

The truth about the Friday Music on the Plaza offering

There is no denying that having live music on the patio in front of the former UP railroad depot on Friday nights during the summer draws a crowd. And since alcohol (beer) has become the primary draw, quite a few locals under 35 find it a pleasant way to spend a few hours they won't be able to remember the following day.

A typical Friday night from the first music night until mid-July might see 50-75 locals there at any one time. The crowd turns over frequently and over the course of the night probably 250-300 people come and go. Once the tourists come to Cheyenne, a bit in advance of Frontier Days in July and during those two weekends, the crowd grows considerably. As does the beer sales.

In the first years of this event, there was considerable open space - now there is much less. In addition to the stage area and sound canopy, there are several other canopies. And a couple of food carts. So, the patio looks full before any people arrive. Once people and their dogs get there, 100 people looks like a Tim McGraw concert crowd.

Even though Jim Mathewson has written about the City paying the bands for their performance, the daily continued to take credit for "putting on" these Friday night musical events. Well, as we said here, they lied. What they "put on" were their

readers. As the DDA minutes reflect, all the newspaper has done was "promote" the Friday Night Lights. To claim they were providing \$100,000 worth of advertising is laughable.

Even if they could sell the same space at their highest retail price per column inch, they aren't doing that dollar value of promotion for Friday Nights on the Patio.

When you enter the patio area from any direction, there are banners that credit the Wyoming Tribune-Eagle as providing the event for residents and visitors. There is no suggestion or no signage anywhere

"Special Projects - Bob Bradshaw: Bradshaw reported that he, Christian [Cherek], Tom Segrave and Paul Howard had met with WTE to discuss Friday nights on the Plaza. WTE's funding primarily is in the form of \$100,000.00 worth of advertising. DDA contributes \$12,000.00 for the event, plus the council has committed \$30,000.00 for Plaza improvement. The Friday night concerts cost the City in excess of \$200,000.00 for bands, work crews, equipment, etc."

Source: DDA Draft Minutes of March 11, 2008 board meeting

that shares that credit with Cheyenne taxpayers. And as you can read in the box above, the City pays for the bands and provides both the crew and equipment to provide the musical events throughout the summer. It is not the Tribune-Eagle.

Why does the WT-E mislead those attending the concerts? Why not tell the

truth? Why not just level with the people? Why must they exaggerate their role? Only Mike McCracken can answer that question.

Even the mayor buys into the lie. When talking about the Friday Nights on the patio, each of the past two have told residents that the newspaper is providing the entertainment, not that the residents are paying for it themselves. Didn't they know that the City was paying most of the costs - that the City was writing the checks for bands, that it wasn't the WT-E that paid for the musicians? Is it possible they were (are) so much in the dark that they

didn't know what was happening?

What the newspaper is doing is commendable. Nothing to erect a statue for but still commendable. They remind their remaining readers about the Friday Night concerts, even do it in color. But they're not really giving up that much. They can't sell the advertising space so to use it for

public service announcements costs nil.

The DDA minutes [in the box] also disclose that, in spite of turning over the depot and its revenues, as well as the W. 15th St. parking lot revenue to the Depot Museum, the city council approved another \$30,000 for "plaza improvement." What financial responsibility does the Old West Museum (the Depot Museum) have for maintenance or improvements? They collect rent from the tavern, DDA, LEADS, the Downtown Chamber of Commerce and the Convention and Visitors Bureau. They also have some special events in the depot that should produce revenue. What do they do with that money? Why are the taxpayers still paying for improvements when the City receives none of the revenue from rent or other sources.

If you believe what you're told all summer long, the Friday Night music brings more people to the downtown than any other happening. Actually, it is a distant second to the Farmer's Market. But, notice that the DDA, with their \$650,000 annual budget, is only responsible for \$12,000 of the cost for the Friday Night music. The rest is yours to pay.

As Paul Harvey used to say, now you know the rest of the story. And, it ain't as presented. Residents of the City, through their taxes, pay for the Friday Night concerts on the Plaza. Not the WT-E.

Candidates for governor

The line will form on the right. Far right.

Whether Dave Freudenthal defies the will of voters who overwhelmingly approved term limits in 1992 or not, Republican candidates are making noises about running for that office in 2010.

