

Moscow City Council



Regular Meeting ~Minutes~

Laurie M. Hopkins
City Clerk

www.ci.moscow.id.us

208.883.7015

**Monday
April 17, 2023**

7:00 PM

**Council Chambers
206 E. Third St.**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Art Bettge, Drew Davis, Sandra Kelly, Maureen Laflin, Hailey Lewis, Julia Parker, Gina Taruscio

STAFF: Bill Belknap, Mia Bautista, Cody Riddle Brian Nickerson, Amanda Argona, Tyler Palmer, Aimee Hennrich, Cody Riddle, Alisa Anderson, David Schott, Brian Strain, Ty Thompson, Laurie M. Hopkins

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Council President Laflin led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PROCLAMATION

Earth Day

Mayor Bettge read the proclamation and presented it to Tina Hilding.

Arbor Day

Mayor Bettge read the proclamation and presented it to David Schott. Schott shared the information for the Arbor Day celebration and invited everyone to attend.

Moscow Food Co-op

Mayor Bettge read the proclamation.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. All Consent Items (ACTION ITEM)

A. Approval of Moscow City Council April 3, 2023 Minutes - Laurie M. Hopkins

B. Disbursement Report March 2023 - Sarah Banks

Staff presented the March 2023 Accounts Payable Report to the Public Works / Finance Committee on April 10th, 2023. The Committee received the report and approved the disbursements as presented.

ACTION: Accept the Disbursements Report for the month of March 2023.

C. Second Quarter Financial Report January 1, 2023 to March 31, 2023 for FY2023 - Sarah Banks

Staff presented the second quarter financial report of Fiscal Year 2023 (January 1, 2023 to March 31, 2023) to the Public Works / Finance Committee on April 10th, 2023. The Committee received the financial report and approved it as presented.

ACTION: Accept the FY2023 Second Quarter Financial Report.

D. Recycling Services Agreement Between City of Moscow and University of Idaho - Tim Davis

The University of Idaho is committed to begin a single stream recycling program on campus with collection of recyclables performed in-house by Facilities staff. The City of Moscow implemented a single stream recycling program in 2016 for residential and multi-family customers. The City later made the single stream recycling program available to commercial customers in 2018. The City of Moscow has a long history of supporting recycling as a part of an overall sanitation strategy including owning the Moscow Recycling Center where all recyclables collected in Moscow are delivered and processed. The City of Moscow supports the University's commitment to begin a single stream recycling program on campus and is committed to accept, process and ultimately ship the University's single stream recycling materials to a Material Recovery Facility. This was reviewed by the Public Works/Finance Committee on April 10, 2023 and recommended for approval.

ACTION: Approve the Services Agreement between the City of Moscow, Idaho and University of Idaho for single stream recycling program as presented.

E. Asphalt Rubber Chip - 2023 Bid Results and Contract Award - Todd Drage

The Pavement Preservation Program for FY2023 includes Asphalt Rubber (AR) Chip Seal road treatments to address multiple locations throughout the City. The City published an advertisement for bids for the project on March 11, 2023. Bids were opened on Tuesday, March 28, 2023. One responsive bid was received from Doolittle Construction LLC of Snoqualmie Washington for the amount of \$433,962.33. This was reviewed by the Public Works/Finance Committee on April 10, 2023, and recommended for approval.

ACTION: Accept the low bid from Doolittle Construction, award the contract in the amount of \$433,962.33, and authorize staff approval for construction change orders in an amount not to exceed 10% of the contract amount.

F. Palouse Mall AC Water Main Replacement Bid Results and Contract Award - Nate Suhr

The Palouse Mall AC Water Main Replacement project consists of the removal and replacement of approximately 740 feet of 12-inch asbestos cement (AC) water main located behind the northeast corner of the Palouse Empire Mall. This project will also replace various drainage structures, water valves, and fire hydrants as needed. The replacement is necessary due to the brittle nature of AC pipe which is of high concern, especially when located near a production well where it will see daily pressure fluctuations due to well operation. This was reviewed by the Public Works/Finance Committee on Monday April 10, 2023 and recommended for approval.

ACTION: Accept the bid from M.L. Albright & Sons, Inc., award the contract in the amount of \$422,530.00, and authorize staff approval of construction change orders in an amount not to exceed 10% of the contract amount.

G. Artwalk Season Finale Alcohol Use Request in Entertainment District - Amanda Argona

The City of Moscow Arts Department is hosting the Artwalk Season Finale on Thursday, June 15th, from 4 pm to 8 pm on Main Street between 3rd and 6th Streets. This annual event concludes the 2022-2023 Artwalk Season in an artistic and festive manner. As a City-hosted event, the Arts Department has facilitated the registration of Main Street vendors and demonstrators, as well as business and non-profit host locations. No more than 5 (five) beer/wine vendors will be authorized for beer/wine sales, and a variety of activities will take place including live music, Kidwalk, food sales, art demonstrations, and more. The event has been reviewed and approved as of March 1, 2023. Following standard operating procedures for events with alcohol that are within the Entertainment District boundaries, Artwalk is requesting a temporary suspension of the open container law by resolution. Per Moscow City Code, Section 10-1-12; a draft resolution has been prepared for Council's consideration. This was reviewed by the Public Works/Finance Committee on April 10,

2023 and recommended for approval.

