

# Enterprise fund

It's comical how the daily newspaper believes, and is trying to convince its few remaining readers, that they "discovered" something. That they discovered the City's sanitation department takes in more revenue than it takes to operate the department - if you don't consider all costs.

Maybe we should declare a holiday to recognize their "discovery." After all, their discovery is as legitimate as Columbus "discovering" America.

You can't discover a place that is already inhabited or, in the case of the daily's discovery, that everybody already knew.

What's next for them - discovering that the City illegally annexed several parcels of land and all annexations were voided?

When they first announced their major "discovery," the Cheyenne Herald mocked them about their assertion regarding the department's revenue exceeding its cost of operation. So, they changed course and agreed that the sanitation department does take in more revenue than it costs to operate BUT the City should segregate the department as an Enterprise Fund so residents can see how much excess revenue is generated and how it is used.

What dopes!

The Civic Center is an enterprise fund. Does the daily know anything about their operation - how much money is taken in and how much it takes from the general fund to keep the doors open? Of course not. And they don't care. For some reason, they are angry at the sanitation department and are desperately trying to tag them with something negative.

Do Mike and Reed know that the parking division was an enterprise fund until Jack Spiker became mayor and he changed it that so losses from the new parking garage would be more difficult to ferret out? Of course they don't know that. Nor care.

Enterprise fund accounting should not be used for the sanitation department. It cannot be (even the Civic Center's accounting is incomplete) unless accurate cost accounting is applied. And, the City does not want to go there. And they don't need to. The daily demands action for which they have no intention of using the product. For example, their tasteless litigation to gain a study on suicides at the local jail. Once they had the information, they sat on it - as they should have.

Only an accountant could understand the details true enterprise fund accounting would provide if the sanitation department were converted. Why not try to understand the annual losses from the Civic Center first, Reed and Mike?

The bottom line of this contrived "controversy" is that without the revenue generated by the well-run sanitation department, the City would have to try to get more revenue in other ways or cut spending. The dodge to avoid spending restraints is always that spending less would mean reduced or eliminated services.

That is not necessarily the case but it usually gets opponents to back off.

It's obvious to most that the City can't reduce spending any more than they have on maintenance of neighborhood streets. The streets have never been in worse shape and they are getting worse by the season. So, where to cut spending?

The daily has stopped demanding that the sanitation department stop generating more revenue than it takes to operate the department. They know it's necessary. Now, they want "an accounting." An accounting that the daily editorialists could not understand. Like the dog that caught the car, they wouldn't know what to do with such an accounting if they got it.

Why not "investigate" the parking garage, Reed? Why not order him to do a review of revenue and costs for that parking garage that you love so much, Mike?

The daily couldn't guess within a few hundred thousand dollars how much of the mineral royalties revenue the State has to share with the City has to be used to subsidize the parking garage. And, if cost accounting were applied, the amount would be far more. Way, way more.

Why isn't it as important to the WTE what is draining City coffers as what is filling them? Because they understand neither.

The answer is very simple. Very basic. The daily newspaper has no core principles. They have abdicated their journalistic oversight responsibility to an upstart "advocacy journal" for the past eight years and now they don't know what's important for them to cover.

All the rest of us have known for years that the sanitation department generated more revenue than it took to operate that department - the daily has just learned it.

Their outrage is phony. They never once expressed such faux anger when Reed's paramour was mayor. Why now? Nothing has changed. Except the mayor.

They never helped the Cheyenne Herald question the folly of buying the Belvoir Ranch for a new landfill. They never editorialized about the bad decisions made by the Spiker administration concerning trash disposal and the excessively long delay in realizing that recycling was a smart thing to do. And a prudent one.

*In the interest of full disclosure, I am a strong supporter of recycling and have long been. Jack Spiker and I had many "arguments" about the benefits of recycling. Jack always felt that we could "just dig another hole" and recycling was an eastern thing that Wyoming did not need. If he has had a revenue-bed conversion, that would be great. I'm not sure he is sincere in his support of recycling. He was forced to try something different when they squandered the opportunity to solve the solid waste problem for eight years. It seemed like everyone else in town knew the Belvoir would never be sited for a new landfill - all except the governing body.*

The sanitation department is an exceptional service in the City. Under-appreciated, the department has been run by Felix and Dennis Pino for over half a century. It is the one department everyone in Cheyenne sees operate. You may also need water but you never see it provided. You may also need electricity but you don't see it provided week in and week out like you do your trash pickup.

