

NSN EXPRESS

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The Saga of “The Modest Man” • Merchants of Hype • The Caboose irony • More faggots for the Murphy fire • The “turkey” deal for Benton school • Buy High, Sell Low Strategy • Taking the fall • Missing reports • Beger/Bushie opinion.

“The Modest Man”. The RDN full color picture below the fold on Sunday, November 3, 2002, was of Jr. Hi principal Dr. Stephen Laub. The headline read, **“Laub is national finalist for Principal of the Year.”** It should have read, **“Laub WAS national finalist.”** This vanity piece was carefully worded to leave the reader with the impression that Laub was in hot contention for this award from the MetLife insurance company but that was not true. Six days before the article appeared, a national press release dated October 29, '02, announced the award had been given to Mrs. Patricia Kinney from Talent, Oregon. Naturally, all nominees would have been notified well before the press release so Laub knew and the RDN “staff writer”, an RHS student, should have checked all the facts. The article was a paean of praise for Laub who, after returning from his nomination interview, was described as having *“reassumed his role as the modest man who helped RJH achieve the Gold Star Award.”* PI-I-I-ease! Whose idea was it to write this flack piece for “the modest man” and call it news?

MetLife’s marketing division churns out hundreds of these “outstanding something of the year” awards every year. It’s cheap advertising and it boosts insurance sales. Candidates can nominate themselves or someone else can do it. This Gold Star Award “the modest man” is credited with achieving is State Farm’s “outstanding something of the year” award so they too can boost insurance sales. Laub may have lost the competition he says he “thrives” on because of one particular MetLife selection criteria requiring that the nominee tell how he: *“ensures the school climate is positive and reflects high staff and student morale.”* Pretty hard to meet that criteria if you were hauled before the school board for violation of school policy AC-R, (the policy forbidding sexual harassment) and put on probation* during the selection process. The campaign to rehabilitate Laub’s tarnished image was kicked off in an editorial by admirer Amy Wilson, (formerly RDN staff, now teaching journalism at RHS) right after his disciplinary action on January 24th. Laub’s nomination process has now been front-page news for eleven months. If we concede that he is The Outstanding “Something” of the Year can we hope to be spared further episodes in the saga of “the modest man”? Probably not while there are more nomination forms to be downloaded.

[*NSN01_85.pdf](#) **“EWING SABOTAGES TEACHERS ADMIN 'TEAM' WINS AT BOARD "CASINO NIGHT", see: “Policy AC-R”.**

The Merchants of Hype. Someday it would be nice to read something – anything - from an official source in Rolla and not have to re-read it very carefully to pick out the sly half-truths and deceptions. A solicitation letter from the Recreation for Everyone Foundation, like the article about Laub, is another example of how to give the public “facts” without actually resorting to them. In updating us on “Rolla’s newest successes” they claim the recreation center *“has exceeded 2100 members which is five years ahead of projections!”* The announcement that the Rec Center is a huge financial success will come as a surprise to the council who are sweating bullets over how to cover the impending deficit. It may be technically true that they have 2100 live persons with membership cards but if they do, many of those members still need Mommy to tie their shoes. In real money terms, that isn’t the same thing as having 2100 adults who each paid a \$450 annual fee. When Klitzing and Morgan submitted their creative financial report on the Rec Center to the council they claimed they didn’t know how many of the members get discounted or free memberships. The math is simple, every year they need at least 2300 members paying \$450 each or the cash equivalent in single, youth, free and discounted memberships to cover the \$900,000 to \$1.2 million annual overhead. The problem with being a hype merchant is that someday when you resort to telling the truth– will anyone believe you?

The Caboose Irony. At the November 4th council meeting J.D. Williams asked Administrator Butz if it was true that the “judge” the council has been trying to please by closing streets and screwing up traffic in town wasn’t a real judge but merely some Jefferson City bureaucrat? Butz admitted that was true. The “Judge” he has been frightening the council with is merely a guy on the state payroll. We may have been unfair to “Judge” Graham in our previous comments. It now looks as if he didn’t take a sudden freak and decide to forbid left turns at 7th and Elm he was only rubberstamping what was “proposed by this application”.

Butz and Hargis filled out the applications for safety upgrades at the crossings.

Butz claims that the restriction was demanded by the railroad and in the “minds” of the railroad barons the 7th street crossing is dangerous because they claim there have been three accidents there since 1972 but neither Butz nor Hargis knew when they happened or what kind of accidents they were. Butz argues the railroad’s case like he was on *their* payroll. Is it asking too much to expect Rolla employees take Rolla’s side in an issue? Judy Jepson declared that the problem was “people just have to learn new habits” and be as happy as she is to take a three block detour. We need “retraining” she says. (With an attitude like that Rosa Parks would still be riding in the back of the bus) Councilman Matt Williams suggested that Beger and Bushie look into the possibility of appealing the most noxious parts of the “judicial ruling”. This should be interesting.

