

No Standing News

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

Volume II

March 3, 2006

Number 44

Serving the Outlaw City of Missouri

Whose “Useful Idiots” are they?

The Rolla City Council has been played for fools again by Mayor Joe Morgan. What Joe wanted, after eight years of failed ‘Big Bold Bizness Projects,’ was to go out of office with at least a TIF project – even if it was on life-support, even if he had to lie to the council to get it. On February 21st, the council reversed their previous 7-4 vote against the TIF Plan. As we predicted it only took a little arm-twisting and a lie about how he and Butz had gotten eight ‘agreements’ from property owners. Morgan got an 8-4 flip-flop vote to revive TIF.

The four flip-flopers were: **Jimmy Dale Williams** and **Jim Waterman** (both voted to kill TIF because they were offended that Sansone went to the Oprah show and hasn’t spent enough time in Rolla stroking their egos). **Rolufs** and **Matt Williams** were the other two flip-flopers. We’ve called the council “Morgan’s Useful Idiots” before and eight of them just proved they still are “Useful Idiots.” Butz and Morgan claimed they had ‘agreements’ from eight of the Williams Road residents. At least one of those ‘agreements’ was a lie as **Ralph Koboldt** proved when interviewed the same evening they voted by **RDN Editor Janese Heavin**. Next day the headline said: “*Double-talking councilmen revive TIF; Koboldt says city council is ‘dreaming.’*” The two-faced pictures of Matt Williams and Jim Waterman on the front page said it all.

How many more of the other seven ‘agreements’ did they also misrepresent? The flip-flopers didn’t even have the wit to examine the so-called ‘agreements,’ a precaution which might have spared them public humiliation the next day. We’re betting Sansone told Morgan and Butz he was backing out shortly after the TIF Commission vote but Morgan and Butz didn’t dare tell the council the truth. Morgan, Butz and the RREC boys were desperately trying to kill the Williams Road rabbits so they could lay their carcasses at Sansone’s feet to get him back in the deal.

“**Big Box**” sucker bait. The only council members who weren’t conned by Morgan and Butz were Council members **Gary Hicks, Richard Sibley, Terry Ruck** and **Judy Jepson**. They at least had the courage to stick to their conviction that, agreements or not, TIF is a dangerous gamble and it isn’t good for Rolla with or without eminent domain. They are suspicious of the massive jump in the price of this project and the \$10 million city IOU Morgan, Butz and RREC are willing to hand over to a developer no questions asked. Sansone won’t even tell the council if he has any businesses committed to fill the \$21 million project even though the whole cost/benefit analysis the city paid for was based on the assumption that the space would be filled with the likes of **Home Depot, Kohl’s, Red Lobster** or **Olive Garden** – the four types of ‘big box’ bait all TIF developers dangle before tax-hungry little towns. Jepson had it right when she said they were being taken for suckers. She pointed out that Sansone has \$60 million to invest in the St. Louis stadium but he’s making Rolla pay for half of his

development costs here! Paying for half of this TIF project was another one of those expert Butz negotiations. No other city in Missouri has ever paid for *half* of their TIF project.

All the wily TIF developers know the weaknesses of Littletown Missourian’s and they play them like a harp. We have a Google alert for Missouri TIF articles and frequently read about other small towns like Rolla such as Trenton, Neosho and Warrensburg as they blunder into a TIF racket and fall for the same TIF bait. Each TIF developer claims they can get the shopping/dining deprived, status hungry Yuppies of some tax-hungry little town one or more of the following: **Home Depot, Kohl’s** and a **Red Lobster** or **Olive Garden**. Their story to the Yuppies and Economic Development cheerleaders of every Littletown is that they can have a shopping paradise and will be awash in new taxes if the small town will just give them free use eminent domain and guarantee huge TIF bonds for millions the community doesn’t have. The Kohl’s, Home Depot and Olive Garden’s later turn out to be some second or third tier knock-off of the big brand names. Is it a clue when all the TIF developers are dangling the same Big Box sucker bait to every rural town? Is that a hint that we are pathetically naïve and it’s time to grow up?

