

# No Standing News

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

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Serving the Outlaw City of Missouri

**Terry's Big Adventure with Burgundy Demi-Glaze • Legislation for Liars • Piecemeal School Budgeting • What Conflict of Interest Isn't – a story about Sonny's roofing contract • Annie Grabs the Gavel – again • Quest for the Perfect Yuppie Child • Citizens for Drain Pipes • City Audit Committee • Trucks not allowed • The Missing Sugar Tree Road Drugs**

**Terry Adam's Priorities.** Parents and students who naturally expected to see the Superintendent at the April banquet for Rolla students who made the National Honor Society were disappointed. Terry had more important fish to fry, namely his own. Adams was at the Lake presiding over the annual MASA/MOSPRA Spring Conference where Missouri's supers were celebrating getting over 90 schools to raise their local school tax levies in the wake of the scare tactics used in February by Holden and the Education Roundtable. While the Rolla National Honor Society students and their parents were chewing rubber chicken, Terry was enjoying a banquet (paid for by George K. Baum and Co.) of "Herb and Peppercorn Crusted Pork Loin slow roasted and served with a Burgundy Demi-Glaze" topped off with a dessert of "White Chocolate Raspberry Torte" and being entertained by a doctor dressed up like a clown to promote his book, "Why Normal Isn't Healthy." Better grub than the local banquet certainly, but more important than recognizing the achievement of our local scholars? Well, that depends on your priorities.

This unreported annual Missouri Association of School Administrator's (MSBA) and Missouri School Public Relations Association (MSPRA) get together is an elite and private meeting where Missouri school superintendents plan what local 'problems' their local school boards will find out they have during the coming year and what the local 'solutions' will be. One workshop was devoted entirely to handing out the new and improved employment contract for superintendents to use which asked these important questions: "Does your contract protect you and your future?" and "Will your contract stand up if challenged in court?" Isn't it nice of local taxpayers to pay for Terry to go to a seminar to find out how to get more perks out of us and how his MASA lawyers can beat the school district in court if he gets fired? There were workshops on how to lobby for more money, how to deal with lawsuits over the co-curricular policy, how to lobby for more money, how to RIF teachers, how to "Engage an Aging Community," how to "Pass a Levy in Uncertain Times," how to mess with teachers health insurance and how to lobby for more money. The only thing they didn't have on the program was any discussion at all about how to better educate students. Terry Adams was the Chairperson of the conference which may explain the lack. The program and all the great meals they enjoyed can be found at: <http://www.mcsa.org/masa/Programbook.pdf>

**Legislation for Liars.** The school districts that have been whining for more money and crying "carnage" have, we now find, actually been ripping off the system (us) for millions. A bill had to be introduced in both houses to prevent school districts from lying and collecting from \$29 million to \$39 million every year for summer school *classes they don't actually teach*. Think about it. The people who took it upon themselves to teach Character Education to our children because they claim we aren't teaching it at home, have to have a law to make *them* tell the truth.

**The "Carnage" that wasn't.** After the statewide marketing hype about their "carnage" budgets, hundreds of avaricious school executives - our school board and Superintendent Adams among them - made a big deal out of getting their "carnage" budgets ready for the big rally in Jefferson City in February but "carnage" didn't happen. Terry Adams you remember, told the Rolla 'Bizness' Partners last November that budget "carnage" would "drain the lifeblood of our children?" We noticed that in all their statements to the press each Superintendent used the same threatened cuts: athletics, class sizes and jobs, knowing well that those three cuts are the ones that trigger fright in school booster parents the easiest. Being so pressed for time, our school board like most others took the easy route and cut jobs and classes but carefully avoided making any cuts in administration. Now, less than two months after the rally and days after the 90+ new tax levies are safely passed, we find out that not only will the School Foundation formula be funded at the same level or better than last year but Governor Holden has finally released \$127 million of the school money he has been hoarding to create the current artificial budget crisis for this year's budget. The little hitch is that to satisfy the school lobby the Republicans had to take the money out of medical and social services to the poor, blind, sick and elderly. Well, if the poor, sick and elderly want to compete with the Education Roundtable they'll just have to organize their own Carnage Rallies at the capitol. That's a little hard to do if you're blind, sick or in a walker but they'll just have to suck it up and hobble out there next year with their "Carnage" signs.

