

# A local bailout?

*Instead of \$1.2 million for a parking lot, the Cheyenne Herald can direct the City to parking in a nearby garage for \$30,000 a year*

Instead of \$1.2 million of state money to build a foolish surface parking lot - a lot that would require demolition of a perfectly good office building - the Cheyenne Herald can provide city government with more parking spaces in a parking garage.

Covered parking in a secure area for less than \$30,000 a year.

No finder's fee.

No acquisition cost.

No construction cost.

No improvement cost.

No maintenance cost.

No security cost.

No bats. No pigeons. No darkness. No snow. No graffiti. No skateboarders. No danger of muggings or beatings against parkers. Camera security.

Why didn't the City find this space instead of opting to buy a small lot with an office building that is occupied?

Because they didn't look.

During the campaign of 2000, Jack Spiker opposed construction of a parking garage downtown because he said it wouldn't be used. But it was built and he was right about the second part - it isn't used.

The only time a parking garage will be used in Wyoming is if it's built for a specific purpose and next to that purpose. The hospital garage is used because of the high level of traffic and the shortage of street parking nearby. A parking garage at UW, adjacent to the football field would get heavy usage - on days of football games.

What the 2000 Spiker campaign favored and what was presented to voters to improve downtown parking shortage, if any existed, was to lease - LEASE, NOT BUY OR BUILD - spaces in parking lots throughout the core area of downtown and then to provide those spaces to downtown employees. Any improvement in available downtown parking has to include employees. They are the ones taking the parking spaces.

Visit a downtown business owner or manager who has been in place during the past eight years - even three or four years - and ask them to walk the street with you at the peak demand period for parking near their business or employment.

They will be able to identify at least 75% of the vehicles parked there and tell you where its owner works. Personalized license plates really give away employees. Walk along 18th St., between Carey and Pioneer someday. If there aren't a number of vacant parking spaces, most cars and pickups there will belong to employees of nearby businesses and offices.

Until employees and employers are convinced that parking in a public garage or parking lot is good for their business and job retention, things won't change nor improve. The mentality now is that if some are parking at the front door of their store, restaurant or office, why should anyone park further away?

A few years ago, with much bombast and more opposition, the Spiker administration passed an ordinance to restrict parking in a nine square-block area of the core downtown. Parkers would be allowed to park within that area only two hours per day. The City was going to buy handheld computers to monitor compliance.

As so many things announced by this administration, that never happened.

The mayor dutifully nods his head when a subordinate lies to the public about the usage of the parking garage built on the former City Center Parking Lot and paid for with money that improve your neighborhood streets. Anyone who drives through the garage at any time of day or any time of the year will see that there are fewer cars parked in the garage than used to park on that surface lot and the surface lot in front of the depot.

The City has tried and failed to solve the parking problem. This administration paved the parking area west of the UP depot and turned it over to the Old West Museum. No one uses it. There is no

revenue coming from the two block long lot. It is used only for the Farmer's Market. If any revenue were realized, it would go to the Old West Museum, not the City. You paid for the paving and striping but won't see any return on those costs.

Now, the same group proposes to waste \$1.2 million to provide 45-50 parking spaces. They have no plan about use - whether it will be paid parking, whether a certain number of spaces will be designated for Sanford's, One West or Pizzeria Venti - the only nearby businesses that might need more parking.

SLIB should see the wastefulness but chooses to ignore it. Like Jerry Mahoney or Charlie McCarthy, their heads just nod obediently when the City of Cheyenne seeks precious funds that could provide another city, town or county real benefits.

For eight years, this administration has sat on its collective hands - never approaching owners of the numerous underused parking lots throughout the downtown. They were never refused and they never failed. They simply never tried.

Now, the Cheyenne Herald can provide a solution. 60 safe and secure underground parking spaces. 40 years of parking for what it will cost to buy and demolish the old UP offices on 17th and Warren.

Our e-mail address is below. Contact us if you have any interest in doing this right.

## Government ownership

Watching the Sunday morning news programs has become very depressing. Much worse than during interminable political campaigns. At least with them, there may be laughs from no-hoper candidates like Ron Paul, Mike Gravel, Ralph Nader and Dennis "I'm Back" Kucinich.

Discussions about the economy and government bailouts have pushed aside stories about Iraq and Afghanistan. Hell, even the runt that heads Iran's government is seldom seen anymore.

The dismal state of the economy is undeniable. The depressing part is hearing so many people, Republicans as well as Democrats, offer solutions that have always been unthinkable in the United States of America. Government takeover.

Yes, there have been federal loans and loan guarantees before. And, yes, the government has taken over small segments of private activity before - like air traffic controllers. But nothing like this.

Every conversation is about the federal government taking over private business or industry. When Cuba did it - nationalized American businesses - we called it what it was. And it ain't capitalism.

We don't even want to call the public money going into private hands what it is - a bailout. We prefer a "rescue." No, it's a bailout - a handout. The same politicians who fought tooth and nail against providing national healthcare coverage for the needy now support massive infusions of money for industries - nationalization of other business types - like banks.

The hosts and guests on these Sunday shows talk about "public works" projects. Too bad they didn't think of that need before the I-35 bridge went down in Minneapolis, killing and injuring many.

And now that it's started, there's no turning back. First was the financial market. They needed money because their greedy and unregulated decisions came back to bite them in their ample fannies. Bank of America will get billions, after announcing a 35,000 employee layoff.

Now the automakers need financial rescue. 3,000,000 jobs and the residual costs to unemployment can't be ignored. Someday, China will want their money. Home values are tanking. Stock wealth has declined by \$10-11 trillion. Yes, it was only on paper but it's gone and you can't spend it. More government the answer?

## Who will survive? Who will fail? Who will relocate?

Eight years ago, when Jack Spiker was sworn in as mayor, it was unthinkable that so many of the major employers in downtown Cheyenne would be gone eight years later. Absolutely unbelievable.

Did you think Grier's would close? How about Dinneen's, only a year before a century in business? Mossholder's? What was it about Cheyenne that they couldn't succeed but they continue in Casper? Frontier Printing. A member of the DDA board when it was relocated to Loveland. P.S. Cook closed. The Cheyenne Club closed. Z's Home Furnishings was taken down by construction of the downtown parking garage - they moved.

The mayor's own store, Bedder Sleep, is 40% of its 2000 size. Prudential-Volk Real Estate gave up the ghost. The Wrangler's future now is in question. Fire took out two businesses. Roedel's is gone. The Whipple House. What's left? Banks. The Plains Hotel. What's the downtown's future? For starters, the Mayflower and the Cheyenne Club (now Game On Sports) will be occupied. The Marriott and Hynds are doubtful. Very doubtful.

On Dell Range, what is happening with C.B. & Potts and Chili's? Why is the Pizza Hut on Lincolnway for sale? Where will it end? Which of today's businesses will be gone at the end of a Kaysen term?

**What's happening with the tavern in the former UP Depot?**

**More on the latest developments in the next issue of the Herald.**