

Briefs ... the Legislature

Electronic voting.

"We need electronic voting. We don't know how legislators are voting, or when."

That is not our position. And we hereby offer to advise other media and residents who cannot figure out how legislators voted on certain bills - in committee or on the floor - we will tell you just what happened.

The Cheyenne Herald rather enjoys the spectacle of watching two or three people in front of the legislators counting those standing in the House or Senate by rhythmically pointing and stroking their finger and silently mouthing "ten ... eleven ... twelve," then comparing the counts determined by all of those counting. There is a frontier charm to that old-fashioned way of determining whether a multi-million dollar spending measure failed or succeeded. Or whether drivers will continue to have the availability of Jack Daniels as they travel to kill the elusive antelope. When the counters can't agree, they just repeat the process. As many times as it takes until there is unanimity. We'd lose all that with electronic voting.

As far as the uninformed legislator glancing around the room to be guided by the obvious "I'm standing," "I'm sitting" vote of his colleagues, who cares? If he/she didn't look for that direction, he/she could have gotten it at the latest lobbyist-paid breakfast. Legislators don't even know what's in the majority of the bills on which they vote - they follow the lead of someone they hope does.

When no one knows what the hell the legislation means, it passes. No one wants to appear stupid and challenge on an issue they don't understand. Vote "aye."

Fecht's master's degree is missing.

Recently, the daily newspaper offered its readers a piece on the State Legislature. As part of that exercise, each legislator presented a brief biography. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, Bob Fecht's purchased mail order master's degree in criminal justice (paid for improperly with public funds) from a Louisiana diploma mill was not shown as part of his education. When revealed by the Cheyenne Herald, he said that the purchased degree was legitimate and valid and that he had worked harder for it than he had for his bachelor's degree from Southern Illinois University - a degree which he does claim. He also does not claim the Lacrosse University master's in the 2007-2008 Directory for the 59th Legislature.

Briefs ... City government

"Building guidelines."

Stop me if you've heard this one before.

It's almost as though Mark Rinne had never left the City Council. One of his final defiant acts was to attempt to impose "Downtown Building Guidelines." His effort was not to allow voluntary compliance with a set of design guidelines concocted by a dentist and state employees but to require those "guidelines" be followed. They were to be mandatory, not voluntary. The word "shall" sprang up all over the pages.

The design rules from non-design people did not pass.

Why, you ask?

Jack Spiker.

Jack singlehandedly presented the case in opposition. Others spoke against the dictates but Jack walked the downtown with a camera, taking pictures of existing buildings and remodels which would not have been allowed under the proposed "guidelines." The night of the city council meeting, he approached the podium, pictures in hand, and presented them, one by one, to then-city council president, Mark Rinne. "The new county governmental complex would not be in compliance, with all the reflective glass," he told Rinne. The "Old West" facings would not be permitted. False facings of any kind were not to be permitted. Entrances not recessed from the sidewalk line were taboo. Height of downtown buildings was to be restricted. Over and over, Jack handed single pictures to Rinne, with the reasons they would not be allowed under his mandatory "guidelines."

When the vote was taken, all the state employees on city council scurried for cover. Mark stood alone. One of Jack's arguments was that people who serve on city council's like Cheyenne's should stay out of the way of the free market. Retailers and others do not deliberately design and construct ugly buildings. His point was then, and should be now, that the governing body was not qualified to dictate to a successful retailer like Kohl's what their buildings must look like. The City will cower and quake when challenged anyway. Enforce landscaping requirements and parking lot designs. Otherwise - Jack, you were right in 1996. Stay with your prepared and documented position. Nothing has changed.

Make a note of this vote.

The only hope residents have for better city government is if the seven to eight person voting bloc that has existed for the last six years is fractured. Since Jack Spiker jumped to the Dark Side in 1997, only Pete Laybourn and Judy Case can usually be expected to cast a vote in opposition to that majority. Occasionally, Jimmy Valdez. Now there are two new members on the Council - Mark Rinne and Jim Brown. Mark could be his own man and, if he is, he is too strong, too knowledgeable and too intelligent for the voting bloc to dominate. Jim Brown told the Cheyenne Herald that he would be an independent thinker and until proven otherwise, he will be taken at his word.

Jack Spiker, Tom Segrave, Patrick Collins, Don Pierson will continue to share one brain, one vote and one conscience on virtually every issue. Segrave will defect if it benefits developers and Pierson may split when it comes to liquor or softball.

That leaves Georgia Broyles. Once beholden to the voting bloc, she may break those shackles now that she has four years to serve and there is nothing they can do to her but shun her, which is the petty stunt they effectively use on dissidents.

A recent vote on an issue (the issue is unimportant) failed on a 5-5 tie. That is a newsworthy occurrence. If the lockstep is broken occasionally, residents benefit.

Am I too old to enlist?

Today's news (January 12, 2007) brought a story that an Air Force Staff Sergeant was in trouble with her superiors for posing for Playboy magazine.

I thought we were past all that.

So many of those who would normally rail against that kind of behavior are themselves in treatment or otherwise disgraced. Who is left to throw the first stone? Some egghead Colonel in the Air Force who was likely the first in line at an airport gift shop to buy the magazine?

This 30 year-old mother of two trains recruits at Lakeland AFB in San Antonio.

I can clearly recall my boot camp company commander and that four-eyed weasel geek wasn't going to be paid a nickel to pose for any magazine beyond perhaps Popular Mechanics.

This gal is accused of nothing beyond taking off most or all of her clothing to pose in a men's magazine. It is hard to imagine someone innocently viewing her. I can't afford her pictorial but I can't believe it will damage recruiting efforts.

I'm wondering ... who would get the most attention from the troops? My worm of an instructor way back then or a beautiful young miss? Hmmm. I wonder.

WyomingNETWORK.com

What's your opinion? Read and participate in the forums at www.CheyenneNetwork.com

The Cheyenne Herald may have to be "sold" in chain grocery stores

Because another "free" publication has a national contract (an exclusive contract) with some of the major grocery store operations, the "free" Cheyenne Herald may have to be sold in order to be offered in those grocery store locations.

While some have long advised that the Cheyenne Herald should be sold on newsstands with the New York Times and Wall Street Journal, it has been kept "free" to readers. It is not "free" to advertisers or subscribers. Unlike the local daily paper, the Cheyenne Herald would not ask for higher payment for our "good" issues.

For the daily paper, a "good" paper is one holding the grocery store circulars (on Wednesday) or national retail store inserts (on Sun day). Advertising is what makes their papers distinguishable - not news content or quality.

The objective of the Cheyenne Herald is readership, not circulation. Newspaper readership in general, such as with the daily newspaper here, is shrinking. Readership of the Herald continues to skyrocket. We would not choose at this time to charge for the paper but would have to make it available in those stores.