

More about the 6th penny election

Some time back, I heard criticism for the length and detail of stories I present in the Cheyenne Herald. A handful of people want the sound-bite treatment to all stories and can't concentrate long enough to get through a more lengthy dissertation of news and issues.

But the vast majority of readers are more intelligent than devout WT-E readers and appreciate the facts, depth and details in our stories. If they don't, they will turn to broadcast media or the WT-E for their limited information.

I received considerable feedback after the last issue about the coverage of the recent 6th penny sales tax election. Readers (at least readers of this publication) want the facts, ma'am, only the facts.

And, while the daily was struggling to explain the defeat at the polls of Prop 4 for a new rec center, specific vote totals were provided here by district ("wards" in the city) and even by precinct for the east county towns.

Once the WT-E read my coverage, they wanted to know if the rural votes hated the city folks and then did what they could to further polarize the population.

But it won't work. Rural voters, including South Cheyenne and others in the "perimeter city" don't hate their neighbors. Hell, they spend most of their income in Cheyenne. There are not many car dealers, furniture stores or national discounters in Albin, Carpenter and Burns.

The reason they didn't support the rec center, in league with Wards 1 and 3 in the city and all other non-city voters, including South Cheyenne, was practical. Some in Burns may have resented the call to pull their needs off the ballot because the Burns mayor and town council voted against the construction of the ballot, but those in the other small towns and unincorporated Laramie County were not sold on the idea that they would use a rec center in the middle of Cheyenne.

Having recently driven to Torrington, one can appreciate just how far it is from Albin and the Meriden area to Cheyenne. It's unfathomable that they would hop in the Woody and motor to Cheyenne at \$3.75 a gallon for gas. Or those belching diesel king cabs at \$4.50 a gallon.

And no effort was made to convince the residents in and near the towns of Albin, Burns, Carpenter and Pine Bluffs that city voters would support their needs if they supported ours. "Ours" being the position of the PAC and city elected officials.

Anyone who takes non-city voters for granted does so at their own peril. To win a county-wide election, unless the wards in the city provide an overwhelming margin, requires a fair amount of support beyond the city borders.

For example, in the recent election, 19,414 total votes were cast on Prop 4 - 13,355 in the city and 6,059 outside the city. To win an election with 50% plus 1 of the votes, assume city voters favored a tax proposition by 55% to 45%. (In politics, a 10% differential in voting results constitutes a "landslide" so that margin would be unusual.) It would still require 2,363 non-city votes to pass that proposition - 39% of non-city votes in support.

Anyone who sells non-city voters short is usually going to be hurt by the results.

Further - remember that Ward 1 seldom buys into more taxes. Assume Ward 1 split their votes at 50% in favor, 50% against. Ward 3 usually does a little better but often does not support more taxes either. Assume they went 52%-48%.

To overcome the described lack of non-city support from the above example (39%) and the votes from Ward 1 and 3 as illustrated, to win an election with 50% plus 1 of the votes cast in this past election, Ward 2, those who are most fond of paying higher taxes, would have to deliver 60.4% votes in support of the tax. Even they can't do that very often. Under this scenario, to pull 55% from the city voters in total - if Ward 1 came in at 50%, Ward 3 at 52% and Ward 2 at 60.4% - it would still take the support of 39% or better of the non-city voters to win.

Readers can see why Prop 4 failed. Non-city voters were shortchanged in the considerable spending and promotion by the PAC and WT-E, even with the prodigious amount of free news space and editorial page articles in support of the proposition. Few households, fewer even than the non-city voter support level, get the daily paper out in the county - probably not even in South Cheyenne.

Remember, non-city voters in every direction from the city rejected the rec center proposition, not just east county voters. Only Ward 2, of all voters, supported the rec center. While the lament of "they didn't support our rec center and we supported their needs" by proponents may be accurate, whose fault was that?

Proponents of a rec center didn't try. They apparently thought they could gain significant enough support within the city borders and that non-city support would not be necessary. Anyone running a campaign like this one should know more about likely results of tax elections and less about the federal discount rate.

Bankers can make good bankers. They do not make good campaign managers.

To think that a detested daily newspaper could carry the day demonstrates that lack of experience in campaigns. The best thing for the Prop 4 campaign would have been for the newspaper to act like a newspaper. Had they not shrieked endlessly about the love of and need for this rec center, it might have had a better chance of passage.

The lack of specificity about profitability should not have been a hindrance. The County hasn't still figured out what they will do with the money approved for the Archer Property. They provided no specificity, yet that proposition passed with a comfortable margin.

Props 1 and 2 were mostly about money for the small communities and city voters came through for them in a big way. I've been trying to convince rural folks that Cheyenne voters would do that. In spite of planting some unpopular projects on the lengthy Props 1 and 2, city voters did not let those sway their votes. The shooting range and airport terminal design proponents should get down on their knees and thank the small towns for carrying their projects to victory. Had those projects stood alone, they would have made the rec center results look strong.

