

No Standing News

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

Volume II

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How long are you going to let chicken-killing dogs stink up your place?

Very important news you didn't see in the Rolla Daily News and why. Thursday, October 27th was a very good day. I opened up my computer and I saw the two following press releases. I had been expecting both because I've been following the case that started this chain of events since 2006 when some citizens in Hermann Missouri filed a class-action lawsuit against their city government for pumping up their utility rates and skimming off the 'profits' to use to subsidize the city budget and other non utility uses. You know, the same way Rolla uses inflated utility 'profits' to subsidize the city budget and pass money under the table to buy buildings to give to RCDC and subsidize RREC's failed economic development schemes and other pork projects.

How the cases came about and how they will affect the three towns being sued is a fascinating story. The first case will be argued before the Missouri Supreme Court in December and a decision is expected next spring. The decision, if it goes against the City of Hermann, could end decades of the corrupt "pump and skim" practice in hundreds of Missouri towns that are not protected by the PSC. It would allow citizens to finally vote on utility rate increases as the Hancock Amendment intended. On the other hand it could touch off a tidal wave of lawsuits. Which way it will go and whether Rolla rate payers will benefit from a decision favorable to rate payers in this lawsuit, depends on several things. Read on...



NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MISSOURI ATTORNEY GENERAL

October 27, 2010

Attorney General Koster says Hancock Amendment protects taxpayers from unfair increased user fees

Jefferson City, Mo. – Attorney General Chris Koster said today that the Hancock Amendment does not allow cities to tack taxes onto "user fees" to avoid the Hancock Amendment's requirement of a public vote.

Koster said his office filed a brief with that opinion on behalf of the offices of the Attorney General and the State Auditor. State Auditor Susan Montee has released a number of audit reports that identified cities that she found collected excess utility charges that were then transferred to the general revenue of the cities for other uses.

"The Hancock Amendment is clear that cities cannot avoid a vote to raise taxes for other city services simply by increasing the user fees for services such as city utilities," Koster said. "I commend Auditor Montee for identifying this unfair avoidance of the Hancock Amendment. The law says Missouri taxpayers have the right to say

when they want their taxes increased and increasing user fees for that purpose clearly is in breach of the law. The brief was filed in a case before the Missouri Supreme Court. ###

MEDIA ADVISORY

State Auditor Files Legal Brief In Missouri Supreme Court -- Some Missouri Municipalities Overcharging Ratepayers On City- Owned Utilities

Audits Found Monies Were Used to Shore Up Other Governmental Services

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Allison Bruns (573) 751-4213 or (636) 236-4884 cell

(JEFFERSON CITY, MO) -- Today State Auditor Susan Montee filed a brief in the Missouri Supreme Court regarding excess utility charges levied by certain city-owned utilities. The brief, submitted by Attorney General Chris Koster on behalf of the Attorney General and State Auditor, includes references to audit reports where State Auditor Montee identified several cities that collect excess utility charges that are then transferred to the general revenue of these cities. State Auditor Montee believes these actions implicate the provisions of Missouri's Hancock Amendment that require voter approval of new taxes or fees.

The audits listed below reported problems associated with Missouri municipalities overcharging ratepayers on city utilities. In many instances, overcharges created reserves in city utility funds that the municipalities then used to pay for other government operating expenses.

For Example / Finding for the City of Marceline :

<http://www.auditor.mo.gov/press/2010-40.htm>

The city has established electric rates that provide more revenue than is necessary to cover the costs of providing electricity services. Transfers totaling approximately \$1.3 million for the two years ended October 31, 2009, have been made from the Electric Fund to the General Revenue Fund. These transfers are significantly more than needed to cover administrative costs and are primarily utilized to fund city operations. As a result, the electric rates paid by city residents were up to 158 percent greater than the average of 12 other cities surveyed. By continuing to fund city operations with electric revenues, the city is, in effect, taxing its citizens without voter approval.

The city entered into a unit power purchasing agreement for a portion of the city's electricity needs with the [Missouri Joint Municipal Electric Utilities Commission \(MJMEUC\)](#), which is projected to cost the city \$440,000 per year for 30 years, without documenting its analysis of cost estimates of other alternative electricity sources. The city also entered into a 15-year lease purchase agreement in excess of \$1 million to purchase two diesel powered generators to expand the capacity of the city's electrical plant. No cost study was documented to determine if upgrading the generators was cost-beneficial to the city. In addition, the city's relationship and agreement with the MJMEUC is not disclosed in the city's financial statements.

