

Joe Bonds Whines: "It Just Isn't Fun Anymore"

According to City Councilman Joe Bonds, it was much more fun giving away the City's money before he had to contend with Judy Case AND Pete Laybourn every week.

He apparently told the local daily newspaper that it's his distaste for dealing with those two members of the Council which have caused him to opt out of running for reelection to his Ward 2 seat next fall.

We feel your pain, Joe. We can only imagine how terribly difficult it is for you to sit there at a Council meeting, grinding your teeth to mere nubs while Mrs. Case and Mr. Laybourn do what they were actually elected to do, namely, trying to make sure that the City's money and other resources are being used wisely and efficiently. You've never really concerned yourself with such things, have you, Joe?

Bonds' frustration got the best of him at a recent meeting of the Council's Finance Committee. He and fellow member Don Pierson bolted from the room like a couple of scared bunnies when Councilman Laybourn wanted to make a few comments about how the Committee had operated under Bonds' leadership.

Mayor Spiker's secretary, Judi Gore, tried to defend Bonds by telling the Tribune-Eagle that Mr. Laybourn's final comments were "nasty" and that she had never in her life witnessed anything so terrible.

Ms. Gore evidently forgot that such meetings are routinely tape-recorded so citizens can compare Ms. Gore's hysterical version of the incident with the actual words used at the December 19th meeting.

JOE BONDS: Do we have any other items to come before us during Finance Committee?

PETE LAYBOURN: Mr. Chairman.

JOE BONDS: Mr. Laybourn.

PETE LAYBOURN: Since this is the conclusion of this year's Finance Committee and we will be appointing a new Finance Committee next year, I wanted to make some comments about my year of service here on this committee and the manner in which this committee has been run. I believe we had a great demonstration of that today in that some members are evidently more equal than other members of this committee, and, Mr. Bonds, I don't take offense personally at any of your rulings but I do believe that you have a responsibility to the people who sent me here to allow a free and full discussion to determine the reasons behind these expenditures that happen here. The point is, Mr. Chairman, that it isn't what you personally believe or personally allow. It's what the members of the committee believe and seek and must sort through to make good decisions. And I would have to characterize your service here as Chairman of this Committee as tyrannical, Mr. Chairman. I think it has been a real disservice to the taxpayers of Cheyenne and it certainly has been one that has been very frustrating to me. Your constant threats to deny my participation ...

DON PIERSON: I'm leaving.

JOE BONDS: Mr. Laybourn, I'm going to If you want to have a discussion, you and I can have a discussion. This meeting is adjourned.

PETE LAYBOURN: This is a matter for the Finance Committee, Mr. Chairman, and if you're going to walk out, I want it noted in the record.

JOE BONDS: I'm walking out.

PETE LAYBOURN: As well as Mr. Pierson. So members of the public, I'd like to tell you that this is a pitiful way to run the Finance Committee and it is a true disservice to the public and whether or not the members of the administration walk out or not, I'm on the record with my comments and I fully stand by them.

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NOTE: When Joe Bonds announced that he wouldn't run for his Council seat again, he was apparently operating under the impression that he would soon be named as the City's new \$65,000/year Parks Director. Rick Parish got the job instead. We feel your pain once again, Joe.

One Citizen's Opinion

Some people are apparently still confused about what THE CHEYENNE HERALD stands for and what my involvement is.

For my part, I merely contribute an occasional story or commentary and have no ownership interest or editorial control beyond my own pieces.

It's Dave Featherly who does 95-100% of the work to produce each issue. He researches most of the stories, writes most of the text, sells the ads, works with the printers, and makes sure that THE HERALD gets distributed as soon as possible after it comes off the press. He works very hard at it. Frankly, I don't know how he does it.

Dave and I don't agree on many political issues and I suspect that we often end up voting for different candidates in national, state, and local elections.

Like me, however, Dave's probably amused when he hears uninformed people refer to THE HERALD as an "anti-growth" or "anti-progress" publication. We both know that's just pure nonsense.

Neither of us has anything against growth and progress. All we're trying to do is serve as an advocate for those citizens who're rightfully concerned about honesty, integrity, and openness in government - particularly local government.

In most cities, it's the daily newspaper which fills that role, but that hasn't been the case here in Cheyenne for several years. Instead of fighting to hold elected officials' feet to the fire, the local daily is more likely to try to extinguish or diminish the flames so their buddies - especially those currently running the City of Cheyenne - don't get burned.