Why are these new blocked roads and traffic barriers so obnoxious? Can’t we all just “learn new habits” as teacher says? No we can’t because this is Rolla, a relatively quiet rural town that still has a laid-back quality of life and we want to keep it that way as long as possible. It shouldn’t take a satellite navigation device to figure out how to get from home to the barbershop. If we wanted to be driven nuts by irrational detours (and weird bump-outs) invented by maniacal traffic bureaucrats we might as well be living in St. Louis.

The Caboose Irony? Well, next time you’re at the crossing at 7th and Elm and have to turn right four times to go left, detour through the new Festival Lot where a Burlington Northern Memorial Caboose has been enshrined at public expense so you can pay homage to the corporation that calls the shots in Rolla. We not only kowtow to their demands we pay for the privilege of advertising for them. The plastic jackasses are looking smarter all the time.

Butz throws more fuel on the Murphy bonfire Not content with firing Murphy and denying him a due process hearing on the lame excuse that he was a city officer and therefore not entitled to a hearing (former Chief Oliver was also a city officer but he got a hearing when he was fired); Butz is now trying to block Murphy from collecting unemployment. Butz sent a letter to the unemployment board contesting Murphy’s claim. Butz is trying to bring Murphy, who has a wife and premature baby, to his knees so that he will agree to sign the paper exonerating the arresting officers and the city. Trying to starve out your formerly “outstanding” employee and his family is about as low as you can go – at least we think that’s as low as this sorry affair can go but we’ve been wrong before. We wonder what will ooze out from under city hall next? If these new accusations are discredited by Murphy and his lawyers it will make the liability the city is already facing in his bungled case just that much more expensive. Did the council

agree to this? If they did are they so dim that they think this is going to make their actions look better?

Least our readers get the impression NSN has become a Dan Murphy Advocacy publication we assure you it has not. We remind you we have had our differences with Murphy many times but our criticism was based on his actions as a public employee, not an attack on his personal character or his family. Our interest in the “Murphy Treatment” is based on how badly administration has handled this personnel issue and why because if they can do this to Murphy they can, or maybe already have done the same to other employees who are not able to fight back as Murphy has. To city employees who are watching the “Murphy Treatment” with great uneasiness, we recommend they read **“Your Rights in the Workplace”** (6th edition) by Barbara Kate Repa and then send Butz, Morgan and the council members a copy. Morgan and Butz have demonstrated don’t know or don’t care about good personnel management or the law or fairness and decency. If they can do it to the city finance director they can do it to anyone.

How FOB’s get “well” out of the public purse. Our school board is considering a proposal to rehab the 1909 Benton school for their new administration building. They didn’t include this in their publicized list of “options” in the Saturday meeting but it’s been discussed on the back stairs where a lot of public business is discussed. They will say they’re only “considering” it but the owner is Tom Sowers, FOB (Friend Of a Board member(s)) so you know it’s more than just a casual suggestion. We have a long tradition around here of helping friends out of the public purse. Ed Owsley arranged for the taxpayers to buy the current city hall so Gene Sally and Ken Lanning could unload their speculative investment. The city and First Star Bank (under one of their previous AKA’s) helped the former Mayor Ferrell out of a serious financial bind by selling his building to the city for eight times what it was worth. This April the mayor and council will put up a bond issue to build a road there isn’t any pressing need for so he and other land speculators can open up more real estate developments on the Southside. The city’s subdivision development ordinance allows every developer to give the city a couple of thousand dollars (Kwantes, the expert in land appraisal, sets the price) in lieu of giving land in a new development for a neighborhood park. The lot the developer has ransomed for \$2,000 from becoming a neighborhood park he can sell for \$30,000 and pocket the difference. (Little kids don’t need neighborhood parks. They can go to a park when they’re old enough to drive to one.) Corky Stack got two big county projects by a method that bears not the faintest resemblance to competitive bidding, the school board used a donation from Mrs. Bray as an excuse to buy swampland for a soccer field and billed it as all her money and a board member’s church congregation was paid far more than their old church was worth for the “emergency” administration building. All

things considered, that's quite a sleazy record for one small town so it's no surprise that the school board is entertaining a bailout for Tom Sowers' investment in the crumbling Benton school.

Sowers is offering them a "turnkey package" He and Hogan will fix the old building up and sell it to them as a "turnkey" deal; the rehab work will be part of the package price. This way the board won't have to get public bids from contractors, which would expose the real condition of the building and how much money will be wasted on it. Take the "n" out of "turnkey" and you have a more accurate description of this deal.

