toward our certified leadership credentials for the Department of Economic Development. We also plan to do blighted studies of the community to see what areas might be redeveloped.”

As city administrator, Sprock is responsible for public works, street department, parks department and the golf course. As a result, he attends numerous meetings, from
New sewer system installed to serve south Gretna

Sarpy County development occurs where there is a sanitary sewer service available. It doesn't sound exciting, but development projects of any size require a sanitary sewer system. Sanitary sewer systems are dependent upon gravity systems, which make it much more difficult to deliver compared to water supply systems, which are under pressure and can be delivered without the need for gravity.

Over the past year, the City of Gretna has contracted to have a sanitary sewer system installed to serve the south part of the Gretna area down to Interstate 80. This system will be fully functional this month. This project has already spurred the development of an industrial park located between Hwy 6 and Fairview Road. It is anticipated that there will be several additional projects occurring in the area now that sewer and water are available.

The city is now planning for the expansion of the sanitary sewer system south of Interstate 80. This system will serve several existing businesses and will open up additional property to development.

Highway 6 and 31 are very important development areas for our community. A couple years ago, the city developed a master plan for this area, which will be the basis for future development. This sanitary sewer system is an important piece to the development puzzle.

Source – City of Gretna

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the Panhandle Area Development District to the League of Nebraska Municipalities.

Sprock said the Mitchell area was thriving about 20 years ago when the sugar factory was still operating and the city’s main highway went through downtown.

Now, the factory is closed and the highway has been re-routed to the edge of town, taking a number of businesses with it. But he still has a vision to rebuild the community with guidance from the state to leverage its resources.

“I like being involved in the community and providing the best services that won’t be a huge expense for our citizens,” he said. “It’s not about changing the culture, but about doing things more efficiently.”

Source – City of Gretna

A walk with the Lexington Mayor

While the wintry wind blew outside, more than 24 people came together for a warm lunchtime walk with Mayor John Fagot at the Lexington Fieldhouse Jan. 26.

The event was planned by the community-based Walkable City Steering Committee and promoted by the City of Lexington, Lexington Regional Health Center and Two Rivers Public Health Department.

The committee will be planning more group walking and biking activities throughout the year.

Source – Lexington City Happenings