

## Did VA misplace hundreds of veterans claims?

Those who have served this nation on active duty military status are entitled to and deserve the services they were promised. This is a zero tolerance issue to this writer. Services must be provided as promised, without exception and without delay.

Most of us cannot imagine the emotional and physical scars carried by many of our veterans - some getting quite old but many still very young. The country has never gone through an extended period of time when our servicemen and women have not been subjected to the stresses and challenges of serving near to or in combat zones.

Many of those who serve, or who have served, are separated from their loved ones for extended periods and the uncertainty of what tomorrow may bring is beyond our comprehension - those of us who never were asked to or were forced to endure those uncertainties.

One certainty that must be in their lives is that the care and concern shown them by those responsible must never waiver.

It has become known to the Cheyenne Herald that as many as several hundred - SEVERAL HUNDRED - veterans claim files may have been misplaced - with claims delayed for unknown periods of time. Perhaps insiders would prefer to have the inaction thought of as merely "delays." Whatever word or combination of words those insiders prefer, the allegation is that rules were violated and, in the course of the violations, claims through the Cheyenne VA benefits office were not processed as expected and as required.

Veterans often do not file claims for benefits to which they may be entitled until the last possible moment. Many just don't want to claim what was promised to them - until they reach a point where they no longer can wait. I know the usual delays in processing claims - from personal experience with an appeal for a relative. Months passed without a decision. So to have the files misplaced or improperly processed is inexcusable. Intolerable.

As critical as this VA hospital is to so many veterans in this region, there seems to be never ending questions about the efficiency in claims processing. Occasionally, the Herald is contacted about problems with treatment and/or claims but many of them fall by the wayside - veterans fear reprisal for asking questions.

In this immediate matter, it is critical that those files that were located be put to the front of the line - to the top of the pile. What remains uncertain is the duration of the problem - how long the diversion of claims files has been occurring. Internal investigations or audits seldom disclose systemic problems - preferring to keep them secret. Whether that benefits veterans or not is arguable.

The Herald has been told that heads have rolled but there has been no official confirmation of that. It is difficult to confirm or refute allegations when responsible parties don't want to share information.

*A request left Friday, 9/11/09 directly with a subordinate of the VA Hospital administrator, Dr. David Kilpatrick, seeking comment for this story, was not returned by noon on Sunday, September 13, 2009.*

## DDA mailing lies to downtown property owners

Remembering what the condition of the downtown was in 2000 when Jack Spiker first ran for mayor, and what it had been before that, it is sickening to read the lies contained in a recent mailing sent by the DDA to owners of downtown property to solicit their support for the upcoming special election to continue the ten mill property tax on those downtown properties.

The mailing started with a lie that would hard to duplicate: "The Cheyenne Downtown Development Authority's (DDA) efforts for revitalization have progressed since property owners voted to support a 10 mill special district assessment in 1993 and again in 1997, 2001 and 2005."

That is so deceptively untrue.

No "revitalization" has "progressed" at any time during the 16 years of the ten mill additional property tax. It has been only downhill, particularly since 2001. And, in the 2000 campaign for mayor, Jack Spiker said on a live radio program that he objected to DDA insiders talking about revitalization of the downtown. He said the downtown did not need revitalization, that the only empty building was the Hynds Building and it was owned by the DDA president.

Residents who have lived in Cheyenne since 1993 or during most of the 16 years downtown property owners have absorbed the additional property tax, know that the area has only regressed - there has been no progression. None! Even considering the public funds spent on the old depot and the patio in front of it, no progress has been seen in the downtown. The parking garage, paid for by debt, has not solved any problem, real or perceived, of downtown parking.

It would be interesting to hook these poseurs up to a polygraph and ask them if they honestly believe the downtown is in better shape now than it was ten years ago, fifteen years ago, twenty years ago. If they said yes, the needle would jump off the sheet. That would be an absolute lie and would so register.

The downtown is in much worse condition than it was a generation ago. Indescribably worse. And, for DDA and City insiders to claim differently is to discredit them in their positions. There is little better about the private sector of downtown than it was a generation ago. The Plains has been remodeled and a couple new banks have been built. What else?

Major downtown draws like Fowler's Department Store, Burri Jewelers, Greyhound Bus Station, People's Sporting Goods, Telesonic Furniture and Appliance (later Mossholder's), Cheyenne Outfitters (later WRO), Grier Furniture, Harrington Furniture, Pacemaker Furniture, Kinko's, Pony Xpress, PIP Printing, Shippy's Copy Center, ComputerLand, Firestone, Bike Broker, The Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitor's Bureau (not hidden upstairs in the depot as they both are now), Wigwam Lounge, Coldwell Banker Real Estate, Dinneen's multiple operations and Roedel Drugs, as well as Frontier Printing - all are gone.

Not to mention TCI Cable, H&R Block, Frontier Boots, Wortham, Tolerton Dance Studio, Cho's TaeKwonDo, Carpet Outlet, Grandma's Attic, Driftwood, Commercial Office Supplies, Cheyenne Steam Laundry, Medicine Shoppe, Shy Annes, George's Boot Repair, Modern Trend Beauty School, Brown's Shoe Fit, Your Appearance, National Furs, Pete's Pizza, the UP offices, and the list goes on.

Are they really claiming there has been "progress" in the downtown since 1993?

When they do, they are not simply mistaken. They are lying. Absolutely, without a doubt, full-throated lying.

The 11 person DDA board of directors couldn't be more unrepresentative of the downtown. There are three lawyers, three financial people, an art studio owner, two public trough feeders, a city council representative who detested the DDA as a private business operator in the downtown and one retailer from the DDA district, Sue Miller. One. The board is under-represented in retail, and unrepresented in restaurant and lodging. Most board members are employees, not property owners in the downtown.

There is so much criticism that can be leveled against the do-nothing, know-nothing, accomplish-nothing, understand-nothing DDA but it just isn't worth the effort anymore. Nothing "progressive" or good is going to come from the current organization. And if downtown property owners want to provide \$100,000 a year for four more years and witness nothing happening except lunches and trips, go for it. It's no skin off my nose. But, the dishonesty should bother more people than me. The current and past mayors should know the claim of progress is an absolute lie. An absolute lie.

## It can be who you know. Or to whom you contribute.

Much of what is suspect in politics comes down to perception or the appearance of impropriety - even if everything is on the up and up.

Recently four new board members were appointed to the Downtown Development Authority Board, a group that is desperately in need of improvement and strengthening. Recognizing that it is virtually impossible to get people to serve on government boards, bodies and commissions, a mayor still needs to be careful that his choices do not start off behind the eight ball. Because this information came late on Friday afternoon before the Cheyenne Herald went to press, we could not determine who had applied for the Board seats and were not chosen. What can be reported is that three of the four new members chosen by the mayor made financial contributions to the mayor's campaign last fall. The question now will be: Did any of those not chosen also make political campaign contributions? That'll come in the next issue.

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## Cheyenne Herald - 2009

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February 17	August 4, 18
March 3, 17, 31	September 1, 15, 29
April 14, 28	October 13, 27
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June 16, 30	December 1, 15, 29

**Always on the lookout for the next Goliath**

