

## Sorry, fellow citizens, but this one may not pass the smell test

by Jim Mathewson

By law, the City of Cheyenne is required to publish the minutes of City Council meetings within a reasonable time following the sessions. It's unfortunate that the State's legislators didn't have the foresight to include some wording in the statute which also requires the newspaper receiving the City's considerable Legal Notice fees to use a size of type which might actually be read by curious citizens without the assistance of a magnifying glass or a seeing eye canine.

The minutes themselves are not particularly interesting, but the listing of vouchers paid by the City Treasurer during that week can be downright fascinating. Such was the case recently when the minutes of the Council's 5-minute voucher meeting on December 1st were obligingly printed in microscopic type by the *Tribune-Eagle*.

Toward the bottom of the voucher section was the following:

*"City Treasurer Barb Dorr expressed her belief that a penalty assessed by the Internal Revenue Service (\$85,640.80) was in error and requested the voucher payable to the IRS be removed from the listing."*

Being someone who's NOT intimately familiar with the Internal Revenue Service's daunting penalty provisions ... thank goodness ... I was both confused and intrigued. As any of my six remaining friends can readily attest if you ask them, it generally takes

a lot to intrigue me but, sadly, much less to confuse me.

(COMMENT: My father would be very pleased to know that I haven't yet dropped below that magic number of friends. He always encouraged me to never have fewer than six. One for each handle. Think about it.)

When City Treasurer Barb Dorr was asked about the voucher to pay the eighty-five thousand dollars to the IRS, she replied,

*"The IRS did not receive the schedule B for the 2nd quarter 941 report, so they assessed a penalty. We called to see what the problem was, faxed them the schedule B and everything was cool."*

I'm certainly thrilled to know that everything is cool with the Internal Revenue Service, but as a citizen of the City of Cheyenne I'm a little concerned that a voucher for more than \$85,000 even got to the point where it was on a list of payments to be approved by the City Council. Most vouchers which get to that point already have a check written and waiting for just the Treasurer's signature, a notation about the check number, and the date when the Council approved it for payment. They're usually mailed the same day. How did this particular transaction ever progress to that point?

We here at THE HERALD would like to know much more about this curiously cool almost-paid voucher. We'll let you know what we find out in an upcoming issue.

### One Citizen's Opinion

Well, we've made it through another orbit of the sun. As 2008 comes to a close, one thing is certain ... it's been a VERY interesting year.

I don't know about you, but I'm certainly glad it's over and I'm really looking forward to seeing what happens during the next orbit.

If 2008 was "interesting", the appropriate adjective for 2009 may turn out to be "challenging". Buckle your seat belts, fellow travelers. It could be a bumpy ride for a while if you don't have a strong stomach and a sturdy constitution.

Speaking of constitutions, I'm delighted that we'll apparently soon have someone in the White House who actually knows (a) that we have one, (b) what it says, and (c) what it means. What a refreshing change that might be.

### AN APPROPRIATE LUMP OF COAL

Each year before Christmas and other holidays, the *Wyoming Tribune-Eagle* publishes a list of "Holiday Closures". It's a nice service to their readers.

If I read it correctly the other day, it said that the City of Cheyenne's Transit Program would be suspending its bus service throughout the City at 2:00pm on Christmas Eve. If that's true, Transit Director Joe Dougherty and his people deserve many, many lumps of coal in their stockings.

Such early closures before a holiday may ... repeat MAY ... be okay for public employees who work in offices, but it is totally inappropriate for a City's bus service upon which people depend.

I've got news for you, Joe. Not everyone who rode on a City bus earlier in the day had a benevolent boss like Jack Spiker who likes to foster love and affection for himself by giving City employees time off every chance he gets.

Some people, Joe, actually work for real businesses which were open ALL DAY on December 24th. Those would have been the people that were left waiting at your designated bus stops in the cold after you and your drivers called it a day.

Here's a tip, Joe, for your 2009 schedule. If it's a holiday, let your people take the WHOLE DAY off. If, on the other hand, it's merely the day BEFORE a holiday, tell your people to work a FULL DAY and run a FULL SCHEDULE of routes around the City.

Just a reminder in case you forgot ... Joe Dougherty thought he was qualified and ready to

be your next Mayor. Thank goodness for primary elections. They certainly do serve a worthy purpose after all.

### HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET A LETTER LIKE THIS ONE?

A friend of mine who knows a lot about the history of the Union Pacific and other railroads passed along a copy of a telegram written by the President of the UP back in mid-1941. It was during the time when the United States was gearing up to join the war in Europe.

The telegram was sent by William Jeffers to the UP's operations people in Ogden, Utah. He apparently wanted to get their attention. I suspect that it would have had the desired effect, although some of those reading it may not have been able to sit down for a week or two ... maybe more.

*"While you staggered into Ogden with the last manifest trains, you are still late. It's the same old story. The minute I take the pressure off, then the trains begin getting late again. Now you are either going to handle these divisions and make these schedules on time or get off the job. If I'm going to have to act as a Trainmaster, I don't need any mediocre officers in the way. I want a copy of this telegram placed in the hands of each Trainmaster, Yardmaster, and Train Dispatcher and I mean just what I say. We have everything on this property to do the work properly except officers who know how to run the job."*

With the exception of some operational units within the City of Cheyenne ... like the Transit Program and Building Inspection department, for example ... I'm not aware of any organizations or private businesses here in town where such a letter might be appropriate or necessary today.

My own father was a fireman on the UP's Big Boy locomotives during William Jeffers' term as the railroad's President. I remember him talking about how much the good employees liked working for "Jeff" because they never had to worry about working beside a slacker, a dope, a do-nothing, or a know-nothing.

### FUN THINGS TO WATCH FOR

Not all the news we'll be hearing during 2009 will be positive, but there are a few things on the horizon which should be worth a grin.

1) The just-starting soap opera in Illinois involving the current Governor there and his potty-mouthed wife should be fun. The soon-to-be ex-Governor had his phones tapped by the FBI and was arrested before he could make a deal to sell the Senate seat being vacated by Barack Obama.

Frankly, I suspect that the transcripts of his wife's phone calls may turn out to be much more informative and entertaining than those of her idiot husband. At least we now know beyond any shadow of a doubt who really is the dumbest politician in America. Come on down, Rod Blagojevich. You are our bleeping winner !!

2) A recent story in the New York Times says that some researchers are apparently on the brink of perfecting a way to make tattoos glow in the dark by using something found in the genes of squids. Now won't that be fun.

Personally, I'm thinking about investing heavily in a chain of tattoo REMOVAL clinics. I sense that there are a lot of parents out there who might be willing to pay almost anything to get "BRUNO" or something similar removed from their innocent little darlings' bodies. I'm just waiting for my quarterly dividend from the New York City investment firm operated by my old friend Bernie Madoff. What a financial whiz he is. I'm certainly lucky to know him.

3) You heard it here first ... there's a new and improved design for the commemorative Wyoming quarter in the works. The bucking horse and rider are being replaced by \_\_\_\_\_. Sorry, I've been sworn to secrecy. Stay tuned.

### A GIFT FOR THE NEW MAYOR

Since I haven't received my dividend check from Bernie Madoff yet, I can't afford to give our soon-to-be new Mayor a normal gift.

In lieu of something tangible, however, I'm offering on the next two pages some suggestions for things which I think could be done expeditiously to make the City of Cheyenne a better public entity. After eight years of Jack Spiker's let's-spend-it-all-and-ask-the-state-to-give-us-more approach to city government, my ideas may be just what the doctor ordered.

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