

**"ANYTHING TWO PEOPLE KNOW IS NOT A SECRET."**

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## What kind of mayor?

Interesting column in the lesser paper this morning. Its editor chastised incoming mayor Rick Kaysen and hurled accusations that are very likely unsupportable by fact. That, of course, does not stop that editor from bringing the accusations.

Frankly, the charges came across to this writer as simple "shots across the bow." Reminiscent of how the same editor brought Jack Spiker into line in 2000. In Jack's case, it was done several weeks earlier. In fact, before that election.

When the David Copperfield paper did not endorse Jack for mayor, in spite of its demand that his opponent, the sitting mayor, resign the position just weeks earlier, Jack was crestfallen. He had been promised by one of the editors that he'd be the pick. But he was not. Neither man was.

That slight convinced Jack that he had to win their favor. He won the election in a landslide, winning every precinct in the city but one and losing that one by four votes, and Jack could have used that mandate to bring the paper into line. Instead, he chose to surrender his integrity to gain their love. Did it work? Readers can be the judge. How often in the past eight years have you read anything critical of Jack Spiker on the pages of the dis-solving paper, in spite of his deliberately and repeatedly breaking the law?

Now, just days before the swearing-in of Rick Kaysen as the next mayor, a column designed to intimidate him or as a pre-tense of real oversight, was published.

While there are some in the City who are pleased with the direction it has taken since 2001; who are giddy with spending all the money this administration could lay its hands on; and beside themselves with appreciation for the validation of the mayor's every move by the lesser paper in town, there are many who are not.

You might believe elections reflect the sentiments of the people. You might also believe the moon is made of blue cheese.

We have reached a point in this nation when voting is often done as an obligation - often without knowledge or concern. It is one "right" exercised more than any other. Incumbents and familiar family names win elections in most cases. Of all the elective offices up this year, not counting education board elections where few know the name of any candidate, only two challengers unseated incumbents

who sought re-election. Gay Woodhouse ousted Jack Knudson in the Republican primary for county commissioner and Amber Ash dismissed Pete Laybourn for a Ward 1 city council seat.

That's it.

Service in public office has diminished to the point where several incumbents who have never distinguished themselves in any way, often run unopposed.

So, it's not like we're always going to attract the crème de la crème. We're not. And it has less to do with compensation than the other negative aspects of serving. One is a hostile or lying media.

In Cheyenne, this is the only place you are going to read or learn the truth. The other media are advertising driven and truth comes with a price. The Cheyenne daily paper, a paper that is distributed no farther than the city limits - in spite of being at the center of government in the state - surrender its journalistic integrity for access. Jack Spiker made that trade.

Now it appears the editor over there fears Rick may not. He comes across as now recognizing that the many years Kaysen served on the WT-E corporate board of his shrinking paper does not automatically mean Rick is going to roll over for them.

That editor made three accusations in his column this day. Were any of them true? Or were all of them partially true? Half-truths have become a way of life for them - this story was no exception.

The editor claimed Rick Kaysen asked that donors to his campaign not be disclosed. That one jumped off the page because anyone who followed this last election cycle knows that Rick printed large ads (**IN THE WYOMING TRIBUNE-EAGLE!**) listing supporters. If he wanted to keep donor names secret, he went about it in a very strange way.

When asked the bases of the accusation, Rick Kaysen told the Cheyenne Herald, "I don't know where that came from."

It is not beneath the other paper's editor to just "make things up." It is absurd to believe that a candidate would promise donors their names would not be made public. And, Rick's list of contributors is filled with "sophisticated" political campaign donors. In many, if not most, cases, this was not their first rodeo. They knew.

Not only does a candidate have to disclose contributions (which wasn't always done in this recent campaign but the WT-E isn't wise to the omissions), they have to do it before each election. In other words, Kaysen's campaign had to list every donor **BEFORE** the primary and also again **BEFORE** the general election. Combined with his two large print ads in the very newspaper that charges him with wanting to hide the names of his contributors, he more than adequately complied with both the spirit and intent of the law.

Rick did tell the Herald that there were a couple supporters, not financial contributors, who asked that their name not be on the second published list. Sometimes a person will agree to place a yard sign or distribute materials for a candidate but they do not expect a linkage to the campaign. They may be personal friends with another candidate in the same race or they are concerned that linkage may come back to hurt them after the election. There is no law requiring disclosure of names of every person who volunteers or places a yard sign. And there shouldn't be. That is not the same as financial support, of which disclosure is required.

Four years ago, a major developer gave campaign contributions to city council members who were seeking re-election at the same time he had an issue moving through the council. That was improper - it gave the appearance of a bribe. Only Jimmy Valdez returned the contribution. Other council members (and the mayor) kept the money. The WT-E was silent because the recipients were their darlings.

Rick made the disclosure of contributors not only through the required reports at the County Clerk's office, he ran two ads listing his supporters and he provided those names on his campaign website.

He did not try to hide their support. He was justifiably proud of it.

The puddle of a newspaper further accused Kaysen of refusing to disclose the names of members of his transition team.

In speaking with Rick earlier this morning, it appears Rick did not have a formal "transition team." In 2000, Jack Spiker did have such a group and proudly published the names. For one thing, Jack was not well known and we felt it beneficial to show that a former three-term mayor, Don Erickson, had agreed to help through the formative weeks.

Kaysen said that he has sought the advise and counsel of a number of people. And there is no legal requirement that a newly elected mayor have a transition team. Or, like Rick did, he could have a loose-knit group of people he sought advice from but they were not to be considered a member of any "team." It is likely that such a group would include people who actually voted for the opponent. That doesn't mean their input is unimportant. It is crucial to good government.

Rick said the WT-E did ask for the names and he was not comfortable providing all names of those he was conferring with, whether in a minor or major way. He did tell the Herald that the four "core" people who may have been considered the nucleus of a "transition team" were Cynthia Pomeroy (who had been his campaign chair), Larry Atwell, Steve Freudenthal and John Sundahl. The last two are downtown-based attorneys.

Rather than present the issue fairly and let readers make up their own minds if Rick were operating with some clandestine transition group, the WT-E editor chose to make an accusation of operating in secrecy, without bases or truth.

There will be times in office that one needs advice and counsel on subjects unfamiliar to them. There is no law against seeking that input. It is a shame that a business like the WT-E, which operates in secrecy, would think that elected officials cannot get the necessary input to make learned decisions. They are so used to Jack Spiker consulting with them on every issue and decision at City Hall, they cannot imagine a scenario where a mayor does not take a member of the Fourth Estate into his confidence on every decision or consideration - no matter how large or how small. The WT-E wants to decide what residents know - and they do not like a mayor making that decision.

On any "ultimatum" given Bob Fecht to choose between being police chief or state senator, as was alleged by the editor in this column - Kaysen assured the Herald that no such ultimatum was issued, insinuated, implied or conveyed through a third party to Fecht. Rick said there was "no discussion of his dual roles" at any interview or discussion between the two.

Will Rick be his own man? Will he be able to stand up to the daily as Jack could not? Give him six months. See if he has melted by then. In the meantime, pray.

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