

No Standing News

Since we have no standing, we stand with those left standing

Volume II

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Rolla District Has 6-Day “Blow-Off Education” Holiday for Seniors; City Council to get court order to examine their own dirt

What no macramé? RHS seniors received a survey to fill out just before Christmas break. For six days from April 13-April 21, instead of getting an education they can participate in their choice of any 2 of 16 activities offered each day such as: Tie Dying T-shirts, Chinese cooking, Karaoke, Frisbee, Volleyball at Vessell’s, hiking, bowling, swimming at The CENTRE, fishing, a 50’s Beach Party & 70’s Disco Dancing, Drive-in Theater at RHS, Tour the Marguerite Bray Conservation Area (Is that the muddy soccer pit on 10th street?) and other non-academic entertainment. (We are *not* making this up - who could?) There are a few academic choices on the list such as attending RTI/RTC classes and A+ tutoring but only one chance each for AP Calculus, Chemistry or English review. Students are not required to pick any of these slim academic offerings during the six days of summer camp. Just as well, how can education compete with beach parties and Karaoke?

School Board: “Will lie for cash.” During this 6 day period, when students are not learning anything their parents hope they are learning and they are not learning anything taxpayers have paid for them to learn, the board and administration will be *lying to the state by counting all the partying seniors ‘present’ in school so they can collect the daily student bounty payment from the state.* Except for some fees such as \$4 for materials to make a Country Kitchen Paper Towel Rack (part 1 of 3) all the expenses of “Blow-off Education Week” will be borne by the stupid taxpayers who stupidly believed their new and improved tax burden (over 90% of our local property taxes) was desperately needed to pay teachers to *educate* students. Sure fooled us didn’t they?

Why is our board and administration providing six days of summer camp instead of six days of education? Well, it seems this was the brain storm of **H.S. Principal Roger Berkbugler** (\$98,200+) and organized by **Asst. Principal Bonnie Brainard** (\$64,294+) to keep the seniors in school for income purposes (but not actually *in school* if you get the distinction) while teachers who are supposed to be teaching senior classes help give the MAP tests. Last time they tried aromatherapy, sucking peppermints and kiwi fruits to get better scores but that didn’t work so this time it’s all hands on deck to give the MAP tests. Why it will help boost the MAP test scores to have a few more teachers giving the test while the seniors party is a mystery understood only by those in administration.

Board sanctioned truancy. Students who skip school are usually punished - often severely. They have been punished

with detention or suspension from school; at times have had their diplomas withheld for ditching school. If some seniors skip out after signing up to make a Mosaic Trivet, what will they be charged with...Incomplete Triveting? Are they technically ditching school if the school is... technically ditching school? Some seniors may not be as lucky as they think to get six play days. Some need intensive help to prepare for their Advanced Placement exams and won’t get it, some might have learned something during that week that they will never have a chance to learn again, some might have been able to pull up a failing grade and be able to graduate by a hair. But never mind, they’ll learn other things...like Glass Etching.

What do the teachers think? Well, we don’t know but we can guess that some teachers who care about their profession and their students are fuming at the loss of valuable instructional time while the less dedicated will consider it a welcome holiday from real work. Absent howls of outrage or even a peep of official protest from RCTA (no howls or peeps so far) we must assume that the latter group outnumbers the former. The question isn’t “What do the teachers think?” but, “Do the teachers think?” Allowing their work to be replaced by Tie-dying doesn’t do much to enhance their image as “professionals.”

Remember Adams told the Business Partners when explaining the “Carnage” budget that by underfunding education “*we’re cutting the lifeblood of our future.*” What is it called when they undereducate our ‘lifeblood’ for six days and call it ‘learning’ so they can get the money? Is that called “selling out the lifeblood of our future”?

