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OUR VIEW

The value of public notice

Oct 25, 2015

On April 26, we published a public notice of a different sort.

Instead of printing our typical public notice offering colorful listings of business incorporations, bankruptcies and other public transactions on an inside page of the newspaper; the Herald/Review dedicated the top of its front page to a list of Bisbee sanitation customers long overdue on their bills.

For all the dire and depressing news that has chased the newspaper industry in recent years, let this example be the bellwether of a new age.

Six months after the story was published the Bisbee finance director, Sharon Buono, has pointed at the newspaper as the most effective media in creating awareness of the city's former \$1.4 million accounts receivable balance.

"That has really made the difference in getting people to come in and work with us on making some kind of payment on past due balances," Buono said.

Bisbee has collected more than 32 percent of its outstanding sanitation bill as of today, a total of \$416,561.

Of course we can't take all the credit.

The city's administration has accomplished something revolutionary in Bisbee, putting policies in place that seek to politely remind sanitation customers that passing off the service and not paying isn't fair and will no longer be tolerated.

The first residential shut off valve installed last week marks a turning point for a city that has in the past relied on charging its paying customers more to cover its revenue needs. Bisbee doesn't lose any of its friendliness by requiring everyone who uses the sanitation system to pay their fair share.

By being consistent in the requirement to pay, but flexible in the terms of collection, the city has found a long-term solution to its sanitation debt problem.

To the community's credit, when that front page public notice was published April 26, the awareness created by that article spurred a response from residents who recognized their responsibility.

Keep it up Bisbee, and so will we.