**Piecemeal School Budgeting.** There's an old, old shaggy dog story about a WW II POW trying to escape back to England one amputated limb at a time that we won't repeat here but it came to mind when we saw the May 13<sup>th</sup> board agenda

included approval of the building and grounds budget for next year. Starting after Christmas the administration periodically presents the board with chunks of the next budget for their approval with the caveat that the board can change it later if they want when it's closer to the budget deadline in June. First the supply budget is voted on, then books, then salaries (with the administrative salaries done in secret), then building and grounds and so on until the last of June when the whole \$36 million budget is finally flopped in front of them. If any board member protests that they only have a few days left to absorb all that and make changes, the comeback is, "But you've already approved 90% of it, the rest is just odds and ends." As long as this distinctive and very queer method of budgeting exists in our school system, management wins, the school board is impotent and might as well skip half the meetings (the half they should be spending on finance) and education loses.

**About Conflict of Interest...** People are quick to identify things as a conflict of interest and their sense of smell is pretty good but they usually give it the wrong label. At the time Morgan proposed the appointment of Bill Morrison to the Police Personnel Board, some councilmen whimpered that they thought it was a conflict of interest. It wasn't C of I because there was no financial gain for either Morrison or Morgan and in this state, money or other financial gain has to change hands for it to be conflict of interest. It was however, an ETHICAL CONFLICT because both had non-monetary gain in mind – in other words, quid pro quo, the mother's milk of politics, "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours." The conflict of interest index has always thrived in Rolla but let's get the terminology straight. There are two kinds of conflict, the legal kind described in state law and the ethical kind. The legal kind requires that an elected or appointed public official do something in his official capacity that enriches himself or a member of his family, including in-laws. The ethical kind is when he does something that enriches or benefits someone who isn't related but which will reap a future favor or benefit of some kind in return; either social, personal or financial. The collection of a non-cash "pay-back" at some distant point in time is difficult to prove but it's much more common and is more corrosive to the body politic than the bald-faced pay-off.

**Example of what Conflict of Interest *isn't*.** Let's say, for instance, the school board is in closed session (illegally) discussing a big building contract and one board member wants to set aside the roofing subcontract to give one bidder more time to submit his bid. He's been disqualified because he had no experience in installing that specialized type of roof and needs more time to find out how to do it and what to charge for it. Let's say the reason this board member wants to give that one bidder such special treatment over the other more qualified bidders who have already revealed their bid prices and material specifics is because the roofer's Mommy is a friend of hers and Mommy wants Sonny to get a high dollar public works job even though it's known that he isn't qualified to do the work. The board member doesn't care that the district might get a bad roofing job which might cost the public a lot in future repairs and could also be a safety

hazard. The reason the board member doesn't care is because there is a quid pro quo here; the roofer's Mommy is in a position to be very, very grateful in other ways. In this example no money changed hands, the board member didn't get a direct financial benefit nor would her relatives, the financial benefit would go to someone unrelated to the board member who is trying to 'fix' the contract. So you see this would not technically or legally be a Conflict of Interest. What it would be is malfeasance by an elected official, a demonstration of arrogance and lack of ethics. In other words, just run-of-the-mill corruption the kind of corrupt practice that should result in the impeachment of the board member.

**Call it what it is.** So let's get our terminology straight folks, if you spot something like that example and it smells, you're probably right but before you slap the handy "Conflict of Interest" label on it, it's more likely you're looking at a condition known as CERD, Chronic Ethical Recognition Disorder. However, the smell alone is a good enough reason to mark that person for removal from office at the earliest opportunity.