Bax puts lipstick on the TIF pig. RREC ordered their economic development ‘expert’ into the trenches on February 6th to rescue their TIF project. This is when **Elizabeth Bax**, Executive Director of RREC, earns her large city-subsidized salary and benefits the hard way. Bax had to stand up in public and repeat the tired old scare tactics about “progress or die” - the definition of “progress” being, of course, what RREC says it is. The Bax mission is to put lipstick on RREC’s second TIF pig and tell us how pretty it is. Bax tried to minimize the despised eminent domain and claimed that it is a trivial issue that has “overshadowed” the “positives of the [TIF] redevelopment plan.” Sure, like cancer ‘overshadows’ a toothache.

After the 7-4 “TIF killing” vote on the 6th, **Charlotte Wiggins** grabbed an olive branch and hurled it at Warren Dean. Suddenly Wiggins wanted to kiss and make up with Dean, Guffey and anyone else offended by their nasty TIF. After demonizing Warren Dean for three years suddenly Wiggins wanted Dean and Guffey to “come forward” so she could hear their proposals! **Ginny [Dean] Wetterau** tried to show them their plans three years ago and the council rudely slammed the door in her face. Suddenly Wiggins wanted TIF to be a “win-win for everybody.” What colossal gall – and what a very selective memory. Remember all the nasty things Wiggins and other members of the council and staff have said and implied about **Warren Dean**? The council passed an insulting ordinance with his name in it to force their way onto his property to hunt for “weapons of mass contamination.” Nothing but a rumor Morgan, Butz and members of the council started out of whole cloth and maliciously spread around in the

paper on the radio and at service clubs. Dean fought back and a Circuit Judge told the City of Rolla to mind their own business. They would have trashed **Kevin Guffey's** business reputation with the same kind of innuendo and gossip but they haven't done that yet. They still have a use for Guffey, he has a contract to destroy Buehler Park for them.

A trip to the RCDC woodshed. Before his flip-flop vote on February 21st, **Councilman Matt Williams** confessed that he accompanied his father **John Z. Williams** to Morgan's private TIF meeting at Zeno's on Friday. What was his RCDC Daddy doing at Morgan's TIF meeting with Warren Dean and unnamed others? Why was Matt Williams, Son of RCDC, the only council member invited? Well, they had to have someone who voted *against* TIF at the Feb. 6th meeting bring it up for a re-vote at the Feb. 21st meeting and Williams was the easiest mark to flip. After the TIF-killing 7-4 vote on Feb. 6th, the corporate lobbyists of RCDC/RREC had to scuttle out from behind the baseboards and intervene directly to rescue their second failing TIF project – thus the Mayor's panic meeting at Zeno's. By the 21st Councilman Matt Williams confessed he had had an economic development epiphany. It had been revealed to him that condemnation on the 'small scale' was more palatable than condemnation on the "large scale." Uh huh.

Economic Development the RCDC Way. Why the unusual personal intervention by **RCDC's John Z. Williams**? There are two reasons: RCDC/RREC (two faces of the same interlocked group of self-appointed 'leaders') represent Rolla's economic development non profit 'corporate' lobbyists...parasitic groups who feel Rolla's taxpayers owe them whatever they demand. For 40 years they have kept Rolla's weak city government on a short leash by telling them if they cooperated and gave RCDC a free hand to exploit Rolla's taxes, land and politics – and breaking the law when necessary – the result would be riches for everyone – "Progress" with a capital "P." They failed to explain that the riches would only be collected by those in the real estate development business. Everything the town and its people needed, public works, health and safety infrastructure and codes enforcement, had to take second place to 38 years of secret council spending that went right into RCDC's bank account. TIF was RREC's baby and it's failing a second time. The danger is this: if they don't have the power to bring the council to heel they will have no power at all and without power they will lose their ability to raid the city treasury, take

The Morgan 'Land Development Company' secretly buys more land

The council's secret land development frenzy continues. During its November 21, 2005, closed session the Rolla City Council *unanimously* approved the purchase of **106 acres** from **Mead Technologies** for **\$600,000**. They spent another \$600,000 to buy land to build a 'maintenance campus' for Steve Hargis. They claim that this storage yard for trucks and pipes is also for "economic development," That's become the standard excuse used to justify every extravagance.

The \$600,000 for the land is just the beginning. The consulting firm the council hired at great expense already has plans in the works to build Hargis a building; offices and provide other amenities for his new 'campus.' The price tag to

our taxes and continue draining the community of its resources to serve their version of 'Progress.'

