

# No Standing News

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

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## *It's his private business?*

Guess who makes a whole lot bigger salary than John Butz, almost as much as our grossly overpaid Superintendent of Schools and almost exactly the same salary

(\$120,087) as the Governor of Missouri? If you're standing up, sit down. If you're sitting down, lie down....

### **It's Dan Watkins! He makes \$120,000 plus benefits...**

...and gets to employ his relatives. What a ugly joke. Watkins doesn't even have a college degree. We assume he has a H.S. diploma but who knows. He's running a power company but he's such a Luddite he doesn't know how to use email. Dan wouldn't comment on his disgustingly inflated salary to the RDN because he said it was, "a personal thing." No dumbkopf. Your *public* salary for your *public* job is paid with *public* funds so it's *public* business. A guy getting \$120,000 a year should know that. A quick survey of several third-class cities shows none of their public works directors making more than \$55,000. Watkins' \$120,000 salary is an insult to every city employee who has been jerked around by Rolla's government for years while Watkins, who can't answer simple questions he's asked at council meetings without running back to the office to ask what the answer is, was being obscenely over compensated for what? Keeping his mouth shut about how the RMU/RCDC board members were shoveling our rate money out the back door to their RCDC friends?

More choice quotes from the June 2-3 interview of **Dan Watkins** by **RDN Editor Alan Gersenecker**: "*We don't have any secrets here.*" This from the paranoid Watkins who told his own board they couldn't see RMU's emergency security plan because they didn't have "security clearance." Watkins has consistently and illegally denied NSN a copy of the water study done several years ago because according to the "Watkins Open Records Law" one must make an appointment and present oneself before Watkins and humbly make your request and wait to see if he will give you security clearance. If we had known then he was making as much as the Governor we would have understood why he was making up his own laws. Watkins: "*Getting out (of MoPEP) is one thing, but you have to have a place to go. I don't believe there anyone out there who could take us.*" When **The Great Duncan Kincheloe** speaks that's what comes out of Watkins mouth and that's what Duncan wants us to think. UE, the PSC regulated company that provides all our neighbors with power for about 6¢ per kWh (that's retail) would take us in a second but we have to get rid of MoPEP and that means we have to get rid of **Stoffer** and **Alfermann**. Watkins will be easy.

The most obnoxious thing Watkins said in the June interview with Gersenecker was, "*The 6.3 figure is a way in which Dr. Stoffer has chosen to explain our rates Watkins said. It's something he's done to simplify things. It's much*

*more complicated than that. Some months, it's well above the 6.3 cents.*" Stoffer isn't simplifying things for us he's simplifying things for Watkins. Only Watkins thinks what Stoffer says is complicated. Watkins couldn't even explain what a cost-of-service business was for this interview without reading from a script prepared for him - most likely by Duncan Kincheloe. To the rest of us Stoffer is just an old barnacle who can put a class to sleep before the bell quits ringing. Stoffer thinks his PhD is a license to lie and patronize the public. When Stoffer "chooses" to use "the 6.3 figure to explain our rates" without "choosing" to add that the RMU board is adding a 3¢ mark-up to MoPEP's 6.3¢ wholesale rate he's deliberately spreading misinformation to confuse the public. That's lying, not explaining.

Alfermann, Stoffer and Watkins became MoPEP's poodle and stuck us with belching MoPEP generators and the highest electric rates in the state. Thanks to those dunderheads, which until last year included **Mayor Wm. Jenks III**, Dan Watkins is getting a salary only \$87 less than **Governor Blunt**. Unbelievable! We've reported some incredible Rolla screw-ups over the years but this beats all. They need to hit the reset button and begin again.

We were going to say that right after the council appoints new public works board members to replace **Stoffer** and **Alfermann** their first order of business would be to search for a general manager who knows what he's doing - like the guy who runs the Fulton utilities - and hire him away at any price. We were thinking they would have to bite the bullet and add a little bit to the current salary to get someone really good, someone like the guy in Fulton. We had no idea they were already paying a salary to get someone really, really good but they're wasting it on someone really, really bad. With \$120,000 to offer it won't be difficult to cherry-pick from the best utility managers out there. Hell, for \$120,000 they could hire the director of KC Power and Light.

We wonder...if you're **John Butz** the Administrator of the whole city, or a department manager for the city such as **Brady**, **Chief Kears** or **Hargis**, is it humiliating to know that a guy like **Dan Watkins** is being paid nearly twice what they're paying you?

