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Sloans Lake is finally free of fecal matter and, NOW, no swimming will be allowed?

Let's see if we've got this right.

Sloans Lake, home to more fecal matter than a turkey factory, was drained dry while a paid city employee sat in an idling vehicle 24/7, either watching the lake empty or listening to Howard Stern on Sirius Radio, and then the lake was re-filled. After the body of filth had clean water coursing through its filters, the mayor declared that the beach would be closed for the summer of 2010?

That sounds a little bass-ackward, doesn't it? Excuse my government.

When the water was more contaminated with fecal matter than a cattle feedlot, kids were encouraged to wade, frolic and swim to their heart's content but when the water was fit to throw a live fish into, kids won't be allowed in the lake?

So, the purpose of draining the lake and refilling it with fresh water was to provide a cleaner place for the ducks, geese and humans to lay waste, so to speak, to it again? To once again make the place the filthiest body of water this side of ... well, this side of anywhere. By the time the kids are allowed back into the lake, the fecal matter should be thick enough to walk across the lake again.

Oh, yeah, that's a great plan.

What will Garth Brooks think? What will the round mound of sand think of the beaches of Cheyenne now?

*They say she just went crazy
Screamin' out his name
She ran out into the ocean
And to this day they claim
That if you go down by the water
You'll see her footprints in the sand
'Cause every night she walks the
beaches of Cheyenne*

We never had a "beaches of Cheyenne" for Garth to sing about. Those were laughable lyrics. Now, there will be an even greater reason to laugh. Now, there won't even be fake beaches of Cheyenne.

So, the mayor thinks depriving Cheyenne's youngest of the only water there is on these plains is a smart cost-cutting move? He believes that the youngest among us should have no recreation? And he wonders when they get

old enough to pull back a crossbow, why they shoot the defenseless geese?

Rick's "plan" will be to allow the Civic Center to continue to drain the budget by over \$600,000 a year but to close Sloans Lake to the children to save \$37.50?

What the City should do is offer the beach up for "fostering." A wealthy family or generous local business could provide money to pay lifeguards and the City would retain liability. The City would pay the lifeguards as they have for lo these many years when the children were waist deep in fecal matter and be reimbursed all costs of providing those lifeguards.

It seems reasonable to expect a person(s) or a company such as Frontier Refinery would sponsor that program - maybe Frontier could get DEQ to divert fines they have to pay for polluting water into making water that will be clean this summer available to Cheyenne's children.

Perhaps the Kiwanis Club would be that sponsor. The community house with their name attached isn't far away. They could provide money for a necessary reason. Perhaps the International Lions Club would do it - the park carries that name.

Or, Union Pacific Railroad. They were conned into providing \$300,000 for developing a "world class transportation museum" in the former UP depot downtown. Perhaps they'd like to donate funds for a project that could reach fruition.

The City is providing how many hundred thousand dollars to attract the American Eagle commuter airline here? All that's been mentioned to this point is the \$1.4 million from the State. How much is the City kicking in? Of course, paying for a profitable major airline company to provide limited service to our city is more important than providing recreation and entertainment for our children.

Isn't it?

The announcement of plans to close Sloans Lake this summer may be a stunt. It may be to soften residents up for other, more important but service-reducing costs. But, knowing the residents here, they won't raise a fuss. When given a chance to show their priorities, they have twice voted to throw fellow residents out

of their homes so not having a beach, albeit a mediocre one, for the children won't get much of a reaction from most.

And there is the bacteria-gathering spray park that the State provided money to create. If the spray park is economic development, why isn't the lake itself? Who's zooming who on this nonsense?

By waiting months too long to take any action to reduce spending, all the while knowing that revenue was dropping weekly, draconian measures are now being taken. Impulsive actions will be taken instead of a reasoned and responsible plan to reduce spending. To believe that eliminating two and a half dozen summer jobs that would be filled with minimum wage students tells you more than you need to know about the irresponsible nature of current city government.

And, closing restrooms in the parks?

What is wrong with this group? The mayor is nickel/diming cost reductions when he should have taken more effective actions months ago. To watch and pray that the State would provide enough money so no spending reductions would be necessary was hallucinatory. Delay, delay, delay. As was written here weeks ago, the mayor should have had a plan prepared so he could take whatever action was necessary once he had it confirmed for the umpteenth time that the State was not going to bale out this irresponsible city.

Closing Sloans Lake and some park restrooms doesn't begin to address the problem. And it demonstrates a disturbing behavioral mindset on the part of the mayor and whoever is advising him.

Fear is impeding action. Fear of taking the necessary act of reducing the city's workforce. Furlough days were announced but unfair to those at the low end of the pay scale. And, each month, the mayor found "new" money under different mattresses so furlough days were never imposed. Now, he promises an announcement of serious action he will finally take - but postponed that announcement until the end of the month - then, it will be the middle of next month, then the end of next month. Ad infinitum.

Granted, employees won't like it when they learn that the false promises of the

prior administration could not be kept by this one. They will not like it when they see co-workers lose their jobs because of the extravagant and unjustified, not to mention unsustainable, raises year after year could not be continued.

Few, make that no one, will remember the 77¢ an hour raise given to all city employees (in addition to normal raises and wage adjustments) in 2001 and how that unwarranted increase has put about \$20,000 of undeserved money into each's pocket. No one has too much money. No one thinks they've been given money unnecessarily or that was not warranted. But, that's a lot of money and, had that one-time across-the-board increase not been gifted, the money would be there to keep the beach open and to have restrooms in parks where they're desperately needed - unless you want to step in what is left behind when there are none.

Because the previous administration spent every cent they could lay their hands on, the savings probably wouldn't be there but it was a foolish, unjustified, undemanded and unwarranted use of public funds to gift those raises at that time. Some adjustments were necessary back in 2001 to keep wages competitive but not to everyone. That 77¢ an hour raise was purely a move to try to buy love.

Had the City stuck to maintaining a 90 day reserve, the shortfalls now could be dealt with without major disruption of jobs and/or city services. There is a precedent for transferring nearly \$3 million just to pay the bills. It could have been absorbed had the city maintained a \$13 million reserve. The commitment should have been to rebuild the reserves if they were drawn down. Not to spend every cent available without regard for the future.

In addition to all other issues facing this mayor, he'll have to worry that voters will not approve the 5th penny sales tax the next time around. Without that revenue, city government will almost come to a standstill. Not that they've accomplished much over the past few years but without those millions in sales tax dollars, you'll hear Dandy Don in the background.

"Turn out the lights. The party's over."

What a shame mismanagement has brought this trouble onto a good city.

MAYOR MAYBE

Back in the late 1970's and early 1980's, the bizarre behavior of California Governor Jerry Brown earned him the everlasting nickname "GOVERNOR MOONBEAM." In Minnesota, Iron Range Dentist Rudy Perpich first became governor by appointment in 1976. Vowing to reduce spending, he unplugged the State House's coffee pots. He was tagged with the nickname "GOVERNOR GOOFY." It is time for a nickname for Cheyenne's mayor. Because of his indecision and unfulfilled announcements, his nickname will be "MAYOR MAYBE." Maybe I'll order furlough days. Maybe I'll lay off some people. Maybe the State will give us more money. Maybe we'll close toilets. Maybe we'll fix the potholes. Maybe ... Maybe ... Maybe ...