

No Standing News

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

Volume II

March 17, 2006

Number 45

Playing Pin the Tail on the TIF

At their March 6th council meeting the council had to put their hands on the red-hot TIF skillet and it really hurt. They wanted someone to promise them that if they voted to proceed with TIF II they'd never really have to vote to throw people out of their homes, but even Butz couldn't promise them that. If he did, **Sansone** would really be gone for good. Sansone won't do this TIF project without an ironclad promise that when he pushes the condemnation button the council will put their heads in the noose and condemn all the property Sansone can't get by purchase, fear and intimidation. Look at it from Sansone's point of view, if he demands the council throw people out of their homes so he can make money, it's not Sansone who will have to live with the blow-back – it's the council.

Councilman Barkledge, a CPA, said he didn't care if Sansone couldn't deliver on his promise to put a Kohl's, Home Depot or Red Lobster in the project (like that was ever going to happen). Barkledge said Sansone was the best developer in the state (he knows that's so because Butz told him) so Barkledge is willing to settle for whatever Sansone gives them. It's bad enough that Barkledge is willing to gamble \$10,000,000 to settle for "whatever" but what's worse is Barkledge doesn't care that other towns don't let a developer get this far *without first showing them the commitment letters from the retailers who are already signed up for the project*. Why should the council commit to the project if they have to do it blindfolded like a Pin the Tail on the Donkey game? If Sansone wants a promise of condemnation from them why don't they wait until he shows something worth condemning property for? He won't show his until they show theirs first, is that the game he's playing? By his game rules they won't know if they've only got a Dollar Store or a Grandpa Pigeon's until it's too late. By that time Sansone will already have the city's \$10,000,000 spent to acquire the land and he'll be laughing all the way to *his bank*.

Barkledge, a Certified Public Accountant, hasn't figured out that the whole financial pay-out was based upon Sansone's *promise* that he could get a high-dollar Kohl's, Home Depot or the equivalent. If Sansone only comes up with a third-rate chain store with third-rate retail sales the whole TIF repayment scheme will collapse. Sansone will get his \$11 million back by selling the real estate - which by then he will own - but the council won't get all of their \$10,000,000 repaid before the 23-year clock runs out. What is it CPA stands for...Credulous Public Accountant?

Will she or won't he? By March 9, after some back and forth in the paper with Butz claiming that Warren Dean

would sell and Warren Dean saying he wouldn't, Sansone was in...no, wait, Sansone was out, TIF was dead... no TIF wasn't quite dead yet, Sansone finally made a statement to the paper which should have made the council members angry. It proved they've been duped not only by Sansone but by Morgan, Butz, the RREC, RCDC and the whole TIF-loving crowd. Sansone admitted he wasn't sure he could get a Big Box – you know, the one he said in his bid *and* his TIF Plan he could get – furthermore he wasn't sure he could interest any big national retailer in locating in Rolla because Rolla is such a little insignificant market. Sansone must know because Barkledge says he's "the best developer in the state."

Interesting that Sansone has started crawfishing at this late date. The council is half-way into voting the TIF Plan Amendment (which Sansone wrote), the Mayor and the Kleptocrats are busy telling us we're the retail hub of the universe and *now* Sansone tells the truth? We've been saying for three years that we're too small a market for any big name Big Box and that this whole thing was just a fairy tale without the guaranteed happy ending. Too bad Sansone didn't give the council that dose of cold retail reality in the beginning. That's what the council ought to be mad about and they should be more than a little embarrassed at how foolish they look. By the time they find out he can't produce their Big Box they will have already handed over the land which they probably had to get by brutal means they didn't want to use. Gee, the council is really good at being a real estate development company aren't they?

On March 15, in hopes of propping up their faltering TIF, they finally got Sansone down here to tour Warren's 'stuff' and look at Warren's quarry. The party was arranged by **Councilmember "Win-win" Wiggins**. She called her fellow councilmen who were lukewarm about a last-ditch attempt to salvage TIF so she arranged it anyway. Isn't that called "micromanaging" and doesn't Wiggins always condemn micromanaging when anyone else tries it? The picture in the paper of the happy couple looked like an engagement announcement (no, not Warren and Sansone - Warren and Wiggins).

