

Anything two people know is not a secret

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## The fictional "wood pellet business" at the County's Archer Complex

by Dave FEATHERLY

As I have written previously and will continue to stress, the Downtown Chamber of Commerce executive director, Dale Steenbergen, is a very dangerous person and needs to be shown the door. He brings nothing to the community and has become very destructive and divisive.

Because his position suggests credibility and authority, he is able to not only play an unqualified active role in recruiting a commuter airline that has failed to live up to its obligations - or, at least, what Steenbergen and others said were their obligations - but he was also able to cajole Cheyenne's Mayor Maybe into ordering mature trees removed from the City's flagship park for no valid or provable reason(s).

He is a "joiner" of the Tom Segrave ilk. He will join any board or commission that will have him. And he is obviously willing to serve as a hatchetman if those appointing him require him to be. Very new to town, Steenbergen has unfettered access to the discredited daily newspaper here and was able to get published several vague, general, unsubstantiated and patently untrue allegations about the Laramie County Fair Manager who he played a major role in getting terminated.

Sometimes considered a county employee and sometimes not, depending on which position is most beneficial to her adversaries, Yvonne Ware answered some questions I recently put to her.

Unlike the daily newspaper that printed inuendos like, "Officials are looking into allegations that an illegal pellet business was run out of Laramie County's Archer Complex, Fair Board member Dale Steenbergen says," I spoke with her.

Which officials? Who made the allegations? What became of the "allegations"? Why was Steenbergen quoted instead of an "official" who knew something about "looking into" an activity at a county property? In truth, there is no "there" there.

Steenbergen knew it at the time he made the unfounded allegations. He is but a marionette. He also must have known that Jeff Ketcham was going to be hired as Fair Manager and it was his role to tarnish the former manager so the replacement would look somewhat justified.

In that WTE article, Steenbergen also was said to have offered, "there may have been a member of the Fair Board involved in the operation," but he declined to identify who that was.

Of course he didn't want to name names. By being vague, he thinks he has a defense to a defamation action when the veiled accusations he hurled are debunked. Coward.

Steenbergen has been a member of the Fair Board for over a year. He is supposed to know what has happened and is happening at the Fair property at Archer. Because he does not attend Fair Board meetings or participate in Fair events, he knows little about what occurs on the property or with the Fair. I am told that he has attended two activities at the Fair in his tenure on the Fair Board. And one of those was a lunch. Where food is involved, Steenbergen is more likely to be present. His job as director of the Downtown Chamber of Commerce, after all, is to attend breakfasts and lunches that dues and donations to the Chamber buy.

It appears the same is true about his participation with the Fair and as a member of the Fair Board.

*I should point out here that I had been told well before Jeff Ketcham was hired as Fair Manager that Yvonne's job was in jeopardy and that Jeff would be named her replacement. Yvonne has been in the crosshairs for some time. Spunky, protective of the Fair, and not afraid to speak or defend her position, she was a thorn in the side of officials who prefer someone like Jeff who will make no waves and accomplish little.*

Was it really that hard for the daily to learn what the "wood pellet business" in the allegation was? It shouldn't have been. But, it is more

fun for them to leave an unsubstantiated "suggestion" hang in the air than learn the truth. Much easier.

Here's what I've been told the nonstory was: Each year, former Fair Board member Brett Bauman had bought a semi-load of wood pellets from Teton Forest Products in town. He preferred them to other bedding for his animals. As he had fewer animals last year, he was planning to order half a load and asked others around the Fair if they had any interest in wood pellets and he would share a full load and its cost with them if they did. The pellets are delivered in bags on pallets.

Others did want pellets, some to burn, and a semi-load was taken to Archer where it was divided and reloaded to several other buyers. It was not a business. No one that was not a member of the Fair family was involved. It was one load and was on and off Archer in a day or so.

Described as it was in the daily, it sounded like the wood pellets came in bulk in a dump truck and were unloaded onto the ground out there and people from town would go out and shovel bags full of the pellets, pay an individual running "the business," and be on their way.

In truth, one person took billing for the entire semi-load. Those who bought some of the wood pellets, helping reduce everyone's cost by sharing a semi-load, made their checks payable to Brett Bauman. He was dividing a load, not running a business. The transaction is not that much different than a parent taking Girl Scout cookies, sorting the boxes and delivering them to offices in a public building. That, in the eyes of the tortured Dale Steenbergen and his allies at the daily newspaper, should be forbidden and any public employee guilty of such a transgression should be terminated and prosecuted. What a crock.

Oh, did I mention that one of the buyers of those wood pellets is a county commissioner? Can't remember if I pointed that out or not. It was. Troy Thompson.

In the article planted and obediently run in the daily newspaper, Steenbergen also said that "the Fair Board has submitted information to Laramie County attorney Mark Voss regarding the wood pellet operation."

Boy, that's the blind leading the blind.

What facts and what "wood pellet operation?" Why didn't Steenbergen ask around - maybe ask new commissioner Troy Thompson what he knew about the "operation?"

Once again, to save his ample derriere, Steenbergen offered, "the operation may have operated at the Archer Complex in 2009 and 2010."

May have? Operated? His weasel words suggest he knew he was lying about the charges he pretended to level. Why? Read this whole article again. Defamation. Slander.

Then, to put the final nail in his own coffin, Steenbergen was quoted as saying that "he didn't want to name specific people who may have been involved in the operation." He said "he does not want to accuse someone until an official investigation is completed." Then, "... Steenbergen said he thinks former Laramie County Fair manager Yvonne Ware would have probably known about the operation if it did take place."

He doesn't want to "name specific people," then does? Doesn't want to accuse someone but then does?

The investigation that should be ordered by the Commissioners is to determine when the Fair Board learned of the accusation that was used to fire a 20-year employee and what her employee evaluations were during the period Steenbergen has served on the Fair Board. Also, another question that needs to be asked is of Troy Thompson and is: Did you think you were participating in an illegal "operation" when you purchased some of those excess wood pellets for your personal use and paid the same price as the guy who bought half of the semi-load of pellets? If you did, will you now resign?

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