



COMMUNITY LIGHTNING RODS

Voices that spark conversations

CONCERN FOR HEALTH, WELFARE AND SAFETY OF THE COMMUNITY: DENNIS MURPHY



Dennis Murphy. Courtesy photo.

Interview by Gail Marvel

MONTROSE-Dennis Murphy grew up in Cinnaminson, NJ, which is 12 air miles from Independence Hall. Dennis said, "Ever since I was little I was a cast out... I was an outdoor kid, a nature kid." Throughout his adult life Dennis has loved woodworking and has handcrafted six acoustical guitars. His latest creation was crafted from an elm tree cut down from his own yard, "Most people think of elm trees as weed trees, but this one has beautiful wood."

In preparing for college Dennis planned to major in forestry, but a counselor encouraged him to go for a degree in forestry and watershed science, "I'm so glad he did because hydrology was in super high demand and you couldn't get a job in forestry." Watershed science includes a broad

sweep of natural resources including forestry, vegetation and geology. Upon graduating from college in 1978, Dennis went to work for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Montrose. He retired from a career in Wildland Watershed Management after 32 years, "For a few years I did some consulting, but not so much the last couple of years. My wife is now retired and we want to do some traveling."

Dennis served on the Olathe Town Council (1980-1984) and spent one year on the Olathe Planning Commission.

He serves on a number of boards including Friends of the Uncompahgre River, the Uncompahgre Watershed Partners and the Gunnison Gorge Anglers.

"I'm a water guy... anything that deals with water, fish and wildlife."

Currently the chairman of the Montrose Planning Commission, Dennis and fellow members were under a great deal of scrutiny during the recent gravel pit hearings. "The planning commission is a thankless job. People don't come up to hug you... they come up to slug you!"

Those in opposition to the gravel pit perceived the planning commission and the county commissioners as cohorts, "Nothing could be further from the truth. We can have no ex parte communication with one another. We cannot discuss the issues with fellow members, the county commissioners, or the public outside official hearings."

During the hearings Dennis took it upon

himself to do independent research and to study the geology in the valley. "Mining is a necessary evil, but if we'd looked at other sources there would have been twice as many people opposed."

For more than a year the Montrose Planning Commission has had one vacant seat, "We have six [people], but we need seven. No one will apply. They say, "Oh, I wouldn't fit in with your group." That's the wrong perception of the planning commission. We all get along, but we don't always agree on the issues. We have differences of opinion."

Dennis has served on the planning commission for over seven years, "I'd like to see more people get involved. We need a full board."

Dennis considers himself a concerned citizen when it comes to planning and growth, "I want the county to grow in a well thought out manner, not chaotic growth." Considering the projected growth for the area he said, "We need to be vigilant and proactive; not reactive. I'm concerned with the health, welfare and safety of the community; not with the desires of groups or individuals. I have a way of sifting through the chaff."

Acknowledging the difficulty in trying to please everyone Dennis said, "If you go to one side or the other, or lean one way or the other, you'll get clobbered. I do my homework. If you want to feel good about what comes out the other side, you can't be happy doing sloppy work."

HONORABLE MENTION

To Volunteers of America., a national non-profit with a heart for Western Colorado, for serving congregate meals, providing countless resources for local citizens of all ages, and for bringing countless jobs to our community...

To everyone who realizes that Montrose and Olathe need vital, sustainable before and after school programs, and to the dedicated volunteers keeping the Innovation After School program alive at Centennial Middle School...

A huge congratulations to three Montrose residents who ran the St. George Marathon in St. George, Utah on Saturday the 3rd. All three finished quickly enough to qualify for the Boston Marathon. The runners were Bryan Gieszl (2:57), Meghan Waschbusch (3:12) and Christa Gieszl (3:26)!