RCDC hasn't paid a dime in 40 years to develop their public giveaway, tax-free property and they don't see any reason to start now. However, if they don't have the power to keep TIF alive, if they can't make the council toe the line on TIF or use our Tourism taxes to buy the Forestry property for their Chamber of Decorator "divas" it's a sign their grip is slipping. If they lose their grip on the council they won't be able to get them to annex the Bahr property and won't be able to make the council give them the millions it will take to develop their private property – again. That's the next RCDC Plan.

Doing things 'The RCDC Way' means the city taxpayers will unknowingly pay to develop RCDC's private property, then RCDC will sell the property at market price and pocket the cash while the council gives the businesses that buy RCDC's land 100% tax breaks. While they're passing money illegally to RCDC and RREC the council will keep raising our taxes and fees to fill the deficit holes in the city budget. We've called some council members "Morgan's Useful Idiots" but that was wrong; they're actually RCDC's "Useful Idiots."

] **Shopping with Charlotte.** Oh no! Say it ain't so. Say we haven't gone through three years of TIF Hell just because - as she told the RDN, **Councilwoman Charlotte Wiggins** "is not able to buy clothing in tall sizes at Rolla stores." That isn't the main reason why we've been through three years of TIF Hell, but Yuppie 'life-style' whining has a lot to do with a lot of Rolla's financial disasters. Charlotte isn't the only one who believe their "lifestyle" needs must be met no matter what sacrifice others must make.

We wish we could hear the council express some concern – not for the 'Shopping Charlottes' and their yearning for upscale boutiques and 'fine dining experiences' – but for the majority of the other shoppers, the 56% of Rolla's families who make less than \$35,000 a year and some who make much less than that. For Rolla's 'other' 56% their "fine dining experience" starts with the cheapest bag of potatoes they can find. Their 'boutique shopping experiences' are the Saturday garage sales where they look for cheap school clothes and warm coats. *Those people are the majority of the council's constituents* – not the Yuppies who coo that they just love "small-town living" but having big city 'shopping and dining experiences' would make their Yuppie lives oh-so-much-more-perfect. From the point of view of Rolla's 'Shopping Charlottes,' no sacrifice on the part of the potato buyers is too great.

develop his new compound will be a million or more – but you know...it's all for "economic development" and without expensive and 'Progressive' projects like this "Rolla will die"...or so they keep telling us.

Where will the money come from to build the Hargis "campus"? Ask any city employee where it will come from – out of their future health insurance and raises for starters. This land purchase, like the last 42.23 acre purchase next to Joe's subdivision investment, was another 'un-budgeted' expense but because they did it in November, after they approved the new budget in September - a budget that was already short by

\$1.6 million - this \$600,000 expenditure wasn't added to this years deficit, it will be part of next year's deficit.

What will the \$600,000 Mead purchase do to the library? The same thing the council's 42.23 acre purchase of park land for \$436,037 next to Joe's subdivision did to the library – take more property tax revenues out of the library budget. Did they think of the impact it would have on the

library to remove a total of **\$1,036,037** taxable property from the tax rolls in '05? No, it would never occur to the council to do anything as responsible as replace the library property taxes lost as a consequence of their impulse spending. It's only a library and the new truck parking lot is, after all, for "economic development

Dining with E. coli

The Rolla "fine dining experience." With all the council's hot pursuit of 'economic development' through the restaurant business (to provide all those waitress jobs) you would think **Councilman Terry Ruck's** questions about the update of the city's food service health code would have been embarrassing because it illustrated how superficial their definition of 'Progress' is. 'Progress' is about getting taxes from having more restaurants it's not about public health and sanitation.

When the **County Health Department Sanitation Inspector Brad Taber** recommended the city update its antique food code Councilman Ruck asked if there was any inspection of restaurant grease traps in local eatery's (or did they just let them run their fingers through the grease traps to remove the big bits?) Brad Taber answered that the county didn't inspect them because they don't have the personnel to do it. The city has always pretended to comply with the bare minimum the state requires of a third-class city by contracting with the County Health Department to do city health inspections but this is a sorry joke and everyone on the inside knows it. The city pays the county so little for this token health inspection that the county can't afford to do more than a few inspections a year. The city, with all the spending they do for so-called economic development and land development doesn't budget enough money to enforce their own health codes. Rolla remember, only has "complaint-driven code enforcement" which is no enforcement at all. If your next "fine dining" experience includes a dose of salmonella you can try "complaint-driven enforcement." Two months later the city will tell you there's nothing they can do. That's how the 'enforcement' part of "complaint-driven" enforcement works.