The men, and there may be women, in the sanitation department work. Hard. They do not lean on shovel handles as you may see other City employees do. Those employees are a proud group. They are often overlooked when it comes to assessing the importance of what they do. They are not paid commensurate with the excess revenue they generate.

If the daily would prefer the sanitation department spend more of the revenue they generate internally, I am sure that Dennis Pino could give his employees a 25% raise. Being efficient and getting the most bang for the buck has now led to a local newspaper criticizing that the sanitation department is doing its job too well. What dopes! The daily, that is. *And, this department is actually a "division."*

Felix Pino set the wheels in motion for this to be a well-run operation and Dennis has continued that tradition. Name another department in the City that compares to the sanitation department in terms of dependability, performance and hard work?

I'm waiting.

The attorney's office? Yeah, right.

I'm waiting.

Maybe the clerk's office. That is still one of the only department's fully operational on Friday afternoon. Others have a skeleton crew or nobody working.

Felix Pino used to tell Jack Spiker and myself that he should get to keep the "profit" he made with the sanitation department. Too bad the daily newspaper wasn't supportive of that - Felix would have been delighted. He probably would have used the money well and wisely. No, **HE WOULD HAVE USED THE MONEY WELL AND WISELY!**

But, I disagreed with Felix then and I disagree with others now who believe that the sanitation department should charge fees sufficient enough just to run the department. There is nowhere else to turn to make up any reduction in fees from that department.

The City governing body could lobby the Legislature for a greater percentage of the first four pennies of sales tax collected here. They could wink in the darkness, too. Neither would accomplish a thing. They could raise the franchise fees on telephone, electric and natural gas, and cable television franchisees. They tried that back in 2001 and backed down faster than Paula Jones in her celebrity boxing match against Tonya Harding. "Not the nose, not the nose," the City pleaded.

One of the utilities told the City, "Not only are we not going to accept an increase in our franchise fees, we aren't going to pay you anything in the future." That didn't pan out too well.

What else is there? Virtually no other revenue is controlled by the City.

They could raise the parking fees in the two downtown garages. Oh, yeah, that'll generate some real cash. They could raise fines for speeding, etc. Now, that is a department that does believe it should get all increased revenue it generates - the police department.

The statutory limit on property taxes already is collected for the City - 8 mills. The City can't change motor vehicle taxes.

Building permit fees and business licenses? Yeah, now would be a good time to further discourage anyone from building or opening a business here.

Cigarette tax? No can do. Gasoline tax? Neither. Mineral royalties? We take what we get and keep our mouths shut. Severance taxes? Ditto.

Municipal rainy day fund handouts from the State? We take what they give. Without that \$4 - \$7 million a year in charity over the past eight years, Cheyenne would be in deep doo-doo. Without that generosity from the Legislature, Cheyenne could not make its payroll. Really.

We could raise golf course fees. Right. Talk about the sound of a banshee, try to raise greens fees by a couple bucks and all the "I have time on my hands and nothing else to do" folks will march on City Hall. Swimming fees? How about the Spray Park? But, they're for the children. Can't raise those fees. Doubling the fee to sell snacks on the CFD parade route worked well - an extra \$6.00 this year and the hike reduced vendors by almost half.

Except for the "market" and the fact that these characters spent all the investable money (to which the daily did not object), investment revenue is just a little better than an "under the mattress" return.

The fire training facility was supposed to generate revenue for its use. None. Where has the daily been on that? Mute.

We could increase the fee to use the Community House (north, not the shed south). That would bring in an extra two, three hundred a year.

Revenue from the sanitation department is critical to the operation of the City. Making the department an enterprise fund would serve no useful purpose.

Once again, the daily has come down on the wrong side of an issue. Actually, the best side for the sanitation department. The daily supports more losing propositions than the federal government. Grab another bag of filled jelly donuts, put your feet up on the desk and fall back asleep.

We didn't miss you.