ACTION: Approve the resolution allowing for the temporary suspension of the open container law within the event footprint of the Artwalk Season Finale for the duration of the event.

H. Moscow Renaissance Fair Alcohol Use Request in East City Park - Amanda Argona

Moscow Renaissance Fair LLC is hosting the annual Moscow Renaissance Fair on Saturday, May 6 and Sunday, May 7 in East City Park. The annual event is a community celebration of spring. Live music, artisans, kid-friendly activities, food vendors, and a beer garden are traditional aspects of this event. The applicant anticipates 1 (one) licensed beer and/or wine vendor in the beer garden, which is estimated to be 30'x20' in size. Following standard operating procedures for events with alcohol within a City Park, Moscow Renaissance Fair LLC is requesting the allowance of attendees to possess and consume alcoholic beverages within the 30'x20' beer garden from 12:00-7:30 pm on Sat., May 6 and 12:00-5:00 pm on Sun., May 7. Per Moscow City Code, Section 5-13-4, a draft resolution has been prepared by the Community Events Division and reviewed by the Legal Department for the Council's consideration to permit this typically prohibited activity. This was reviewed by the Public Works/Finance Committee on April 10, 2023 and recommended for approval.

ACTION: Approve the resolution allowing for the possession and consumption of alcoholic beverages in the designated beer garden in East City Park for Moscow Renaissance Fair for the listed dates and times during the event.

Kelly moved, Taruscio seconded, to approve the consent agenda as presented. Roll Call Vote: Ayes: Unanimous. Nays: None. Abstentions: None. Motion carried.

REGULAR AGENDA

2. Staff Recognition

None offered.

3. Mayors Appointments (ACTION ITEM)

None offered.

4. Public Comment and Mayor's Response Period (limit 15 minutes)

Kent Salisbury (Moscow) sent email to council regarding artwork at Jackson and A Street and the implications of the painting and the larger meaning in the current climate. He looks forward to the day we don't have to make a statement in public on a mural so emboldened. There is also box mural art by One Word and Nectar that says Murder in Moscow. With the November event, perhaps the title should be changed out to something more hopeful.

Paul Kimmel (Viola) passed out information related to keys to economic success and what builds a community. He went through the top 5 reasons people and businesses either come or stay in a community. Number 5, tax rate; 4, infrastructure; 3, workforce and housing; 2, quality of life; 1, collaboration and cooperation. He also passed out an excerpt from Strong Towns regarding choosing a place that is able to grow stronger and wealthy and provide a good home for its inhabitants. The author argues two components: people that are well traveled and brings ideas (he feels U of I does that) and then mystic patriots, a person who works tirelessly to improve the place they live and loves not as a consumer but because it is their place. He thinks the council serve as that reason and thanked the Council.

Kelli Cooper, City of Moscow staff, invited everyone to downtown cleanup at 9:30 a.m. this Friday.

5. Mayor's Earth Day Awards

Mayor Bettge provided the history of the Mayor's Earth Day awards and presented the awards to the winning recipients. See attachment.

6. Appeal of Conditional Use Permit at 2518 Itani Drive (ACTION ITEM) - Aimee Hennrich

On January 6, 2023, John and Candis Write applied for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to allow a Bed and Breakfast Inn, utilizing two of the four existing bedrooms in the single family home at 2518 Itani Drive. The Board of Adjustment conducted a public hearing for the proposed CUP on February 7, 2023, and subsequently voted to approve the CUP application with the condition that the applicant provide six (6) off-street parking spaces on the property. Under current City standards, a single-family home would require two (2) off-street parking spaces and a two (2) bedroom Bed and Breakfast would require one (1) additional parking space for a total of three (3) off-street parking spaces. On February 23, 2023, the Community Development Department received an appeal from John and Candis Write, stating that they wish to appeal the Board of Adjustment's decision to City Council in order to eliminate the condition of approval.

PROPOSED ACTIONS:

1. After considering the record and appeal request; sustain the decision of the Board in whole or in part; reverse the decision of the Board in whole or in part; or remand the matter in whole or in part to the Board with comments and/or instructions for further consideration by the Board; or take other such action deemed appropriate.
2. Direct staff to prepare a written decision based on the Council's action.

Mayor Bettge and Aimee Hennrich explained the appeal process. Hennrich continued by introducing the item with the above details, including requirements for zoning and short term rentals. At the Board of Adjustment hearing there was verbal testimony given by four (4) people and one (1) letter the was read into the record in opposition to the proposed bed and breakfast. Concerns included parking, snow removal and not wanting the character of the neighborhood to change.

