

It's my turn again to write the Commissioners Comments, I was able to beg off last time with the help of County Clerk Skrinny Dixon. Skrinny has been bailing out Commissioners for a lot of years and I for one am very thankful, she will be missed.

Commissioners, by statute are in charge of the County's money, the Road and Bridge department, Planning and Zoning, and numerous other tasks. This month I would like to talk about the money part and how the lack of it affects our decision making process when it comes to Road and Bridge. Platte County is one of the poorest counties in Wyoming, and regardless of what happens with wind and oil we will be that way for a while yet.

Our Road and Bridge crew is a pretty good bunch of guys who for whatever reason chose to work for the county, when they could take their skills and make more money elsewhere. We are glad to have them and thank them for their dedication. So before you cuss them please take a minute to hear me out. Platte County has roughly 600 miles of county roads, and an \$832,000 Road and Bridge Budget. If you take out wages, that leaves us with \$786 per mile of road for construction and maintenance. It takes \$20,000 per mile to gravel a road, \$23,000 to chip seal and roughly \$350,000 a mile for pavement. We are able to make some improvements on some roads every year, but if you look at the big picture we simply do not have the money to do everything that needs to be done. If we had the funds we could spend 6 million on roads and may be caught up. I understand that the most important road in the county is the one that you drive every day; the reality is we can do only what the money will allow.

Happy Hollow Bridge in Chugwater is another case of too little money. The Department of Transportation does bridge inspections across the state. Following a recent round of inspections Happy Hollow Bridge was condemned by the state; we had no choice but to close it. The options for replacement are many, the cheapest is to permanently abandon the bridge and build a short connector road to the state highway, about \$30,000, but there are right of way issues with a landowner. Next would be to replace the bridge for \$130,000, or go with a state cost-share program that will cost Platte county 10% of a \$600,000 bridge and will take 2 to 4 years. The few residents of the area still have access by a longer route but would like to have this resolved. The commissioners like option one, but if that can't be worked out we will be forced to cost share with the state and to live with its time frame.

To sum up my thoughts, Platte County is great place to live; we have some of the lowest taxes in the nation, not too many people, friendly neighbors, and lots of good scenic views. What we don't have is money for 600 miles of high quality roads. So if you live here or are thinking of moving here please enjoy, and keep in mind that the roads will be narrow, rough, muddy, dusty, drifted with snow, long, and lots of times will have cattle or wildlife standing in them.

As always feel free to let us know your thoughts.