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Do we really want to turn rural residents against the City?

by Dave FEATHERLY

Of all the bizarre utterances by the mayor and certain city council members, repeated by their house organ at 702 W. Lincolnway, one of the worst is one that, like Puxatawney Phil, seems to rear its ugly head on an annual basis.

That is the position taken by those mentioned that rural residents should be charged higher fees to utilize or enjoy amenities which may be located within the city limits. The basis for this wrongheaded thinking is that the City totally funds those facilities and that non-city residents are a drain on the fields, pools, etc., and should have to pay a special and higher fee to partake of those activities and facilities.

This is not only dumb, it is potentially destructive.

As I have written on these pages before, an "us versus them" philosophy is misguided when directed at Laramie County residents from the rural areas or outside the city limits.

As was once written on these pages, residents of South Cheyenne, if they could incorporate as a city separate from Cheyenne, would be one of the larger cities in the state. It is just foolhardy to risk alienating those residents at the point of their deciding to take their spending money to

northern Colorado. For reasons ingrained over several generations, buyers in Laramie County confidently believe that the selection, price and service from Colorado merchants are superior to those of Cheyenne retailers. That belief is cultivated by the several Colorado automobile dealers whose flyers clutter the Wyoming Tribune-Eagle Saturday editions.

"Tunnel vision allows the owner/editors of the daily paper to ignore the fact that there are county-provided amenities, attractions and services. If a shoving match is provoked, what is to prevent the commissioners from establishing different fees for city residents at the Laramie County Fair, at the Laramie County Library, at the Laramie County hospital, at the Treasurer and Clerks's offices when getting license tabs, titles, deeds, paying sales tax, etc.?"

Furniture dealers from northern Colorado aggressively court Wyoming buyers.

For now, there has been no boycott of local retailers but if the effort continues to treat those local potential buyers as unwanted in the Capital City, they will migrate south to make their purchases.

This is a discussion I had with Jack Spiker many times in the past. I have always had the concern that even suggesting that non-city residents should pay a premium to use city amenities would backfire. It cannot, and should not, succeed because it is just a bad, bad idea.

If we want to adopt an "us versus them"

public posture, northern Colorado should be the "them," not our friends, relatives and neighbors who have an address that is not within the city limits.

The daily newspaper is using incredibly unsupportable logic by continuing to pressure the dupes of the city governing body to take such action.

Their reasoning must be that they have no circulation outside the boundary of the City so they are not offending subscribers and may be appealing to those living in the City. I doubt that is the case.

I talk with almost no one anywhere in Laramie County who is supportive of having different fees, depending on address. It is often pointed out that many key city employees live outside the city limits. Obviously, the mayor and council members do not because that is a requirement for office - living in the city.

Passage of sixth penny tax propositions can depend on non-city residents. The WT-E chastises commissioners, bleating

incessantly that they represent those within the City, as well as those from without. The WT-E now wants them to represent **ONLY** those in the city. Maybe Knudson would be willing to ignore non-city residents but the other two wouldn't.

Tunnel vision allows the owners of the daily paper to ignore the fact that there are county-provided amenities, attractions and services. If a shoving match is provoked, what is to prevent the commissioners from establishing different fees for city residents at the Laramie County Fair, at the Laramie County Library, at the Laramie County hospital, at the Treasurer and Clerk's offices when getting license tabs, titles, deeds, paying sales tax, etc.?

Residents from outside the city limits volunteer at Frontier Days and other city activities, coach teams playing on city fields, buy in the city, work in the city, but they have nothing to say about the waste and embarrassing behavior of city officials. Did I mention they spend their money in the city?

We are in this together. Repeat: We are in this together. For a diminishing newspaper to polarize Laramie County residents should not be allowed. Ignore their fruitless attempts to be divisive. Let them channel their envy and jealousies wherever they need to. But do not allow them to drive a wedge between our residents.

A message from Dave Featherly ...

Yes, my name was on that list.

"That list" was the one submitted to the City governing body by the City Treasurer to gain approval to "write-off" over \$70,000.00 in "uncollectible" debts.

I received a call midday on Thursday, April 19, asking me if I knew my name was on "the list." I'm guessing that my name is on a lot of lists but I didn't know what list was being referenced and, after asking, was told it was the list I just mentioned.

As soon as I could, within two hours of that call, I visited the City Treasurer's office and asked if that tip were true and asked to see "the list."

I generally like and respect those who work in that office and will not take the opportunity to be critical or question motivation. So far as I am concerned, the outstanding balance is legitimate. Can I prove that I paid it? No. At that time, I was starting this paper. I pay cash for charges like that. I would have no check record. I do know that they didn't try to collect it. I accepted that I had not paid and went straight to the Clerk's office and paid \$41.81.

The original amount was \$40.00 and was charges from the Sanitation Dept. for a dumpster delivered and, then emptied and returned. The date of the invoice is **DECEMBER 18, 2001**. Obviously, I have been in that office numerous times since and I am known and visible in the community. I recall seeing the names of a couple of Cheyenne's wealthiest men on a similar list a few years back so I know that collection of outstanding balances is not a high priority. I will not publish other individual names from the list but readers would recognize some of them. A local architect, one to whom the City has paid tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of dollars, is on the list.

Oddities -- the list shows that the Union Pacific Railroad owes BOPU an amount of \$3,807.00. BOPU "uncollectibles" go back to 1987. 1987!!! HUD is on the list. K-mart is on the list. A nursery went bankrupt, owing \$20,352.49 to the City. Several significant amounts are shown due "Risk Management." How? On the BOPU list (1987-2003), there are 37 accounts to be written off as "uncollectible" with balances of **LESS THAN \$5.00**. There are many under a dollar and, ready for this, there is an account to be written off as uncollectible for a balance of \$.01 - that is **ONE PENNY**. BOPU needs training in accounting. When someone makes a mistake on a check amount of one penny, an account titled "Over and Short" should be used to clear that account. How many statements were sent that person? Am I embarrassed? A little. But after reviewing the complete list, there is enough embarrassment to go around.

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