**How many times can a chicken cross the road to grab the gavel?** Answer: As many times as she wants. Annie Bass decided she would be the school board president... again. Last year Dana Rapiere was president, the year before that Bass was president, the year before that there was a slip-up and Randy Stratman got to be president, the year before that Rapiere was president and the year before that Annie was president... Annie is not good at sharing her toys.

**Quest for the Perfect Yuppie Child.** We hate to once again be pointing out the flaws in school board policies but it's just irresistible. Their MSBA written policies are often silly and the solutions are worse than the juvenile behaviors they imagine they can "cure." MSBA and our school board seem to have a naïve belief that with if they keep piling on more rules they will stumble upon the right combination to produce perfect Stepford Students. The Nervous Nellies at MSBA dream up these things but the board doesn't have the wit to laugh and throw them in the trashcan. This new policy will forbid students to dye their hair funny colors. Admittedly they look like escapees from the circus but it's just a fad and will pass. However, some MSBA lawyer must have read the latest study from The Association of Anal and Chronically Uptight Home Economics Teachers that proves beyond all doubt that hair dye penetrates the hair follicles and causes them to swell. The swelling then presses upon the undeveloped brains of teens causing the cerebral cortex to be pushed down into their little gonads. The result is a race of alien-like beings in your house with purple and orange hair who whine "But that's not fair!!!" are obsessed with sex, listen to bad music, have phones glued to their ears, and make their parents want to run away from home.

When it comes to hair one can't be too careful. Remember the long-haired students of the last generation had to go all the way to the Supreme Court to get confirmation that regulating the length of hair is not the business of school boards? Those degenerate long-haired teens are now teachers, doctors, cops and CEO's and probably wise enough to ignore

the funny colored hair on their children and grandchildren knowing that the age of rebellion is mercifully short and usually harmless. The best strategy for parents is to not give them the rise they're trying to get out of you and take pictures so you can embarrass them when they have teens of their own.

Consider also the contradictory sociopolitical message of adults who disapprove of purple hair on kids but elected to the school board a man who groomed his facial hair into two perfect little circles, a facial embellishment which made communication with him difficult as the mind of the listener inevitably wandered off into speculation as to how such a perfect geometric effect could be achieved and maintained and... is that a tiny stray hair there that escaped the curler? In that case, and using the school board's Logic of Hair, funny hairs must be linked to the inability to adequately communicate his worthiness for a second term - voters couldn't remember anything about him but those perfect little hairy circles. Hmmm, there could be something to this hair theory.

Other than looking funny we can't imagine what dire peril colored hair represents to the board. Does orange or purple hair have a bad affect on test grades? Is it an indication of bad character? Pierced ears used to be viewed that way; now if only your ears are pierced you're considered to be a dork (we're talking about the faculty). Whatever flimsy excuse they're using for this policy, what about all that blond and wild henna colored hair we see on some teachers and employees? What about some board members who have been hiding their gray all these years with something out of a bottle?

If our Board of Utopia Seekers bans dyed hair in their fruitless quest for the Perfect YUPPIE Students we can't wait to see what inventive "annoy-the-grownups" behavior the kids will come up with in retaliation. A few years ago when the board mandated all blouses had to have sleeves to keep bra straps from showing, the girls (as well as a number of female teachers) solved the problem by going braless - not exactly the outcome the "ban-the-bra-strappers" on the board had in mind.