So now Sansone has seen Warren's junk and toured Warren's quarry and everybody is smiling. That must mean some high-dollar Kohl's is ready to sign up to come to the Big Box in our little town and the council won't have to condemn any property and there won't be any shortfall in paying back the city's \$10,000,000 at the end of the 23 years and we will all live happily ever after. That is why everyone is so happy isn't it?

The “Kleptocrats” vs. the Proletariat

Webster’s Dictionary defines a “kleptomaniac” as one who is “afflicted with an irresistible desire to steal.” Webster’s Dictionary defines an “autocracy” as the form of government where one has “uncontrolled or unlimited authority over others, independent or *self-derived power*.” In Rolla, we have been ruled for decades by an autocracy, a self-appointed group of elitists who on occasion were “afflicted with an irresistible desire to steal” our tax money under the pretense that someday the benefits would “trickle down” to us - the lumpen proletariat. Our tax money was the object of their “affliction.” Using secret city government meetings they funneled our money into their non profit corporations - the RCDC, the Chamber of Commerce and recently, the RREC.

Rolla’s Autocracy never felt any obligation to account to us for their failure to accomplish anything with the money they’d stolen...they weren’t even embarrassed by their failures. Each new raid on the city treasury was sure to produce “The Big One” - the economic development project that would fulfill their “Vision” and transform Rolla into the industrial power of the Midwest. Its one thing to be “Visionary” but it’s another thing to have hallucinations – and spend public money on them.

Over time, they not only came to believe that not only were they justified in taking the money from our streets, sewers, law enforcement and other essential public services to spend on their “Visions,” but they came to believe that we *owed* them this ‘tithe.’ In the NSN Dictionary this is defined as a “**Kleptocracy**.” A “Kleptocracy” is a group of self-appointed autocrats who have no hesitation in demanding that the taxpayers support their organizations and repeatedly pay for the “Progressive” projects they enjoy dabbling in. It’s so easy to experiment with some one else’s money because it doesn’t hurt if you fail. Without pain some people don’t learn from their mistakes. For example, the Chamber Kleptocrats are now demanding we purchase, for their enjoyment, a \$511,000 property but that’s not all. They also demand that the council make the first seven years payments for the land out of the general fund instead of out of the Tourist Tax because the welfare check they’re getting (\$230,000+ annually) is “tied up” in paying Chamber salaries and benefits and hosting Chamber Banquets and other entertainments for the enjoyment of their fellow Kleptocrats. Sorry, but *they* simply can’t spare any of *our* tax money so that *we* can buy *them* a 9-acre estate. See. Kleptocrats are spoiled to the bone.

Time to redistribute the wealth. The Kleptocrats have been trying to ‘spin’ this as just a purchase out of “*the Chamber’s* tourist tax” which again proves our point. Their self-delusion has gone so far that they think the voter-approved city Tourism tax belongs to them. Not only is it not “*the Chamber’s* money,” but the city council can easily take back the Tourism Tax and spend it on other things – something the Rolla City Council would know if they would read their own ordinance: **Sec. 37-55. Use of fund:** “*The Lodging Tax funds shall be used exclusively to promote tourism, conventions and other related activities, and programs for the fostering and development of manufacturing, industrial, retail, scientific, educational and business enterprise, and economic*

development in the City. The city of Rolla reserves the right to collect and retain ten (10) percent of all proceeds of the Lodging Tax for operation and maintenance of the Lodging Tax collection process.” (emphasis Ed.)