The buy high, sell low strategy. What about the other old building, the church at 8th and Main they just bought a few months ago for \$375,000 you ask? The new architect told them no matter what you do to an old church it will always look like an old church (Didn't Dana Rapier tell them it had that funny pointy roof before they bought it?). The lead paint and asbestos loaded building can't be renovated for any reasonable cost. That was quite obvious when Ewing and Westbrook started pushing it for pre-school and all-day kindergarten site over a month before the fire suddenly made it an "emergency" purchase. They've now found that the "perfectly suitable building" isn't "perfectly suitable" at all. They don't like sitting down in a moldy church basement to have their meetings and they don't like sitting up in the drafty sanctuary to have their meetings. The Taj Mahal that burned down was more...you know... executive and didn't have a funny pointy roof. So the new plan is to sell the old church (in their dreams) and they have an offer of \$250,000 for the old administration lot at 6th and Main. Add that to the insurance money and they can build something they like better. The property at 6th and Main is a whole block on the busiest street in town with access on three sides; it's prime commercial property. Smaller, high traffic properties have sold for a half-million and much more but the school board is considering an offer for half that? That's our school board - buy high, sell low.

Taking the fall. The reappointment of Bill Moorkamp to the Rec Center Advisory Committee comes just in the nick of time. The Rec Center has this business committee invented by Morgan, a bastardized version of a park board. It has no power, no public participation, no accountability and reports only to the mayor - from Joe's point of view that makes it the ideal public board. The alleged business acumen of the RCAC has done nothing to divert the impending financial disaster estimated to be in the neighborhood of \$600,000. With Klitzing's escape the RCAC will take the fall for not meeting the mayor's 100% recapture promise to the voters. Moorkamp, the "visionary" behind this over-built money-guzzling monster, has just been appointed to the RCAC. Who says there's no justice in this life?

Missing reports. We notice some follow-up reports are missing from public meetings.

One MIA report would have been on the Phelps County Gazebo, why the Phelps County Commissioners haven't reported to the public why the jail construction was restarted, whether the plasterboard will pop off the walls every time a train passes, how much over budget the project is and when Corky is going to pay for it. But in the November 19th issue of the Rolla Daily News, reporter Bill Morrison did an excellent job of probing all angles of this disgusting waste of public money. If you missed the Monday paper it's worth getting one.

The Chamber of Commerce has given up all pretense of bringing tourists to Rolla and with it all pretense of reporting to the council on what they're really spending the tourism tax money for – salaries, travel, cabooses, plastic mules?

The school board and administration (especially the new Curriculum Director) have never admitted they have this year's MAP and SAT scores much less explained to us why they are not better than last year. They are, however, very preoccupied planning construction projects in which education is supposed to happen so they don't have time to explain why the education that is happening isn't happening very effectively.

Butz has never reported on how much money he squandered on his WaCo wild goose chase. He said he was "negotiating" to get the deposit back. Presumably that negotiation was as successful as the ones he has had with the railroad.

Update - The Beger/Bushie Opinion. (Council meeting Monday, November 18) Beger and Bushie gave their written opinion to the council that it's too late to appeal the order of the administrative "judge." They said it's too late because the rules require the appeal to be filed within 30 days of the order. They *didn't* tell the council that the Supreme Court Rules Governing Civil Procedure in the Circuit Courts (rule 44.01 (b)) has always allowed an "enlargement" of those time limits for good cause; good cause simply means having a good attorney who can make a good argument – not the case here. Beger and Bushie, as we expected, didn't tell the council what all their options were they just told them what they couldn't do. Their "opinion" lacks in objectivity but it does demonstrate why Morgan makes sure his pet lawyers get the city contract and a nice raise every year. They declare the city isn't "aggrieved" (not fact just their opinion) and the case isn't a "contested" case because the council, as is their habit, blindly authorized the Mayor in a resolution on August 6, 2001, to agree to anything on their behalf. Morgan, without telling the council what he was doing, agreed to the "No Left Turn" provision, which became official when the administrative judge signed it on December 14, 2001. The order took effect ten days later.

Nine *months* later the council woke up to the details of how Morgan, Butz and Hargis used their authority.

Monday night the council voted 6-4 *against* the ordinance that would make it illegal to turn left at 7th and Elm. Their enlightenment comes too late. Why didn't they make Morgan and Butz report back to them on the exact details of what they were "negotiating" with the railroad before it was too late? Butz and Morgan, in exercising the council's authority and blind trust had an ethical obligation to tell them what was going on even if the council didn't ask for the information. In both this case and the Murphy affair, city administration (the Mayor and Butz) are still pursuing their "don't ask, don't tell" policy. If the council doesn't ask they won't be told. Even when they do ask for more

information they often aren't told *all* the details, just the ones Butz and Morgan decide they need to know.

It's bad enough that the council always falls for the cop-out "Resolution of Authorization" that leave it to the Mayor and City Administrator to "work out the details" – details the council members are responsible for and have no right to delegate. It's even worse that they don't exercise any oversight to follow-up on how their authority is being used. The lesson is obvious; never give your credit card to teenagers with little wit and less judgment.

Morgan and Butz will shove this ordinance on the agenda as many times as it takes until the council does pass it. They will do it because Beger told them the Boogeyman will come after them with injunctions and drag the council off in chains if they don't do as they are told.

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