John Wright, owner, said the direct and immediate effect wasn't discussed at the BOA meeting which is by extending his driveway into the yard would eliminate one or possibly two on-street parking spaces. There are no current parking issues. If he must comply with the BOA requirement it would also de-conform the look of his house. Eliminating on-street parking isn't desirable. In his appeal application he included a brief map of businesses in the neighborhood but it doesn't show other rentals in the neighborhood, which do exist. The basis for his appeal is they exceed all the minimum requirements, by adding two more off-street parking spaces it would take out one to two on-street parking and de-conform his home. Because of family activities, he won't be renting much on weekends. He anticipates most visitors will parking at night and not during the day.

Taruscio said she feels uncomfortable with the additional requirements that have a somewhat cascading affect and doesn't agree with the possibility of losing one on-street parking space, potentially two She feels it was an extreme condition. Davis agreed with Taruscio that the extra parking was an extreme condition. With the condition of the neighborhood, one or two cars on the street, he didn't see it as a detriment. He added when considering the lack of housing in all of Moscow, bed and breakfasts and accessory dwelling units are a way to mitigate by using them as additional housing. Lewis stated she appreciates that neighbors are voicing their concerns and after rereading the transcript, she feels the BOA made the decision to be sure the neighbors were heard. She doesn't feel it is the best solution. Parker felt it is arbitrary to add parking spaces to this BNB. It is unfortunate neighbors are having conflict with parking but doesn't agree with imposing an extra requirement on one particular BNB.

Parker moved to reverse in part and remove condition of requiring the additional parking spaces. Davis seconded.

Kelly is hesitant to go against the City boards and all the work they put in. She felt the neighbors wanted to be heard and they were. She agrees the extra parking is not needed. Laflin said it is hard to understand why this one BNB has more requirements than the other BNB's in town and doesn't agree that there are different rules for this one because the neighbors complained.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes: Unanimous. Nays: None. Abstentions: None. Motion carried.

Parker moved to direct staff to prepare a written decision based on the Council's action. Taruscio seconded. Roll Call Vote: Ayes: Unanimous. Nays: None. Abstentions: None. Motion carried.

7. Public Hearing: Idaho Community Development Block Grant - Status of Grant Funded Project Activities for Fire Truck Acquisition (ACTION ITEM) - Alisa Anderson

In April of 2022, the City of Moscow received an Idaho Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG) in the amount of Three Hundred Thirty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$335,000) from the Idaho Department of Commerce. This funding is allocated to the State of Idaho from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The funds are currently being used to purchase a new Pumper Fire Engine for the Moscow Volunteer Fire Department. The hearing will include a review of project activities and accomplishments to date, a summary of all expenditures to date, a general description of remaining work and any changes made to the scope of work, budget, schedule, location or beneficiaries. Verbal and written questions and comments will be accepted at the public hearing.

PROPOSED ACTIONS: Conduct a public hearing regarding project activities and accomplishments to date, a summary of all expenditures to date, a general description of remaining work and any changes made to the scope of work, budget, schedule, location or beneficiaries. Accept verbal and written comments and questions at the public hearing.

Bettge opened the hearing at 8:08 p.m.

Anderson introduced the item as written above. The engine to be replaced was due for retirement in 2018 and the new engine will be housed at Fire Station No. 2. It is a Pierce Saber Pumper with a price of \$687,081. The grant award is \$335,000 and City match is \$352,081 which was budgeted in FY2022 but carried over to FY2023. It is being built in Florida and final inspection and delivery is anticipated to be in August.

Nickerson said the vendor drives it to Moscow and upon arrival there is a final inspection by staff. Palmer said the fleet and fire departments have a very critical and comprehensive checking process for the review of the engine. Nickerson provided construction and assembly photos. The extra equipment has to be installed by the Fleet Division and it will be identical to the other two engines. The retired engine will then be housed at Station 3 and be used as a rescue truck.

Mayor Bettge asked for testimony in favor, opposition, and of a general nature. No testimony was received and he closed the public hearing at 8:24 p.m. No Council action is necessary.

REPORTS

City Council

Moscow Tree Commission – Taruscio reminded everyone there will be free seedlings at the Arbor Day event on April 29th.

Planning and Zoning Commission – Taruscio said the Commission discussed intersections.

Moscow Urban Renewal Agency – Laflin reported they received a presentation from Riddle regarding proposal requirements and designs for the Jackson and Sixth Street property.

Moscow Arts Commission – Parker said the Commission is getting ready for the next Artwalk.

Council members spoke on other meetings and events including Town and Gown.

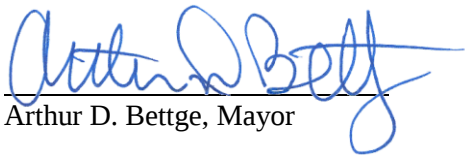
Mayor

Mayor Bettge said he attended the live fire training with the Fire Department; taught a few high school government classes; and tomorrow is the AIC spring district workshop.

