

No Standing News

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

Volume II

August 6, 2004

Number 15

Serving the Outlaw City of Missouri

We feel another WACO coming on

If there's one thing City Hall hates more than listening to public opinion it's admitting they screwed up because they didn't listen to public opinion. TIF is dead; they just can't stand to admit it. **City Administrator Butz** has admitted that **Kaplan Co.** can't find a single renter, much less the "Big Box" retailers Kaplan Co, claimed they had ready to sign up but still they persist.

They've already tried throwing more money at Kaplan and even that didn't work. At their March 1st closed session **Harry Kiefer** made the motion seconded by **Charlotte Wiggins** to give an extra \$365,000 in "additional TIF assistance" (a.k.a The Taxpayers Handout) to Kaplan to keep them from backing out. **Brown, Wiggins, Barklage, Magdits, Rolufs and Kiefer** voted yes. **Spangenberg, M. Williams, Ruck, Waterman, J. Williams and Jepsen** voted no. **Mayor Morgan** broke the tie and the motion carried. Sweetening the developer's pot with a bigger subsidy was a public policy decision about squandering public funds and it was illegal to discuss in closed session but Morgan always prefers secrecy and didn't want voters to know they were giving away more money until after the April bond election.

Early in July Butz said that if Kaplan was still in default of the TIF contract by the end of July he would have the council extend the deadline and give Kaplan more time. July is now over, Kaplan is still in default and Butz is still talking about giving him more time. Kaplan Co. was scheduled to come to the August 2nd council meeting but they didn't bother to show up. We wonder how many times in high school John had to be stood up before he got the hint? Butz is talking through his hat because the law doesn't allow them to extend the deadline and it won't do any good anyway. If Kaplan won't play Butz says they will look for another developer start the whole thing over again and leave those people trapped in the TIF zone - their property locked up in TIF hell for as long as it takes.

Refusal to face the fact that TIF is dead, that it's a failed policy, follows the pattern Butz established with the WACO landfill project, a plan he sold to the council with a lot of bogus statistics about the volume and cost of trash disposal over the next 20 years (even Greenspan couldn't project pricing that far) to buy Rolla a landfill from a bunch of con artists in Washington County. Butz told the council it would make them rich on trash. Twice the deal fell through and twice Butz begged for another chance to get back in the deal for even more money so Rolla wouldn't be denied the opportunity of being swindled. When the shysters found

another chump to sell the landfill to (last we checked it was still having licensing and environmental problems) Butz never admitted to the council the deal was dead and over \$300,000 had been wasted - he just quit talking about it. The WACO deal quietly faded away to the place where all his "Too-good-to-be-true" schemes wind up and the city never recovered a penny. When is the council going to tell Butz to quit putting lipstick on this pig?

"No Confidence" Petersen ordered to be humble. In closed session Monday, July 19th, ten members of the city council who were present unanimously agreed that **John Petersen** was ineffective due to his "poor communication style in dealing with the public and a general lack of customer service focus." The mayor told the RDN that "from the time he (the Mayor) took office he's tried to direct all city departments to be attuned to the import of good customer service skills." Please, someone grab a shovel and dig us out from under all this guano. Butz said that the council's vote of "No Confidence" in Petersen was "as much a reflection on him (Butz) as it was on John (Petersen)." That part was true.

The council only 'discovered' that John Petersen is rude, arrogant and hateful when they found out he was moonlighting on a TIF project in Park Hills and thought they could fire him for it. When they found out they couldn't fire him for having a second job like all their off-duty cops they 'discovered' he was a poor communicator. The idea of Mayor "Shut-up, you-can't-talk-about-that" instructing city staff to be "attuned to the import of good customer service skills" is a farce. Morgan couldn't even use "attuned" and "import" in a sentence without a dialogue coach.

