

# Rick: Tell the WT-E to sit down and shut up!

*The more often the daily demands their few remaining readers vote for the 5th penny sales tax, the less likely voters will be to do so*

You might think the local daily would have learned a lesson when it comes to haranguing its readers about voting for higher taxes.

But you'd be wrong.

When they editorialized almost every day prior to the vote in support of a new rec center and it failed decisively, the WTE blamed the City. They said the City didn't run an aggressive campaign. The City, of course, counted on the obsequious newspaper to carry the load - they expected the constant bleating of "you must approve the rec center or you'll go to hell" threat would work.

It didn't.

This year, the same newspaper repeatedly warned downtown property owners that if they didn't approve an extension of the ten mill property tax levy on their property, the downtown would shrivel up and die. Oh, wait, that was happening when the ten mill additional property tax was in place. Lo and behold, many of those property owners who had always obediently voted in favor of the additional charge upon themselves got wise. And they looked around and couldn't see that any improvements or advancements had been made in the downtown they were paying dearly to advance. Plus, many who had not voted in the past because they didn't think their vote would matter, did. And found out it mattered mightily.

One more pet project of the WTE went down to a crashing defeat. And the one sixth penny project they ordered defeated

passed - the Archer Property.

The days of influence when it comes to voting are over for the daily newspaper in town. They have no more influence than a single sandwich board on a neighborhood street.

There has never been organized opposition to the Optional One Cent Sales Tax (the fifth penny) in the past but there are more people threatening to vote against it this cycle than have ever expressed that sentiment before.

And, the City itself seems to have bought into the notion that it will fail. They are telling beneficiaries to plan for no 5th penny sales tax in 2011.

Some may be inclined to support the extension of the tax because they don't want to hamper the City's operations for four years. But that wouldn't necessarily be the case. If defeated in November, the tax could be put before the voters again a year later. That might satisfy some that the City had been taught its lesson and the future would see better use of the \$10 million annual stipend. The funds are only available because of the generosity of voters - no other reason.

Chances are the WTE is requiring candidates for city and county offices to take a blood oath of support for the 5th penny tax or they will not be "endorsed" by the dwindling newspaper. Candidates should know that the WTE endorsement is as much a kiss of death in close elections as it could ever be beneficial. So, take their threat with a grain of salt.

When the rec center was requested, the WTE editorialized almost daily in favor of passage and used their "news" pages to editorialize even more. They will "commission" bogus voter polls that are poorly done and seldom valid - all to convince voters to vote in favor of higher taxes onto themselves. At the same time, if necessary, the newspaper will retain legal counsel to oppose any additional sales tax on their sales or advertising. Such are the principles of the Wyoming Tribune-Eagle. Higher taxes are good for you, bad on them.

While there may be great risk involved in this political climate, the mayor and elected city council members should be the ones trying to convince voters to support the 5th penny sales tax extension. To send mid-level city employees out there is a bad idea.

Because of the financial mess made by this governing body, it may be impossible to convince enough voters to support passage - regardless of whom is trying to do the convincing. But, leaders must try. The county commissioners are holding informational meetings. So should the mayor, Spiker, Collins, etc.

The material produced during such a time is always interesting. Public money cannot be spent asking voters for their "yes" vote. But all material produced with public money - material they will call "informational" - will be slanted to only one side. Passage of the extension. There will never be a word on the other side. There will be no admissions of mistakes or acknowledgment of public dissatisfaction.

A listing will be provided, showing the projects funded with the tax revenue. But nothing will be written about projects that were not funded because elected officials considered some more important than others. Neither will it be disclosed what important projects will see no money in the upcoming four years if the sales tax collection continues. Ah, the beauty of government.

The critical thing, in my opinion, will be for city and county elected officials to convince the WTE to step back - to not sabotage the chance of success by being too much in support of the sales tax passage.

## Does CRMC want to apologize to the Nob Hill residents who had their homes confiscated for a new hospital?

There is probably great joy in the city building and by most residents of Laramie County who still use the local hospital and go to physicians in close proximity to it. The hospital is critical to the well-being of the downtown - not only medically but financially with all those employees who spend money on lunches, bank, etc.

A decision has been made to expand the current hospital and abandon plans to build any kind of new medical facility on the land taken from Nob Hill families.

The Nob Hill properties west of town (out Happy Jack) were confiscated with threat of use of the power of eminent domain. As is often the case, property owners in areas the government wants to take their houses are not as sophisticated as those elsewhere in a community. The threat scared the hell out of Nob Hill residents who had lived there for generations. Nine households of the same family made Nob Hill their home at the time of the taking.

If John Lucas wants the addresses of those residents so he can send them an apology for needlessly destroying a family compound, I am still in touch with a family member and can probably accumulate those addresses for him.

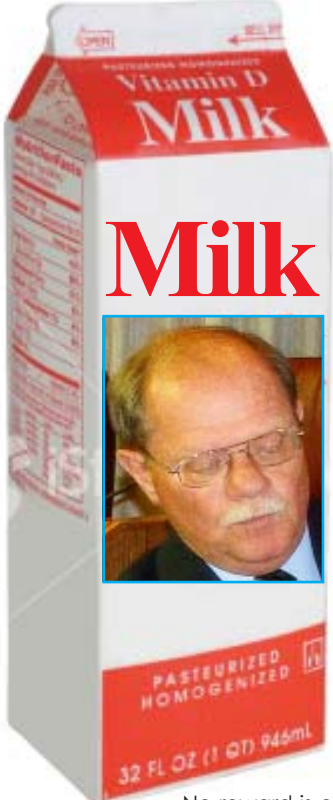
Because the Nob Hill homes were taken under that cloud of threatened condemnation, the land should not be marketable or transferable in any way. It would not be right to allow the hospital to divest itself of land taken under duress, now to be used for an adult entertainment emporium or similar. It seems that it has to be that the hospital is "stuck" with the land. If they are now allowed to sell it off for alternate uses and even at a profit, something is wrong with Wyoming statutes.

It's too bad that the hospital isn't imposed financial penalties. They used the club of eminent domain to force those families to sell and they had no specific or certain plans to actually build at Nob Hill. That is borderline criminal as it turned out.

At minimum, CRMC should have to own the land - no selling to anyone else.

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