Other Municipality Findings and Reports Links :

City of Salem <http://www.auditor.mo.gov/press/2010-08.htm>

City of Springfield <http://www.auditor.mo.gov/press/2007-80.htm>

City of Farmington <http://www.auditor.mo.gov/press/2007-11.htm>

City of Lebanon <http://www.auditor.mo.gov/press/2008-46.htm>

City of Hermann <http://www.auditor.mo.gov/press/2004-88.htm>

City of LaPlata <http://www.auditor.mo.gov/press/2000-126.htm>

#end of advisory#

What does the Hermann Hancock lawsuit mean?

The case the Attorney General and the Auditor are filing amicus briefs to support is the class action lawsuit *Arbor Investment vs. City of Hermann* which is now case # 91109 on the docket of the **Missouri Supreme Court**. Oral arguments will be heard in December and a decision is expected sometime in the spring of 2011.

If the City of Hermann loses, and I say the odds are they will, it means there will be a new “landmark” case from the Missouri Supreme Court telling all the unregulated towns that they must quit taking money from their utility funds to fill holes in their budgets that they were too incompetent to balance. Some few will do it willingly but most we expect will have to have a gun held to their heads. Why do we say the odds are that the City of Hermann will lose? When two ambitious politicians, the Attorney General and the State Auditor both take sides on an issue it means they’re pretty sure who the winners and losers are going to be.

This case started in 2006, when citizens in Hermann, Missouri represented by the firm of [Armstrong Teasdale LLP](#), 7700 Forsyth Blvd., St. Louis, Missouri, filed a class action lawsuit against the city. In 2010, Armstrong Teasdale, finding the same conditions existed in other towns filed similar class action lawsuits on behalf of more clients in the towns of **Marceline** and **Salem**. Each lawsuit alleges basically the same violation of Sec. 22 of the **Missouri Hancock Amendment to the Missouri Constitution**. The three complaints charge that each of the three cities have over-charged their local utility citizen-customers by millions of dollars annually then skimmed off the ill-gotten utility ‘profits’ and used the cash to subsidize city deficits and/or fund other non-utility projects. **James E. Mello** of the **Armstrong Teasdale** firm is the lead attorney for all three suits.

The oldest of the three lawsuits is the one against the [City of Hermann](#), which was first filed in the Gasconade County Circuit Court in 2006. On Tuesday, September 21, 2010, this class action suit was accepted by the **Missouri Supreme Court** for transfer, which means it has been placed directly on the Supreme Court docket without the case going back to the Gasconade County circuit court on remand as the Missouri Court of Appeals ordered in their June 2010 decision. The link to the [Hermann Application for Transfer](#) is a summary of the case and contains the questions the Supreme Court is being asked to decide. The class action suits against the cities of [Salem](#) and [Marceline](#) by citizens of those towns which raise the same questions were filed early in 2010 but have not yet been heard in their respective circuit courts. Marceline’s is the most entertaining read. The redundancy of the filings can be read as resolve on the part of the **Armstrong Teasdale** law firm to end this decades-long municipal corruption which is practiced in dozens if not hundreds of unregulated towns in this state - not just in the three towns being sued.

In addition to the allegation that the cities were inflating various utility fees and skimming off the excess ‘profit’ for non-utility purposes it is also alleged that they raised these utility rates *without a vote of the citizens as required by the 1980 Hancock Amendment*. Pumping up utility rates and skimming off the surplus for non utility uses is a popular and common practice among cities with *home-owned* and *unregulated* electric utility departments that are unprotected by the Missouri PSC. In the three lawsuits the “utilities” at issue are not just electric power but also water, sewer, natural gas, trash and communications. Although the most egregious violations are usually in electric utility rates - the greatest revenues naturally produce the greatest abuses - *all utilities* offered by a city for what is now called a “fee” have been abused and will be affected by this ruling.

Among the more bald-faced practitioners of this “pump ‘n skim,” scam, the utility rake-off is dumped into the general fund and spent as part of the general city budget. Among the more nervous it’s politely called “interdepartmental loans” which moves money from the lucrative utility fund to other funds (permitted by law temporarily) but the ‘loans’ are never repaid (not permitted by law). The excess utility ‘profits’ are never rebated to the utility customers and rate increases are never voted on by the public and there lies the heart of the legal question.