Many of the stories and commentaries printed here in THE HERALD are based upon public documents we've uncovered on our own or received from others. If it weren't for the Wyoming Public Records Act, it's probable that many of those documents never would have seen the light of day.

Obviously, we're big fans of the Public Records Act. So, they claim, is the Wyoming Tribune-Eagle. The difference between the two newspapers is that the WT-E likes the idea of open records while those of us associated with THE HERALD are more apt to actually use the Act to find interesting public documents worth writing about.

WE COULDN'T HAVE SAID IT BETTER

A good example is an excellent recent column written by Reed Eckhardt, the WT-E's Managing Editor. He used the opportunity on January 28th to warn about some troubling changes to the Wyoming Public Records Act which the Legislature might be considering soon. If passed and signed by the Governor, the changes would make it harder for citizens to find out what's been going on and easier for public officials to hide what they've been up to.

According to Eckhardt, "What is important to keep in mind here is that the **process** of government is just as important as the final result. It is only by following the path of public communications - in open meetings and in open documents - that the people of Wyoming are able to see how the decisions that affect them are made." We totally agree, Reed.

In the coming weeks, we here at THE HERALD will be making some very specific public records requests of the Mayor and other WT-E pals at City Hall. When we do, we'll be trying to discover more about where all the money's been going AND the **process** by which it's been evaporating.

My prediction is that when we start getting close

to potentially embarrassing revelations, the WT-E will jump the fence and do everything it can to help their City Hall buddies explain away what we find.

They've done it before. When THE HERALD revealed last spring that Cheyenne's Police Chief had purchased a phony mail-order *Master's Degree in Criminal Justice* (for which he was reimbursed \$2504 by the City), the Chief, the Mayor, and the WT-E combined forces to concoct an equally phony story about the Chief being paid, not for the bogus master's degree itself, but for the research report which he supposedly submitted as his "thesis".

They philosophize; we dig. They editorialize; we reveal. They concoct; we laugh.

THEN IT GETS FUN

To most reasonably-sane citizens, digging through public documents doesn't sound like a lot of fun. They're mostly right.

It's tedious, time-consuming, and usually boring ... except when you find one of those little nuggets which the public officials wish didn't exist.

Another fun moment comes whenever we request a peek at a document we've already discovered or received from another source, only to be told by a public official that the document doesn't exist. Hallelujah !! Let the good times roll !!!

BEATING UP ON JUDY AND PETE

Anyone who's been reading the Wyoming Tribune-Eagle on a regular basis is aware of the paper's ongoing campaign against City Councilman Pete Laybourn.

From time to time, the WT-E also takes a shot at Councilwoman Judy Case.

Typically, the criticisms of Pete and Judy have to do with them not being "team players". The Tribune-Eagle apparently thinks running a City is like running a high school volleyball squad or football team.

While it's true that friction among team members can affect a team's performance on the court or field, it's silly for the daily newspaper to repeatedly strain the analogy in an attempt to make it apply to City government.

The fact that Judy Case and Pete Laybourn often ask for an explanation of a contract or voucher before voting to approve it isn't an unhealthy thing. It's a

sign that at least two of the elected members of the City Council take their election and their oath of office very seriously.

There may be yet another reason for the Tribune-Eagle's incessant criticizing of Case and Laybourn.

Perhaps the paper is trying to discourage other like-minded citizens from throwing their own hats into the ring when it comes time to declare their intentions to run for a City Council seat.

What better way to discourage such potential candidates than to give them a sample of what's in store for them if they win a seat and then don't go along with everything the newspaper's editors and their obedient sycophants at City Hall want.

The Wyoming Tribune-Eagle doesn't like tough, independent-minded elected officials like Judy Case and Pete Laybourn.

It likes -- and consistently endorses -- local candidates who can be easily steered whichever way the paper decides. They're the do-nothing, know-nothing, say-nothing, stand-for-nothing candidates who will obligingly do what they're told.

Luckily, Pete Laybourn and Judy Case are a little tougher than the average ... and let's hope that there are a few more around town when filing time comes.

Jim Mathewson

"What is important to keep in mind here is that the **process of government is just as important as the final result. It is only by following the path of public communications - in open meetings and in open documents - that the people of Wyoming are able to see how the decisions that affect them are made."**

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