

More jobs for friends

While the DDA board of directors had an opportunity to try to turn around the fortunes - actually, misfortunes - of the downtown by hiring an experienced person from another community, word is they will follow the established pattern by hiring an insider who *needs* a job instead of a person who can *do* the job.

As bad as it is to hire a lesser person when you're dealing with public funds, it is equally wrong to make others believe they have a real chance to secure the job. In this case, two of the finalists were from out of the region. Whether they actually traveled to Cheyenne to interview, I do not know. They may have realized they were not seriously in the running and aborted any trip the DDA scheduled.

Whoever heads the DDA does not matter much. A weak person at the helm has been the norm and if that doesn't change, nothing further can be lost. And, the City governing body could take an active and interested role in leadership.

In addition to hiring an insider to probably be ineffective at the helm of the DDA, the City also must hire a new police chief. It is probable that the new chief will come from among the current ranks of the police department. Why do I say that? While not positive such a move will be made, that is the accepted norm in Cheyenne and Wyoming. Since fire chief Scott Alvord was hired several years ago, no outsider has been hired for a high profile

here. Alvord was not employed by another city at the time but he had recently been fire chief in Provo, Utah.

The latest Public Works City department head may be from out of town - I don't know him. But, other City department heads are promotions from within or a friend of someone involved with the selection decision. It is human nature to choose someone who is not a threat - in experience, qualifications or leadership skills. Unfortunately, that is what has usually been done with public money.

When the experienced first economic development head of the Wyoming Business Council proved to be unmanageable, he was removed in favor of a retired military officer with no experience in the field. When the retired Colonel left the job, it was handed to another local guy with no experience. To take economic development in Wyoming to another level will require someone with experience. We compete with states, counties and cities having development people with skills.

When the LEADS honcho left the job after playing an integral role in developing the industrial park on Campstool and helping encourage Lowe's regional distribution center be built here, he was replaced by an underling who is not even a shadow of his former boss.

Why should we expect anything different from DDA? Fear is a great inhibitor.

DDA

After the October 27th issue of the Herald came out, I received an e-mail from a reader who questioned why I mentioned that DISH Network did not vote in the DDA special election regarding the additional ten mill downtown property tax and suggested that I had "sensationalized" the story by including their name.

The name came from the polling list provided by the City Clerk's office - which had also been marked to indicate which of the properties had been voted. It is, after all, the property that is entitled to a vote, not the property owner. As shown on an earlier listing in the Cheyenne Herald, several people or legal entities own multiple properties in the downtown.

One of the downtown property owners manipulated a small office building that he owns into eleven votes. Others are entitled to a vote for empty lots or vacant ground with little value.

After five of these special elections, four of which passed, you'd think the DDA board would have all the kinks out and the eligibility determination would be as good and equitable as they could make it - excepting, of course, for the guy who rigged the system by pretending to "condo" his little building so he could gain ten additional votes for an election where there are usually about 100 votes cast.

But, you'd be wrong.

As a result of the referenced e-mail, I

decided to look further into whether there were other oddities to the polling list.

There are.

Yet, after twenty years of these special elections, no one came across the fact.

Businesses with no downtown property, per se, are entitled to a vote in these special elections.

Why, you ask? Because those businesses have had their "properties" assessed for tax purposes by the State of Wyoming (not the County Assessor's Office) and in distributing values throughout Laramie County, some of the value is determined to be in Tax District 151, the DDA district.

Ten such businesses, all public utilities of some sort, are shown on the polling list as being eligible to vote and entitled to a single vote each. None, including Cheyenne Light, Fuel and Power, which does have a physical property within the DDA boundaries, cast a vote in the latest special election.

DISH Network has property with a total "assessed value" of \$537,629, according to a list from the Assessor's Office, of which only \$252 is in Tax District 151. For that, they are entitled to one vote - which they do not exercise. The list should be cleansed and only those businesses with real "property" (building or land) downtown should be eligible to vote.

2009 Christmas Parade

Once again, our thanks to Marie Crader for her initiative, ambition, determination and foresight in bringing a Christmas parade to Cheyenne. Marie's commitment and dedication to her community has provided a rewarding parade experience to local residents each year on the Saturday evening after Thanksgiving.

The past Saturday night was a bit cold but there have been several others among the 19 Christmas parades that were colder and had stronger winds.

It is an incredible tribute to a solitary woman (likely with encouragement from a supportive husband) that this parade not only began but perseveres. It is not an easy thing to do. Any parade is difficult - witness the end of a Memorial Day parade in Cheyenne - and to have an unbroken string of 19 parades is great.

There are always some floats or entries that stand out and it would hard to single out all of those that were exceptional.

Cheyenne Frontier Days enters a bright, well-lit and appropriate float. The Hot Air Balloon Club is a much appreciated entry as they stoke up the burners and warm up the crowd nearest them at the time.

A number of churches are represented and they present an appropriate message. The children that ride or walk must be cold but they are spirited and look like they're having fun. All in all, the Cheyenne Christmas Parade is an indelible accomplishment of Marie Crader. Even the governor and mayor now ride in it.

Two suggestions: If it ain't lit, it don't fit. And, no use of "Xmas." It is a Christmas parade, after all.

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Is it any wonder?

On Sunday, November 8th, while driving around town with the Bentley's radio on, I heard an announcement that caught my attention. It was a promotion for the "Ghost Trolley Tours," offered by the Visitors Bureau prior to Halloween. I know the dates because I published the announcement in the Herald. At about 2:00 pm that Sunday afternoon, several days after Halloween, listeners were told how they could ride the trolleys for the "tours." While a small thing, it is indicative of why the downtown is in the condition that it's in. No one pays much attention to what is going on.

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