Board Appreciation Week. On January 8th board meeting the **Rolla Community Teacher’s Association** (RCTA) came to one of the few school board meetings they bother to attend each year to express their appreciation to the board. The ceremony takes the form of presenting fancy bags of gifts for each board member, accompanied by a speech and a rhyming poem of praise written and read aloud by a member of the RCTA. Neither the poetry nor the performance would get a passing grade in any good English class, but it’s the thought that counts, isn’t it? The school board members bask in this lavish flattery and then, the show is over till next year. The RCTA Appreciation Delegation scurries out because they have no interest in sitting through the rest of the school board meeting to hear what their employers are doing that might affect their classes or employment. Two weeks later at the January 22nd “workshop” the board continued their discussion

of how many of the poem-reading, praise-singing, board-appreciating RCTA members will lose their jobs or have their remaining classes crammed with students. To say that the RCTA is a toothless organization is an understatement. It's

not just that they annually kiss the hand that's holding a knife to their throats - they don't seem to be aware the hand is holding a knife. It makes you wonder about the survival instincts of the people who are teaching our children.

PASS THE FAT – The Pizza Hut Hypocrisy

Kids today are fat. They pig out on junk food; watch too much TV and don't exercise enough. It's the subject of endless breathless special reports on the news so it must be true. But let's face it - you only have to watch when school is letting out to see the extra pounds of flab here and there. If the experts all say fat kids are the fault of their lousy parents, it must be true - or is it? It seems they have a lot of help from school boards and our school board is no exception. In our case there's more than just fat *in* the school budget there's also fat being purchased *by* the school budget – in one year a grand total of **\$9,931.73** of greasy, porky, cheesy pizzas. That's about 8,888 servings of pizza. The pizza bill for just one day, December 2nd was \$2,623.25! We only mention this because the school board seems unable to find any 'fat' to cut from the budget before they resort to eliminating jobs so this one seems like a no-brainer. Here's a \$10,000 savings that will be positively beneficial to everyone except Pizza Hut and Little Caesar's - but their business problems aren't the school board's responsibility are they?

This perpetual Pizza Party is paid for out of the Student Activity Fund. They tell you the money comes from student fund raisers and fee based activities, "receipts from clubs, classes, athletic gate receipts, etc.," but parents who are forced to pay for all the fee-based activities and fund raising know that one way or another most of it comes out of Mom and Dad's pocket. Mom and Dad might be surprised to find that this year the school board, anticipating the parents unlimited generosity, budgeted the Student Activity Fund at **\$1,657,181**.

Fat Dispensers "for the children." While on the subject of fat children, let's consider the school district vending machines. Depending on the location and the number of machines, the machines in one school can take in over \$8,000 in just five months. If there isn't a pizza party that day, or even if there is, the older students can load up on the maximum daily requirement of empty calories and fat from sodas, chips, and candy before they go home to tell Mom, "I don't want supper, I'm not hungry."

Each building is paid a percentage of sales or a commission from the vending companies for selling soda and junk food. They say the money is used for teacher's dinners and staff functions, student recognition and appreciation

programs and supplies. But the relatively insignificant utility of the vending machine revenues comes at a nutritional price for students. Like the discipline policy, the flock of valedictorians and cutting academic classes instead of administrative pork, the hypocrisy of mixed messages from adults is never lost on our critical teens.

It's a classic parasitic relationship and another illustration of the school board's lack of leadership by example – "Do as I say, not as I do." The school provides students with junk food from school sponsored vending machines; then lecture them about good nutrition. In exchange for selling them sugar, caffeine and fat (some machines do offer juice and less lethal products but the big sellers are sodas), the school gets a percentage of the junk food sales which are spent to feed teachers and 'appreciate' students. They require students to take PE for their health but demand activity fees from parents part of which goes to buy \$10,000 worth of saturated fat pizzas. Educators then bemoan the fact that fat kids prove the parents are lousy because, in addition to not caring about education, they also neglect their offspring's health. Meantime the clueless parents are wondering why their dental bills have escalated since their kids got out of grade school, why they're never hungry for supper and only want to eat junk food. Does the school board ever discuss these insanely contradictory health messages they're sending to students? No. Do they ever discuss their contribution to the future coronary disease, diabetes and tooth decay "of the children"? No they don't discuss that either.