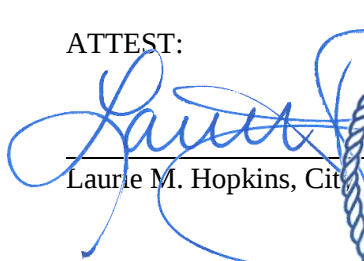
Belknap said the MVFD agreed to participate with the City on a pilot program for residents and volunteers to provide a stipend to stay over the holiday weeks when coverage is difficult. It will be proposed in the FY2024 budget at a cost of \$24,000. The Board also approved an EMS waiver due to lack of paramedic coverage. The waiver is a method to let the state know that licenses them as an Advanced Life Support provider and that there may not be paramedic coverage and that there is an operations plan on who to notify when it happens. It assists to protect the volunteer's liability.

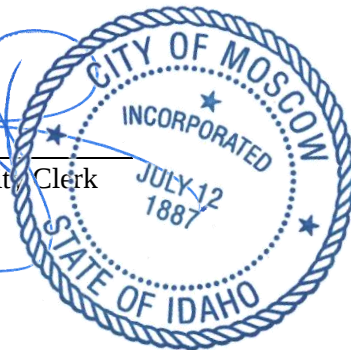
ADJOURN

It was moved, seconded and mutually agreed upon to adjourn at 8:39 p.m.


Arthur D. Bettge, Mayor

ATTEST:


Laurie M. Hopkins, City Clerk





Keys to Municipal Economic Development

Success: Five ways not to kill your community

by [Doug Griffiths](#) | Feb 1, 2023 | [Community Development](#)

Municipal Economic Development: In my extensive travels across North America the past year, I made an interesting discovery that might surprise or even shock you. It was a discovery that supported my own growing suspicions about our obsession with lowering corporate tax rates in communities to attract businesses.

All of my numerous meetings confirmed that lowering municipal tax rates is not the economic magnet it used to be. Realistically, it probably never was very effective at doing much more than fostering a race to the bottom as communities lowered their mill rates to beat their neighbors to become the 'cheapest' community. We get what we pay for. Regardless, even if it was once upon a time successful at some level, it certainly isn't now.

That was apparent to me after speaking with knowledgeable people including economic development officers, chambers of commerce executives, and officials involved in selecting sites for businesses. Every one of them in every place I visited confirmed my suspicions that out of the five factors that determine whether a person or company will invest in your community, taxes ranked fifth. Dead last. Taxes are not as important as they used to be. What comes in at the top of the list will likely surprise you.

Before we get to that, let's examine why taxes are less important than many people think regarding municipal economic development. There was indeed a mindset permeating the last 50 years that the lowest tax rate possible was the most important objective to grow your economy. That mindset stretched across political jurisdictions in North America whether they were federal, state/provincial, or municipal. If we just lowered taxes, investment would come.

You could certainly point to some success stories, where it appears the lowest taxes won the day, but those stories are likely to be much more complex than you'd think. Indeed, there are jurisdictions where taxes are low, and they cite that as the reason the economy is booming.

However, in following up on those claims it is usually a case of mistaking the effect for the cause. Those jurisdictions usually have a predisposition to exceptional economic opportunities or the good fortune of natural resources that caused the growth of their economy and tax base, which then allowed the government to lower taxes. Lower taxes were the result of economic growth, not the stimulant for it. The low taxes didn't cause the growth, they were the result of it.

Practically, it's like how we often wait to have more energy so they can work out, when in reality working out is what gives us more energy. Having more energy doesn't cause you to work out. Working out causes you to have more energy. Low taxes don't drive the economy. Low taxes are the result of a prosperous economy.

Research on municipal economic development tends to back this up. For example, a report entitled *Rethinking Property Tax Incentives for Business by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy* concluded that companies choose a location based on many factors, not simply tax rates.

"Firms consider dozens of factors during site selection, but government officials rarely know which factors are most important," says the 2012 study. "They may feel compelled to offer tax incentives since it is one of the few location factors they can influence directly. Policy makers may think that tax cuts and incentive offers are decisive, but this assumption is often wrong. When businesses lobby for tax breaks, they have a clear motive to exaggerate the importance of incentives, because otherwise they are unlikely to receive any breaks. In fact, evidence shows that in some cases businesses negotiate for tax incentives after they have already chosen a location."

Of course, proponents of tax cuts will argue they do in fact work in favor of municipal economic development. However, there is a caveat to that argument, too. A 2018 report from the Kellogg School of Management entitled *Does Lowering the Corporate Tax Rate Spur Economic Growth?* said, "cutting the corporate tax rate can, indeed, spur growth—but only if the current rate is exceptionally high." For example, if your community and surrounding neighbors have a corporate tax rate of 35 percent, you could attract businesses by lowering it to 10 percent. But if you and your neighbors all have a rate of 10 percent, lowering it to five percent won't make much difference.

