



**By Jan Schultz**

### ***The Imperial Republican***

Jason Tuller is settling into his new job as Imperial's Community Development Director.

Tuller, 35, is in his third week here and has kept himself busy reading, meeting other staff and attending meetings.

His first week on the job, which started Feb. 4, was spent reading "everything in my office," he said.

That included the city's Comprehensive Plan, the LB840 Economic Development Program book, as well as Imperial's housing studies. He's also reviewed all the files in the office "to get a handle on what's going on," he said.

The first night on the job, he also attended the city council meeting, where he was introduced to the mayor and council.

He got to know the city officials a little better last week during the council's annual retreat that included a tour of city facilities.

And, he's already helped a local business apply for LB840 funds, something he had to jump right into, he said.

Shortage of housing has been on the front burner for city officials, and Tuller foresees that issue as one of his most important duties right now.

"Imperial is really limited housing-wise," he said.

Without adequate rentals, especially, it hurts business efforts to add employees. Then, jobs can start moving out-of-town, he noted.

Tuller said he's aware of employees here who are driving to work from McCook.

The new Community Development Director experienced the housing shortage himself. He stays in Imperial during the week, then returns to his family in Curtis on weekends.

Luckily, Imperial has a police officer, Spencer Rowley, attending the Law Enforcement Training Center in Grand Island. So, on the weekdays, Tuller stays at his rental house, then when Rowley comes home on the weekends, Tuller is back in Curtis.

Next to housing efforts, Tuller said finding dollars for the local community through grants and other funding is another priority in his job.

"Finding funding for city improvements and growing the businesses we have" is important, he said.

With very low unemployment here, Tuller said it would be hard to recruit a new business to the community that requires a lot of employees. They just aren't interested if they see the low unemployment figures, he said, because they know of the difficulty they will have getting workers.

Therefore, putting effort toward growing the businesses already here is often more valuable, he noted.

So, what's surprised Tuller about Imperial so far?

"The sirens," he smiled.

“No one warned me about the sirens” at night and in the morning, he said. Curtis blows a siren at noon, he said, but that’s the only time.

He also has been pleasantly surprised with the amount of recycling that takes place here, and the options residents have for trash pickup service.

“I hadn’t seen the sticker system before, and having the choice to have trash picked up or not,” he said.

“It’s neat that you can control your bill” with recycling, he said.

The McCook native, who has lived in Curtis with his young family the past few years, was hired to replace Leslie Carlholm, who held the position eight years and left in September.

Most recently, Tuller served as director of the Nebraska Business Development Center in North Platte. One of his major duties there was working with businesses on their start-up plans. He worked with clients in a 17-county area that included Chase County.

Tuller said his family will eventually move to Imperial, and they have made an offer to purchase a home here.

He and wife Dawn, who home-schools their children, are parents to Amanda, 15; Ashley, 11; JD, eight; and Amber, four.

Tuller enjoys fishing and reading in his spare time.