

# Why five county commissioners?

A self-appointed "activist" who had a role in the recent unsuccessful petition drive to repeal the City's cell phone ban is now making noises about pursuing three initiative and referendum actions in Cheyenne and Laramie County.

In spite of his zero-for-one success rate, he has concluded that he could get three measures passed when he could not play an important role in getting one successfully through the signature phase.

Other than standing out in the wind gathering signatures, it's hard to imagine what he believes his qualifications are to rework government.

He picked up on the notion of increasing the county commission from three members to five by reading it on these pages. If he has any thoughts as why that might make sense, he is keeping them to himself. One thing he has proven adept at is self-promotion. He can get on Channel 5 easier than the governor.

Before getting into the subject of this story: The activist also proposes reducing the number of city council members from nine to six. Why? I have no earthly idea. For a county resident to care how many city council members there are is a stretch. At least the cell phone ban applies to those county residents who work, eat or shop in town. The Cheyenne Herald is more attuned to public sentiment than almost anyone or any of the other

media outlets and reducing the number of city council members has never been broached. By anyone. In fact, the biggest complaint at this point is not city council but the lack of leadership shown by the mayor. Some in Cheyenne are about ready to ask Robinson Dairy if they'll put his picture on the side of their milk cartons. Out of town on Thanksgiving, he may have pardoned a turkey but other necessary action has been lacking.

The activist also wants to take another bite of the cell phone apple. He said, on a telephone message left at the Herald, that he would attempt an initiative and referendum on that subject. There is a point, already past, when he has to accept that a cell phone ban is in place and is almost certain to remain there.

Now, why five commissioners instead of only three?

First, although not a major reason, is that most of the larger counties in Wyoming have five commissioners, which suggests that residents believe that is a better number than three. In fact, Sweetwater County voters just approved increasing the size of their county commission to five.

Second, major mistakes like the latest specific purposes ballot would be less likely to reoccur with two more brains added to the mix. State statute is very specific in requiring that use of sales tax revenue voters may approve also has to

be very specific. In other words, while the last ballot specificity was lacking, perhaps even one more commissioner might have realized that and done it right. To ask for twentysome million dollars for an "Archer Project" would not pass a smell test, let alone legal scrutiny. The daily newspaper should get off the morgue kick and should have brought legal action against the County for noncompliance of state statute for specificity on that ballot.

While there is probably no perfect number of people to have on a board, commission, committee, etc., that number is almost certainly not one. Even if only one member of the county commission leads and dictates actions taken, it just doesn't look good to have but one county commission. Two doesn't work because everything could end up in a tie. Three is an acceptable minimum just because of the previous two explanations. It's not like three is a well thought-out number. It's just the smallest number possible and, here, it followed the earlier city commission form of government.

A dictatorship may be the purest form of government but dictators almost always turn out bad. So forget about asking me to be the sole county commissioner. I don't want to turn out bad.

The city council here has nine members. The city council in St. Paul, Minnesota, has four times the population of Cheyenne, has seven. Boulder, Colorado, the city

Cheyenne government desperately wants to emulate, has seven council members. Look how they've grown and prospered with only seven hands in the pot. Fort Collins elects six council members and a mayor. The mayor kisses babies for \$1,005 a month and council members enact laws for \$675 a month.

So, the ideal number still hasn't been determined but three is not it.

Some may object to the cost of a larger commission but that can be remedied. There is a way to redistribute the ~\$120,000 paid to three to five members.

The greatest danger to having three county commissioners is that a voting bloc of two, which Cheyenne now has, controls every decision made. True, three could do the same thing in a five member commission but it's a better risk to take. In Cheyenne, two members ran for office together, ran political campaign advertising as a team, and rule as a duo.

Personally, I'd rather take my chances with five. Whether there is that much work to do or not remains to be determined. But, how can the incumbents who face re-election next year argue there is not enough work to need five commissioners and then argue that the part-time job is worth nearly \$40,000 a year? One of those has to be wrong. Ruling with two is very, very close to a dictatorship. It is dangerously close to totalitarian rule.

## UW sophomore is 22

A recent story asked what age new UW basketball mercenary Thomas Manzano is. One of six players on the 2009-2010 men's basketball team roster to come from prep schools (four from Stoneridge Prep in California and two through Genesis One Prep in Mississippi), Manzano had the most unusual path to Laramie. Manzano is shown as a college sophomore on the UW roster. He is, however, 22 years old - born July 29, 1987. According to different sources, he went to high school in Brooklyn, New York. He then played one year at Genesis One and another year at Notre Dame Prep in Massachusetts. He enrolled in Western Iowa University, then transferred to Garden City (KS) Junior College where he red-shirted one year, then played as a "freshman." He then found his way to Laramie. As a Division 1 school becoming known as a haven for basketball players with a lengthy post high school resume, these six former Prep School players (some of whom also enrolled in other D-1 schools before arriving in Laramie) joined five other players on the current UW roster who made a stop at other junior colleges and D-1 schools on their way to Laramie.

One of the Stoneridge alums has to sit out the first 14 games of this season because of "amateurism." What does that mean? He's played somewhere as a pro?

Only three players on the UW roster came directly from high school. The true age of the Prep School players is suspect. Four of the six show July as their month of birth and all but Manzano were born overseas. What are the odds that four of six Prep School mercenaries would be born in July but none of the other eight players on the roster were born in July? Pretty long.

The greybeards on the team are Stoneridge alum Djibril Thiam and Boubacar Sylla. Thiam first went to Baylor and Sylla to Auburn. Thiam became eligible at UW during the second half of last season. He is shown to be a junior. He was allegedly born July 6, 1986 in Dakar, Senegal. He is 23 years old. Sylla is shown to be a sophomore. He was allegedly born July 16, 1986 in Paris, France. A 23 year old sophomore.

Still another Stoneridge alum would have been on this year's roster but he dropped out of UW to play "pro" ball overseas. He is Mahamoud Diakite and he could not get floor time with the Cowboys. What professional team can he play for? The Nets?

With the tomato can opponents UW started with this season, and the fact that all but three of their first 17 games would be played in Wyoming, it seemed like the mercenaries could start the season with a bang. But, they lost huge at home to South Dakota State, a team that went 8-21 last year and 6-24 the year before. Since, they've lost to Denver, Monmouth and Hampton. These prep school imports, and junior college and other university transfers may not be so good after all.

## Billboards - elevated and ground level

Someone should start an office pool as to when the Saturn billboards will be removed. The unfortunate demise of that brand, through no fault of the Cheyenne dealership, did not bring an end to billboards touting the car's virtues.

Until and unless the mayor takes seriously the part such things have in making Cheyenne a laughingstock instead of a desired destination or home to people and industry, torn billboards, billboards with outdated or obsolete messages (including political campaign signs months after an election) and blank billboards are not good for a community's image.

It is not suggested here that the mayor

has to personally go out and remove the unsightly billboard panels. What he can do is insure that contracts are properly written, penalties are in place for violations, and then enforcement action is taken. That is his role in government here. At this time, many local billboards are nothing more than elevated graffiti.

And the bus bench contract is a joke. There are several requirements in the contract that are ignored. For the most part, these benches are nothing more than ground level billboards but a few are now being utilized for waiting bus passengers. The angles the benches are to the street are often at odds with the contract. But, no one seems to notice or care.

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