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Cheyenne city prisoners are now being held in the Platte County jail - with empty beds in our new jail!

by *Dave Featherly*

On a regular schedule, prisoners convicted of crimes in City of Cheyenne municipal court(s) are taken to Wheatland to serve their sentences. Instead of being held in the new Laramie County detention center, they are transported to the Platte County Jail.

The same arrangement has been made with Goshen County but, to date, it does not appear that any prisoners have gone to Torrington.

Contracts No. 4696 (Goshen County) and No. 4697 (Platte County) were entered into on December 22, 2004, when the Chair of the Board of Platte County Commissioners and Platte County Sheriff signed a contract earlier (November 24, 2004) signed by Jack Spiker and, for some reason, Bob Fecht, police chief.

In an interview with Laramie County Sheriff Danny Glick and Captain Bill Long, who handles detention responsibilities, it was determined that the new expansion still has empty beds.

On November 7, 2000, voters of Laramie County approved a request for \$15,000,000 (fifteen million dollars) to expand the Laramie County Detention Center. The intent seemed clear.

Voters very likely believed they were approving an expansion which would house Laramie County (Cheyenne *IS* in Laramie County) prisoners for the years ahead - until a further expansion would be necessary.

But, within two years of opening, the new jail in Cheyenne is being largely abandoned by the mayor and police chief of the city. Those incarcerated as a result of sentences from the Circuit Court and District Court are still being confined in the Laramie County jail.

So, why would the mayor initiate anything so incredibly bizarre?

Editor's note: A handwritten note in the Platte County contract file, from the City's Risk Manager Bill Tennant, advised that insurance indemnification should be written into the contract, holding the City of Cheyenne harmless. He wrote: "Ins. needs to include auto liability. Since the prisoners are ours, Cheyenne will also get sued in addition to the jail. If a prisoner escapes and hurts or kills someone, Cheyenne will get sued for the jail's negligence. We need to be indemnified and backed up by insurance to defend Cheyenne." Nothing was put into the contract to follow his advice.

Why would the mayor ignore the intent of the electorate when they narrowly approved the jail expansion on November 7, 2000 - the same date he was first elected mayor?

Do he and Fecht believe that voters intended for the jail expansion to accommodate prisoners from within the Laramie County but outside the city? Because those arrested for violations of city code and tried in municipal court (speeding, lane change violations, not signaling a turn, etc.) are likely city residents. After all, as the city and its house organ at 702 W. Lincolnway continually remind residents, Cheyenne represents about two-thirds of the total county population.

If the mayor now believes that the county jail is for county (non-city) residents only or for city residents tried in the other levels of court, he should have campaigned on that premise last fall. Notice that all action on this subject took place safely AFTER the election.

And it was the city residents' votes which carried Proposition 2 in the November 7, 2000 election. Had it been up to non-city residents, the expansion would not have been approved. The final vote percentages were: City (52.4% For, 47.6% Against) Non-City (49.4% For, 50.6% Against). The proposition was narrowly approved - 51.5% to 48.5%.

According to Glick and Long, the county had been charging the City the rate of \$65 per day for the room and board of each prisoner. That money was not covering the cost in the expanded jail and the rate was increased to \$75 per day.

While city officials may have whined about the increase, they accepted it. But, when the Sheriff advised the police chief that they would seek an increase to \$79 per day, the city sought another jail.

Dismissing any loyalty to the residents of all of Laramie County, including those in the city, this band of renegades went to our neighbors to the north. Even though there was (is) room at the local inn, and taxpayers of Laramie County paid for it, these "inherit and spenders" pretended to be interested in their spending. But, was it that?

Or was it that the WT-E has taken a dislike to Danny Glick, as they did Roger Allsop and Pat Barrett before him, and city officials sought to ingratiate themselves further with the discredited little paper by showing Danny a thing or two about power. More about abuse of power, it seems to me.

The fact that the WT-E so quickly leaped to the defense of Bob Fecht's bogus master's degree seems to confirm that unhealthy relationship between them.

All of a sudden, these spenders at city hall sought to save a dime. Also ignored was the common decency they might have considered for families of those incarcerated. Oftentimes, they are guilty of nothing but caring for the wrong person. But they may have children who cannot see the parent in Wheatland as easily as if they were in Cheyenne, where they are supposed to be held.

This same group built a tavern with public money after the public many times

said "no" and indebted residents for a garage that was doomed to financial failure from the first day.

But now they had seen the light. Got religion. They entered into a logistical nightmare and broke faith with the voters. Over four dollars a day! The deal with Wheatland (Platte County) is for \$55.00 per day. Sounds good, no?

Not only is this an unconscionable act against county taxpayers who will now have to pony up the missing funds for jail support some other way, but these yahoos didn't save \$20.00 per day.

Oh, by the way, they didn't confront the Sheriff with their objections to the \$4 per day increase and give him a chance to renegotiate or capitulate. No, that's not the way these gunslingers do business. It's their way or the highway. I-25.

Platte County is also paid to transport the prisoners back and forth. \$375 per mile and \$18.00 an hour for a transport deputy - more than three prisoners requires two deputies (\$36.00 an hour).

Payments have been made to Platte County since early March - progressively larger. March 7 - \$2,295.47 ... March 21 - \$6,158.28 ... April 25 - \$9,811.38. The latest one was divided on the voucher (the others weren't) - \$8,800.00 for housing and \$1,011.38 for transportation. The equals 160 prisoner-days.

Assume the April 25 charges are representative of a normal monthly cost. At 160 prisoner-days per month, it would total 1,920 prisoner-days per year. Transportation costs averaged \$6.32 per prisoner-day. So, Platte County charged \$61.32 per day, compared to Laramie County's \$75.00 (\$79.00?) per day.

If the difference were a true savings, and it is not, the mayor and police chief "saved" between \$26,265.60 and \$33,945.60 a year. Enough for ten to twelve bogus master's degrees from Lacrosse U.