Communities are starting to realize cutting their rates simply ends up in a race to the bottom to attract businesses, thereby strangling their ability to pay for municipal services. Ironically, those are the same services they need to attract business, and people.

As a 2020 report from the *Journal of Economic Perspectives* pointed out, “To the extent that lower corporate taxes are financed by reduced public services, a corporate tax cut may have adverse effects on productivity. In Kansas, for example, dramatic business income tax cuts reduced state revenues by \$700 million, leading to underfunding of public schools, increases in sales taxes, and decreases in infrastructure spending.”

Adding to the problem was that Kansas was in a race-to-the-bottom tax-cutting war with its neighboring state, Missouri. The two realized they needed to end the war, but old tax-cutting habits die hard. “In 2019, Kansas and Missouri came to a truce: they would not offer tax incentives for firms moving from the other side of the border in Kansas City. However, both states rushed to finalize large incentive deals right before the truce was enacted.”

So, if cutting taxes is not at the top of the list (it comes in 5th out of 5 factors) to attract businesses, and could actually be bad for your community, what are the factors that rank higher?

Number 4: Infrastructure. This includes water, wastewater, roads, rail, and airports. But even infrastructure is not as important as it once was as the world changes to local manufacturing and just-in-time production, especially given how much transportation costs are increasing while logistical coordination is improving.

Number 3: Workforce and Housing. These two are inextricably linked because housing is a critical issue in every corner of this continent. Without affordability and diversity in housing you cannot attract a diversified workforce and without a diversified workforce you are not likely to attract many new businesses and industries. Businesses and industry look to locate where people (the workforce) already live, and particularly, where they love to live.

Number 2: Quality of Life. In simple terms, if you must leave town to take your kids to swimming lessons then you’re probably going to buy groceries in that neighboring town. Conversely, if you must drive somewhere to get groceries then you are probably going to take your kids to that swimming pool while you shop. Either way, eventually you will move to the community with the grocery store and the swimming pool.. It’s a simple example of municipal economic development but I think you get the point.

And there's a crucial related point: Economic development and community development must go hand in hand. It's an argument I have been making for years. A few years ago, I was working with a community that over time had lost a couple of major industries and several hundred jobs. One of the folks from the town told me they just needed to attract an industry that would create a couple of hundred new jobs. I delicately explained to him that they weren't going to be able to attract an industry that would create a couple hundred jobs for two reasons. First, there weren't 200 unemployed people in the community available to work. When the original jobs had been lost, those newly unemployed residents moved away almost immediately, along with their families. Second, the community wasn't offering a good enough quality of life to retain people or to attract new people. No business was going to invest in a place where people didn't want to stay.

When a business or industry is looking to locate in the community it's important to have an existing workforce they can draw from. Not having an existing workforce almost guarantees that you will not be able to attract any business or industry. It's pretty simple really. Baby boomers would move to where the jobs were, but younger generations are moving to where they want to live, and the jobs are following them. If your community does not have a good quality of life and people don't want to live there, then a new business won't want to be there either.

Number 1: Collaboration/cooperation. By that I mean both collaboration between neighboring municipalities and cooperation within the municipality itself. Investors and site selectors have told me they will drop by school board meetings and council meetings to see how well the community functions and how well it works with neighboring communities.

The case they made to me every time was that if the community can't work together and collaborate with others, then the other four items on the top-five-factors list cannot be addressed properly. Communities in a region that can't work well together won't be able to address quality of life issues around services and businesses, and municipal economic development will be affected. They won't be able to address regional housing issues that can attract the workforce. They won't be able to deal with the issues around water and wastewater and other infrastructure needs. And that usually means that the quality of life will be reduced, the workforce will be reduced, infrastructure will be missing, and that means the taxes will be higher.

Or, as one person so succinctly put it, if they aren't higher now, they will be going higher soon, because they won't attract investments, businesses, industry, or people. In other words, a lack of collaboration makes it impossible to address the other issues.

If you have ever heard me speak, you know I believe a lack of collaboration/cooperation between and within municipalities is the plague of the 21st century for our communities. A failure to put down your egos and focus on cooperation and collaboration is the one thing guaranteed to ensure your community will fail. I guess that's why my new presentation on collaboration and cooperation is so popular these days. My biggest piece of advice to communities, and my last word on the issue, is to put down your ego, reach out a hand and get to work on collaboration, because collaboration is the first step to making your community and your region stronger.

[Keys to Municipal Economic Development Success: Five ways not to kill your community - 13 Ways \(13waysinc.com\)](http://13waysinc.com)



Community & Economic Development Blueprint



Economic Development

(provides tax \$ to invest in lower levels)



New Businesses Attraction

Existing Business Development

Entrepreneur Support

Quality of Life

Infrastructure

Housing Solutions

Community Engagement

Leadership Development

Public Policy

Workforce Development & Education

Community Development

(foundation for upper levels)



← ———— Storytelling & Marketing ———— →

(Source: This has been adapted from a model developed by Tom Johnson at Elevate Rapid City.)

