

NSN EXPRESS

A PUBLICATION FROM THE OUTLAW CITY OF THE OZARKS
A No Standing News Special Edition / Fast reading for busy people

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Oink if you love the new J teacher. Having no teaching certificate and no teaching experience, RDN reporter Amy Wilson, was hired by the school board by a one to four vote (two abstentions) to teach journalism and English. Bass, Rapier, Strassner and Kippenberger cast the votes that hired her – a much too obvious pay back for Wilson's help in trashing their opponents in the last election and for packing every issue of the paper with school photos and good news stories to get the 80-cent levy passed. Wilkerson voted against this odorous serving of pork but Blum and Burns chickened out by abstaining. Why? It was a simple yes or no question. An abstention is only legitimate if there is direct personal or pecuniary interest such as, not voting on your wives' pay raises and other benefits. Except in those special situations elected officials don't have the right to cop out on any vote.

Is this an example of the "quality teachers" we were promised when our school taxes were raised? We thought the teaching certificate was some kind of minimum professional standard but apparently it isn't. Didn't Burkbuegler have other better-qualified applicants for this job? Were there 98,000 brand new reasons why he "recommended" Wilson for the job?

The dimmest bulb of all. At the June 3rd Rolla City council meeting there was an encore infomercial by RMU manger Dan Watkins to explain again why it is reasonable for you to sit in the dark while paying \$800,000 a year for generators he can't use to turn on your lights. After hearing his dodgy answers to a few council questions it became obvious that they should have asked those questions when Watkins and Dain Ward first pitched the \$8 million purchase. Their glowing promises of big profits and reliable power backup for Rolla are what we said they were at the time – lies to con the council and mayor into signing the contracts they didn't bother to read and didn't want to strain their brains to understand.

On July 1st a summer storm blew the town out again, fires started and someone was trapped in the hospital elevator. On July 2nd a few more raindrops fell and the electric went out on the city wells...and so it goes. Let's hope RMU has an ample supply of glue and baling wire.

The Jell-O Jail. When the jail project first ran on the rocks because Corky Stack couldn't get the steel measured correctly, there were threats to sue him but the county commissioners let him excuse his way out of it. At that point the project could still be salvaged and moved somewhere

else without much financial loss. Presumably, some costs could have been recovered at that stage by suing the engineer - assuming they required a performance bond or that he could provide proof of insurance – an assumption that can't safely be made when it comes to any good ole' boy public construction around here. One of the deficiencies the inspection team noted was the lack of handicapped accessibility. How on earth can any architect or engineer "forget" to put handicapped access in a brand new public building? We don't know why the county commissioners; Verkamp, Dean and Klossner are still hesitating, if ever someone deserved a lawsuit Corky does. We should all be grateful to whoever blew the whistle on this disaster to the state engineering board. Can you imagine trying to keep prisoners locked up in a two-story jail that vibrates hard enough to shatter concrete every time a train goes by? Prisoners wouldn't have to break out of our Jell-O Jail – they'd have to hang on to keep from *falling* out of it.

The Brewer blunder. At the same meeting a resolution was passed for the city to issue revenue bonds for the Brewer Science expansion. This too was something that the council members should have asked more questions about but we can't fault them for not knowing what questions to ask on a bank loan deal – city officials aren't elected to be in the banking business and that's why the council should have turned this down. If you own a business in Rolla pay close attention to how this is done because if the council can do this for Brewer Science they can do it for any local business – you can get all your old debt rolled into a new 3% note from the city and get a new building just like Terry Brewer did. The question that the council members should have asked but didn't is this: "Why aren't they getting a business loan at the bank like everyone else? If local banks won't loan to Brewer Science we probably shouldn't be doing it either." The council had "job creation" dangled in front of them so they wouldn't think of these things and they took the bait. Terry Brewer has gotten lots of government money over the years based on promises to create jobs –did anyone check on how well or poorly he has kept previous job creation promises? They were also told that in case of a default on the loan they wouldn't have to pay back the bonds – no fault, no foul. See Virginia, there is a free lunch after all. More on the 'free lunch' later.

Run it like a business? For years the popular (but erroneous) bumper sticker panacea in Rolla and elsewhere has been that "government should be run like a business."

Like which business, Enron, WorldCom or Arthur Andersen? Even our gullible school board plays at 'corporate governance' spoon fed to them by a corporate guru whose theories have now been totally discredited. Having a Bizness Mayor and a council that let themselves be dragged into all these enterprise activities has put the taxpayers in debt and in competition with private health clubs, day care providers, (tried and failed to takeover) a TV station, set up an wasteful super-corporation for a regional landfill scam that collapsed and now they're in the banking business. What next, city car and truck sales, city restaurants or city dry cleaners? The Chamber of Commerce should be protesting their taxpaying members are being forced to finance business competition from their own government, but it's real hard for the Chamber to work up a fit of righteous indignation when they're holding a tin cup for their own tax subsidy from the city.