**Why does the Chamber have nothing to say about the utility rates?** While homeowner utility rates have almost doubled, local businesses have utility rates that make a

homeowners bill pale by comparison. One local restaurant saw its \$3,000 a month bill jump to nearly \$7,000 a month! Where they can they're going to pass that cost increase along to you, when they can't it means their families or employees will have to do without. The council, the RREC and Bax are only obsessed with Big Projects and Big Boxes so they're totally unconcerned. We're concerned with our "Little Boxes" the men and women who run their own businesses and provide a lot of the sales taxes the council spends. Why hasn't the alleged **Chamber of Commerce** been there at every meeting telling the council to do something to relieve their Little Box members of these oppressive rates? Sales taxes are \$3.9 million of the \$28 million city revenues. Why isn't Jenks, himself a businessman, more concerned about the impact these rates are having on local independent businesses that provide the city with the sales tax dollars the city depends upon?

The real business owners in Rolla (not the institutional and corporate management-types who are typical Chamber board members but the ones who work 16-hour days, six days a week who sweat their slim retail profit margins every month) must take the time to remind city hall whose sweat and tears are providing them with the \$3,900,000 they're spending on all their development foolishness. If they are afraid to make a phone call, go to a meeting, make a donation or sign a petition they will continue to pay extra thousands of dollars every year to the overpaid fat cats like \$120K Watkins at the Royal Municipal Utilities instead of sending their children to college, putting away for their retirement or giving their employees health insurance. Every month \$120K Watkins sends them a bill that says they're mice not men.

Rolla's independent businessmen and women can't rely on the **Chamber of Commerce** to protect their interests. Last month the lead story in the paper was how **Chamber Executive Director Stevie Kearse** was praised by **Mayor Jenks** for writing an "outstanding report." *His* sales tax producers are bleeding to death from *his* utility rates and he's giving Stevie an A+ for her nice book report? The news story said her affection for her job and Rolla's businesses is "infectious." We'd like to see her express some "infectious" enthusiasm for Rolla's businesses by telling the council to sack the RMU board, terminate the MoPEP contract and get off the backs of the businesses she claims to hold in such affection. We won't see Stevie doing any of that.

Stevie was asked recently by a Rolla businessman if the Chamber would help **RMU4U** to get utility rates lowered. She replied that the Chamber "really couldn't get involved." No they really can't. They quit representing businesses when they went on the city dole. Their embarrassing silence on the utility rate crisis is proof that they don't have the guts to stand up for their members. They've turned their backs on their small business members to lick the hands of their political masters who hold the cash.

We call them the **Chamber of Decorators** because that's what they are – party planners who spend \$220,000 a year of public tax money meeting in their club house, planning progressive dinners and golf tournaments and polishing up the image of an organization that is no longer

worth the price of membership.

**Doolittle is coming! Doolittle is coming!** Give the man a metal! Petersen has again protected Rolla from being "encroached upon" by the threat of annexation by Doolittle, or at least that's what he told the council and **Councilman Monty Jordan** swallowed every word of it. Last year Petersen had the council annex a long narrow ditch along I-44 toward St. James. He and Butz gave the council some mumbo-jumbo about having to block the threat of St. James annexation. Later the announcement was made that the RCDC had purchased 125-acres of the Bahr ranch and the mystery of the St. James "annexation threat" was explained. RCDC was getting ready to have the council annex their new industrial property. The first step was to make up an excuse to get the city limits up to the edge of the Bahr property. Then they planned to get the land annexed and then the city would put in the roads, sewer, water and power for them just like they did for Hy Point. Unfortunately **Jim Sowers** and the RCDC (including the soon-to-be Rolla Mayor **Bill Jenks**) didn't realize the extent of the city's deficit condition. This time the council couldn't slip RCDC a million or two out the back door from RMU like they used to do in the good old days.

The looming "Doolittle Encroachment" is just an excuse to start the process of annexation of the whole 800-acres for Rolla West. In the council's annexation paperwork they told the council that this strip-annexation was "requested by MoDOT." On 4/23/07 MoDOT was asked why they wanted this strip annexed. This was the reply of **R. Rakestraw**, MoDOT District 9 Transportation Project Manager.