Why wasn’t Rolla on the Auditor’s list?

Unfortunately, the *City of Rolla* was missing on the auditor’s list in the press release but in Montee’s 2009 audit of Rolla she was focused more on RMU’s nepotism, their ugly “Joint Venture” with MJMEUC/MoPEP and the billions in liability they’ve brought down upon our heads than re-examining RMU’s decades-long incestuous fiscal relationship with the city council and RCDC and RREC. After all, **State Auditor Margaret Kelly** had covered their utility skimming in the 1998 state audit and had bluntly called it “hidden taxation” and a violation of Hancock but the arrogant city and the RMU pinheads

continued to do it anyway so rather than rehash it Montee moved on to investigate Rolla's unfortunate involvement in MoPEP which will be the next big scandal in unregulated municipal utility corruption.

Then I thought about how many utility "fee" increases the Rolla City Council has been hastily passing lately. It's as if they see doomsday coming and are trying to grab everything they can before disaster strikes. Nothing about the Hermann class action law suit has been in the **Rolla Daily News** of course, but Butz and the council know all about the Hermann lawsuit and have probably discussed it illegally in closed session because **Butz** has been on the **Missouri Municipal League** board and the MML board and membership doesn't like what they fear is going to happen in this case.

The MML has, like **Attorney General Koster** and **State Auditor Montee**, filed an amicus brief except that the MML's "friendly" brief was filed on the side of the **City of Hermann**. All of the MML members like Rolla don't want to have to stop stealing utility money. Deep down in their tiny lizard hearts they know sooner or later they're going to have to quit using their utility fees as "hidden taxes" and start submitting rate increases to the voters they just want it to be as later as possible. Owensville Missouri is the only MML member I know of that doesn't take a penny of their utility money for anything. Owensville is trying to get out of MoPEP. Smart people run Owensville.

If there is no franchise, there can be no franchise fee. If there is no franchise fee, there can be no payment "in-lieu" of it. So wrap your tax around that.

In an attempt to apply legal lipstick¹ to this pig, and avoid complying with Hancock, some cities – Rolla is one of them - have passed ordinances assessing 5% or more of the gross revenue utility 'take' to the general fund by renaming this skim a "franchise" or P.I.L.O.T. fee (Payment In Lieu of Taxes?). John Butz explained to the council this was a "tax wrapped in a fee." Butz-speak often comes out like that –incomprehensible to humans. In 2005 the City of Rolla changed their old PILOT ordinance [Ord. #35-161](#) from \$1,000 a month - and whatever they could steal from the utility overcharges to pipeline through the city to the RCDC with the happy collaboration of the RCDC members they had appointed to the RMU board - to a flat 5% of ALL the *gross receipts of water and electric revenues from the quarterly receipts*. The council anticipated their 'take' from the 5% of all utility gross receipts would be over a million plus annually. They even take a nickel from every dollar contributed by compassionate customers to help the poor with their utility bills! Yes, the evil toads even steal from the poor.

But the council was so greedy to do their 5% deal that they agreed to the "with depreciation option" RMU offered them because they didn't understand that meant they would have to – for the first time since 1945 – pay for their own utilities. They were voting on the ordinance in public and they wouldn't admit that they didn't know what the hell Stoffer was talking about by the "with depreciation option" so they ended up netting out only a fraction of the utility loot they thought they would get. They are so dumb they can't even steal cost-effectively.

The Big Franchise Lie. If there is no franchise, there can be no franchise fee. If there is no franchise fee, there can be no payment "in-lieu" of it. The fundamental lie necessary to pulling off this "franchise" or PILOT scam is to pretend that the public's own utility department is not really a public utility department and that the rate-payers are not really trapped in a monopoly that has police powers to force them to pay for city monopoly services. In Rolla's case the lie is especially galling since the citizens directly purchased the water and electric company in 1945 with a \$450,000 GO bond which they paid off.

