

# NSN EXPRESS

A No Standing News Special Edition  
*Fast reading for busy people*

May 8, 2001

Number 2

## **We could have had cheap, clean, quiet generators but.....**

The Dinosaurs have arrived! Wrapped in nice, new white tractor-trailers, labeled "CAT.... Rental Power." Remember the \$6 million in bonds RMU slicked the city council into giving them so they could buy some noisy, smelly, carcinogen belching diesel generators? After the RMU board (Ward, Jenks, Alfermann and Stoffer) got the bond contracts signed, they slunk back to the fortress and nothing more was said. Now the antique diesel technology has finally arrived, but it's not going to do much more than prolong the inevitable. Like a siege army, Intercounty Electric Co-op now has RMU surrounded and only has to wait for the inhabitants to start (metaphorically speaking) eating their cats and rats. Sometime in December, the RMU board must have signed a new contract with Ameren/UE (or somebody - they have never told anyone who or how much more it costs) to keep kilowatts flowing through Rolla's only electric lifeline. Someday - more likely some decade - the city council will be forced to make new appointments to the board. Hopefully they will be people whose understanding of power technology goes beyond the electric toothbrush. We have more electrical engineers per square mile than anyone else, but never mind. Take a look at this article from MIT's Technology Review. This is what Rolla could have had for less money, less emissions, less maintenance and more fuel efficiency. <http://www.technologyreview.com/magazine/may01/fairley.asp> If you don't want to know quite that much about turbine

generators, scroll down to the short version, "The Virtual Power Plant."

## **Ber Juan Lake is sinking - but into what?**

To the gratification of farmers and backyard gardeners we seem to have returned to a more normal weather pattern. Spring rains have filled farm ponds to the brim but curiously the water level in Ber Juan Lake keeps sinking. The city said it was a minor leak in the overflow gizmo but we noticed that nothing was coming out of the overflow pipe at the bottom of the dam. Could the water be draining into something else?

Frank Furman repeatedly urged the council to have geological studies done before they started the project because his extensive research into the history and geology of the property showed it was probably the site of some old clay mines. Where there are clay pits there could be sinkholes, Furman warned. Sinkholes and old clay mines could cause disastrously weak foundations for the dam, the lake and the Recreation Center. Instead of taking the time to get a geological survey done (where oh where would they ever find a geologist?) the figure-out-the-details-later method of planning prevailed; they plunged ahead with the project - then found out it would cost far more than they had budgeted. There goes somebody's street work.

## **Another City Well Bites the Dust**

At the same time Ber Juan Lake was NOT leaking into a sinkhole, City Well #4 between the dam and 10<sup>th</sup> street was undergoing major renovation. Was the well sucking air because the pump could no longer reach shrinking aquifer or was it something else? How much lower did the pump have to be lowered this time? Don't look for the answer in the NEWS

paper. You'll have to call your council representative or one of the technologically challenged utility board members they appointed.

### **Redefining Parks**

We've always thought that if the city can't give us good government, they can at least provide us with entertainment - and boy do they. Are you following the council comedy about Sooter's new development? Bob Sooter and Park Director Ken Kwantes are trying to convince the council that a pond - with no surrounding land - should be accepted as public parkland in the middle of Sooter's new development. Some members of the council are skeptical. ONLY SKEPTICAL? How can anyone get up in public and argue with a straight face that a pond is a park? The council will eventually buy into Kwantes' mumbled excuses, vote to declare the pond a public park and relieve Sooter of liability for his wetlands - that's the real purpose here. Why not? The taxpayers are getting soaked for everything else and hey - let's be positive - it's a park Kwantes doesn't have to mow. By the way, how did this "pond as park" farce get past Morgan's P&Z appointee Councilmember Judy Jepsen? Remember the Mayor just had to get Brian DeFriese off the P&Z board and get Jepsen on because ....We forgot; why did he urgently need her on the P&Z board?

Watch for the grand opening of Sooter Park. Mom and Dad can park the car under someone's laundry line and break out the picnic basket while the kids swim out to the swings. If they can hold their breath long enough they can shoot some hoops.

### **The WaCo Snag - No news is not necessarily good news.**

Watch your local paper for more "no news" about the WaCo Landfill deal. Another great "business" deal brought to you by our City Administration, "Run Government Like a Business Enterprises." After City Administrator Butz, Mayor Morgan and

County Commissioner Verkamp got the county and the mayors of Phelps County towns (aka the Phelps County Landfill Board) to jump on the WaCo bandwagon in March, the \$300,000 non-refundable deposit was supposed to be handed over in a matter of days so they wouldn't lose out on what Butz calls a "gold mine." But on April 9<sup>th</sup> at the very moment John Butz was giving the WaCo "everything is going fine" update to the council, Channel 6 was broadcasting the Sullivan public meeting on the WaCo Landfill and all hell was busting loose. It seems the citizens of Sullivan thought the idea of paying \$37 million for 300 acres of pasture in some other county was just plain stupid. How come the people in Sullivan are so smart?