It's time for our governments to run like tax financed governments and public schools to be run like public schools. The daily business of picking up trash, maintaining infrastructure, educating kids and keeping order is not as glamorous as playing at being puffed up corporate executives but now we see their role models for what they were all along, empty suits out to line their pockets at anyone's expense. It's time for our local officials to quit imitating bizness bozos and just do what they are supposed to do, take care of the unglamorous but necessary daily housekeeping details of running public – not private – sector services.

Rehiring Beger and Bushie. In related business the city attorney(s) were rehired without having solicited competing proposals from other lawyers; their hourly rate was jacked up from \$90 to \$120 an hour. Beger and Bushie are so reliable; they can be relied on to sit in silence while the council lurches from one disaster to another and they can always be counted on to supply a specious "legal opinion" justifying doing whatever the backroom gang wants to do. Why should Beger & Bushie advise the council to be prudent or cautious when they make a lot more dough cleaning up council messes and facilitating silly projects like a regional landfill.

Many years ago Circuit Judge John Wiggins was the city attorney. When he saw the council was running off the rails with some cockamamie idea he would stop them right in the meeting and explain why it wasn't legal or what the probable legal consequences would be of the choice they were about to make. The council then could either avoid a mistake or go ahead and make one - but at least they knew what the consequences were. It was a useful educational process that served the public and the council well. The council hasn't had that kind of help from any city attorney since.

Good on Bob! Representative Bob May learned how very partisan our non-partisan school employees are when he was hammered by Rolla school personnel for his opposition to raiding the state's "Rainy Day Fund" to cater to the demands of the school lobby. "Pac Man Ewing" (thankfully now our ex-Superintendent), sent the staff a memo last month instructing them to land hard on Rep. May for his refusal to beggar the state for the benefit of the K-12 lobby. As we are all aware from the spending binge of the last few months, fiscal prudence is not considered a virtue in our school district. Wyman Principal Jeannie Cavender enthusiastically complied with the "trash Bob May" order and received special praise in the memo from Boss Ewing. Maybe Johnny Can't Read because school employees spend too much time politicking on district time instead of doing their jobs?

The School Board at Play - June

(Just spending money isn't work, when they start working we'll let you know.)

- NSN finally received the long awaited state Fire Marshall's report. As anticipated they decided the administration building burned due to a squirrel carelessly smoking in bed.
- Jerry Giger, the \$90,000 a year curriculum director, wanted and got money to pay teachers for being on the curriculum committee. Before the ink was dry on his new letterhead Jerry had expanded his turf from 8 assistants to 14, so now 14 other people are doing his job. What will Jerry want next and how much will it cost us?
- Giger also reported that he asked the faculty if they wanted to eat up large amounts of teaching time by *voluntarily* giving the MAP tests next year despite the fact that they have a waiver and don't have to give them. Their answer was a resounding NO! Either the teachers are smarter than we thought or Giger is dumber.
- The board will take private donations from some parents so six girls can learn to play golf. Wilkerson and Blum protested private funding of "free public education" because there is no guarantee that the board can pay for golf next year but they were out voted by the Gang of Four: Bass, Rapier Strassner and Kippenberger. **Quiz:** Six parents put up \$6,000 for the "free" public school golf class. Fifteen girls want to play golf. The class only takes six students. Whose daughters will be picked to be on the golf team?
- The board passed the new '03 budget without a question. The budget process is the same as before. The board gets a big thick document they don't understand. They don't read it but they approve it anyway. Immediately after that they start approving new spending proposals that weren't in it.

- They gave Westbrook a blank check to make budget adjustments for an unknown amount of changes to the fund balances because he said he couldn't get the books closed until after the end of the fiscal year. A characteristic exit for Westbrook; making excuses to the very end for not getting his job done.

Trailer trash. The trailers to accommodate the new all day K program have arrived. The one at Mark Twain is parked too close to the edge of the sidewalk and busy Salem Ave. It is also crammed so close to the old trailer that emergency services could not easily get children out in an emergency. Why has this dangerous condition been deliberately created? The board, members Bass and Rapier in particular, made it clear when they voted for the program that they wanted the trailers squeezed into the front yards of Truman and Mark Twain schools to compound the eyesore. They intend to use this to create a public demand for the new elementary school - the one that voters have already turned down three times. The safety of the children who will be in those trailers never crossed their minds. If this ploy doesn't get voters to give them the money they want, next you will see tarpaper shacks in the middle of the street.

