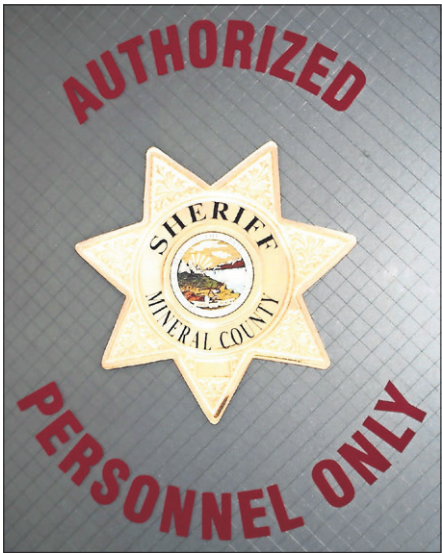




Company hired to replace Mineral County jail roof

By HANNAH SHIELDS
Hagadone News Network
Report for America

Mineral County commissioners hired a Missoula-based firm to replace the roof of the public safety detention center. Summit Roofing, a commercial roofing business with locations in Missoula and Helena, was hired by the county on Sept. 24. It was the lowest qualified bidder out of four submissions, with a price tag of \$209,965. Commissioners are footing

the bill through a combination of state and federal money.

The first \$80,000 will be paid with an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant from the state Department of Environmental Quality. The remaining balance is covered with federal aid money that the county received during the pandemic, called the Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund. About \$2.5 million of the fund remains, and there's no

expiration date or spending restrictions.

Repairing the roof over the detention center, which is housed in the Mineral County Courthouse Annex Building, was a top priority for county commissioners. The roof membrane and underlying insulation haven't been replaced since the Annex was built in 1994. Lack of proper insulation and dysfunctional rooftop air units has caused the jail to overheat in the summer and freeze during the winter.

Contractors will replace the roof's deteriorating membrane and install thicker insulation underneath with enhanced air sealing. SLATE Architecture Consultant Scott Cromwell said the project should wrap up by the first week of January, weather pending.

Report for America Reporter Hannah Shields can be reached at 406-758-4439 or hshields@dailyinterlake.com. If you value local journalism, pledge your support at dailyinterlake.com/support.

Chili fundraiser for the Tarkio Fire Station coming up

By MONTE TURNER
Mineral Independent

What could be better than a big bowl of chili on a cool November afternoon? Add in a chance to win some prizes, a silent auction, and the opportunity to see what it takes to be a firefighter and you've got the Superior Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department's Second Annual Two Hot Chili Pot, set for Saturday, Nov. 14, at Fire Station 1 on Cedar Street at 4 p.m.

The event is a fundraiser for the Tarkio Fire Station, also known as SVFD Station 2, but it is also a chance for the community to have some fun and get better acquainted with the people who are ready to answer the call when uninvited trouble comes knocking.

It is also a good opportunity to meet the department's new chief, Craig Usher, who took over leadership of the Superior Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department on June 8. Usher came to Superior from San Diego County, California, four years ago where he served as a deputy fire chief for a rural fire department. After 38 years in the fire and EMS business, he had been thinking about moving and retiring. That retirement plan apparently didn't last long.

"I've been doing fire and EMS for 38 years," Usher said. "I enjoy giving back to the community, so this is a great fit."

One of the more interesting parts of this year's event will be an optional obstacle course designed to give adults and kids a small taste of what firefighters do.

"We try and put residents through a few portions of a training course that firefighters train on that they could do on a fire ground," Usher explained.

That might mean pulling a hose line full of water and aiming it at a cone, giving participants a chance to discover that a fire hose is considerably less cooperative once it is charged with water. Other activities have included what firefighters call "dummy-draws," allowing people to experience the work involved in pulling someone from a burning building.

Sledgehammers and



CRAIG USHER, Chief of the Superior Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department, invites people to attend the 2nd Annual Two Hot Chili Pot on Nov. 14 not only for the vittles, prizes and obstacle course, but for them to meet the other members of the team and himself. He took over in June and would like to get to know the residents he serves at this event.

tires have also been used to simulate the physical exertion firefighters face on the job. The adult portion of the course is still being finalized, but Usher said the idea is to give people a small glimpse into the physical demands of firefighting.

For kids, the activities will be scaled down but will still include pulling a smaller hose, knocking down a cone, climbing around on the fire trucks and asking questions.