RMU's insatiable greed. **Councilman Harry Kiefer** understands that squeezing people by making each property owner responsible for repairs to water and sewer lines from the city main to his house is, in the long run, counterproductive and doesn't contribute to the city's growth. Kiefer sent the ordinance that would have forced homeowner to pay for repairs to RMU's water and sewer lines back for a rewrite. At the August 2nd meeting they were still talking about the water line ordinance and still couldn't make a decision on this rip off. At the meeting on July 19th a related discussion broke out among the council members critical of RMU's other greedy policy of charging \$6 a month for inspecting meters and at that point Morgan got hysterical and shut off the discussion. With over 5,000 meters each

generating \$72 dollars a year RMU is clearing a cool \$360,000 and for what? Inspecting meters they rarely inspected before they discovered they could shake down homeowners for it? Since you've been paying the new water meter inspection fee have you seen anyone inspect your meter?

Like the water line issue, the phony meter inspection fee is just a ruse but there's a reason for the ruse. Morgan, Butz and RREC want to – no wait, before the council has voted to do it Butz has already announced they *will* – hire an economic developer and they need at least \$150,000 just the first year. They don't have a spare dime so where will the \$150,000 come from? RMU just announced another "adjustment" in our electric rates. They didn't bother to explain why because the city council doesn't have the guts to require them to hold public hearings to explain anything. Why don't they require their own utility department to justify their rate increases? Because they want their cut of the phony fees and rate "adjustments," that's why.

Some in city hall don't care how they get the money as long as the RMU board cuts them in on the action. Unfortunately for the greedy, **Councilman Harry Kiefer** does care and he's not going to let RMU jack up their rates, add outrageous meter fees and demand homeowners pay to repair RMU's water and sewer lines to boot. Now *that's* looking after the best interest of the city and all the people. Rolla needs more of that.

The Felonious Candidates Contest. We didn't go back more than this year to check on which political party is ahead in the Felonious Candidates Contest, but whichever one is winning it's only by a nose. The Republicans appear to be losing the race to put up the most disreputable local candidates but they needn't gloat; the odds just happen to be in their favor because the Democrats field more candidates. The party committees used to formally meet and more or less vet their candidates before the party chairman signed their filing applications. Either the party rules have changed or they no longer care to provide voters with quality candidates. **Bill Walker** (D) is facing three criminal charges; **Brady** (R) was removed from the ballot because he didn't meet the residency requirement. Residency should be the easiest thing for party officials to check on. Priors should at least be a multiple choice question.

But county Republicans had their own embarrassing primary candidate. **Bill J. Dobkins** ran again to be the

Eastern District Phelps County Commissioner against incumbent **J. Glendon Klossner**. Dobkins lost against Klossner in 2000. Fortunately for the county he has lost again. During the 2000 election campaign Dobkins was being investigated for the alleged rape of a young retarded girl and he was under a court protection order to keep him away from her and her family. During a candidate forum on Ch. 16 Dobkins waved, what he claimed, were some documents 'proving,' that she was promiscuous; to protect his candidacy he maligned the retarded child to the TV audience – a real stand up guy that Dobkins. Ken Clayton appointed a special prosecutor on this case and then washed his hands of it. Unfortunately, there was no investigation or prosecution of this political candidate, not even after he lost his attempt to take cover in a political post. Dobkins tried again this year to take Ken Klossner's seat, but this time Dobkins turned his coat and ran as a Republican. In June, Bill Dobkins and one of his sons had more Ex Parte hearings scheduled alleging Adult Abuse and Stalking by each of them. His son's hearing took place but Bill Dobkins hearing has been conveniently delayed until September - safely after the primary. This time the Dobkins (R) record, unlike Brady (D) and Walker (D) records did not make the front page. Why the difference?

Is this really the best the two establishment political parties can do? Is it time for a local third party for candidates who don't have felony records or should the Democratic and Republican county committees just cut to the chase and have their meetings at the Probation and Parole Office?

It's an odometer stupid. It's not nearly as good an election gimmick as "Vote for Blankenship" gun locks or emery boards but this election **Sheriff Blankenship** has discovered people are exceeding the speed limit on county roads. It took him 12 years to discover this because they don't patrol county roads. He borrowed a large electronic sign to tell you how fast you're driving in case you're too stupid to figure out what those numbers on your dashboard are for. The county has over 700 miles of county roads and Blankenship has only the one electronic speed sign so if you want to know how fast you're driving you'll have to travel quite a way to go past the sign and find out. **Deputy Crivello** is "in charge of placement" of this device but they have it only for a limited time – until the polls open in November. If you think people are driving too fast or you just have a warped sense of humor you can have it parked in front of your place and watch your neighbors slam on their brakes.