The council could use the Tourist tax for all kinds of other things, industrial development, education and business purposes, etc. They could even use it to subsidize the Recreation Center’s annual budget deficit since the Rec Center can be considered a tourist facility. All they have to do is amend the ordinance and change the “retain ten (10) percent” part to read “retain (80) percent.” The city can give the Chamber Kleptocrats 20% of the Tourism tax to hand out Branson brochures until their unreasonably long 25-year contract runs out, the council can use 80% of the Tourist tax to pay their own overdue bills. The 20% should be enough to make the last payments on the Visitor’s Center and the Chamber can learn to live on a much reduced budget with money they should be raising from their own members to pay for their Executive Directors and swanky entertainments instead of dining out on the annual welfare check from the taxpayers while pretending to be creating tourism.

This solution has several real benefits for the council: **1.** they won’t get beaten up when people find out they’ve spent \$511,000 on a bunch of spoiled Kleptocrats and, **2.** they’ll have an extra \$250,000 or more every year to use to cover up the annual Recreation Center deficit and **3.** with a new source of subsidy for the Rec Center deficits they won’t have to ask voters to make the “temporary” Recreation Sales Tax permanent which means they won’t have to answer the same embarrassing questions about why they were weak enough to give the Kleptocratic Chamber a gift of a \$511,000 property while they’re hammering the rest of the population with raises in petty fees and fines and soaking them hard with the city’s 5% franchise tax every time RMU’s prices go up. It’s what **Councilmember Wiggins** calls a “win-win” solution...the Chamber of Decorators just won’t be one of the winners.

Magdits threatens “Due Diligence.” Sometimes he drives us nuts with his dogmatic “government-should-be-run-like-a-business” theories but there are times when **Councilman Lou Magdits** applies his ‘business theory’ to good purpose (without admitting it’s just a good government practice). The subject was the upcoming deal for the Chamber Pork Package. Magdits warned Butz that he’s not going to be satisfied with the usual vague ‘Suzy Sunshine’ staff recommendation. Magdits said he intends to examine details like the long-term maintenance costs of the old Forestry buildings, insurance and other liabilities that may be involved in city ownership of the property. Magdits is talking about a process called “due diligence” which is something Butz and the city staff are paid to do but they don’t. They prefer one-sided, politically motivated “the staff recommends” instead of providing impartial factual research. With honest due diligence the outcome is always uncertain. They don’t like uncertain outcomes.

The due diligence Magdits expects includes full disclosure of what Butz was told when he contacted the state and what the state and federal government will demand the

city do if they buy this land and what it will cost to perpetually maintain the five old buildings of the Rolla Ranger Station that were built as a CCC project and are already registered as a National Historic Trust. Being part of the NHT means they must be - not just maintained - but *preserved* in their original condition therefore, their use for any other city purpose would be strictly limited. The city has to pay for an archaeologist to do a survey and report on the site because of the buildings and the Civil War encampment. After this is done the **Forestry Service** and the **Missouri Historical Preservation** staff will decide *what covenants they will attach to the deed* that the city will have to comply with "FOREVER" and we all know how well City Hall deals with keeping covenants "FOREVER," don't we.

As of this week, the state does not have the information they need to start this process.

Give the Feds money? Are they nuts? As every homeowner knows being the caretaker of one aging building is a constant headache and a never-ending drain on the pocketbook. Maintaining five, already old, buildings in their original historically correct condition will be even more costly and time consuming. Why would the city take on such an expensive burden and also have *already approved plans* to spend another \$250,000 to fancy it up for the Chamber? How would the people of Rolla benefit if public funds are spent on this purchase for no other reason than to allow the Chamber to continue to have their own free compound and pretend for another 13 years that they're bringing tourism to Rolla for 'economic development'?

Let's look at the bare facts of this proposal without all the flimsy window dressing about how we need a Visitors Center so the Chamber can hand out Branson brochures to justify their \$230,000+ annual welfare check, or how this will make a good "replacement" for Buehler Park or how spending another \$250,000 and a little tree thinning will transform it into a great public park for the people of Rolla. The plain facts are these: The Chamber Kleptocrats want the taxpayers of Rolla to pay the Forestry Service – that's *the federal government* - \$511,000 to take this 9-acre property off *the federal government's* hands. *The federal government* will make \$511,000 and then *the federal government* won't have to continue to sink their cash into the perpetual repair and maintenance of a collection of uninteresting but technically historic buildings – the taxpayers of Rolla will have to perpetually spend their money on it. That's the whole idea in a nutshell. It's clear how the federal government will benefit from dumping this financial liability on us but from the taxpayer's point of view it's like paying someone to run you down with a truck and then making annual payments to have them keep doing it.