The district isn't entirely insensitive to the flab issue and students, in fact, aren't the only ones who waddle down the hall to hit the fat vending machines and eat hot delivery pizzas. The board budgeted **\$5,604** this year for the faculty "Wellness Program." During this time of fiscal crisis and budget "carnage" this \$5,604 "salary supplement" is paid to some coach or faculty member to monitor after-school aerobics for teachers. It isn't clear if that means someone actually teaches aerobics or just watches while teachers huff 'n puff in the gym. Last year no one could confirm if any of the *four* people who had signed up for this expensive faculty benefit actually showed up to exercise, but the "salary supplement" was paid anyway. This isn't, of course, one of the salaries they're cutting out of the Carnage Budget.

City Council to get court order to test their own dirt?

City hunts for Weapons of Mass Contamination. If they can find just a little oil on the ground of Dean's property from some leaking truck Warren Dean's "butt is toast." The "his

butt is toast" is a quote from **John Petersen** and the Toasted Butt strategy came up in the closed session after the January 19th council meeting. The council huddled with their lawyers

and decided to go on Warren Dean's property to hunt for environmental contamination. Correctly assuming Dean wasn't fool enough to let them enter his property to get evidence to use against him, they also voted to get a judge to force him to submit to their Hunt for Weapons of Mass Contamination after he refused. They claim there *may be* WMC's on Dean's land and if they can find some they think it will help to beat down the price of the land when (if) they get a judge to condemn his property for them. Councilman Barkledge has been bragging that they're going after Dean's home next. These people get real nasty when they're crossed.

We can just imagine the conversation in court:

Judge: "Now, let's see boys, you want me to force Dean to let you come on his property to hunt for some contamination that will lower the value of property of the property you intend to take away from him by eminent domain so you can give the land to Kaplan Co. so they can get rich and give you more sales tax money, is that right?" **City:** "Yes Your Honor that's what we want." **Judge:** "But didn't Mr. Dean invite you several times to come inspect his property?" **City:** "Yes, Your Honor but the Mayor had another temper tantrum and said he didn't want to know what was on Mr. Dean's property. The council - except for Lou Magdits - was afraid to go see for themselves after that because everybody's afraid of Joe's bad temper. Lou snuck over there later and walked around but we didn't get enough off his shoes to prove anything." **Judge:** So this is just a fishing expedition. You have no probable cause to believe that there are Weapons of Mass Contamination on his property?" **City:** No, Your Honor, we're not fishing, we're trying to nail Warren Dean's butt because he's standing in the way of Progress." **Judge:** "You're seizing public taxes from everyone, evicting people from their homes, using eminent domain to subsidize a developer from St. Louis who can't prove he can get the financing or the tenants to sell dry goods to give you more sales taxes. You've got the whole town so riled up they'll probably turn down your April bond issues and you claim *Dean* is the one standing in the way of progress? I'm afraid you'll have to explain that." **City:** "Sure, it's like this Your Honor. If we don't get his property real cheap and do this TIF project, well...it will be The Grits Effect all over again." **Judge:** "The Grits Effect?" **City:** "See, we had a chance to have the best grits 'n gravy joint in the Ozarks. But we didn't want them to locate out by Blue's Lake we wanted to sell them a public park so we could give the money to the Chamber of Decorators and they could pay off their building and have a park for themselves. But people gave us a lot of grief over it and when the grits place found out we couldn't legally sell them the park they went down the road and now all kinds of other businesses have started up there. We figure it's because they have a good grits 'n gravy place and we don't. That's The Grits Effect." **Judge:** "You're telling me that Grits is the reason the Ft. Wood area is expanding and not the huge amount of Federal Impact Funds they get for being one of the biggest training bases in the country?" **City:** "Well, it must be The Grits Effect Your Honor. Since we lost the grits place we've just had no luck at all. We tried building a big recreation center but that bombed, then we tried to get rich investing in a landfill business in