Ruck then asked if the city required food workers have Hepatitis shots. Did they require any other of the common preventive measures against infectious diseases? The answer was no, the city has never required anything as radical as protecting diners against life-threatening communicable diseases. The new code they were about to vote on also didn't require any of those common public health precautions but it could if the council wanted to put it in. The council postponed the second reading but not because they were concerned about public health and safety or willing to budget any money to actually enforce it.

The lack of health inspection is an example of how RCDC/RREC's definition of 'Progress' works. The city will give away anything – even their word not to sell a dedicated park – to have more "fine dining experiences" and call it 'economic development' but they don't care if those businesses don't meet even a nearly non-existent public health standard. The city wants 'Progress' but they can't keep throwing away money and land to RCDC, give RREC \$500,000 to build an economic development bureaucracy, spend \$1,036,037 in one year buying land for 'Progressive' projects, bail out the

Chamber, subsidize the Rec Center and also budget the funds to enforce their codes – so forget the enforcement.

Managing a town well comes down to one thing: making good budgeting choices. Rolla's non profit corporate lobby decides what the council's budgeting priorities will be and they make sure their 'projects' are first on the list. They want more restaurants to enhance Rolla's "dining experiences" but they don't care if diners get a helping of E. coli for dessert. Hiring inspectors to make sure Rolla restaurants are meeting, merely a good standard - not even a high standard, for sanitary food handling isn't anywhere on the corporate list of priorities. City Hall doesn't feel public health is their responsibility either so year after year they pretend their contract with the County Health Department is providing a credible level of health inspection. It's the money they want; to hell with your health.

Eat at your own risk. The last time you had a 'fine dining' experience in Rolla did you see a health department inspection sticker on the door? As you cut into your meat did you wonder if cockroaches had walked over it while it was sitting on a counter that hadn't been cleaned after the raw chicken had been cut up? While you were eating was someone in the kitchen wiping his runny nose on his sleeve? Did an employee with TB cough on the lettuce she was cutting up for the salad bar? Is there staph breeding on surfaces at the public swimming pools and on exercise equipment you and your family use? Are school cafeterias *frequently* inspected or is it better to risk children's health than embarrass the School Board and Administration? Do the grocery stores keep their meat and dairy cases cold enough? What about those scruffy little birds that fly around pecking on the produce at Wall-Mart? If you've always blissfully assumed "someone" was inspecting local restaurant kitchens for rat droppings and chemical contaminates in your food – you just don't know much about Rolla's government.

A city that's ready for 'Progress' and growth budgets whatever money it takes to have rigorous health inspections, they don't spend the city budget cutting RCDC's grass, buying the Chamber an estate or subsidizing retail developers. A city that's ready for 'Progress' hires the staff they need to enforce their health codes and laws they don't palm off the frustrated public with "we only have complaint-driven enforcement," that's another way of saying every ordinance they pass is a joke. A city that's 'Progressive' has a plan ready for natural disasters; it doesn't waste time and money protecting sewer plant #3 from a terrorist attack. A city that's ready for 'Progress' doesn't have to resort to hiring convicts to mow the grass and pick up trash. A city that's 'Progressive' doesn't pass deficit budgets and doesn't ignore the fact that they're starving the public library every time they give away property taxes to a local business that moves into RCDC's industrial park even when no new jobs are being created.

Rolla isn't ready for 'Progress' because Rolla's government isn't able, and isn't even interested in doing a good job running this third-class city. What they do well is kow-tow to corporate special interests and pour millions of Rolla's "potential" into 'economic development' projects that consume our taxes instead of spending that money enforcing health codes and cleaning up trash and weeds. What Rolla's government does well is have 'visionary' retreats and hire surveys and consultants to help them spend millions to keep special interests happy. City Hall doesn't want to do the hard work it takes to be more than a little third-class Ozark town with a fourth-class infrastructure, fifth-class management and first-class pretensions. A city that won't even pay to get grease traps inspected isn't a city that's ready for the "big time." Rolla has failed, not just because of the decades of economic development flops, but because after 78 years they can't manage to cut their own grass or inspect grease traps. That's what makes Rolla's government pathetically small-time.

