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GIVEAWAY

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WASATCH WAVE - APRIL 22, 2015
County Council Corner -

Jordanelle Audit Response

BY MIKE KOHLER
Wasatch County Council

Last Monday, the long awaited Jordanelle Special Service District audit was released by the State Auditor's office. The process started



over 14 months earlier and was based on a citizen's complaint. From the beginning, it was apparent that the points being investigated by the auditor's office were the same as those being challenged in court by property owners in the Jordanelle basin. It seems quite clear that the complaints were originating from the same place. Now a little explanation...

The Jordanelle Special Services District has been embroiled in several lawsuits over the past years stemming from a bonding process to build water and sewer services for Area C in the Jordanelle. That includes most of the properties on the south side of the Jordanelle Reservoir. Quickly stated, property owners in area C requested a public financing package to fund these services for their properties. They voluntarily agreed to pay the cost by assessment and pledged their property as collateral. The project started in 2005. In 2009 when the project was done, some didn't make their payments and were foreclosed. That started over 4 years of lawsuits as these property owners tried every possible angle to keep their property by blaming everyone else for their financial bad luck. It appears that part of their strategy was to attack the District in court and through the auditor's office at the same time.

So, to the audit findings:
1. Why was the District slow to surrender documents when requested? Because of law-

suits. Each document request had to be reviewed by attorneys to consider their relevance to the suit.

2. What about lost documents?? A very good question and one for which there is not real good answer. Blame has been pushed around the organization but, in my opinion, it is the board and their hired manager's responsibility to make sure they are kept no matter who does it.

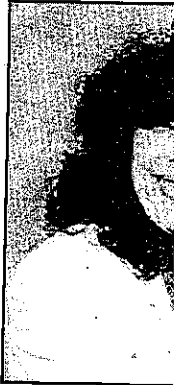
3. Was there, as alleged, misconduct on the part of management? As the audit report states, due to lack of records, it can't be proven either way.

What will be done about it? Management is one part, elected officials over those managers is another? The County Council took over and became the JSSD board in November 2013. Prior to that, it was managed by an independent governing board including 2 councilmen and 5 appointed citizens. This change was meant to give the county council more direct control towards solving pending lawsuits. The old manager quit and an interim manager was appointed until a new hire is found. The County, in cooperation with our districts, hired a comptroller to monitor and assist in managing financials, minutes and other records in compliance with state and federal requirements. This will affect all districts in the county. Standardization and consistency will help all of them do better. We are trying to locate lost records and are also working hard to solve ongoing lawsuits to stop the bleeding.

The JSSD Board is committed to fixing these problems, meeting all governmental record retention requirements and refining district operations so that it can run as efficient as possible for the benefit of the citizens it serves. We will learn from the audit experience and we better not let this happen again.

If you have questions, send me an email at mikekohler2009@gmail.com.

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April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month



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