"We just try and put that little spark in the back of their heads to consider this as a potential volunteer opportunity or career," Usher said.

And that little spark is an important part of the event.

The Superior Volunteer Fire and Rescue

Department currently has 22 firefighters, but like most volunteer departments, more hands are always welcome. That doesn't mean everyone who volunteers has to charge into a burning building. In fact, Usher emphasized that there are plenty of ways to help that don't involve crawling into smoke and flames.

"We can use people who can service our trucks, or they can do data entry, they can apply for grants," he said. "Some people don't want to go into a fire. I get that. You can come hold a stop sign at a traffic accident site. You don't need to cut the car apart. We just need you to control traffic."

In other words, there is a place for just about everyone who would like to lend

a hand.

Meanwhile, the Two Hot Chili Pot is doing its part to help another piece of the department grow. The Tarkio Fire Station is currently operational near Round Mountain in a privately owned structure.

The department hopes to eventually build a permanent station on land donated by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. A well has already been drilled on the property. Money raised through the chili cookoff will help provide matching funds and pay for whatever is needed to move that project forward.

Another method for revenue is when the SVFD

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Mineral County's Crime Stoppers program gets little use

By MONTE TURNER
Mineral Independent

Does Mineral County have a Crime Stoppers program? The short answer is yes, but apparently, it isn't being used very much.

Crime Stoppers is a nationwide, community-based program that gives citizens a way to anonymously provide information about criminal activity. Established in 1976, the program has helped lead to numerous arrests and the recovery of significant amounts of stolen property and illegal drugs.

The concept is fairly simple. Someone who has information about a crime can call a toll-free number and provide that information without revealing his or her identity. The caller is assigned a number for future contact with the program. At a designated time, the informant can call back to find out whether the information qualified for a reward.

The Crime Stoppers Board of Directors determines which tips receive rewards. The program is designed to be a partnership between law enforcement, the public and the media. When law enforcement needs help solving an unsolved crime, the agency can ask Crime Stoppers for assistance. Information about the crime can then be made public, giving residents an opportunity to provide information they may have that could help investigators.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks has a similar program for reporting poaching, trespassing and other wildlife-related crimes through its TIP-MONT program at 1-800-TIP-MONT. FWP periodically issues press releases asking the public for help in solving cases. It works well.

So, what about Mineral County?

As of March of last year, Dan Clemts has been Mineral County's representative with Five Valleys Crime Stoppers, a Missoula-based organization that also includes Ravalli and Lake counties. Five Valleys serves as the hub for the regional program.

According to Clemts, he was asked to fill the Mineral County position a couple of years ago by the police chief in St. Ignatius, Jason Acheson.

In a Facebook post, Clemts said, "I was asked to fill that spot a couple of years ago by the Police Chief of St. Ignatius. I joined and had a conversation or two with our Sheriff, asked him to pass out cards to the Deputies, started a Mineral County FB page to publicize the program, reached out to the local paper to do informative articles (no luck yet) and posted flyers in multiple locations."

Clemts has apparently done his

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Bridge work proposed for Prospect Creek Road near T-Falls

Clark Fork Valley Press

The Montana Department of Transportation is seeking public comment on a proposal to repair and stabilize the banks of the bridge crossing over Prospect Creek on Secondary Highway 471, commonly known

as Prospect Creek Road, about 18 miles west of Thompson Falls.

Proposed work includes erosion repair, bank stabilization, channel grading, bridge end paving and other work. The purpose of the project is to restore the channel banks and roadway due to flood related damage.

Construction is tentatively planned for 2028 depending on completion of design and availability of funds. The estimated cost for construction has yet to be determined.

No new right-of-way should be needed. Utility relocations may be needed.

Partnering with the

community is an important part of properly planning for future projects. The transportation department welcomes the public to provide ideas and comments on the proposed project. Comments may be submitted online at mdt.mt.gov/contact/comment-form.aspx or in writing to

Montana Department of Transportation, Missoula office, PO Box 7039, Missoula, MT 59807-7039. Please note that comments are for project UPN 10761000.

The public is encouraged to contact Joel Boucher Missoula District Project Development Engineer at 406-544-

5802 or Project Design Engineer Josh Dold at 406-444-6385 with questions or comments about the project.

For more information about active MDT projects around the state, please visit our website and MDT's five-year Tentative Construction Plan.