THE ROLLA SCHOOL BOARD IN FOUR PART HARMONY

Tale of the Snake-bit Superintendent. Poor **Terry Adams**, nothing ever goes right for the guy. He tried to defect a few months ago and no one would have known except that the Parkway district decided to be innovative and for the first time in the history of school boards blabbed to their local paper the names of their final candidates thus exposing Adams as a ship-jumper - not a move calculated to inspire confidence in his staff. We can't blame him for trying to get

out of here. In the very short time he's been here he has generated three lawsuits and one "almost" lawsuit. Two wrongful discharge/discrimination lawsuits, one "almost" wrongful discharge lawsuit that they recently paid themselves out of and a gratuitous third lawsuit for blacking out all the incriminating bits in the documents he was forced to hand over in the first lawsuit. A twofer! Two lawsuits with one case; not many superintendents can pull that off. He managed

a public relations masterstroke when he sold off school property to a porn purveyor and when the city wanted to rob the school district with their TIF scheme Adams and board member **Keith Strassner** not only enthusiastically agreed to it, they were willing to drive the getaway car for the sake of their newfound ‘partnership’ with the city. Next Terry let his board push him into an ill-advised bond issue for \$8.5 million knowing quite well they couldn’t afford to pay the debt service (or with none of them caring whether they could pay it – it’s hard to tell the difference). The debt schedule is a back-loaded, interest-only balloon note for \$8.5 million, the envy of payday loan sharks everywhere.

To add to Terry’s woes the state has just closed an e-mail loophole in the Sunshine Law which put a crimp in his regular Friday Memo, the regular but illegal e-mail correspondence between him and the board where they discuss and decide what they will discuss and decide at the next board meeting. He explained when he was hired that he preferred to “resolve any issues” before their twice monthly board meetings to promote harmony. Sounded good to most of the board because some of them have a phobia about voting unanimously and being harmonious so they like to check how they’re going to vote before they meet to actually take the vote to make sure their chakra is not blocked and board “harmony” is maximized. (The strain of all that harmony sometimes requires bringing in an MSBA board harmonizer to analyze their personality colors.) Denied the e-mail opportunity to secretly agree on how they would vote before the board meetings, now Adams had to find a way to achieve perfect unanimity in the long postponed decision to put the 69¢ levy reauthorization on the ballot but alas, he had to do it in public right in front of everybody.

Singing off key. Robyn Sooter, one of two new school board members, has a lot to learn about being harmonious. Robyn demanded to know why they were told they had plenty of money for administrative raises when they voted on them in April and are only just now being told that they might not have enough teachers next fall because Adams – like every superintendent in the universe – can’t predict with perfect certitude how many students of what age and grade will enroll next year. Sooter demanded to know why they weren’t told this before the voted on raises for administrators. Silly ole Robyn, doesn’t she know giving raises to administrators is more important than hiring teachers? President **Annie Bass** says it’s no problem; we’ll just take money out of reserves. The ink wasn’t dry on the new budget they voted on two weeks before and already Annie has made it a deficit budget. Annie says they aren’t a bank, so if there’s money in the reserve fund why not spend it? Annie says that a lot. She had said that too many times in 1998 and in 1999 they discovered they were \$990,000 in the red and couldn’t give teachers a raise; that’s how we wound up with an 80¢ tax increase in our property taxes in 2001.

The vote before the vote. It was quickly apparent that the opinion on how much and when to put the tax on the ballot wasn’t unanimous. **Ralph Wilkerson** proposed that they not ask for the whole 69¢ to be made permanent but just ask for

the bare minimum they need (and have been using for years) for operating expenses, which wasn’t what the voters gave them the money for in the first place. This begged the question whether they legitimately ‘need’ it for operating expenses at all since the money was only supposed to be used for specific capital improvements and some equipment - not operating expenses, but no one ever goes there. Wilkerson’s suggestion was unacceptable to Bass, Rapier and Strassner who are never satisfied with less.

