

Rick: Sell the Ice Center. Sell the land at Dell Range and Windmill. Lease the Civic Center. Do not sell the Belvoir. Maybe parts. You're stuck with the garage.

As this city administration looks to cut spending a quarter at a time instead of tackling the problem head-on and finding real, immediate and long-term solutions, let me offer them some help.

If they fear reducing the work force and only want to "furlough" or offer early retirement to a handful of their best and most valuable employees, they need to consider liquidating some assets. And do it legally, not with inside deals that can be legally challenged or stalled.

The Ice Center is probably the most liquid asset the city has. Having paid nothing for it but worthless land, any amount they get for it will be a gain. Maybe not by their bookkeeping standards, in which they claimed the traded land had significant value, but realistically.

To move quickly, the governing body needs to determine which of the assets they will, can and should dispose of to get enough cash to get through another year or two. If they buy that much time, they can reduce work force through attrition. The remaining employees will have to pick up the slack and work harder, but no one needs to be terminated to reach the savings goal. And, please don't call terminations "layoffs" or "furloughs." A layoff suggests the employee will come back. A termination means they won't.

The city does have a personnel manual with policies stated but they've beat those in court and can do pretty much anything they choose when it comes to ridding itself of employees.

The first thing the governing body should do is to determine what part of the Belvoir can be liquidated while retaining the area of a most likely future water source and a substantial area for future

recreational use. If they can sell the Black Hole or Big Hole or whatever it's called, they need to consider doing that. There is little likelihood it will benefit the city or its residents in the foreseeable future.

To make the appraisal come out to the necessary total value of the Belvoir - \$5.9 million - 1200 acres was appraised as "rural residential" land, at a value of over a million dollars. Sell that and the meadowland that should be marketable, attractive and valuable. That would retain most of the Belvoir land and all of the land considered valuable to the BOPU, which put up \$3.0 of the \$5.9 million. All of the money, of course, came from the same pockets - yours.

The Belvoir may be quickly saleable, it may not. But a decision on how much could be disposed of and retain most of the original land acquired should be done now. Procrastination has made the situation worse and that is why they jump from one unpleasant solution to another.

Let's assume not enough long-term employees will opt for the insulting early retirement offer. In that case, they need to be looking for that \$1.5 million elsewhere. And, withholding the \$1 million payment to BOPU can be legally challenged. It has been considered several times in the past and each time, that city administration retreated because voters approved the payment. It is not discretionary.

Now, if they want to raid the BOPU treasury, that's another matter. After all, the BOPU is partially responsible for the mess the city is in. Its pay and benefits bleeds the revenues as bad or worse than other city employees do. Probably worse.

A decision on the Belvoir should be possible within a month. The ranch

is one of the two most unpopular, and probably unwise, expenditures made in the past nine years.

Because the debate on ridding residents of the Belvoir land, at least *some* of the Belvoir land, will be heated and divisive, it needs to be started first and now.

Next, the governing body needs to surplus both the land at Dell Range and Windmill and the Ice Center property. Immediately. That is legally required before those parcels and facility can be offered for sale. The "appraisal" for the ice center suggests it is worth far more than it can be liquidated for. But, it is now wise to sell it. The city cannot manage it profitably but should enter into a long-term agreement with the buyer providing access to the facility for certain city programs that are crucial. This was an amenity that was acquired without cash outlay but it will drain the coffers if operated by an unqualified city department.

Someone in the "ice" business should be able to make the facility profitable. Using it as a convention center for small trade shows, etc., along with the events using the ice, a buyer could pick up the Ice Center for a fraction of what it's costing them to build comparable ones elsewhere. When offered for sale, set a minimum bid price of \$2.0 million and let it go for that if you have to. Someone in the business may offer more. Let's hope so. But sell it before it becomes more in need of repairs and/or a greater drain on city resources.

Also, put the civic center up for lease immediately. It has been a huge cash drain on the city since it was opened and does not show any improvement. RIF employees of the civic center and turn over the operation to a promoter who knows how to not only make a profit but offer more and better entertainment for residents who paid to build the place. There would be no immediate cash infusion from the lease but it would eliminate the constant hemorrhaging of cash.

It would be hallucinatory to think the parking garage (either of them) could be sold or leased to another operator. They are white elephants that will always siphon money faster than the feds can.

Another asset to unload would be the baseball field on Windmill. It is being improperly used now, in violation of the promises made to attract donations to build the thing. Perhaps another Rookie League franchise (like Casper) could put

a team here. The field was not built to minor league specs (I have the file if anyone wants to see it) but it could be upgraded cheaper than building a new field. Post 6 could continue to use the field but not have an exclusive hold on it. In the bind the city now finds itself in, if it's necessary, that lease can be broken. It was negotiated on false premises and Post 6 is in no PR position to litigate to enforce a broken promises lease.

Other things that can be done that would result in reduced costs and/or produce revenue but not as quickly as selling the ice center, the land at Dell Range and Windmill and part of the Belvoir Ranch, as well as leasing the civic center, would be to reduce the fleet of vehicles the city owns and maintains. Get rid of at least 200 of those vehicles and allow only "on-call" employees to drive one home. Also, reduce the cost of maintenance and replacement of police vehicles by restricting use to a direct route between work and home when not on duty. The presence of a police car in the neighborhoods may be somewhat of a deterrent to crime but there are probably no statistics to prove that assertion.

But, seeing a squad car with the family in it at King Sooper's is not a good use of city resources when the bottom is falling out of revenues. No non-uniformed city employee should be provided a full-time vehicle - including the mayor. Other cities provide a monthly stipend for their mayor. And ours now makes \$95,000 a year - he doesn't need a city-provided car. And probably doesn't even want it.

What else? Take back the depot. Taxpayer's money went into the remodeling and the giveaway to the Old West Museum needs to be undone. All rental income goes to them instead of the city. All parking revenue from west of the depot goes to them, instead of the city. Undo that giveaway. Then, try to sell the depot. Full of tenants, it should be marketable. Let's see if some of the talkers about the downtown will become a doer by investing some of their own money into the district.

As far as the promise to the Botanical Gardens to give them, or share with them, the proceeds of a land sale at Dell Range and Windmill, work it out. The mayor and city council president had no right to enter into such an agreement - to give the Gardens money from such a sale if they'd stay off the 6th penny ballot - so it's unenforceable. But do the right thing. Provide some of the proceeds to them.

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