DAKOTA
RESOURCES



On Choosing a Place

Daniel Herriges, April 5, 2023



An email I received once from a Strong Towns reader has stuck in the back of my mind for years. It said (paraphrased), “I noticed in your byline that you live in [Sarasota, Florida](#). I have to ask why you would choose Florida! It doesn’t seem to have many of the qualities of a strong town, what with all the suburban sprawl and the lack of walkability. What about it do you find embodies your ideals?”

I remember chuckling at the writer’s assumption that I had chosen to live in Florida because of the particular qualities of the urbanism or the place. I’m not denying that life works that way for some people, but in my case, I didn’t come to Sarasota for a lifestyle, but for personal reasons that had little to do with the place. I had met and begun dating, long-distance at first, my now-wife after visiting her roommate at Ringling College of Art and Design. (She, in turn, a Pennsylvanian by birth, wasn’t there because she’d fallen in love with Sarasota the city, but rather because Ringling offered an excellent computer animation program.) After she graduated, she was hired by a local startup and then by her alma mater; I stuck along for the ride.

I lived there for 12 years (10 accounting for a couple away at grad school), and if I’m being honest, always held the place at a sort of emotional remove. I didn’t try quite as hard to make

or keep friends; I stayed on the sidelines of local politics. It was where we lived, but neither my wife nor I ever expected to be in Sarasota forever. We were both from other places and had lots of conversations about when we might move. I love Sarasota and got to know the city very well, but what those 12 years taught me is that you live differently in a place when you expect to be there indefinitely than when you believe you won't.

I would plant a tree in the yard, measuring out paces from its trunk and thinking about the shade it would cast at different times of day and the view from various angles. And then I would feel the sudden, deflating moment of waning enthusiasm for the project when I remembered that it would be someone else's shade, someone else's view, by the time that tree was fully grown.

[I still planted the tree after that.](#) Most times. Not always.

A funny thing happened to me when we made the decision last year to move to my hometown of St. Paul, Minnesota. It wasn't a spontaneous decision; we'd talked for years about a move to Minnesota to be closer to family and friends, and having children raised the stakes and the urgency. Once we narrowed in on a timeline—spring 2023—I started thinking about all the things I wanted to make a point of really enjoying in Sarasota before leaving. We'd spend a lot of time at the beach; we'd hit up favorite restaurants; we'd be really on top of our packing and planning so we'd have time to just be tourists in our tourist town at the nicest time of year.

If you read this space with any regularity, you know I have two toddlers, and if you know I have two toddlers and you know what preparing for a cross-country move is like, you've already laughed at my above expectation, because you know *exactly* how that went. February was the busiest month of my life. Many nights I collapsed on the couch with the lights on and fell asleep. There was no tourism.

But the other thing that happened in February was that it was the month of the incredible shrinking to-do list. Every plan I had that entailed a continuing life in Sarasota was instantly rendered pointless.

That text from a casual friend with a baby about my son's age that said, "We should get them together sometime!" Nope. Guess that's not happening.

Trying to catch up with the people I'd befriended on the city council and the planning staff: not a top priority anymore.

A short list of Strong Towns story ideas that involved on-the-ground research I wouldn't have time to do? Crossed off.

Connect with the parents of a couple kids at my daughter's day care whose names she had begun mentioning incessantly? Nope; why bother?

STRONG TOWNS

Plant that last royal poinciana tree that's still in a big pot in the driveway? Hang all the birdhouses in our tree out front? Weed the flower beds and plant a new one and beautify the face my home presents to the neighborhood? Nope. Not going to be my problem now.

All the stuff I do habitually as a way of deepening my relationship with a place—take a different way home, bike through a neighborhood I've never explored, take the kids to a different playground—suddenly felt meaningless. Far from being exercises in preemptive nostalgia, as I thought they might, trips around town became simple errands to be completed with rote efficiency.

Weeks before the movers actually hauled our furniture out of the house, it—and Sarasota—had in some important emotional way already ceased to be home. It was just the place I was still sleeping at night.

What makes a place home? There are a lot of ways to answer this, but I think one is that home is where you make plans for the future.

There's a parallel here to relationships. I remember a good friend of mine telling me once when we were both just out of college, "After I've been on a couple dates with someone, I ask myself if I could see myself married to them someday. And if the answer is a clear no, I break it off immediately." Early-twenties me thought this was crazy. What was the rush? What if you just...liked someone and were having fun with them? That's what being young is for, right?

What she was saying was actually rooted in a pretty fundamental lesson about life. She had just gotten there early; it would be another decade before her words made sense to me. For my friend, if she wasn't able to think about long-term plans with someone, then the relationship was hollow in the present moment, as well—no matter how much fun she might have in that person's company. She wasn't home.

