



First District News

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50th Anniversary & Picnic

Since COVID cancelled nearly everything last year, we are very excited for our Annual Picnic. This year's picnic will also coincide with our 50th Anniversary celebration. The picnic will be held on September 23, 2021, at our new office location: 418 18th Avenue NE. The day will start with a Watertown Chamber of Commerce Ribbon Cutting/open house from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The First District will have their Governing Body meeting at 4 p.m. Social hour begins at 5 p.m. with the picnic dinner at 6 p.m. There will be tours of the new building, where we have been for 18 months, plenty of food (ribs, chicken, baked potatoes, coleslaw) and beverages. Suzie will be contacting the membership, Governing Body, and our other partners with invitations in August. We will need RSVPs returned by Labor Day in order to plan accordingly. We look forward to seeing you on September 23rd!



Meet the District

When I became director 13 years ago one of my first initiatives was to have the membership "Meet the District". With COVID in our rearview mirror combined with the 50th Anniversary of this organization, I thought it would be appropriate to reinstitute that program. Starting in August the staff will host a meeting in every county within the District where county and municipal officials, as well as economic development organizations, will have an opportunity to meet the Staff and find out about the various work activities and services provided by the District. These meetings will allow the membership to become familiar with the staff while providing staff with information regarding needs of the membership and potential work activities in FY 2022. Suzie Zirbel will be coordinating the meeting locations and getting invitations to all of you. The tentative schedule is August: Codington (17th), Hamlin (24th), Deuel (26th), Moody (31st); September: Miner (2nd), Brookings (16th), Lake (21st), Clark (28th); October: Kingsbury (12th), Grant (14th), Roberts (19th).

-Todd Kays

MY THOUGHTS... By: Todd A. Kays



Just a few updates from the last newsletter on issues that are still topical.

American Rescue Plan (ARP) Funds – There is very little guidance available since the April newsletter. Many communities and counties within the District have begun the preliminary registration process and many counties have already received their direct allocation from the Federal Government. Communities are to receive their funds as a pass-through from the State. I am unaware of any municipalities receiving funds to date. Regardless, we are still recommending caution in spending these dollars. Be patient. You have time to identify projects and develop programs that will meet the Federal guidance which to date has not been officially adopted. At this time, my best advice to you is that unless you are prepared to pay the money back to the Federal government, just hold pat. Our office will be providing information to the membership on guidance as soon as it becomes available.

Marijuana – July 1st has come and gone and if you adopted the temporary ordinance provided to you from the First District, you should have no immediate worries. However, you will need to adopt either a zoning or licensing ordinance or a combination of both relating to medical marijuana by October to be safe. We are currently working with many planners and attorneys to develop several model regulations for you to choose from. It is our hope this information will be distributed to the membership by late July.

Have a great summer and we look forward to seeing you in September at the picnic.

First District to Provide Assistance in Updating County Highway & Bridge Improvement Plans



In 2015, the South Dakota Legislature created the Bridge Improvement Grant (BIG) fund that provided \$7 million for local government bridges derived from an increase in license plate fees. In addition, the South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT) added \$8 million state funds, for a total of \$15 million available in the bridge grant program.

To be eligible for the funding, counties must have an adopted Highway and Bridge Improvement Plan. These plans are required to be updated and submitted to the SDDOT annually to maintain eligibility for the bridge grant funding. The deadline for submitting the plans in 2020 was October 15th. We anticipate the same deadline for 2021.

Last year the First District assisted nine counties with the development of their highway bridge plans. The First District is offering assistance to all of its members in developing updates to their County Highway and Bridge Improvement Plans. This service is provided at no charge. County Auditors and Highway Superintendants recently received a letter regarding the timeline and information required to complete the plan updates by October 15th.

If you have any questions, please contact Todd, Greg or Christina at the First District.

First District Welcomes Opi Ouallo



Hello, my name is Opi Ouallo of Sioux Falls, SD. At the time of writing this brief summary about myself, I will be entering my 4th year of college at South Dakota State University pursuing a major in Geography and Geographical Information Science with a minor in French. I was born in the West African country of Cote D'Ivoire (the Ivory Coast) but because of wars in the region during the 2000's my family and I emigrated to the US (why specifically South Dakota, I am still wondering) .

After graduating high school in 2018 from Lincoln High (Go Patriots!!), I attended the University of South Dakota for a year before transferring to SDSU where I found my apperception for Geography and all things geographically related with the help of my advisor. I don't know exactly what I want to do with Geography once I finish school. But this amazing internship at First District has inspired several possibilities.

In my free time, I like to read, paint, watch TV, archery, and anything sportive with family or friends. Since my dad's side of the family comes from the Ivory Coast, I speak French at an above average level and whenever I get the chance I practice learning Spanish and Arabic. I'm the middle child of my parents, three total. All my siblings and I have an eight year or plus age gap between each other so our interests are VERY different.

First District Welcomes Levi Jayom

My name is Levi Jayom, and I began working as a Planning/GIS Intern at First District on June 1, 2021. I'm a second-year MSC Geography-Geographic Information Science student at SDSU (Go Jacks!). I was born in Ghana to a large family of 17 (my father was a Chief with four wives, so he had a lot on his plate!). Before moving to the United States for my master's degree, I earned a bachelor's degree in urban planning. I intend to graduate in the spring of 2022 and hope to work as a planning/GIS specialist in America after that. During the first month of my internship, I worked on land use surveys for Kingsbury and Roberts Counties, creating existing land use maps for DeSmet and Sisseton. So far, my favorite moment at First District has been the DOT collection, which allowed me to travel to the western parts of South Dakota. I enjoy singing, so I do it in my spare time, along with spending time with my friends and church family in Brookings.