Elizabeth Bax said Rolla has "great potential." Everyone says that about Rolla and they've said it for 40-years. The reason Rolla never benefits from all of our "great potential" is because we have always let the non profit corporate parasites, RCDC, the Chamber and now RREC, spend our potential. Until we get rid of the parasites that have fattened themselves off our sweat and our taxes for decades and given us nothing in return, Rolla will always have "great potential" but it will always come to nothing.

The Chamber's Pork Roast. The question the council will vote on is: "Should the city buy the \$511,000 Forestry property to provide a permanent home for the Chamber and make the payments for them for the first 7 years and spend another \$250,000 to 'develop' it for them?" But that's the wrong question. The right question is: "Why can't the lazy Chamber socialites stand on their own feet and support their own organization?" For that matter, why can't the RCDC and RREC support their own organizations? Why do they all feel Rolla taxpayers owe them - not just some small annual stipend, oh no, Rolla taxpayers owe them hundreds of thousands of tax dollars annually so they can have office buildings and conference rooms and executive directors and staff and all the trimmings. They feel we owe them but they don't feel they owe us any accountability for how they spend the money and they're not the least bit ashamed that year after year they fail to produce anything worthwhile for the hundreds of thousands of dollars they suck out of the city budget - money that could be put to much better use.

Should the council hand out political pork to these people hasn't been a question for 40 years. The council just gives them whatever they want. The council will probably buy this large dripping chunk of political pork and then make the payments because...well, just because.

At the last council meeting seven members of the Council voted to approve a "Memorandum of Understanding" with the Chamber (negotiated by John Butz) to buy the Forestry land for their use. What was being 'Understood' in the memorandum was the Chamber would do nothing and the city taxpayers would pay for everything. Even with their \$230,000 annual welfare check from the city's Tourist Tax, the Chamber says they just can't spare any of that money to make the

\$25,500 annual payment so Butz and 7 council members are *willing to make their payments for them for the first seven years*. The Chamber can't afford to take the \$25,500 annual payment out of the \$230,000 they get from the Tourism Tax because they're spending most of it on inflated salaries (over \$112,000) and perks for their Director and staff and important things like handing out bagels at the Teacher's Meeting, hosting Chamber golf tournaments, having annual dinners and paying for special inserts in the RDN glorifying the Chamber. They also use the city tax to make contributions to OATS and other organizations. How could anyone be so cruel as to expect them to cut back on their club entertainments and social events?

The Chamber quit making the effort to raise money from their members to support their own organization years ago, instead they've been living off the fat of the tourism taxes - a predictable result when anyone climbs on the government gravy train. Occasional feeble requests from some council members for a complete audited financial statement have been ignored and the council has never dared to demand accountability of them. It's easier to ignore what we all know, that the tourism "contract" is just a pretense. From the beginning it was nothing but a tax-subsidized clubhouse for Ed Owsley and his friends and it's certainly been successful at that.

Despite the fact that there is absolutely no justification for another giveaway of city taxes for Rolla's spoiled elite the council will probably do it and then they will insult our intelligence by telling us they're spending over a quarter of a million dollars to create a park for "the public's benefit." After they take care of the Chamber's political pork they will turn their attention back to raising fees for children to play ball and any other fee increases they can squeeze out of Rolla residents and never understand what a bunch of ward heelers that makes them. After the city has made the payments for the first seven years the Chamber will have more excuses for not being able to make the land payments out of the Tourist Tax ("What? Eliminate our golf tournament or the Progressive Dinner? Never!) so the council will just keep making the payments for another 13 years, and keep doing the maintenance, and doing the repairs, and on and on.

Meanwhile, when any citizen wants an eyesore removed or more police to make their neighborhood safe, they will get the same lame excuses they've been getting for the last 40 years; that the city only has "complaint-based enforcement;" that the city doesn't have the money to improve public health and safety because it takes an awful lot of tax money to support the lavish life-style of the Chamber of Decorators, RCDC and RREC.

On March 6th the council won't just be voting to cater to the Chamber "divas" they will be voting on another long-term budget choice. The choice is between having about three-quarters of a million dollars to spend on public health and safety for all Rolla's citizens or taking on another long-term financial burden to support the Chamber of Decorators in the style to which they've become accustomed. The council is about to demonstrate whether they're also the Chamber's "Useful Idiots."

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