

"ANYTHING TWO PEOPLE KNOW IS NOT A SECRET."



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## They don't go when they're not invited. But they also don't go when they are invited.

Commissioners can't find a way to get City Council members to meetings.

by Dave FEATHERLY

In what has become a ritual similar to a public flogging, two of the county commissioner continue to administer the cat of nine tails to the backside of the majority of the city council and the mayor.

Not even having the daily newspaper in their pocket has prevented the city governing body from absorbing legal loss after legal loss.

And now another one may be coming their way.

Relying on a letter from the state's attorney general, the city and their newspaper is once again certain that an annexation they've approved is legal and will withstand legal challenge.

By the way, has anyone seen the daily newspaper drink water and Jack Spiker speak at the same time? Or, vice versa? I didn't think so.

Gay Woodhouse, who was herself Wyoming's attorney general and could have written a letter totally contrary to this guy's, has made herself the state's expert on the subject of annexation. She has been aided in her pursuit of knowledge by this city's unending ignorance and violation of those same laws.

Since August of 2001, this mayor and his headnodders on the city council have approved repeated illegal annexations. Is there any reason to believe that either the annexation of city-owned land west of the military base, which is neither adjacent or contiguous to the city proper, or an annexation of land east of the city which was annexed upon application by a person not the property owner at the time of application and, even if he had been, the land used to provide the "substantial touching" was not to be developed ... is there any reason not to believe that eventually both of these annexations will also be ruled "void ab initio" by the Wyoming Supreme Court?

The city administration has tried to use dupes in the legislature to achieve their goal of landgrabbing. Because they have spent about \$40 million of excess funds

inherited when they took over city government in 2001, they need to continuously seek more and more funds just to balance the annual budget.

One of the most dependable and growing sources of money a city can control is sales tax. For every man, woman and child in Cheyenne, over \$200.00 in sales tax collection is returned. If a subdivision with 700 lots can be retained in the city, and if those lots are developed with an average of 2.5 persons per household, they will provide \$350,000+ in additional revenue to the city coffers.

If that same land is developed in the county, the city loses not only the sales tax for the number of residents occupying the land but 8 mills of property taxes also. In the above example, if each lot is home to a \$250,000 (average) house, the property valuation in the city would increase by \$175,000,000.

Residents and houses are money to this city - a city desperate for money and willing to trample anyone and everyone in their path to gain more revenue - and they only support growth in the city. Any growth of population or houses in the unincorporated area of Laramie County is of no interest to them.

I don't think neighbors to the annexation of the Grasslands Research Station are comfortable that the purpose of the annexation is to gain a 60 acre arboretum or bring the existing Roundtop Park into the city limits. Both of those valuable additions could have been accomplished without annexation.

The mayor and councilmen started meeting with USDA regional officials some time back and the purpose was not to gain support for such an annexation. They do not need that acquiescence - according to their legal minds - to annex land they own. What they more likely discussed at the unlimited free breadsticks restaurant in Fort Collins (Olive Garden) was a plan for the USDA to relinquish most of the 2,100 acres back to the city - to amend the lease that runs far beyond any of our lifetimes. By the way, YOU paid for that meal. Why would the city buy lunch for the federal government?

City elected officials and the city attorney have represented to the public that they cannot annex other land from this island city they would create even if it would otherwise be eligible for annexation. There is nothing in Wyoming statutes that would prohibit annexation of land which would comply with the requirements put down by the Court's ruling in **Cotton**.

They said they **would not** annex away from this island after the annexation. But that was before they knew they'd be sued if they annexed the Grasslands.

The problem is, as speaker after speaker at the recent county commissioners meeting charged, they cannot be trusted. They are willing to exaggerate, distort and even lie to the public. Their attorney is even willing to lie in court, which he did in the parking garage litigation. A map prepared for the mayor proved the city's intent for controlling county neighbors to the Grasslands - if that land were brought into the city.

Ms. Woodhouse had invited the county commission to authorize the county attorney to join the lawsuit which was certain to be brought against this questionable annexation and the commissioners put the item on their February 7th meeting agenda. The item was brought to the front of the topics for discussion - probably in an effort to accommodate the many who would attend to speak to the subject.

Even with that consideration, no elected official from the city was in attendance. Instead, mid-level employees were sent to take the heat. The city has an "annexation specialist" who knows little about the process. He had no business trying to explain or defend the city's actions. But the mayor, council members and city attorney lack the confidence to deal with residents and voters **UNLESS** it is on their turf. On their own turf, speakers are ruled out of order and silenced. As guests at county commissioner meetings, they do not have the power to stifle debate. To the commissioners credit, I cannot recall a time when a speaker has been gavelled "out of order" or heard "call the question" demanded by a commissioner. Debate is open and welcome.

When asked why he, as council president, did not attend this critical meeting to determine whether the county would again join litigation against a city action, Patrick Collins said they weren't invited.

Weren't invited?

The commissioners often appear at city council meetings when they haven't been invited. The notion that you've elected officials who show no initiative to attend public meetings to represent your interests unless they are formally invited is ludicrous.

Let me make a prediction: They will not be invited to District Court when the lawsuit is heard. But they will attend. City Hall empties when one of their losing lawsuits is heard. Some even go to the Supreme Court to listen to oral arguments when erroneous District Court rulings are appealed.

Just a few days earlier, only two city council members (Case and Laybourn) attended the presentation of an audit done for the city and county. In that case, they were invited. So, Collins does not attend a meeting because he hadn't been invited but also didn't attend a meeting to which he was invited. How do you get them to attend a meeting outside the safe haven of the city council chambers where they wield the gavel - and control?

By a 2-1 vote, Jeff Ketcham and Diane Humphrey voted in favor of a resolution authorizing county attorney Peter Froelicher to join the lawsuit being initiated by county (non-city) property owners. Jack Knudson continues to be a lapdog for this city administration and, as expected, opposed the action. His action took no courage. He does not run for re-election this year and takes comfort in the fact that the daily newspaper strokes his ego and behavior and in the fact that far more voters reside in the city than in the small towns and unincorporated areas of the county.

Jeff and Diane have all of the same factors weighing against them - the paper, the voting numbers and re-election. They showed courage while Jack showed his true colors once again. (More on page 5)

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