

Veterans' Commission

Governor appoints members more understanding of veterans needs

The Wyoming Legislature passed HB33, which provided for Governor Dave Freudenthal to appoint members of the Veterans Commission to staggered terms of office to begin July 1, 2005.

The twelve member commission had often been at odds with the veterans service organizations, particularly the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The veterans commission is a publicly funded bureaucracy and the veterans service organizations are self-funded. The VSOs also have been rendered services for Wyoming veterans for decades and the commission was a new creation that was trying to supplant the VSOs - at public expense.

The commission comes under the military department and consists of one member residing in each judicial district. The governor makes appointments to the commission and is not supposed to consider political affiliation, sex, religion or ethnic background.

The recent legislation providing for the staggered terms necessitated the governor to name a completely new commission. Members could have been re-appointed but most named were new members.

Four of the twelve appointed were for one year terms, four were for two year terms and four were three year terms. That way, all twelve members' terms do not end at the same time and historical experience and continuity will always be present, whomever the governor might be.

Because the veterans commission is able to service veterans who may reside outside the normal reach of the state's VSOs, it can provide real benefit to veterans. But if it makes decisions such as support for the return of the Bells of Balangiga to the Philippines against the wishes of the majority of Wyoming veterans and all of the VSOs, cooperation between the groups was problematic.

In a joint letter, the Wyoming Department of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the Wyoming American Legion (AmLeg) sent a letter to the governor, providing a slate of persons who would be acceptable to their groups.

The governor chose many on that list. A majority of the commission will now be those who can cooperate with each other and the VSOs and such cooperation can bring further benefits and services to the 55,000+ Wyoming veterans. The governor did a great service to veterans with his appointments.

Hospital inaccessible during Frontier Days?

Cheyenne residents who know their way around town complained to the Cheyenne Herald that they could not quickly get to UMC-West emergency room during days that parades were held during Frontier Days. Their complaint could not be thoroughly investigated before this issue was completed but the subject will be explored further. Local residents who had trouble reaching the emergency room of the local hospital during Frontier Days because sections of Warren Avenue were closed and because no through traffic was allowed on Pershing should contact the Cheyenne Herald at 637-2879 and share their story. No event should restrict access to the emergency room of the hospital - from any direction - for any reason. It cannot be allowed.

City "check scam"

Greater loss prevented by alert city employee

A lengthy briefing to the Herald by city treasurer Barb Dorr and staffer Tammy Fossen cleared up any misunderstanding that existed about what the "check scam" really entailed.

A check in the amount of \$450.00 and payable to a vendor in New York somehow came into the possession of a third party for whom it was not intended.

That check was altered to a greater amount and at least four other checks were created and used to perpetuate a scam with checks drawn on a City of Cheyenne checking account.

The scams, often referred to with a reference to Nigeria and erroneously reported as a Nigerian scam by the WT-E, were foisted on people in various parts of the United States. The bank receiving the money was in Tokyo, not Nigeria.

It is hard to be sympathetic to the losses of "innocents" who believe that they are entitled to receive hundreds of thousands - even millions - of dollars with no risk or investment on their part. More often, there turns out to be a great risk on their part if they give up any of their own money or money purloined from others.

Like other pigeon drops, the villains offer a great return but require a deposit of some sort of money on the part of the lucky recipient. For example, they will tell the dopey dupe that much money could be sent to them but they need a good faith deposit or "seed money" to put the wheels in motion. Should the pigeon say they don't have that kind of money, even that money will be provided.

That's where the checks of the City of Cheyenne entered the picture. Fraudulent checks in large amounts were sent the dupes and they were supposed to cash those checks and wire transfer the money to the directed bank. Then the scammer would send an enormous sum of money to the pigeon. In these cases, the pigeon believe they are out no money because it was never theirs. But they could be out a lot of money - if it actually got transferred from them to Tokyo.

The five checks passed on the City account totalled over a half million dollars.

Luck undermined the scam. A recipient of an altered City check (which he was to cash and then forward the funds) called the City to see why his check had not been negotiated faster. Upon inquiry, department employee Tammy Fossen advised the caller that the check was bogus - that the payee and amount were not the ones for the legitimate check issued by the City with that check no.

Ms. Fossen immediately had the bank stop payment on that check (which the bank ultimately paid anyway and absorbed that loss). She did not let the matter rest. She came into the office on a Sunday and compared checks paid by American National Bank against checks the City had written. Four more fraudulent checks had been paid - for large amounts of money. The original check the miscreants had altered and used to duplicate others did not have its number altered but the MICR coding line at the bottom of the check had a number that did not match the preprinted check no.

The other four checks had numbers which were within the same range but outside the no.'s used by the City.

Upon discovery of the checks which had been paid by the local bank, the wheels were set in motion to minimize the loss to the City of Cheyenne. Checks in the aggregate amount of about \$200,000 had been negotiated by banks in the local areas of the participants and that money was lost to the City. Checks in the aggregate amount of about \$300,000 (including the stop payment check) had not been remitted to the payees and that money was not lost.

The City of Cheyenne is self-insured through Wyoming Association of Risk Management (WARM) and a claim was made. The loss will come back to members of WARM in the form of higher premiums. The City had a recent increase of about \$130,000 a year to WARM. More will be forthcoming. But, had Tammy not discovered the other fraudulent checks until reconciling the bank statement weeks later, the loss would have been the entire \$500,000. Her diligence and commitment to excellence saved taxpayers \$300,000. Software has now been installed to prevent a similar scam.

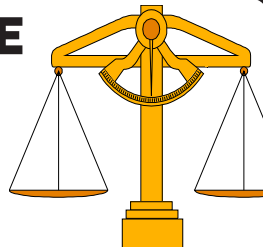
Zen's zandwiches
are zen-zational!
Try one. Zoon!



Zen's Bistro
2606 E. Lincolnway
635-1889

Vegetarian and Gourmet Sandwiches
... Coffees and Teas ... Organic Salads
... Unique Pastries ... Delicious Soups
and Much, Much, More!!

GAY WOODHOUSE
Law Office
Liberty & Justice for All
"Dedicated to the protection
of your rights."



e-mail: GayWoodhouseLaw@aol.com

211 W. 19th St. ♦ 432-9399

The Wyoming State Bar does not certify any lawyer as a specialist or expert. Anyone considering a lawyer should independently investigate the lawyer's credentials and ability, and not rely upon advertisements or self-proclaimed expertise.

WINDSHIELD CRACKED?

We offer prompt, friendly, qualified windshield replacement. Backed by over 40 years of experience! Same day service - using first-line, quality Auto Glass. Installation guaranteed watertight for as long as your own your car or we'll fix it ... **FREE!!**



Wyoming Owned & Operated Since 1976
VISA, MasterCard, Discover, AmEx

up to
\$100.00
Off

YOUR INSURANCE
DEDUCTIBLE FOR
WINDSHIELD
REPLACEMENT

On-The-Spot Glass

63-GLASS (634-5277) • 805 W. 21st

Oasis Market
190 So. College Drive
637-8870

Your best choice for ...
Beef

XL Premium Beef, All Natural Angus Beef, Dry Aged for Flavor and Tenderness, USDA Inspected, Antibiotic-Free, No Growth Hormones Used, Quarters and Halves Available, Laramie County Produced. **KNOW WHERE YOUR MEAT COMES FROM!**

M-F 8:30 - 5:30 / Saturday 9-4
Visa, MasterCard & Discover