*"MoDOT does not request cities to annex land along our routes. A request for annexation comes from a city because they want to do it not because we want them too. In this case I would take a guess that it has to do with the boundaries of their proposed tax district."*

Here is proof of another lie by Petersen, Butz and Jenks. Why did they lie the council would have done it anyway? Like **Tracey Watson** said about Stoffer and Watkins, "Do they think no one will check on what they say?" Yes, they do think no one will check on what they say. Exposing city lies used to be a cottage industry; it's becoming an Olympic sport.

**The Prince of Perks won't shut up.** If you watch the council meetings always wait for the last little bits after it looks like they're all done with the meeting. One bit (they cut out the elapsed time) is when Beger or Bushie has to confess to what they were doing in the closed session and they were usually doing something illegal. It's always a treat to see any lawyer go on record and confess to participating in an illegal act. The confession for June 4, 2007 was typical. They were having another illegal closed session to discuss **Elizabeth Bax's** proposal that they use our tax money to build a private park for **Terry Brewer** in RCDC's private industrial park on a contaminated lagoon. This was at best a budget adjustment and should have been discussed in open session. It was not a real estate purchase so it was a blatant violation of the

Sunshine Law but both Bax and Butz know how unpopular this project is with the public so they first set it up in a secret meeting with the council. They had to break one law to twist the council's arms to get them to violate another law (the constitution) to spend public money for the benefit of a private corporation to build Terry his lavish private park on RCDC's land and then con the council into paying for annual maintainance for him. Bax says if we would do this the "tenants" (not our "tenants" RCDC's "tenants") would feel loved and appreciated. RCDC as usual isn't putting a dime in the project. One of the unappreciated "tenants," having milked us of all the incentives they could get for 12 years, is moving to China. Their hundreds of ex-employees don't need a park - they need jobs.

City taxpayers have already given Terry a \$14,300,000 in city revenue bond which paid off all his debts and built him a new building all at less than 4% fixed interest rate and they also excused his property taxes. In return, he *failed to retain the 240 jobs* he promised but he still gets to keep the new building, his debts are still paid off, the loan is still fixed at less than 4% and he's still getting all the tax breaks because Butz and the council don't have the guts to take them away. Terry recently got a \$10 million grant from the government so to show his loyalty to Rolla for all the wonderful things we've done for him he used it to create new highly paid, hi-tech jobs *in Springfield*. Everything the council has given him isn't enough for the Prince of Perks, he never shuts up about that damn park in the toxic lagoon and Elizabeth Bax never quits pimping it for him - illegally if she has to. If he wants a park why doesn't he have RCDC build it for him? It's an improvement to their property not ours. They've got our land and our money and they've never paid a dime back to us in property taxes. It looks like Butz has our employees out at Hy Point again with that fancy new **\$15,000 and \$10,000** lawnmowers Butz bought (the city had to borrow money to buy it) so Kwantes could *cut RCDC's grass for free* again this summer. Can't the RCDC moochers ever pay for anything? Sooner or later the council has to take a vote on it. *That vote may be Monday night.*

**The Tom Sowers eyesore.** In spring Rolla's eyesores show up best. Our Eyesore of the Year for 2007 is the old Pershing school building at 5<sup>th</sup> St. and Salem Avenue. The city has spent three years and who knows how much money on TIF because they claimed Warren Dean's property was an eyesore and a public safety hazard. Well, this property is an eyesore and it's unquestionably a safety hazard. It's long past any kind of renovation; kids could easily break into that building and hurt themselves falling through the rotting floors. Can no one in the codes department see this derelict building, this big brick museum of code violations? The last we heard the building was owned by **Tom Sowers**. Could that be why this eyesore never gets any "complaint-driven enforcement" and why this obviously derelict building never shows up on City Hall's "blighted" property radar? At the least Sowers should be required to alleviate this attractive nuisance by putting a fence around it or is the council still afraid to give orders to a Sowers? There should be a sign on the building that says: *"Your Tax Dollars Not At Work Here!* This is an example of

Rolla's dysfunctional priorities. They're too lazy to do anything about an eyesore and an obvious public safety hazard but they're more than willing to bulldoze homes in a subdivision for a \$35 million tax-and-spend development "Vision."