But, sometimes you're the windshield and sometimes you're the bug.

This election wasn't about the economy or gas prices, either. It isn't as though all propositions were rejected and the 6th penny sales tax would not be collected in the future. Over \$50 million worth of projects were approved, including the Archer Property proposition which had little information provided to voters. All that the \$55 million rec center passage would have done is prolong the period of the 6th penny.

It is likely that when this coming \$50 million+ cycle expires, another list of projects will be presented and some, if not all, will again be approved and the 6th penny sales tax will go on and on. Voters showed no real opposition to the 6th penny of sales tax - it was just the rec center project.

You have to wonder now which candidate the WT-E will drag down to defeat with their "he's our guy," "he's our guy" coverage.

Results by "district" in support of Props:

| | Prop 1 | Prop 2 | Prop 3 |
|------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Ward 1 | 67.5% | 64.0% | 52.5% |
| Ward 2 | 74.2% | 67.8% | 57.5% |
| Ward 3 | 68.5% | 65.4% | 53.2% |
| District 4 | 60.8% | 58.4% | 46.3% |
| District 5 | 64.8% | 62.2% | 55.3% |
| District 6 | 58.4% | 65.3% | 49.6% |
| District 7 | 62.0% | 61.1% | 51.6% |
| TOTAL | 67.8% | 65.0% | 53.5% |

District 4 is north, northwest, west and southwest of Cheyenne. District 5 is east and southeast of Cheyenne. District 6 is Carpenter, Burns, Pine Bluffs, Albin and Meriden voters. District 7 is county pockets within the city boundaries.

You can tell from the above percentages (in favor of each proposition), that the ardor cooled in every area from Prop 1 to Prop 3. Except for District 5, rural voters rejected Prop 3 - city voters supported it.

Herald

pick-up locations

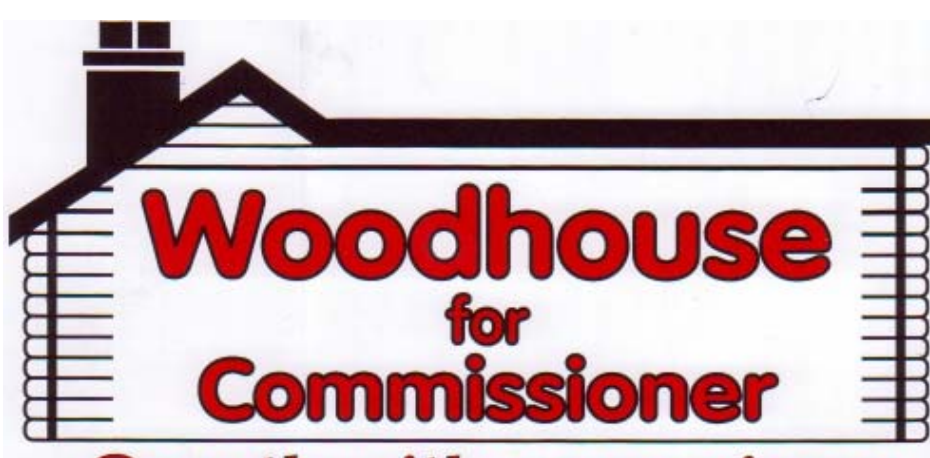
- City News - Downtown
- BLM Building Lobby
- Safeway - South Cheyenne
- Wonder Bread Outlet - Ridge Rd.
- Oroweat Bakery Outlet - SW Dr.
- Borderline - Colorado Lottery
- Laramie County Library
- Laramie County Gov't Center - North
- Herschler Building - North
- VA Hospital - South Entrance
- Town & County Liquors
- Burger Inn
- Luxury Diner
- American Storage
- Avenues Pet Clinic
- Los Amigos
- Diamond Horseshoe
- Daylight Donuts (both)
- Quick Draw Optical
- Village Inn-Downtown
- T-Joe's Steakhouse & Saloon

Many, many other locations in the City and Laramie County

In the county ...

- Uncle Fred's, A & W,
- RA Lumber and Wild Horse
- Restaurant - all in Pine Bluffs

- Panhandle Co-Op, Burns
- Antelope Truck Stop on I-80
- Albin Diner & General Store



Woodhouse
for
Commissioner

Growth with a conscience

146-149 Paid for by Woodhouse for Commissioner

MAY
28

Five hundred eighty-four (584) days since Jim McBride threatened to take legal action against the Cheyenne Herald for disclosing his Bennett, Colorado, Superintendent Evaluations.

The Evaluations can be read at:
www.cheyenneherald.com
"Articles" page, October 30, 2006