Ask any school board member why the trailers aren't parked on the 7+ acres in back of Mark Twain and they will repeat the silly excuse they were given; that there is bedrock back there so they can't run sewer lines to Soest Road. Wake up people, this is the Ozarks, there's bedrock everywhere. Are the houses behind Mark Twain (sitting on the same bedrock) using privies? They will also say that **they can park any place they want to because the school district isn't subject to city codes.** None of our school board members over the years have bothered to check to see if that was true or not. It isn't true.

One of our readers called the city codes department and found out they too have bought into the fiction that they aren't allowed to inspect school buildings. They explained it was because, "they (the schools) are a higher municipal power." What bunk! The state fire marshal's office was contacted, they said there is no state code for public buildings therefore school and all other public buildings ARE subject to local municipal code. DESE was contacted and they said the same thing – **school districts are not immune from health, safety and construction rules - they have to obey local codes.** The convenient fable explains why the admin and other buildings renovated with the 1987 special tax didn't have sprinkler or alarm systems. It also explains why the school board got away with wasting \$350,000 on a decrepit church that also doesn't meet code for a public building. What other construction, plumbing and wiring in our school buildings is sub standard? What other patched up wires may start another fire?

If city electrical codes had been used when the schools and admin building were remodeled in 1987, if all changes

since then had been inspected by the city annually, the jury-rigged wiring might not have burned the administration building. The Fire Marshall may have danced around about it (it wouldn't be smart to cause the school trouble getting their insurance check) but his report reveals that the fire was due to letting some incompetent employee rig up non-code wiring in the ceiling instead of having a qualified electrician do it in compliance with code. Now that both the state and DESE, two "higher authorities," have confirmed that *local codes do apply to all school buildings*, the question parents should be asking before school opens is: *"When is the school board going to move the Mark Twain trailers to the rear, get each school a full codes inspection and start giving more thought to the safety of our children than to their cheap political tactics?"* Even if the board believed the myth about their alleged immunity nothing prevented them from requesting the city do a full codes inspection of all buildings after the fire but it didn't even cross their minds, they were much too busy finding new digs for their board meetings and handing out executive raises.

Aren't these the same board members who told us to "do it for the children" when they wanted our money? In the admin building we only lost papers that the state auditor needed for the audit, but in the other buildings we have 4,000 children. Risking even one child is unthinkable - it's also grounds for one hell of a lawsuit against a negligent school board and city.

Kiefer's good try. At the July 1st council meeting, Councilman Harry Kiefer scored some important points even though he lost the vote to restore Buehler Park to the zoning classification it had before Conan the Barbarian (a/k/a Joe Morgan), Buz Harvey and the Chamber decided to sell it to dude up the Chamber Tourism premises. Thanks to Kiefer's efforts several things were made clear. Joe still thinks he has the right to sell anything in the city. If it has no value to him then he will try to turn a buck on it. Any future attempt to sell Buehler or any other public park will be an iffy proposition for Mayor Joe. Half the council voted against the mayor, so they must finally get it. Representatives of the people are supposed to listen to the people – not the mayor and commercial exploiters. The real estate exploiters must finally get it because Joe complains that they won't 'front' another offer for Buehler Park. Now if Ken Kwantes would quit removing the play equipment from our parks, the public might be able to use them again.

Developer rewrites city subdivision code. At the June 17th meeting the city council turned the engineering department over to Mike Woessner and let him write his own code for his new development on 10th street. This retirement development has units crammed in so tight that if you put it on wheels it would be a trailer court. Woessner made the city sign a contract in which he told them what development ordinances he would follow and which he wouldn't! Then he

made them agree that whenever he wanted an inspector they would get one to him within 15 minutes. The city council should have torn up the contract in disgust but after Williams and Magdits lodged protests over this arrogance and the abject capitulation by the contract 'negotiators' Butz, Petersen and Hargis, the rest giggled and simpered as they laid down and rolled over for Woessner. The Woessner Precedent nullified all subdivision regulations in Rolla because, as Magdits pointed out, they will now have to do the same for everyone else. Next time you want to enclose your carport and they hit you with permit fees, rules and regulations, just say, "No, I won't follow the rules. I want to 'negotiate' a deal like Mikey's."

What do city codes apply to? During the discussion of the Buehler Park rezoning Petersen jumped up to make points

with the Boss by telling the council that, **"city government is not necessarily bound by (their own) zoning regulation"...** Their codes DON'T apply to the city, they DON'T apply to the hospital, they DON'T apply to developers, (especially Mikey) they DON'T apply to school buildings... in fact, they apply to so few groups it's hardly worth having codes at all. It's odd that in other communities, school districts, hospitals, churches and other public entities conform to their local codes and are inspected and cited for noncompliance. Developers in other towns are made to conform to building and safety codes and exemption's are hard to get, that is probably why other towns look cleaner, neater and have much less of that half-done hillbilly look. And they wonder why Rolla is widely known as the "The Outlaw City of the Ozarks."

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