

The DDDon't

When the Cheyenne Downtown Development Board had an opportunity to go outside and hire a new director who would bring in new energy and fresh ideas, they didn't take advantage. Instead, they hired another woman with no development experience and no proven track record. Her earlier jobs of the recent past provided no evidence she had it would take to right the sinking ship of downtown Cheyenne.

So far, she has proven herself incapable of changing the direction the "hub" of the city has taken over the past ten years.

As a reminder, during the mayoral campaign of 2000, the only empty or boarded up building in downtown Cheyenne was the Hynds Building and it was owned, at the time, by the president of the DDA. The Hynds has stood vacant and abandoned since 1986 and no factor in the downtown since 1981. It is an eyesore.

By that reference, you can see how far the downtown has deteriorated since 2001, when Jack Spiker became mayor. And, before being elected mayor, Jack did not support the DDA nor any merchants association that came along.

Worse, the amount of money provided to the DDA, whose sole mission is the vitality of downtown, has grown and the accumulation of wealth in their bank account has been huge. Millions of dollars have passed through their hands, or been deposited into bank accounts on their behalf, over the past decade.

Their efforts have usually been misguided. Such as pushing for downtown building design standards at a time when the rest of Cheyenne was growing nicely and downtown was emptying. When you have naive, inexperienced and foolish people involved in an organization, the outcome will invariably be bad. The DDA has mostly attracted board members with no retail, lodging or restaurant experience. Having a nine person board comprised of three lawyers and three from the financial field will not result in positive business growth in the downtown.

Recently, the ten mill additional property tax on downtown buildings and land was defeated (at the last election) and a new director was hired. A director who has been part of the problem, not the

solution, for several years. After nearly a decade of violating Wyoming state statute by not employing a director but using an independent contractor in that position, the DDA had a chance to correct their past failures. They chose not to. They chose to pursue the same failed path the new director inherited.

Recently, a mailing was sent to all "stakeholders" in the DDA district. Even the district boundaries have been hard for insiders to understand. A previous president of the DDA did not know that the finger of land and businesses on the southside were in the DDA district. More recently, the head of the Chamber of Commerce and others have mistakenly referred to the former Safeway store as being a "downtown" store. It wasn't. It was closer to downtown than to Bar X but it wasn't in the downtown - by any definition.

In the packet of material sent to downtown stakeholders, a cover letter went down the tired and error-filled path about the failed property tax vote. Inexperienced people will not understand the uniqueness of surveys. And, neophytes believe what they want to believe. They are neither realists nor accepting of the truth.

A survey that asks only downtown property owners whether the DDA should survive is an incomplete sampling. By the defeat of the mill levy, the property owners have spoken. They have said they will not support the DDA with additional property taxes. What a new director does not understand is that the DDA district and the TIF funding were approved by voters of Cheyenne - not by only property owners in the downtown. Those who can benefit most, downtown property owners, are likely to want the DDA to survive - so long as they do not have to pay special money for that to happen. What about the voters as a whole? Survey everyone in Cheyenne. I'd bet the ranch voters see no reason, no purpose and no benefit in the DDA continuing.

Continuing to delude herself into believing the mill levy vote failed because of poor voter turnout shows her naivete. Voter turnout was actually good. And, voters who would have opposed the mill levy also did not vote. The new director believes that "a building" was destroyed in the downtown fire. It was actually two.

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Walk In My Shoes

The 13th Annual WCH Walk In My Shoes Fundraiser, presented by Beacon Hill Baptist Church, will take place June 12, 2010, starting at 907 Logan Avenue.



Registration starts at 8:00 a.m. and the Walk begins at 9:00 a.m.

The Walk registration form can be found at <http://www.wch.vcn.com/walkregis10.htm>

Registration for walkers or ghost walkers is \$12.00 prior to the event and \$15.00 on the day of the event. Contributors and sponsors are needed. Door prize donations are needed.

e-mail address is: wch@vcn.com
 Call Betty Ann (632-6248) or Virginia (634-8499) at Wyoming Coalition for the Homeless with questions.

"I know who killed JonBenét Ramsey!"

I get all kinds of calls, letters and e-mails - even some in-person conversations when I'm out and about and people know who I am. Averages several a week.

In the last ten days, I've had requests for involvement in issues in Rawlins, Thermopolis, Riverton, Boulder, New York City, Maryland, Fort Collins, etc. I have had to tell people that my target audience is Laramie County and, without readers elsewhere, it is just not productive for me to chase stories beyond our borders.

Just a few days ago, I received a telephone call from a woman who told me a friend of hers had suggested that she contact me because the friend had praised my efforts and, in a nutshell, had told her I was likely the only one with the courage and ability to tackle her subject.

I asked her what she was calling about.

"I know who killed JonBenét Ramsey," she said.

Can you imagine the attention I'd get? On one page of this issue, I describe a public institution taking an action to try to deprive me of freedom of the press and on another, I disclose who killed JonBenét? Forget the pothole stories, political stories, etc. I could do something no other publication - local, regional or national - has been able to do. None.

Nothing would please me more than to be able to make that announcement.

But, of all things I am, realistic is near the top of the list.

And telling the world - yes, the world because the JonBenét case goes far, far beyond Boulder, Colorado - who the murderer was would bring attention I've never tried to garner from these pages.

But, being that realist, I know that to confirm the representations of one claiming to know who the killer was would take more hours of investigation and more feet on the ground than I can offer. That case has been investigated every which way come Sunday for several years. Books have been written about it. I've read 'em.

Nonetheless, before referring the caller to a national television program in New York that I thought might be interested, we spoke at length. The caller testified before a grand jury down there and has many interesting things to offer. Do I believe she knows who killed JonBenét Ramsey? Hell, I don't know. I do know that bozo who conned a first class airline ticket back to the States by claiming he did it or knew who did it, didn't. Sorry, but I can't tell you who killed the girl.