The Mo. Supreme Court created the lie out of whole cloth in *Pace v. Hannibal* that the city monopoly is just like a private corporation (like AmerenUE) to which a franchise fee or PILOT can legally and logically be charged for allowing the city monopoly (now pretending to be a private corporation) the use of the publicly owned infrastructure (i.e. right-of-way, poles, roads, admin., etc.) but which has already been paid for and is maintained by the public with property, sales and other taxes in order to deliver to the public the utility product or service, which product or service is then billed to the owners of the infrastructure (the public) but which, in the fee margins of the monopoly pricing for this and other utility product and services,

¹ ***Pace v. city of Hannibal, Mo. Banc 1984.*** In *Pace*, the SC said that in *Hannibal* an *ordinance* taking a percentage of the utility receipts was not a violation of Hancock because, among their other reasons, "The utility operation, the setting of rates by the board, and the payments in lieu of franchise tax, are all long established and should not be lightly disturbed." Well hooray for history. The Justices, in their political naïveté, also mused that, "The legislature might also conclude that normal political pressures would be sufficient to keep rates of municipal utilities in line," and that, "There is no particular motive for turning a profit." Thus sayeth the urbanites all of whom personally enjoy the protection of PSC rate-controlled utilities. They babbled on... "In addition, the rates charged by government-owned utilities are generally lower than those charged by privately-owned utilities. Thus, one of the main reasons for government regulation of private utilities-to keep rates reasonable-does not exist for municipal utility operations." There are times when our esteemed Justices start drinking much too early in the day. This was one of those days.

already includes the maintainance and depreciation of the public infrastructure described above which has now been paid for multiple times. If you try to make sense out of this PILOT illogic your brain will explode.

This convoluted justification forces the public to pay city hall monopolists a 'toll' multiple times for use of their own property which they purchased outright in 1945. Mafia protection rackets operate in much the same way but with less tortuous rationale and you only have to pay them once.

The Appellate "Toast" order. In their June 2010 ruling on the Hermann case the Eastern District Appellate Court gave the City of Hermann and the lower court this parting shot:

"In conclusion, we find the trial court erred in entering summary judgment in favor of the City because there is a genuine dispute of material fact as to whether and for what purpose the City increased utility fees in violation of the Hancock Amendment by setting charges at a level to increase the City's general revenue and to subsidize general government expenditures rather than to compensate for the provision of services. Therefore, the judgment of the trial court is reversed and remanded.

If it is shown on remand that the object of the fees is to fund the City's general revenue, then this constitutes a violation of the Hancock Amendment and deserves an appropriate remedy under the Hancock Amendment." – 6-10 Mo. E. Dist. Court of Appeals, Arbor Investment Co.....

Translation: "You have one chance to prove that for decades you haven't deliberately pumped up city utility fees and skimmed off the resulting 'profits' to benefit the city budget thereby using your monopoly captives as "hidden tax cash cows" and that said cow did, in fact, jump over the moon. If you can't prove this, you're toast."

Of course the City of Hermann denies that they ever intentionally inflated utility rates so they could skim off the excess revenues for non-utility uses. They say it was just an accident which happened with uncanny regularity month after month, year after year, decade after decade. All the corrupt cities like Rolla who steal their utility funds this way tell the same lie. Any lingering question about the City of Hermann's intent was blasted sky high at the [9/29/10 Hermann city council meeting](#) when Hermann's **Alderman Penning** blurted out, "We had an election in the 50s in this town to go into the electrical business to make money to run the city....It was done specifically to make money to run the city." It's fair to say that Alderman Penning doesn't have a firm grip on the defense strategy in their case.

Marceline refuses rescue offer. Some of these towns are so thick they still don't get it and Marceline leads this pack of Stupids. Not only are they soaking their citizens with the highest utility rate in the state (**15¢** per kWh, but Rolla is closing in on the rail with **10.3¢** per kWh) but they're also running their town almost entirely out of their utility fund which is municipal hari-kari if the Hermann decision and/or their own later class action lawsuit goes against them. How will they cut back their city budget by **62%** in one year?

The Marceline Malefactors have refused a settlement offer made by James Mello of Armstrong Teasdale on behalf of the three Marceline plaintiffs who are suing the city. As part of the settlement the plaintiffs would drop the lawsuit and Mello and the firm would arrange bridge financing and other financial assistance while the Marceline Malefactors figure out how to run a town without sucking the utilities dry and exploiting its citizens with the highest utility rates in the Midwest. The law firm would charge a substantial fee for this remedial class in government but the reprobates in City Hall can't expect the law firm to provide the means of a massive bail-out and teach them how to govern for nothing. The firm's fees for this service would be high but probably less than the cost of the inevitable court-ordered bankruptcy ² and the long-term economic damage such headlines would cause which is their almost certain fate right now. In exchange, the city would have to quit ripping-off its citizens but that, it seems, was too high a price to pay.