**Citizens for Drain Pipes (and Joe's Road).** For the record, the Citizens for Road and Flood Control Improvements raised and spent \$5,350 (mostly with RDN and KTTR) to campaign for Joe's Road and the storm drain bond issue. The committee was: Bill Jenks and David McKee. The contributors were Rolla 63 Investment, Elgin, Maggi, Stoltz, Brewer, Bloomsdale, Thomas and two banks - all with a vested interest in development and construction. None of them spoke publicly in favor of the issue, that was left to Butz, Petersen, Hargis and anyone else Bob McCune could get to come on KTTR and talk about the issue without really explaining what the "No-Tax" Bond Issues were really going to cost voters in terms of lost city services. Well, at least they didn't use city taxpayer money to sell the tax issue. The school board on the other hand, never bothers to pretend they're not breaking this law when they spend voter taxes to con them into voting to raise their school taxes. McCune pronounced this issue to be a "no brainer" and that's exactly what it was but not in the

way he meant. Did you vote yes on this issue or not bother to vote at all? Have you been waiting for your street to be resurfaced for only 10 or 12 years? Do you still believe your street has a chance of being on the priority list during the next decade. That's the "no brainer" part.

**City Audit committee.** Rolla's relatively new city Finance Director, Mary Beth Kamrath, has proposed having an Audit Committee. We applaud her initiative and what we believe to be her sincere desire to draw council members into the budget and finance process whereby they may learn what they are doing as opposed to blindly rubberstamping whatever budget or cockamamie financial scheme that is put in front of them. We hope she is successful. An audit committee is composed of individuals both elected and appointed who are willing to spend unglamorous hours in the careful examination of financial management of the city and ask real questions about the feasibility of things like piling up revenue bond debt for shaky projects - something the council has never done. If Rolla ever wants to grow into the exaggerated image they promote they will have to get a grip on how to manage money and quit lurching from one "instant" cure to another like TIF and the perpetual Downtown Redevelopment.

**Trucks not allowed.** No one at the May 17<sup>th</sup> council meeting wanted to confess to authoring the city's latest bad idea. It's an ordinance forbidding people who have trucks or drive semis for a living can't park them at home. The council for once postponed passage and appointed a committee to take a second look - something they should do more often. But wait, last year Hargis told the city council they couldn't ban semis from rumbling through residential areas because, he claimed, MODOT wouldn't permit the city to restrict them to the highways. Bunk. Nearly any city in Missouri you drive through has No Trucks signs posted at the entrances to all side streets to keep heavy truck traffic out. Hargis gets away with these whoppers because he knows there isn't a single member of the council who has the initiative to call MODOT and find out if he's telling the truth. If, as Hargis says, they can't prevent semis from driving through residential neighborhoods, how can the council keep them from parking there?

**Where's the Dope?** In the last county audit, along with other findings, the auditor cited the Lord High Sheriff for losing the evidence in over 730 drug cases. From about 730 cases examined the auditor said, *"For most of the cases the Sheriff's department could locate neither the property item nor documentation of the property's disposal."* According to the elaborate PR campaigns that the Sheriff stages on his own behalf, some of the missing property would consist of course of drugs; piles and piles and tons and tons of drugs, cash, cars and etc. from his Sugar Tree Road drug trap. It was explained that a clerk had "mislaidd" the evidence and would be demoted. "Mislaidd?" "Demoted?" That's it? The missing evidence in over 730 cases would be investigated they said by the Mo Attorney General but there hasn't been a word about the results of this investigation. In any other town "mislaying" the evidence in 730 cases would be a major

scandal and make the network news. What happened to the investigation? Where were the howls of judicial outrage from our six-figure Circuit Judges about the scandalous incompetence of the Lord High Sheriff? Was Prosecutor Clayton dozing while 730 cases flushed? Blankenship wants to be sheriff for another term. We think he should find the evidence in those cases first. (NSN - **Fruit of the Poison Sugar Tree, Nov. 3, 2003.**) Before you vote in the August primary election read the auditors report on the poor

performance of the Sheriff at *State Audit of Phelps County* at: <http://www.auditor.state.mo.us/press/2003-98.pdf> (download of the PDF file is very slow)

**A Sister City to Whom?** It's surreal enough watching local preachers say prayers over a city government that shoved porn down their throats but Rolla becoming a sister city to a Palestinian community? Don't they have enough problems in the Middle East?

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