Washington County but we got ripped-off on that. Next we tried getting a caboose and planting petunias in our Festival Lot but no one wants to have Festivals, so we figure it must be because of the Grits. Without good grits you just can't succeed at anything." **Judge:** "So you're telling me Grits are the key to economic development?" **City:** "Right." **Judge:** "I'm sorry I asked. Let's get back to Mr. Dean's property. You realize don't you that if you don't find anything you will have damaged Mr. Dean's business plans, he can sue the city and it's your butt that will be toast?" **City:** "We're not worried Your Honor. We know there's some motor oil somewhere in that fill." **Judge:** "Oh? What makes you so sure?" **City (winking):** "Because it's our fill - we dumped it there."

City Council - always the last to know. The story is made up but the punch line is true. Many people, particularly the SOG committee, have known about the fill for over a year. NSN mentioned in a previous edition that the city had been dumping fill on **Warren Dean's** property. The only people who didn't know what the city was doing were the city council members. At the council meeting on February 2nd, **Brian DeFriese**, former Ward 5 council member and candidate for the Ward 5 seat in April, asked the council why they were going to *get a court order to look for contamination in their own dirt*. (This news gem was pointedly omitted from the RDN council report.) **Councilman Lou Magdits** was astonished and demanded to know if it was true. **Steve Hargis** hemmed and hawed but finally admitted it was. We can safely assume that since at least a majority of the council voted two weeks before in closed session to get this court order, then at least a majority of them were as clueless as Magdits. Of all the dim-witted things the council has done, getting a court order to examine their own dirt ... Stuck on Stupid is what we called them. Stuck on Stupid they will continue to be until they quit giving Butz glowing annual evaluations and raises for repeatedly letting them get smacked with the rubber chicken.

The TIF project is in meltdown. The city council should write off TIF now and save further waste of the taxpayer's money. Tax Increment Financing is a clumsy and ill-advised attempt by administration to apply to a small rural town, a law meant only for hopeless inner city slums. But the council won't cut their losses and move on to more productive issues as long as they think of themselves as part of Morgan's "Administrative Team" rather than our representatives. The law and constitution made them the legislative branch; that's their job description. They're not members of the Mayor's Corporate Board even though he thinks they are and uses them as though they were. The council's duty is to put administration's schemes to the test and when they screw up the council should put the brakes on either by telling him to drop it and move on or, if necessary, by shutting off the money he uses to chase these cure-all development schemes. The mayor has no power to do anything if the council won't write the checks. Their duty is to balance the city budget, but not by using schemes that steal money from other taxing districts. Their duty is to apply the city's shrinking resources

to services that benefit the whole community, not use them to subsidize a St. Louis developer. Forcing this divisive issue down the community's throat may cost them more in April than they're willing to pay. Why should voters pay for Joe's Road while the city council is establishing this new city policy that your property only belongs to you until they decide to take it?

There are only three races this April in Wards 2, 5 and 6 for the six council seats. City voters should ask the challengers this question: "Are you going to be a real council legislator or another member of Morgan's real estate development corporation?"

We regret the error. Due to a typo we misstated the school board's new policy on how they plan to cannibalize the

reserves so they can make payments on the new bond debt. They will not use 10% of reserves each year as the text said; we should have said they will use *1% each year until the reserves are down to 10%*. Specifically, the board agreed to "deficit spend" by \$190,000 this year and \$110,000 next year and continue to do this for the next three or four years until the reserves are down to 10%. They now claim this is necessary because it helps prop up the Carnage Budget plan, but their story last January was that they would have to use the reserves for the next eight years (even though they're making interest-only payments on the debt) because they will be short from \$108,000 to \$900,000 every year on the debt service payments until 2011. We apologize for our error. They should apologize for their poor excuse for a budget policy.

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