

The City wasted some money? Now, there's a scoop!

It is now being claimed that three houses the City paid for to complete the Norris Viaduct project were unneeded and the purchases were without merit and wasted public money. That's a story?

At the very time this issue was being regurgitated by the lesser media in Cheyenne, the City demolished two houses that stood at Pershing and Converse. Why they get involved in ways to bring public derision instead of just demolishing all of them when they learn they bought a property they shouldn't have and wasted public funds on is beyond me. Had Nixon destroyed the tapes, he would have served out his second term.

Have elected officials learned nothing in the last 40 years?

Demolish and defend. Once the five houses bought unnecessarily (two for the possibly abandoned roundabout project and three for the Norris Viaduct) are gone, the controversy will be gone right along with the wood and concrete blocks.

It is amusing to watch those who make foolish decisions to buy unnecessary property slap their palms to their collective foreheads while exclaiming, "we made a mistake." That sounds like a Steve Martin bit.

And residents pick up on the story as though it were important.

While forgetting (or never realizing) that the City under mayors Spiker, Collins and Segrave paid \$300,000.00 of City money for an outside attorney to defend illegal annexation actions - litigation that the City lost every time challenged - these houses have become poster children for wasted money. Hardly.

And these houses, at least the three on the southside not demolished, do have some value to them. The lost annexation lawsuits had no intrinsic value for residents of the City. None whatever.

How much will the City's stalled sale of the land on Windmill at Dell Range to Menards cost residents? Not that it should have been considered for sale to a major retail chain instead of retained for its intended use - for recreational use. But it was. And is.

And how much did the City confiscating land the shape of a bowling lane from Mary Coonts cost residents? City ownership of that strip prevented Mary from rebuilding on it and also has cost the potential of a developer constructing an extended stay facility on the adjacent property.

None of these wastes of money or abuse of power compare to the acquisition of the Belvoir Ranch, of granite geology for which no use was known at the time of acquisition at the full listing price, and none has been determined in subsequent years, and none is likely to be found in the near future. That purchase cost residents \$5.9 million, of which \$3.0 came from the coffers of the BOPU, whose every rate increase has to be attributed to their use of that money for an acquisition without purpose. Equally as objectionable as the purchase was, paying a distressed seller full listing price was moronic. None of those involved would have done the same had it been their own money instead of yours.

Now that City officials know that the houses near the corner of Morrie and 5th St. on Cheyenne's southside have little interest to potential buyers. they have started to hurl accusations against those no longer employed by the City. The decision to buy the houses cannot be laid at the feet of a former city engineer. The mayor and council approved the purchases. The mistakes are on their shoulders, no one else's.

And, several on the council and the mayor now seem surprised that the three houses have dropped in value with a busy traffic interchange being added at their front doors. They probably think an adult entertainment emporium built next to your house would enhance the value of your property. It would be "development." It wouldn't nor did the high traffic streets of 5th and Morrie. That should have been anticipated. The fact that they might be able to get \$140,000.00 for houses that were bought to be demolished is not a loss. I mean, they didn't buy them from residents who didn't want to live next to the busy streets to sell them to new people who would be content to live next to the same streets, did they? Did they?

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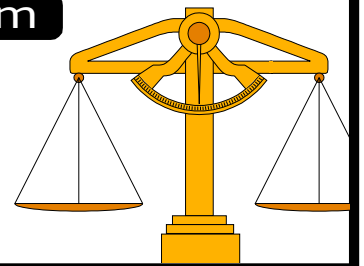
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What is the Cheyenne Herald? It is a bi-weekly publication (usually) that I hesitate to refer to as a "newspaper" but calling it only an "Opinion/Commentary" publication now does not adequately describe it either. While some of what appears on these pages is opinion, commentary, and/or essay, much of it is breaking news that readers won't find elsewhere. The WTE labeled the Herald "the local advocacy journal." I like that. But, when I published disclosures about misuse of City credit cards by a City Council secretary, that was not advocacy. That was fact. That was news. And, when I published specifics of the "secret" Costa Rica trip that LCCC's president had hidden from public scrutiny, that was fact. News. Not opinion or commentary. Or advocacy. Because I write virtually everything presented on these pages, my byline is seldom used. It is unnecessary. An article written by someone else will have their byline. The Herald is NOT a member of the Wyoming Press Association. I do not clear my offerings with anybody and I will not pay dues to share information. The Cheyenne Herald is Wyoming's only investigative publication and that responsibility is taken seriously. Thanks for reading.

Dave Featherly