And the reason for doing this is...what exactly? To provide a permanent clubhouse for the Chamber of Decorators so they can continue to hand out Branson brochures and continue the spending binge they've been on since they started getting an annual welfare check from the city to allegedly provide Rolla with conventions and tourism – neither of which they have ever produced despite spending over a million public tax dollars to do it. Well, it's easy to see

how *the federal government* and the Chamber will benefit but we still don't see how the citizens of Rolla benefit. Why would anyone in their right minds continue to fund a fraud or willingly *GIVE* money to the federal government?

On the other hand, if the council *doesn't* buy the property to give the Chamber a free home, Rolla taxpayers *won't* be out \$511,000 *plus* they won't have a perpetual drain on the city budget FOREVER to maintain historic properties. The city will either have to sell the Visitor Center building to *the federal government* or, if they won't buy it the city will have to keep the building and pay *the federal government* ground rent to use their own building because they were stupid enough to let Ed Owsley and the Chamber bully the 1993 city council into co-signing a mortgage to build a city building on land *the federal government* owned! Even so, paying *the federal government* ground rent will still be cheaper than the million dollar deal the Chamber wants us to pay for.

The Chamber would have to move out and go back to supporting *their own* club and raising *their own* money to pay for their golf tournaments, progressive dinners and other Chamber amusements. As the Chamber New Ager's would say, it would be so 'empowering' for the Chamber Divas to be 'validated' by the monthly 'iconic moment' the rest of us have – paying our own bills.

If the council wants to take \$511,000 out of general revenue and give it away for some "public purpose" they could give the money to the Rolla Public Library for their expansion. That actually would benefit thousands of people. Or they could use it to hire someone to inspect restaurants and enforce all of their uninforced "complaint-driven" codes. Spending it to treat the Chamber like they're the Royal Family of Rolla has no benefit for the people of Rolla.

Not the sharpest knife in the drawer...When asked in the RDN candidate questionnaire what he thought of the proposed purchase of the Forestry Land for the Chamber, **Councilman Jimmy Dale Williams** replied: "*Due to the fee that the U.S. Forest Service is going to impose on the Chamber for use of the land, why not? It is interest free and the value of the land is only going to go up.*" Why not? Why not? Either Jimmy Dale thinks the Ward 5 voters put him in office to be the Councilman for the Chamber of Commerce or he thinks the council's new job is to flip real estate. We understand why he confuses City Hall with Remax, its because land acquisition and development is about all they've done during the Morgan administration.

Two Reformers and an Apparatchik. We're rarely surprised by anything candidates say when campaigning. It's usually a one-way conversation so they can safely say anything they think will get them votes without fear of being contradicted, but the RDN mayoral candidate statements in the Sunday, February 19, 2006, RDN were not campaigning as usual. Two candidates, **Gary Hicks** and **Tom Sager**, talked about the people of Rolla, their needs and concerns. Both said Rolla has to take a different direction to improve quality of life *for all the people of Rolla*. Imagine that! They believe that even if they aren't rich and can't afford to join any of the right clubs citizens shouldn't be shut out of

participation in their own government and their needs are just as important as those of the 'ruling class.' Neither Hicks nor Sager believe that TIF and retail development are going to be the salvation of Rolla and neither are for destroying Buehler Park.

The third candidate, **Bill Jenks III** talked about how important it was for "the community at large to work together with the RCDC, RMU, the Chamber and RREC" to "attract retail" development. Jenks was lukewarm on TIF and the Buehler Park issues. He said on the 19th that he won't push either one either way it goes. Jenks did however make it crystal clear that he's a card-carrying member of the Old Guard, a party apparatchik who will continue to put their agenda first. These corporate groups – Kleptocrats all - have controlled the city for 40 years and Jenks said his priority is cultivating "good relationships" between City Hall and RCDC, RREC and the Chamber.

