

What Wayne Hoffman Doesn't Understand About Boise

By Emily Walton

Perhaps it's because he doesn't even live in Boise, but Hoffman's misguided plea to our Boise City Council to not put a bond on the ballot this November demonstrates a lack of understanding about Boise, Boiseans, and the history of this city that we love.

Boiseans have understood for 150 years that a great city takes investment. From the beautiful parks, foothills and a downtown that we enjoy, to the good schools and safe neighborhoods that we cherish, we all know that a city of Boise's caliber doesn't just spring up without investment and devotion.

Hoffman claims that parks and open spaces are just for 'fun' and that they aren't 'needs' so we shouldn't get to vote on them. Since when did a guy from Nampa have so many opinions on how to run our city? Over the last 150 years Boiseans have made it clear that we take our open space and parks seriously and we've demonstrated that through our commitment to maintain and increase them.

I prepared this letter in rebuttal to Hoffman when I first heard about the city considering these bonds because of course the Idaho Freedom Foundation is against Boiseans having more 'fun' things like parks and open space. Somehow, to them, freedom also means your kid can play in a dirt lot, instead of in a neighborhood park. To them, freedom means you can buy a gym membership instead of going for a run in the foothills. Their model of freedom seems to claim that pooling resources for a common good will hurt people and society in the long run, yet that's exactly how a good city like Boise functions.

Can you imagine Boise if Hoffman had his way the last 150 years? What would our city be like without the foothills? Without Julia Davis Park? The Greenbelt or Ann Morrison? Without our tree and flower-lined streets downtown?

Hoffman's plea centers around an argument that Idaho's statewide unemployment rate is rising, but he forgot to mention that Boise's unemployment rate is sinking. In fact, Boise's unemployment rate has dropped from 9 percent in January 2010 to 5.5 percent as of April 2013. Using a rising statewide unemployment rate to argue against a bond in a city with a dropping unemployment rate doesn't really make sense. Our property rates have risen too, with Ada County property values at an increase of 21.6 percent in the last year. And let's not forget that Boise is consistently identified as a great city for a variety of reasons in magazines and top ten lists.

Even if Boiseans waited to consider the bonds until the economy was improved, Hoffman would still object because it doesn't align with his political philosophy. But Boiseans understand that electing pragmatic city councilmembers who can balance the cost of amenities with the benefit we receive is the best thing for our

city. For Boiseans, it's not just about small government. It's about smart government.

Hoffman spends a lot of time in Boise when he's lobbying the state legislature for more freedom. I hope when he's here he enjoys our city as much as we do. But I also hope he realizes that it's one of the best cities in America because we love it and we're not afraid to each make a small investment that has big returns on our quality of life and our economy.

Sorry Hoffman, we're not about ready to stop investing in a city that Boiseans before us have loved for over 150 years just because you emailed our city council a letter from Nampa. Try elsewhere.