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## PUBLIC NOTICE

Date: 9/17/20

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CALDWELL - At a special meeting on September 14, 2020 the Caldwell City Council decided not to participate in the Governor's Public Safety Initiative (GPSI). The GPSI proposes to use federal CARES Act funding to pay for police and fire payroll expenses between March and December 2020. The payroll savings realized by the city would have been credited against property taxes in 2021.

The CARES Act provides funding only for expenditures incurred due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Further, the expenditures must have been unanticipated and *not* accounted for in the current Caldwell city budget. After carefully evaluating these criteria, the Caldwell City Council concluded that participation in the GPSI would be inappropriate for the city. Caldwell police and fire payroll expenses were budgeted for in the current fiscal year and the services provided by those departments were not "substantially dedicated" to addressing COVID-19 as required under the CARES Act and applicable guidance.

The language of the CARES Act and unanswered questions about how it works with the GPSI largely contributed to the decision. "At this point, I can't say that our department duties have been different over the last six months than they were before the coronavirus pandemic," said Caldwell Police Chief Frank Wyant. "We have implemented new safety measures for this pandemic, but we have continued to serve the community of Caldwell in full capacity."

Caldwell acknowledges that other cities and counties participating in the GPSI may certainly have had different needs associated with COVID-19 and budgeted differently with respect to police and fire personnel.

Caldwell was previously appropriated approximately \$1.9 million by under the CARES Act in March of this year to cover expenses incurred due to the COVID-19 crisis between March 1, 2020 and December 30, 2020. Caldwell has carefully tracked its expenditures and used approximately

\$140,000 of those funds to cover additional first responder expenses to date, including PPE and employee time.

In addition, the Caldwell City Council had already previously planned to take 0% of the available 3% increase available to the city for property tax revenue for fiscal year 2021, effectively saving taxpayers' dollars.

Caldwell leadership highly values the quality of life of residents and has worked hard to lower the property tax levy rate over the last decade.

“Every dollar we spend is done with the safety and well-being of our citizens in mind,” said Mayor Nancolas. “As our population increases, so have our first responder demands. Fortunately, the amount we budgeted for fiscal year 2020, with the addition of CARES Act funds appropriated in March, has been sufficient to cover all COVID-19 related expenses. While we are grateful for the Governor’s willingness to work with local government on property tax relief, the program would not be appropriate for Caldwell at this time since we have not incurred enough reimbursable expenses.”

“Since the start of COVID-19, the Caldwell Fire Department has worked regularly with Canyon County Ambulance, Sheriff and Emergency Management on the response to the COVID-19 impacts in Canyon County,” said Caldwell Fire Chief Mark Wendelsdorf. “To date, the expenses related to COVID-19 responses have been reimbursed to the city through the March 2020 CARES Act allocation. Additionally, Canyon County Emergency Management is working on the coordination of anticipated additional supplies for first responders for this fall and winter season. The Fire Department continue to work within the budgetary guidelines as set out in the Fiscal Year 2020 budget.”