One of the best pieces of advice I've ever received about marriage is that, at a certain point, you are almost guaranteed to make yourself unhappy if you expect your relationship to check the right set of boxes for you. If it's about finding the "right" person with all the right attributes, you will never be able to stop wondering if there was a better match out there, someone who would have made you happier. Every successful long-term relationship is rooted not in being "right" for someone, but in the hard, day-to-day work of getting better at loving the person you're with, exactly as they are.

You, of course, don't ever have to settle down with one partner for life. Many people don't, and many are happier for that. Similarly, you don't ever have to root yourself in a hometown, born or chosen. I know fascinating people who've spent their adult lives as nomads—maybe a few months in this city or country, a few years in this one.

STRONG TOWNS

I have come to think, though, the older I get, that basically everyone has to eventually root themselves in *something*. I think it's pretty hard to be happy in this life if you don't tether yourself to something—a family, a community, a faith, a place—that is inextricably part of you.

At Strong Towns, my job is to think about what makes a place [antifragile](#): able to grow stronger and wealthier and more able to provide a good home and a good life for its inhabitants, year after year. I think strong communities need members with both tendencies. They need people who are well-traveled, who are restless explorers, who will bring in fresh ideas from the best of what the rest of the world has figured out. Somebody has to be the maniac [shouting at suburban Canada about Dutch street design](#).

But strong places also need “[mystic patriots](#),” the people G.K. Chesterton wrote about when he wrote, “It is the mystic patriot who reforms.” The person who will work tirelessly to improve the place they live, in ways that will reverberate for generations, is the person who loves it not as a consumer, not for some list of pleasurable attributes, but because it is *their* place. Because it is home.

I'm always going to be an explorer. I love visiting new cities, and when I do, I make a point of getting lost in them, exploring without a destination, trying to glean something of how locals experience the place. I don't expect to ever stop doing this. But as I get older, I feel an ever stronger pull to be somewhere where I can plant a tree—literal or metaphorical—and be around to see that tree tower over me, someday.

I'm back in Minnesota now, in St. Paul, a place that has always felt like mine because I was born into it, and I don't expect to move to another city again. But who knows. Life and relationships make these choices for you. I never expected to be a Floridian. In a slightly different world, I might have stayed in Sarasota for 50 years and sat one day in the shade of that poinciana. Or ended up somewhere else entirely, with a different set of commitments.

I don't want to preach to anyone about how to approach the question of home. But I do see a trait in so many of the people who come into our orbit here at Strong Towns, who join as members or reach out to write to us: they're people who are deeply committed to a place, beyond reason, beyond clear self-interest. I think that's important to what we're trying to accomplish.

We need people who will live in a place as though they're going to be there forever, who will make plans and watch them grow. And to do that, you have to voluntarily give up on the idea that it has to be the *right* place or the *best* place. It just has to be your place.

[On Choosing a Place \(strongtowns.org\)](https://strongtowns.org)

History of Earth Day Awards

Since 2006, the Mayor's Earth Day Awards have recognized Moscow residents for sustainable practices that foster environmental sustainability through conservation, recycling, reuse, construction/design, and public education.

Recipients

DEVELOPMENT CATEGORY - Camden Court HOA for its forward-thinking design to include a park-like stormwater detention pond and less grass that requires heavy irrigation. Several homeowners within the HOA also have plans to take this one step further and install artificial grass to further reduce irrigation needs.

GREEN NEIGHBOR CATEGORY - City of Pullman for the creation of the Environmental Resilience Commission and for the newly-adopted Water Conservation Ordinance. The Environmental Resilience Commission will be charged with making recommendations to the Council regarding resilience and sustainability. The Water Conservation Ordinance will help reduce the pressure on the aquifer that Pullman and Moscow share, ultimately benefitting both communities.

INDIVIDUAL CATEGORY - Mary Dupree for her work with the Citizen's Climate Lobby, Climate Action Working Group, and the City of Moscow Transportation Commission.

TEACHER CATEGORY - Lee Anne Eareckson for her work as a biology teacher and as the faculty advisor for the MHS Environmental Club. She works hard to create hands-on environmental education and service for her students both inside and outside of school. She encourages her students to take part in environmental service projects, which also help them learn important life and job skills.

BUSINESS CATEGORY - Inland North Waste for their work to make Moscow a cleaner, more beautiful and more sustainable community. They routinely spearhead clean ups of local streams and rivers, provide outreach on best practices and partner with other likeminded organizations to protect our environment and natural resources.

UNIVERSITY STAFF CATEGORY Iris Mayes and Ember Powell for organizing the Master Gardner Program which helps promote local and environmentally friendly food production. They are also instrumental in the planning of the annual Pollinator Summit.

CITY STAFF CATEGORY - Marques Miller for his work to help active construction sites meet stormwater regulations and MS4 permit requirements through site inspections and direct education on the impacts of stormwater runoff from such sites.

