

## A parking lot for restaurants that don't support other locals?

The Volk/City Downtown Parking Lot at 17th and Warren seems to be in violation of many rules. There is but a single entrance/exit off one street. The lot has no provision for handicap parking spaces. No ADA access. The lot, funded by state funds at city begging, has no landscaping. There is unsafe access off an adjacent alley, which was covered with asphalt itself. And, the lot is inadequately lit.

Private businesses in other parts of Cheyenne have not been allowed to construct a similar parking lot for themselves. They could design and build one without city knowledge but it would be shut down the minute it was discovered.

The Volk-City lot, to this time, has no signage to inform who can use the lot, for how long and at what cost.

If the lot was constructed to benefit the nearby businesses "needing" off-street parking that they were not required to provide for themselves, it would almost certainly be intended for four restaurants, a bedroom furniture store and a law office. The City has learned that employees, owners and managers will not walk

much more than a half block for even publicly-provided free parking - witness the parking garage and 15th St. parking lot.

Fast food places Quizno's and Carl's Jr. have off-street parking lots of their own so they don't need a publicly funded lot. The Freudenthal law firm has their own parking lot to the south of their offices at 17th and Warren. That leaves the Rogers law firm, Bedder Sleep, Pizzeria Venti and its new outlet, Two Doors Down, Sanford's and Ruby Juice. The former Mossholder's and its basement offices may use the lot but it's questionable how much they need more parking spaces. Lucky 7 has adequate street parking.

Alley parking provides employee parking for Bedder Sleep and street parking isn't much needed there. So, the 52 space lot - the Volk/City Lot, poorly designed and illegally opened - was built for a handful of food service establishments, whether for customer OR employee parking. There is no signage to indicate what its purpose is. Yet, those food establishments aren't expected, let alone required, to reciprocate and do business with those who are paying for their parking.

### Ongoing ...

The VA employee. A man with "Excellent" evaluations was terminated two weeks before his probationary period ended - for excessive absences approved by his superiors. He had contacted Senator Mike Enzi's office and the Equal Employment Opportunity office and PRESTO! his approved absences were no longer acceptable. What does the VA Handbook and Employment Manual have to say about such termination? How does the Cheyenne VA Hospital treat its employees, especially one with a disability who is also a veteran himself? More coming on this story.

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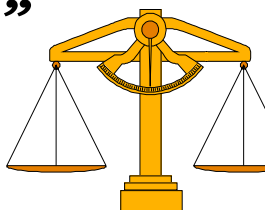
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## Atlas Theater

Old downtown theaters have a place in Americana. What has happened with one of the three formerly in the downtown, the Lincoln Theater, has been valuable to downtown traffic.

The Atlas (once the Strand) is a specialty theater used primarily by the Cheyenne Little Theater Players. It needs repairs and upgrading and now there is talk that the City of Cheyenne will assume ownership so grant money can be sought for the improvements. After taking title, the City would lease it back to Cheyenne Little Theater Players for a dollar a year.

I had been asked what my position would be if such an ownership arrangement were put forward. As a "downtowner" of long duration, my position is that we do not want to lose any more downtown tenants or properties - whether it be to closure, fire or abandonment. There are far too many empty properties down there now - most notably the Hynds Building, which has been empty since 1986 and not a factor in the downtown since 1981.

When I was asked my position about the City taking ownership of the Atlas with a leaseback for a minimal amount, there were no specifics offered in terms of amount of grant money that might be needed to rehabilitate the Atlas.

And, when it was announced that it would require \$14 million, I cannot support that. In spite of what economic development people may believe, grant money does not drop out of the heavens. It comes from tax money of some origination. And, that same grant money can go in a number of different directions. It would bother me to know that we have asked for obscene amounts of grant money (and gotten it) for a limited use downtown playhouse when other cities did not get needed money for more valuable and legitimate projects for their communities.

So, as bad as it would be for the Atlas to also be vacated and fall further into disrepair, \$14 million is too high a price to pay to retain it. If private money could have been raised for its renovation, any amount would be fine. But, the group obviously could not raise substantial funds and they are now where they are.

I am not an actor. I do not engage in "pretend." That may bias my thinking.

That current Atlas Theater is a property tax exempt building of less than 7,000 sq. ft. To spend \$2,000 a sq. ft. to upgrade it would be imprudent. A new building could be built for a fraction of that per square foot cost.

## Fieldhouse

The fact that voters rejected a recreation center on the last specific purposes ballot doesn't mean, in my opinion, that residents (a majority of them, even) do not want a rec center. From conversations I had before that election, there was good public support for a rec center - just not for *that* rec center, proposed by *that* group, and supported by *that* newspaper.

In their overzealous attempts to browbeat voters into approval, the mayor, city council and Tribune-Eagle sucked all the air out of voters and they rebelled. Every other project on the ballot was approved so it wasn't spending the money - it was the fact that the ones who wanted it most oversold it worst. The daily newspaper points the finger at others but they had as much to do with the failure of that sales tax proposition as any other single thing.

Now, a group with little success to claim, has offered to build a fieldhouse and turn

it over to the City after it is paid for. Think about that proposal. "We'll build you something. We'll operate it through the loss period. We'll pay for it. Then, we'll turn it over to you when it is paid for." In Lake Barrington, Illinois, the only fieldhouse built so far, news stories said that would take 17-20 years. It is a non-profit venture that needs to be tax exempt.

Let 'em come to town and meet with groups that might want to rent a large, open fieldhouse or gym(s) - at up to \$750 a pop. Let 'em put together projections for such an operation. Then, let 'em present their findings to the mayor and council.

The city governing body has shown itself incapable of making financial decisions. Residents need to remember the Belvoir, skywalk and serial bad ideas approved by the prior administration. Trash to ethanol. Trash to diesel. Trash to pellets. HeliSupport. HelpDeskNow. Etc., etc.

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