How could the "relationship" between City Hall and these non profit corporate parasites possibly be any better? They're attached to the city treasury like leeches, they've been getting a free ride from the taxpayers for decades and their hands are always out for more of our tax money. The RCDC is too cheap to pay to have their own grass mowed. Butz and Morgan have city employees mow it for them – free of charge of course. How much more must Rolla taxpayers lavish on these country club organizations and their self-involved members to "improve" the relationship Jenks feels they deserve?

Hicks and Sager, however, both point out that we've had 40 years of Old Guard ideas and Old Guard spending on economic development and have little to show for it but seizure of private property and exclusion of public ideas and contributions. It's time, Sager says, to put the focus on rebuilding trust in city government and run the city for the people who live in it and who pay their taxes. They don't believe in government by some of the people for some of the people. Well, there's a radical idea and one that won't find favor with the Kleptocratic class.

If Rolla voters want a change in the city's attitude, policies and spending, **Jenks** makes it perfectly clear voters only have a choice between his opponents, **Hicks** and **Sager**.

"Ten-hut!" On March 13, 2006 on the Channel 16 interview of the mayoral candidates Sager and Hicks were still opposed to TIF but by this time Jenks had gotten off the fence and joined them. All three mayoral candidates are opposed to TIF – now there's a news flash. Both Hicks and Jenks impressed us by showing the ability to see past the obvious negative of condemnation and deal with the complexities and flaws of TIF financing. They pointed out that the city could not afford

to get stuck with a \$10 million TIF debt for a retail gamble that could go sour. They get good marks for at least knowing that much about the next 3 steps of TIF when the council's knowledge level hasn't made it past condemnation on page 1.

The really big surprise was to learn that Jenks has suddenly acquired a new persona. He came out of the closet that night as (drum roll) **"Colonel Wm. Jenks III of the United States Reserves."** During the forum Jenks was "colonel-ed" at every opportunity and once he even "colonel-ed" himself. However, he still didn't take credit for being on the *RCDC Board of Directors*. He now does admit to being on the *RCDC Board of Directors*.

When the three were asked for a closing statement as to why people should vote for each of them, "Colonel" Jenks did a little patriotic thing about the war, liberty, freedom and those serving over there...etc. etc. etc. (wave flags) For those who have known Jenks for decades and never heard Bill make an issue of his "colonelship," it sounded...well it sounded a little smarmy using the war and those serving in it as bait for votes to be the mayor of a little town in Missouri. It sounded like someone is afraid the RCDC candidate may not win so they're playing the "patriotic" card.

This isn't the first time RCDC has produced a "great military leader" for Rolla. For too many years we had the 'Big Colonel' **Ed Owsley** insisting on being addressed by his former rank (Ed 'fought' his war running officers clubs) while he shamelessly picked our pockets. Ed cashed in on his military rank because it puffed up his image and helped his schemes to get city land and tax money to enrich RCDC and the Chamber. Big Colonel Ed was the strutting honcho of the Kleptocratic faction for over 30 years. He believed in government 'by some of the people for some of the people' and we're still paying the price for it. The 'Little' Colonel is getting some bad campaign advice.

The stakes in this race are very high for the RCDC, RREC and the Chamber. Without their man Jenks in the mayor's chair it may be impossible for the Kleptocrats to get the council to annex their new Bahr property over by St. James and also provide the millions it will take to develop it for them. They are accustomed to having Rolla's taxpayers develop their private property, never mind that it's a constitutional violation: **Article VI, Sec. 23.** "No county, city or other political corporation or subdivision of the state shall own or subscribe for stock in any corporation or association, or lend its credit or grant public money or thing of value to or in aid of any corporation, association or individual, except as provided in this constitution." Like all kleptomaniacs, they are "afflicted with an irresistible desire to steal."

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