The stiff-necked Marceline city government flat refused the offer because to accept it and stop milking their citizens would be to publicly admit their guilt and they absolutely refuse to do that even though they've twice been caught by the state auditor with both hands and feet in the cookie jar. Instead, they asked citizens to volunteer to serve on a finance committee. Marcelinians may not be the brightest but they weren't that stupid. There were no volunteers.

² In the infamous Jefferson County Alabama Ch. 9 bankruptcy a federal judge appointed a lawyer to be the court-appointed receiver at **\$500 per hour** but the judge cautioned him not to bill the county for more than **10 hours per day!**

At the November 2nd Marceline city council meeting, **Mayor Stuart**, city manager **Liz Cupp** and the Council came up with their second most wonderfulist idea ever. They made plans to put a referendum on the April 2011 ballot asking the citizens of Marceline to vote on whether they would *like to have the Council to continue to transfer money from the electrical fund and continue "business as usual!"* The sheer idiocy of it takes your breath away doesn't it? These people are afflicted with the same brain disease as Herman's Alderman Penning. They actually think a local referendum will absolve them of compliance with what they fear will be the outcome of the Hermann case before the Missouri Supreme Court and subsequently their own case.

These people are beyond saving. They're like having a chicken-killing hound. He may be your favorite hunting dog but when he begins killing your chickens there are only two choices, cure him or shoot him. The only way to cure him is to take a chicken he's killed and a stout piece of rope and tie that chicken on his back and leave it there until it rots and falls off and he stinks so bad the other dogs can't stand him and he even looks ashamed and can't stand himself. If that doesn't cure him you just have to shoot him. The problem is you have to live with the stinking dog while you're trying to cure him of killing your chickens. Marceline's city government never was a good hunting dog to begin with. The dead rotting chicken has been stinking a long time and they're still killing chickens. It's time to just shoot them with a mass recall election.

What will it CO\$T if Hermann, Marceline and Salem lose?

In each of the three lawsuits the plaintiffs are asking for "damages, declaratory judgment and injunctive relief." If the Supreme Court finds the skimming practice to be an illegal "hidden tax," that automatically makes it a violation of the Hancock law, so the plaintiffs ask that they be immediately stopped from doing it and they ask that the excessive utility charges which were transferred from one or more utility funds to other funds for up to six preceding years be refunded to their utility customers. Presumably, if the current utility rate is illegal it could be ordered rolled back to the last voted legal rate which may have been years ago or to 1980. That would require immediate action by the city to hold a public referendum to try to restore the kilowatt or water or trash rate to its current illegal level. All these "ifs" are up to the court.

The plaintiffs in each city are *asking the utility rebate to the rate payers* from the alleged illegal transfers for the years 2005 to 2009 in **Marceline** which transfers would total **\$3,335,220**. In **Salem** the total is **\$4,700,000**, in **Hermann** the rebates would be a total of **\$5,255,052** because they were skimming from six different utility accounts. In addition to refunding some of their ill-gotten gains the cities may have to pay some or all of the legal fees and costs of the plaintiffs.

The Supreme Court can do all of the above or none or something else entirely but the very least that will happen if they find this practice has been illegal is that the city of Hermann (Salem and Marceline in their turn) will be ordered to cease this practice and the people will be relieved of a gross injustice and henceforth be able to vote on utility rate increases as they should have been doing since 1980. If that happened the cities would have sudden large holes in their budgets and will have to learn how to run a city without a subsidy from the utility fund. Is that a bad thing? They would also have to learn how to make a convincing case to the voting public when they honestly need a rate increase. That's accountability.

The budget shortfall in Hermann would be about **35%** just for the annual skim which is bad enough but in Marceline over **62%** of their annual city budget is skimmed from the utility fund. And here is the mother of all ironies – if they're ordered to pay back the millions they've taken from inflating and skimming the utility accounts they'd have to do it **WITHOUT** being able to use the money from inflating and skimming their utility accounts!

What will happen to all other guilty unregulated towns?