Is Dave beatable?

No one is unbeatable. Dave's popularity has been artificially buoyed by the State's prosperity which is disappearing. There won't be any national Democratic coattails in 2010 to help a local governor or create any interest for voters. And only Cynthia Lummis' seat of the three federal offices will be on the ballot.

One thing Dave does have in his favor, if he chooses to poke a finger in the eye of the voters who chose term limits with 77% approval in 1992, is that Wyoming voters have often elected a Democrat to the State House. No further. Just the State House.

So far, Republicans Ron Micheli and Matt Mead have made their intentions known and Colin Simpson, as he did in 2006 when he bullied Barbara Cubin by threatening to challenge her for the U.S. House seat, is holding his spittle-damp finger in the wind. Colin and Matt both would have preferred to have an office handed to them but that didn't happen - the Senate seat was handed to Barrasso. Will either actually campaign for a state or federal office? Time will tell.

It is conceivable that all five state offices next year will have a new occupant in 2011. There are the health concerns of Joe Meyer and Max Maxfield and someone in the Republican Party is likely to step forward and take the State Superintendent of Public Instruction office from Jim McBride.

McBride has done for Wyoming public education what he once did for Bennett, Colorado education. And the longer he is at the helm, the further into the depths will fall Wyoming education. He has a record for doing just that. He has never succeeded in the public education field. A strong candidate is supposed to surface. We'll see if that was just talk.

Rita Meyer hasn't announced her future plans but, as the titular head of the Wyoming Republican Party, it seems her best move would be to seek the governorship in 2010. She dare not risk Micheli, Mead, Simpson or a still unnamed Republican grabbing that office while she tarries.

Other than Dave Freudenthal, the Democrats simply don't have a viable, certainly not a proven, statewide candidate. Gary Trauner learned a lesson the hard way - the 2006 close race against Barbara Cubin was about Cubin, not Trauner. When he faced a marginal, but different, Republican candidate in Cynthia Lummis in 2008, she easily defeated him.

The small numbers in the Wyoming

Legislators, of Democrats that is, does not bode well for a run at federal office.

And, if Max, Joe and Rita do not seek re-election, there will be plenty of available State seats that a Democrat might think much more attainable.

Which Democrat in the Legislature would have even a prayer at winning statewide? Their membership is very unfamiliar outside their own counties and sometimes unknown *within* their own counties.

In the past Session, Democrat House leaders were Sandra Meyer (who was appointed to fill a vacant Senate seat, Patrick Goggles and Lori Millin, who didn't even win re-election by a large margin here in Laramie County. In the Senate, the Dems leadership was Kathryn Sessions (a support of diploma mills), Mike Massie and John Hastert (John, not Dennis). The Democrats just don't have a farm system to develop candidates.

If Dave decides to seek a third term, it won't be easy for him to explain the wisdom of trying to appoint his wife to a lucrative federal job. Nepotism doesn't play too well in Wyoming [except for Simpsons]. If he announces after the next legislative session that he will not run again, perhaps Mark Gordon will come clean, admit he has always been a Democrat, and spend another million dollars of personal money to try to become Governor. Otherwise, who will run as a Dem?

Another No for Nadia Nyet. Fire Grants Reauthorization Act of 2009 - Vote Passed (395-31, 8 not voting)

The House approved this legislation that would reauthorize FEMA's Assistance to Firefighters grants and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response program through FY2014. The bill now goes to the Senate.

Wyo. Rep. Cynthia Lummis voted NO

Note: Others voting No included Jeff Flake (R-AZ) and Ron Paul (R-TX). Interestingly, Mary Bono Mack (R-CA) voted YES. Her husband, Connie Mack (R-FL) voted No.

Head Start Open House

Community Action of Laramie County, Inc has announced the **Head Start** rescheduled annual Open House on December 11 from 6-8 pm. It will be held at the **Head Start** main center, which is located at 711 Warren Avenue (the former Johnson Junior High).

Head Start staff will provide tours of the facility, community partners will be available with program information, and games will be available for children.

The **Head Start** 2010 Blue Bird school bus will be on display.

For more information about the Open House or the **Head Start** program in general, please contact Shari at 634-5829.