EVENT CATEGORY - Moscow Renaissance Fair for incorporating sustainable waste management into the event. Roughly 85% of the waste generated at the fair is composted or recycled in partnership with Inland North Waste.

SCHOOL CATEGORY - Palouse Prairie Charter School for their Adventure Friday activities that seek to get kids outdoors and connecting to nature through activities such as snow shoeing, rock climbing, mediation teaching and practice, hiking, and skiing at low or no cost to all students.

TEACHER CATEGORY - Matt Pollard for his work getting students at Paradise Creek Regional High School involved with the Confluence project, a year-long program that pairs scientific experts with high school students across Northern Idaho to promote hands-on experience, field data collection and higher education degrees in the natural sciences.

STUDENT CATEGORY - Ian Schlater for his work with the Climate Justice League and the Moscow High School Environmental clubs. He is actively working to get a solar installation (including working on funding sources) on a school building and is an active youth voice on many environmental topics. He also serves as the high school representative on the Sustainable Environment Commission

CITY DEPARTMENT CATEGORY - Stormwater Operations Department for their work to locate, inspect and clean the City's stormwater system. They are also the first to respond to spills and illicit discharges to protect our waterways.

NON-PROFIT CATEGORY - Unitarian Universalist Church of the Palouse for recent improvements to their building that included the addition of a solar roof, replacement of the gas furnace with a heat pump and incorporating LED lighting. Additional improvements to note are water savings measures, incorporating native plants into landscaping, reuse of building materials, incorporating recycled glass into the stained-glass window and preserving the original 115 year old building.

BUSINESS CATEGORY - Wintz Company is receiving this award in the for their work on the Woodbury Development. The development incorporates paths for recreation and alternative transportation, neighborhood trees and greenspaces, stormwater controls, and low water use. It also increases biodiversity and habitat for local wildlife.

**BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF MOSCOW, COUNTY OF LATAH,
STATE OF IDAHO**

WRITTEN DECISION OF THE MOSCOW CITY COUNCIL REGARDING AN APPEAL TO THE APPROVAL OF A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT BY THE MOSCOW ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT TO ALLOW A BED AND BREAKFAST INN LOCATED AT 2518 ITANI DRIVE IN THE CITY OF MOSCOW, IDAHO WITHIN THE MODERATE DENSITY SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (R-2) ZONING DISTRICT PER MOSCOW CITY CODE 4-3-4.

WHEREAS, John and Candis Wright, the applicants, filed application LUP2023-0001, for a Conditional Use Permit on January 6, 2023; and

WHEREAS, the Moscow Board of Adjustment conducted a duly noticed public hearing upon the subject Conditional Use Permit on February 7, 2023; and

WHEREAS, having considered the matter including all materials presented and testimony received, the Moscow Zoning Board of Adjustment approved the proposed Conditional Use Permit, LUP2023-0001, with one condition of approval, and instructed Staff to prepare the Reasoned Statement of Relevant Criteria for the Board's review and approval; and

WHEREAS, on February 15, 2023, the Moscow Zoning Board of Adjustment met and approved the Reasoned Statement of Relevant Criteria establishing the Board's written decision upon the request and serving as the Board's final action upon the matter; and

WHEREAS, on February 23, 2023, John and Candis Wright filed a timely appeal to the decision of the Moscow Zoning Board of Adjustment in accordance with the requirements of Moscow City Code Section 4-8-5; and

WHEREAS, the Moscow City Council considered the appeal during a public meeting conducted on April 17, 2023; and

WHEREAS, the Moscow City Council reviewed the record established by the Board of Adjustment, did not consider any new or additional evidence, and heard the appellant's argument on the appeal; and

WHEREAS, having considered the record established by the Board of Adjustment, and having considered the issues presented by the appellant, the Council reversed the decision of the Zoning Board of Adjustment in part, upholding the approval of the Bed and Breakfast Inn and removing the sole condition placed upon the approval.

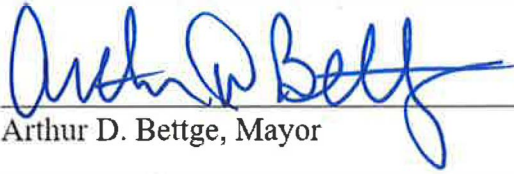
THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MOSCOW, IDAHO, AFTER DUE DELIBERATION AND CONSIDERATION OF THE RECORD ESTABLISHED BY THE MOSCOW ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT AND HAVING CONSIDERED THE

ISSUES PRESENTED BY THE APPELLANT AND THE APPLICANT, HEREBY CONCLUDES:

DECISION

The Moscow City Council hereby **REVERSES** the decision of the Zoning Board of Adjustment in part, upholding the approval and removing the Zoning Board of Adjustment's condition of approval requiring additional off-street parking spaces upon LUP2023-0001.

PASSED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MOSCOW THE 1ST DAY OF May, 2023.



Arthur D. Bettge, Mayor