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## Tax the children more so city employees can be paid more and the council can spend more!

### The fee enterprise system and the city budget

Did you know that the children who pull wagons along the Cheyenne Frontier Parade route have to buy a permit to do that? Can you imagine that? A 9 year-old little girl who wants to pull a wagon and sell soft drinks and water for a buck so she can go to the carnival has to apply for a permit and pay a fee to do something that should be encouraged - and allowed to be done for free?

Why? What changed after nearly a century of being able to offer cold drinks and maybe a candy bar to warrant having a record of whom the children are and charging them a fee, however small?

Some would argue that paying a dollar for a permit is not unreasonable. But, it isn't the dollar that is unreasonable by itself. It is a child's fee for any reason.

If the mayor really thinks some sort of permanent record must be kept of these vendor children, when will that include fingerprints and photos?

Many residents were unaware that kids had to register and pay until the recent news of a plan to balance the city budget on the backs of these little street urchins.

A few years ago, some of these same council members tried to ban the distribution of flyers along the parade route. The fact that a church group downtown had used these parade lunches to raise funds did not matter to a minority of council members. They said blowing paper could spook the horses and cause great damage to property - perhaps even kill someone. When asked if that had happened in the first hundred years of the parades, they had no incident to relate. One, desperately trying to get the ban passed, offered that a team of horses had spooked a few years earlier.

When questioned, he retreated and admitted that the reason was a person ran in front of the team. They didn't try to ban spectators from the parades. The effort (to ban flyers, including the Tribune-Eagle) failed. Maybe that's why the insiders decided to take it out on the kids.

Requiring the children to pay money to sell their wares is unconscionable.

According to records at the City Clerk's office, there were 70 children's vendor permits sold last year. By doubling the fee to \$2.00, the treasury will gain \$70.00. The city could cover that revenue by not having pizza or subs at their meetings.

Up until 1992, children could sell wares along the CFD parade route without a permit or having to pay a fee.

In 1992, in an effort to thwart the tikes selling homemade goodies, a permit was required. That way, they could be told that selling anything not prepackaged in China or sealed in a can was prohibited. Evidently, they (the city) had encountered huge problems with 7-9 year-olds staying up all night making baklava, making shredded beef burritos and preparing whole wheat bread loaves from scratch.

In 1997, when the city budget was much like the current one - unbalanced without new revenue - a \$1.00 fee for each "vendor" was put into place. The fee was to help cover the cost of supplies (the little badge the ragamuffins have to display on their person) and time at the Clerk's office. It should be pointed out that if three little sibling, the youngest perhaps only four or five years old, walk together and each make "sales," each much purchase a permit. It must be hard getting a toddler to sign the lengthy (8 1/2 x 14") application form and to acknowledge they understand what the restrictions are as to what they can or cannot peddle.

*Note: You can see the current form on the Cheyenne Herald website.*

On CFD parade days, the permit is only valid to sell wares between 9:00 am and 11:00 am. Any child walking the route and offering treats as people are securing their positions beginning at 7:00 am is a violation of the permit. And there may be waterboarding involved.

The "Affidavit/Authorization" box on the Permit Application requires the children to allow the city "and its agents and employees to seek information and conduct investigations into the truth of the foregoing statements as set forth in this application ... and further declares that the foregoing information contained in this application is true and correct."

These are children, for crying out loud! They're not applying for a job in Homeland Security. Those applicants probably don't have to make a stronger statement of patriotism, loyalty and fealty to get a job with Homeland Security.

In that same box, there is a place for the applicant's signature and for the parent or legal guardian's if the applicant is under "the age of 18 years." Signature notarization isn't required of those under 18.

What?

A notarized signature to offer soft drinks and Snicker's bars along the parade route? Someone needs to chill.

The best is yet to come.

For this \$1.00 (now going to be \$2.00) permit, signatures are required of City/County Environmental Health, the mayor, **AND** the City Clerk. The mayor has nothing better to do than sign 70 permit applications for children to sell pop? Maybe that's the problem with the budget. Plus, of course, neither City/County Health nor the mayor have a clue about these applications. Not a bloomin' clue.

In addition to the children needing a permit, they are subject to investigation as they walk along pulling their Radio Flyer with a Thermos cooler in the box. "Excuse me, Missy. We had a report that you were selling more than Coke and Fritos from your traveling dope box. I need to look into your cooler."

The seven year-old begins to sob as the adult city employee accuses her of selling meth from her portable lab. The adult looks and sees that the hung-over fat slob from Ohio was just pulling his/her chain.

Fewer and fewer children are hawking their wares along the parade route because large, privately-funded organizations like churches are offering free water in competition to the tikes trying to make a few bucks to ride the Tilt-a-Whirl.

These "vendors" don't require a permit or have to pay a fee because they offer the warm water for free. A nice gesture if you don't consider that they are putting "free enterprise" to a different meaning. What if they spike the H<sub>2</sub>O? Remember what was done through the caps of Tylenol? Without proper identification of what church group handed you the bottle, you won't know who to report. If, on the other hand, a private vendor (child) gives you the wrong change and you don't notice until you're back at the Crown Bar that night getting falling down, throwing up drunk, you can report the little thief. If you wrote down her vendor number.

Is what the churches are doing a silent form of proselytizing? Of course it is. Whether they hand a recipient of the free water a slip of paper or just hang signs on their coolers or expensive wagons, they want you to know which church gave you a free, albeit it warm, bottle of water.

I'll tell you how to balance the budget.

*First, the City cannot withhold the \$1 million payment toward the Stage II project. It's been tried. See page 12 for that story.*

And, they could have avoided doubling the fee to children by eliminating food at meetings or Chamber lunches for city officials or employees at public expense.

\$80,000 could easily be pared without affecting spending. Each city council ward is provided a "contingency" fund. The council members actually have two contingency funds. **EACH!** These are slush funds that the council and mayor have been very judicious in spending. It would cost no one anything by reducing the ward contingency funds from \$20,000 each to \$10,000 each. That would save \$30,000 (\$10,000 x 3 wards). They also have a "general contingency" fund of \$50,000. Reduce it to \$20,000. It doesn't get spent but it affects the budget. The mayor's contingency fund is small but the mayor's salary is now \$95,000. Rick should reduce it back to \$75,000 for FY2010. \$80,000 in cuts. Believe me, if they want to spend money that wasn't budgeted, they find a way. Reallocation.

If I were mayor, knowing that revenues would be, at best, flat for the coming fiscal year (there is no excuse for the mayor, council and treasurer's office not knowing that was coming), I would not only have looked for ways to generate more revenue. I would have directed every department head to **REDUCE** spending from the FY09 budget levels by 2%. The FY09 adjusted budget was \$52,315,091. That's right - **FIFTY-TWO POINT THREE MILLION DOLLARS+!** They needed to transfer \$1.9 million from reserves to pay the bills. Leo Pando's last budget called for \$28.6 million in spending. FY2009 spending was 83% greater than in FY2001 - general fund spending (most of it payroll, payroll taxes, benefits, etc.). Buying the Belvoir, remodeling the UP depot and building a patio in front of it, the downtown parking garage, building a baseball field for one program, etc., came from other funds - which have been spent. Or from debt, as for the unused garage.

A two percent reduction in spending across the board would save over \$1 million. Could it be done? Easily. Department heads are to be paid as much as 80% more in FY10 than in FY01. 80% more! They are now four city attorneys yet they needed an outside attorney to handle the billboard case. They *need* that \$70 from children. That'll really help.