After gingerly probing their differences, Adams asked if they thought they could “reach a consensus before they voted?” No one seemed to find anything funny about taking a “consensus” or polling the votes before they vote to find out how they would vote if they were really voting but we think it’s hilarious. It was obvious that they had no harmony going on so Adams put the big decision off until a more harmonious time. We have a suggestion. Put the bare minimum levy increase on the April ballot but *on condition* that the proceeds go into the reserve fund and can’t be spent without a supermajority vote of the board and can’t ever be used to pay administrators. That way, when they pass a balanced budget and unbalance it two weeks later we’ve still got something in the kitty when the district is short of cash to make the payments on their back-loaded, interest-only balloon note for \$8.5 million.

Artful Lawsuits and other personnel problems. One teacher who no longer has an employment problem is the son of Board Member **Dana Rapier**. It would not be nepotism if he was already employed and *then she* was elected to the board but when Sonny is hired when Mom is doing the hiring, it is. We’re sure Dana made a great show of not actually voting on her son’s new job and we’re equally sure administration knew exactly who was supposed to get that job no matter how carefully the hand-washing rituals were acted out.

Others teachers were not so fortunate however. One of our few very experienced male elementary teachers, **Russell Edgar**, suddenly quit. Did he jump or was he pushed? Since their 2000 discussions on teacher’s raises some board members and administrators have made no secret that their payroll problems would be eased if they could get rid of their more expensive senior teachers and replace them with the cheaper inexperienced kind. Their wish seems to be coming true. Is that “for the children” or “for the money”?

On July 14th the board was scheduled to have a special meeting for a grievance hearing at 9 a.m. for a tenured LD teacher at Mark Twain who had been abruptly terminated. The hearing, at the teacher’s request, would have been open to the public. An “emergency” closed board meeting was called for Friday morning, July 9, then it was cancelled and reset for Friday night and another was held Friday night. That meeting was cancelled and reset for another “emergency closed meeting” was held Monday morning July 12, then that was cancelled and the teacher’s open hearing was rescheduled for the 13th but that was cancelled too. Monday morning all these cancelled emergency meetings signaled that a settlement was urgently being negotiated to avoid letting the public ‘hear’ the teacher’s hearing. To the board, not having

their dirty laundry discussed in public was worth paying out a whole lot of our tax money, the question is how much of it would be given to the teacher in return for being fired without cause or without due process or however they had screwed up this time. Administration is stalling on releasing the settlement agreement but you can assume that the check for concealing their latest human resources screw-up will be about \$50,000 plus the lawyer's fees for both parties; more than enough to cover the salary of at least one of the teachers Aaron forgot to hire for next year. The other federal lawsuit is from **Patti Dewing** who, you will be surprised as we were to learn, has taught tuition free English as Second Language classes to foreign students for the Vocational Center for six years. These classes were held on the UMR campus where Dewing complained the teaching conditions amounted to harassment. According to Dewing she was fired because she had the gall to ask for better teaching accommodations like a key to get in the classroom. Those wanting to learn "American-speak" now have to pay tuition to take the class. When they fired her they explained they were "doing her a

favor by terminating her." This crass comment from some nincompoop did not amuse the state labor board and it will probably cost the district by the word.

We do have a Human Resources 'expert' to handle these things. His name is **Aaron Zalis** and his meteoric rise from art teacher to Assistant Superintendent is attributable to...well it must be attributable to something. He has a degree in art but he's paid over \$96,757 a year to produce annual personnel lawsuits; a task he has performed with remarkable diligence. Aaron has other talents though. Last year he organized construction of the new soccer fields which were built below sea level and surrounded by large dykes. The fields can't be used because they flood every time it rains but they are a marvel of terrestrial art. It seems no one has explained to Zalis that he's supposed to *prevent* federal labor lawsuits - not cause them. It would be easy for him to get the wrong idea since he is rewarded annually with generous raises and free health insurance for his family no matter how many lawsuits he bumbles into.

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