The latest word on WaCo is that the WaCo landfill board, aka Municipal Solid Waste Corporation (MSWC), has been meeting, but the contract with WaCo Landholding still hasn't been signed. The phony landfill business plan, which was manipulated by Derrick Standley, is undergoing emergency revisions. The first two cells, they just discovered, will cost an extra \$2 million. It wasn't hard to predict this would happen. When we opened the "Due Diligence" document and found Maxim Engineering and Standley didn't know how to spell "proforma" it was not a good sign. So now they're busy trying to get WaCo Landholding to take only a \$6 million down payment instead of \$8 million so they can squeeze out enough money to get this white elephant off the ground. The Attorney General, one of the designated heirs to this mega-million dollar boondoggle, must be frantic.

In the meantime, someone looked up the case law (why did they not do this before they started throwing our money around?) and found that in 1994, it was determined that deals exactly like the one they are setting up have already been ruled to be illegal, by no less an authority than the United States Supreme Court. All subsequent attempts to get around the SC ruling have also been declared

illegal, unconstitutional and even discriminatory by several U.S. District and Appeals courts. What do Butz and MSWC need to convince them – a burning bush?

For MSWC to adjust the phony “performa” for this project is like stopping to repair a car that has a ticking time bomb in the trunk. All they’re doing is creating a lawsuit that they can’t possibly win and wasting millions in the process.

On April 17, 2001, the City of Sullivan voted to repeal the ordinance to participate in the WaCo Landfill Corporation and the ordinance to contribute \$60,000 for membership in the Municipal Solid Waste Corporation. So it looks like the City of Sullivan has backed out. WHO WILL BE NEXT?

**No, the school levy issue isn’t over.**

Four days after we published the administrative contracts, the NEWS paper finally did the coverage they promised they would do before the election. However, they again left out the full story on Ewing’s three-year contract and tried to focus only on his first year \$109,000 salary; we are supposed to pretend we don’t know he will make \$115,000 by the third year. Ewing still tried to divert attention by pointing out that all of the administrators together ONLY got a 4.1% increase. Is there anyone who hasn’t figured out that 4% of their really big salaries is a whole lot more cash than 10% of anyone else’s salary?

**The 2005 Levy Kicker.** Now the school board’s problem is how to hang on to their new 80-cent increase when the old 69-cent special levy expires in March 2005. The 69-cent levy was approved by a slim margin in 1987, but it was only for 18 years. The 69-cent tax will “sunset” or automatically drop off our tax bills UNLESS (pay close attention to this part) the school board puts it on the ballot and asks us to vote YES to keep paying that tax permanently. By that time, all those people who didn’t read carefully and thought the tax

would only cost them \$8.20 a year will be suffering from sticker shock as the impact of the levy increase shows up calculated on the new, higher reassessed property values. Do you think the school board can pull off the same trick twice?

**NSN Mailbag.** When we printed the news about Larry Ewing’s golden parachute it brought only one irate protest. We’d like to know if using school property and school time for personal correspondence is a violation of school policy\*.

Here is the unedited e-mail correspondence:

Date: Tue, 24 Apr 2001 08:37:38 -0500  
 From: "Shanda Cash"  
 <ShandaC@rolla.k12.mo.us>  
 To: <rwnash@rollanet.org>  
 Subject: Re: PAC MAN Mugs Easter Bunny!

I have several points to make w/you. First, being that you have way too much time on your hands. Second, his total raise over a 3 year period is only approximately 6.5%. Myself & many others will be getting much larger raise percentages than that. Third, Larry Ewing & his salary & benefits & memberships & whatever else you went on about is no different than any other superintendents packages w/maybe a few minor tweaks. & it is certainly a lot less than a CEO (which is what he is) of a privately owned company of this size.

& Fourth, unfortunately there are always people like you that continually strive to undermine something that is good & right. The tax levy will help many people in this area & not just school employees. It will roll over into the community & least of all it will help our children. I for one think that Larry Ewing is a fine leader & superintendent. He was great as our leader throughout the entire tense time before the election & I’m sure will continue to do so. So, maybe people like you ought to just say "Thank You" & not worry about what others have. Before you try to

clean someone else's kitchen you ought to try cleaning up your own. (end)

Thanks, Shanda, for sharing that with us. The image of Larry as "CEO" and "Great Leader" had not occurred to us.

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\*The It's Worth It Committee set a bad example by breaking state law during the campaign. **RSMo 115.646:** No contribution or expenditure of public funds shall be made directly by any officer, employee or agent of

any political subdivision to advocate, support, or oppose any ballot measure or candidate for public office. This section shall not be construed to prohibit any public official of a political subdivision from making public appearances or from issuing press releases concerning any such ballot measure.

Furman warning letter:  
[http://www.rollanet.org/~rwnash/Furman\\_letter\\_to\\_Butz.PDF](http://www.rollanet.org/~rwnash/Furman_letter_to_Butz.PDF)

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