

Rezoning the ice land

When the City first spoke publicly about acquiring the IKON Center, which was well after I was made aware that such a transaction was already in the works, I supported the move.

There were two predominant reasons for the support. First, my long-held stand that "you should dance with the one that brung ya" and, second, because of the attractiveness of the purchase price.

Amenities for those who have stuck it out in Cheyenne before it had major retail shopping and a wide variety of restaurants deserve more consideration than those people who now live somewhere else and we are trying to entice them to move to Cheyenne. Facilities like the ice rink, swimming pools, a clean public lake, playgrounds, a reasonably designed and priced rec center, a public event venue like the Civic Center, the amphitheater in Lion's Park and community parks throughout the city - residents have a right to expect those.

The 17,000 acres of land now called open space (which is half way to Buford) isn't an amenity. It's still a granite quarry.

My support for the City acquiring the ice rink and the other attractions that came with it had caveats. One was that the property be inspected by an independent firm whose report could be trusted - not a local toady who would not come up with a list of the needed repairs for fear they would lose the City account. That was not done and now some major repair requirements are being disclosed.

Some assumed that since I was from Minnesota anything frozen would hold great appeal to me. But my wife and I have reached a point in life that broken bones and muscle strains are no longer to be desired. I do want the families in Cheyenne to have reasonable amenities available to them. I do not believe, nor have I ever believed, that the 11 miles of concrete walkway called the Greenway in any manner, shape or form attracted the Lowe's Regional Distribution Center. I think it's important to have amenities for those here now, not those who may move here at a later date.

A major reason I supported the swap, from a financial standpoint, was that the land being traded was of little to no value to the City. I think I referred to it as worthless. And, of course, land zoned "P" is of absolutely no value to a private party.

So, the ice rink givers have begun the process to rezone the three parcels of land so it can be used for something productive to them - commercial, residential, industrial, etc.

In days gone-by, the City took the matter of spot rezoning very seriously. In fact, the opening line was always that they just didn't do it. But since the growth-at-any-cost addiction has set in, this City government has ignored rules that used to apply. Now, it depends on whom is asking and what the end product will be.

Because of what's been said during this attempt to rezone the land near North Cheyenne Park, it appears about time to suspect this group of skullduggery on this land for ice rink exchange.

They just can't do anything above board.

Probably no one who has watched this group operate for the past eight years doubts that side deals were made - at least verbally. For example, did Jack and Patrick promise the past owners of the ice rink that rezoning would be a slam dunk, regardless of what the powerless Planning Commission recommended?

Who can forget that this same Planning Commission recommended approval on a subdivision off Chalk Bluffs Road only to have the new Rural City Council reject it on personal friendship bases?

The governing bodies have little idea what represents that right decision when it comes to approval of subdivision plats or rezoning requests. All that matters is who is involved. A friend, yes. Others, no way.

Why did the City "trade" land which was zoned "P" instead of effecting the rezoning while they still owned the land? Were they afraid that the public outcry would have stalled the deal so it could not have been accomplished before that calendar year-end, which was critical? They must have known that this land is near Mustang Ridge and some of the residents there are movers and shakers in town.

Was that their out? If the rezoning could not eventually be accomplished, the City would re-do the deal or be sued for trading land that was zoned to a classification those receiving it could not use? Is that kosher? Shouldn't a deal be a deal? Buyer beware? When those on the receiving end of the land are attorneys, can they claim abuse of the law as an excuse to demand more marketable land now?

More and more, property buyers around Cheyenne cannot protect themselves against the future. It used to be that buying land closest to a park or school would give the buyer peace of mind that he/she wouldn't one day look out the living room window into a 24/7 Walgreen's. Tell that to the residents off Dell Range who faced exactly that future until they figured out using covenants could stop the move. No thanks to the City. The City had approving rezoning for Walgreen's to build right outside the window of residents. Ditto the new Walmart SuperCenter.

Will the city governing body reverse the decision of the Planning Commission? Will they go the route of two members of the Rural City Council (County Commission) and appease those closest to them personally rather than protect the property interests of those who have relied on that land out north being owned by the City or LCSD1 and zoned "P" to protect them against a "C" store, liquor store or adult book store. *It would take L-I zoning for an adult book store. But, stay tuned. Almost anything else could happen.*

Mayoral candidates

What difference will it make which candidate is elected mayor?

As Jack Spiker proved after the election in 2000, what a candidate says or promises during a political campaign is not what they may choose to do.

That being the likelihood, or least possibility, why be concerned about whom you vote for? Well, you have to hope that this election will be different. To accept anything less would be to throw in the towel and then *they* win.

As has been offered on these pages previously, the six candidates for mayor this election provide the deepest field since 1988. Is it also the strongest? Probably.

The daily's endorsement of Rick Kaysen was predictable and could be harmful to his candidacy. If that deteriorating daily would just stay out of the endorsement business, candidates could compete on a level playing field and not be drug down by that support.

Rick Kaysen has a great deal going for him and is the first candidate for mayor to have comparable CEO experience in the private sector before seeking the office. No one who has claimed "business" experience during their campaign in the past came close to running a business the size of Cheyenne Light, Fuel and Power, Rick's background.

I have interviewed Rick Kaysen on a handful of occasions for CLFP stories appearing in the Herald. I have also asked him questions in telephone contacts. To his credit, he never ducked my questions and always returned my calls. Like every other subject of a story, he couldn't be sure if his company was going to be praised or excoriated.

I have had less to do with Jayne Mockler because the "beat" of this publication seldom extends to state issues. She, as opposed to Rick, could usually guess that anytime her name was mentioned on my pages, it would be in a less than complimentary way. Still, Jayne Mockler has always made herself available for my questions and has also always returned my calls. She has guts.

For those who don't think having the courage to speak to a critic says much

about a person, they're wrong. It says a great deal about a person. A good mayor cannot be cocooned by those around him / her. They must be available to more than a protective and friendly daily newspaper who will mislead residents for a compliant mayor's benefit. One piece of advice I gave Jack Spiker after the 2000 election was to continue to get out and talk with residents - that he should not always trust the input of those closest to him. Few have the courage to tell him anything he didn't want to hear - no matter how important it was that they should. Jack ignored that advice. To his harm.

Like the current mayor, who became afraid to interview with me without written questions in advance, that tells how they will govern - in secrecy and protected by handlers around them. I've had enough of that, thank you very much.

It is time for something different.

The other candidates for mayor offer less in comparison than do Rick and Jayne.

CJ Brown has 12 years experience on the city council. He might work hard but his being perpetually late to meetings is not a quirk that is likely to lead to becoming mayor. Dru Rohla has worked for the City for a very long time but his performance missed the mark for all the time he has been director of the Civic Center.

The Civic Center has lost significant money every year. It hasn't gotten better, it has gotten even worse. For a fully depreciated building, structured as an enterprise fund which is supposed to generate adequate revenue to cover its expenses, including depreciation, to come woefully short after over two decades is not the path to the mayor's office, either.

Joe Dougherty was considered the "co-mayor" during Leo Pando's two terms. That designation makes him equally responsible for the financial bad times of Leo's first term. Pando's second term turned finances around with a new make-up of the governing body - credit going more to the city council than to the mayor's office or Joe.

The August 19th primary is likely to send Rick Kaysen and Jayne Mockler forward. But don't be surprised if either Dougherty or CJ Brown survive.

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