**The Rolla Free Public Library** has a wonderful summer program for children. They are doing for our children what the city Parks and Recreation Program used to do when we had a statutory park board that kept Kwantes doing something besides sitting in his office playing computer games. Keep in mind the Library Board is doing this on their tiny little budget and they get not one dime of subsidy from the city for this or for their building program. Ken Kwantes and the park system, on the other hand, also have their own property tax but yet they get a subsidy from the council of hundreds of thousands and for what? While the library is squeezing out money for a program to keep children excited and interested in reading and learning, Scrooge Butz charges them **\$18,000** every year which he claims is the city's cost of collecting their taxes along with the city's taxes. Separating the Library's property taxes from the City's property taxes after the county does all the work of actually collecting them must take about five minutes. You'd think if the city council is too tightfisted to help the library any other way (given the millions they've wasted on their speculative land deals and virtual development schemes) they'd at least order the Chamber of Decorators to give the library one of the "grants" from the Tourism Tax to help with this summer children's program. But no, the Decorators prefer to dole out money to the artsy set rather than encourage children's literacy.

**OYEZ, OYEZ, CASE.net.** The 25<sup>th</sup> Judicial District has finally joined the computer world and the world of judicial accountability. We, the lumpen proletariat, who pay for the judicial system, can now go on line to look up the cases filed in our courthouse and peek in on what they're doing. The system is **CASE.net (called Casenet)**. The rest of the state has had it for about 20 years but ex-judge **Doug Long** wouldn't let us join the state system because he was peeved about something. He's gone so now we have the same information everyone else has had for years. Want to see the lawsuits that have been the deep dark secrets of local public officials for decades? Google **CASE.net**, then type in a corporation or a name like say...the Rolla Public Schools. They have **15** lawsuits and CORE (in the RPS list under their real name, "Rolla Public School Foundation") has **one**. We found **two** mechanics liens and a **one** breach of contract against RCDC. Hogan Construction has not one as reported earlier but **30** and the City of Rolla **522**. PCRMC takes the prize with **842** cases on file! Now that we have a real newspaper editor who doesn't sanitize the news and we can see what used to be highly secret lawsuits, how will public officials explain? Lawsuits are a quality indicator that boards should be using in management's annual evaluation. Are they?

**Schlock in; schlock out.** Here we go again. On **May 16**, the RREC (**John Petersen** and **Elizabeth Bax**) received the RFP's back from two consultants to do the *Rolla West Retail*

Market Assessment study. (See, they were going to do it anyway whether they got any money from their "cooperators" or not.) The RFP says, "The purpose of the Retail Market Assessment is to determine current and forecasted retail market share for Rolla, Phelps County Missouri which will be used in evaluating opportunities for retail trade expansion." Translation: No matter who bids we're going to hire **Development Services** – the same schlock merchants who did the TIF studies - to do the crystal ball gazing that will tell our cooperating council members that IF we attract some really, really BIG, big boxes we can draw hordes of shoppers from Ft. Wood and make tons of money on sales taxes. Development Services will say that the Big, Big Boxes will sell so much that we will be able to pay off the Big, Big Debt for the Big, Big Bypass.

"Forecasting" any retail market is like predicting the mood of water buffalo in heat. Forecasting what will happen at a shopping mall over the next 30-40 years is something only a con artist would pretend to be able to do. Only a fool would pay for such drivel and only a chump would take it seriously. The Council, PCRMC and UMR are both.

**What won't be in the DS consultant report.** The "expert"

consultants won't, of course, be asked to factor in the impact of our MoPEP-driven utility rates, the highest in central Missouri, and the regressive effect of MoPEP rates on both Rolla's overall economic growth and the vanishing disposable income of Rolla shoppers who are paying doubled utility bills and who will not be able to buy anything at the BIG, big boxes. The consultants also won't be asked to address the economic impact of tax-shifting a new shopping area will have or what impact a special sales tax district will have on Rolla residents or predict how many existing Rolla businesses will die as a result of the special sales tax district. The report will not address how many businesses will avoid locating in their higher sales tax area like they would avoid a case of incurable clap or what will happen to their special tax district and their whole Rolla West project if Wal-Mart moves somewhere else at any time over the 40-year life of the really, really Big, Big bond debt. Other than that it will read exactly like the last report Development Services did for TIF that said IF we got the biggest of the BIG, BIG boxes and IF everybody in a 100 mile radius came to shop in the BIG, BIG boxes for 23 years and IF nothing went wrong, we'd be able to pay off the BIG, BIG debt. C'mon Toto, let's go home to Kansas.

**END**

**Notice:** If you want to sign the petition for the city audit contact: Donna Hawley at 458-2165 or Tracey Watson at 368-3837.

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