

"ANYTHING TWO PEOPLE KNOW IS NOT A SECRET."

**THE LEGENDARY
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Smackdown!

Rec center rejected by huge margin!

by Dave Featherly

In what has to be considered a major repudiation of Mayor Jack Spiker and the McCracken daily newspaper, Laramie County voters soundly defeated the proposed new rec center in the May 6th specific purpose sales tax election.

For weeks, residents couldn't pick up the McCracken newspaper without reading stories and columns supportive of the propositions, particularly on the rec center. Day after day after day, the McCracken paper ignored other news items to focus on their single-minded obsession, a \$55 million rec center to be paid for with sales tax revenue.

The McCracken paper abhors sales taxes which would apply to their operation, but worship it when you are asked to pay.

For a solid month, paper after paper was filled with propaganda favorable to the passage of all sales tax propositions to be presented, with about 75% of the attention paid to Proposition 4 - the rec center. On the newspaper's website, those columns and articles were presented again. Only one letter to the editor was offered each day - a "featured letter" and they could determine which side would be presented - for or against the rec center.

In spite of an even split in the letters to the editor in the newspaper itself, the website tilted heavily to those supportive of the McCracken paper's agenda.

Letters to the editor are much more representative of public sentiment. Senders must identify themselves. The drivel offered on the newspaper's forum is without identification and it cannot even be

determined if a single person is sending repeated postings, using a different "handle" each time. One person writing for or against something multiple times - even answering their own e-mail.

The undisguised bias shown by the McCracken paper removed forever the right of this dwindling (in circulation and influence) publication to be called a "newspaper." It bears little resemblance, short of carrying advertising, classified ads and obituaries, to a real newspaper any longer.

At least 30 times in that month before the May 6th election, the WT-E wrote, almost screeching, in support of another penny of sales tax on the residents - so long as it didn't apply to them.

And it backfired on them.

"Overkill" was a common charge.

"Desperation" was another.

"Fear" still another.

In another attempt to deceive their readers, they published a "poll" done by the underwriting firm. Specifics of how the poll was conducted - methodology to determine those polled and the questions asked of them - were never revealed.

For all anyone knows, the polling was never done and it was a fraud perpetrated on voters to claim a wide majority of their peers supported the items.

The WT-E wrote: "Archer needs help." In the end, it was the rec center that needed help and they couldn't provide it.

A Political Action Committee (PAC) was formed to support passage of Prop 4. And there is absolutely nothing wrong with that action. A PAC allows that group to avoid contribution limits placed on individuals and this PAC was no exception.

The list of individuals and corporations that gave money to fund this PAC has been on the Cheyenne Herald website for days (a pre-election report has to be filed seven days before a special election but this PAC was late with their filing by a day).

As interesting as those who gave was those who didn't. Of the City governing body who proclaimed unwavering support and undying love for this rec center, only Jack Spiker and Don Pierson gave to the PAC and they gave but \$150.00 between them. No other member of the governing body contributed a nickel to the PAC, nor did they run supportive ads of their own.

It is your money they're after. Not theirs.

Efforts on the part of the supporters were intense. They exploited a local man by positioning him around town on all days of the week, where he waved a "Vote Yes"-type sign, adorned with American flags, for hours and hours and days and days before the election. On election day, they had three different signs being waved at the north base of the Central Ave. viaduct-some say by city employees.

Homeless people would have been rousted from the area had they waved signs asking for food or money. But, when the City agrees with the words on a sign, it is okay. It is encouraged by using city employees. It was distracting and dangerous and should never have been allowed.

This election outcome has many threads.

It has proven that the McCracken Pravda no longer has meaningful influence in local elections and cannot set the agenda.

It has proven that Jack Spiker's hold on the mayor's office is no longer assured just because the government-controlled press at 702 W. Lincolnway supports his re-election. The rejection within the City, in the face of the overwhelming advantage in supportive actions was not just about the rec center. It was about the governing body and the house organ the WT-E has become for it.

When the final reports are filed, in combination with the free promotion offered by the WT-E that does not have to be disclosed as an in-kind donation, there will likely be upwards of \$100,000 spent toward passage of Prop 4. Yet, the only area of Laramie County to succumb to the pressure was Ward 2 in the City.

If you remove Ward 2 votes from the equation, the rest of Laramie County (including Wards 1 and 3 within the City), rejected the rec center by a 59% to 41% margin. That is beyond "landslide" margins. 10% differential is considered a "landslide" in elections.

This was not just a rejection of a rec center in Cheyenne. The defeat goes much deeper. Voters told the mayor, "we don't trust you to do what we tell you to do with the money," and told the WT-E, "we don't care what you write about political matters anymore. You aren't trusted either."

For further analysis of this outcome, please see pages 5, 6 and 7.

The Rec Center - As the votes came in election night - 60 Precincts in all (+ early voting)

	11 Precincts	26 Precincts	37 Precincts	40 Precincts	44 Precincts	57 Precincts	60 Precincts	Early Votes	Total
For	496 38.87%	1668 42.14%	2822 45.03%	3389 44.46%	4045 44.29%	5403 44.08%	6166 45.54%	2685 45.72%	8851 45.59%
Against	780 61.13%	2290 57.86%	3445 54.97%	4233 55.54%	5089 55.71%	6855 55.92%	7375 54.46%	3188 54.28%	10563 54.41%
Total	1276	3958	6267	7622	9134	12258	13541	5873	19414
							69.75%	30.25%	100.00%
Deficit	284	622	623	844	1044	1452	1209	503	1712

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