If that is the Supreme Court's decision any unregulated Missouri city guilty of the same practice that does not likewise voluntarily roll back utility rates and take other prudent remedial measures will be wide-open to an easy-to-win lawsuit by any local ratepayer and his \$300-per-hour-plus-expenses lawyer. Unlike the remedial offer made to Marceline other lawyers can just use the precedent, file a lawsuit, collect an out-of-court cash settlement with no judicial decision and walk away leaving the city to continue to milk their electric cow. This can happen over and over and with a confidentially agreement you'll never know who city hall is paying off or for how much and of course you'll be paying for the settlements out of your utility bills.

No one knows how many towns are playing this skim game but its been going on since WWII. My money says it's not the dozen the auditor has uncovered but more likely there are well over a hundred or even two hundred corrupt unregulated towns. In the last few years, petition audits by the State Auditor of the towns of Springfield, in 2007, Salem in 2010, Rolla in 1989 (their second state audit was 2009), Marceline in 2010 (also their second state audit), and Hermann in 2004, and, as the auditor points out in the above press releases, state petition audits of several other Missouri towns such as, **Farmington**, **Lebanon**, **La Plata** and others going back many years, have produced repeated condemnation from state auditors of both

parties for what they called “hidden taxation” or the practice of skimming inflated utility rates. But, like an addict loves his needle, city officials loved their secret pork machine so they flat refused to give it up even when publicly exposed. For the ethically feeble, continuing the crooked practice was easier and more rewarding than exercising the tough fiscal discipline often promised in their election campaigns.

***The “Hermann decision” will not be self-enforcing
but more like a Do-It-Yourself-Kit***

If the Supreme Court decision in *Arbor vs. City of Hermann* is that cities may not fund non utility things out of their utility account and must get voter approval of fee increases, it doesn't mean every city council in the state that is guilty of doing the same thing Hermann has been doing will automatically stop their illegal practices. Human nature being what it is – intractable - and city council's being what they are – dumb – many or maybe most will go right ahead and continue to do the same thing they have been doing for decades, victimizing their fellow citizens while making up whining excuses why their reason for doing it is different and justified unless they see chain gangs of city councilmen in perp walks on TV - which they won't.

So don't sit back and wait for the hound dogs to stop killing your chickens because it won't happen. There will be no thunderbolt to strike them dead for you - mores the pity. God only helps those who get off their fat asses and file class-action suits. What the Hermann case does mean is that local citizens may have a great new precedent or almost a do-it-yourself-kit with which to file their own class action suit and a fairly easy time winning it. “Attach lawyer A to the new Landmark Hermann Case B and insert nozzle into...”

If the past is a predictor of the future, and it usually is, citizens in all the little unregulated towns in Missouri who are paying gawd-awful utility prices had better be thinking about doing what the citizens in Hermann, Marceline and Salem have done which is calling up the lawyers at **Armstrong Teasdale** or some other law firm and offering to be one of the names on a class action lawsuit against their City of Really-High-Utility-Rates-With-No-Votes. Initiating a class-action lawsuit *shouldn't* cost the plaintiffs (that would be you) much except maybe for some filing fees and it's the only way people (that would be you too) are ever going to get their utility, sewer and water rates down to something reasonable and competitive and have the privilege of voting on all future utility increases that qualify for a Hancock Amendment vote (also you).

The Hancock Amendment, or the power to vote on some utility rate increases, is our rather crude substitute for the Public Service Commission protection that we pay our state taxes for city people to have but we don't get because we're an *unregulated* municipality. So this solution is not perfect but it's all we've got and for decades they've even robbed us of that.

In Rolla's case if no one in this town of 17,000 people has the guts to step up and do it then you can all just keep paying 10.3¢ per kWh for electric and all those other new “fees” they just raised that you didn't get to vote on because as soon as the dust clears Stoffer and Jenks and the other chicken-killing dogs in RMU and City Hall will go back to raising your rates in the dark of night and skimming off the cream for whatever failed ‘development’ excuse they dream up next. Neither Rolla nor any other small town in Missouri will ever attract new residents or businesses until this kind of official corruption is cleaned out and we can once again brag about our low cost of living. Who wants to live in a town that even lies on its utility bills and says it's charging for kilowatts and “service availability” when they're really charging a hidden tax for city hall pork?

The law firm below is the one representing the plaintiffs in the *Arbor Investment Co vs. City of Hermann*. I say hire the cook with the most experience because beginners are going to have a long and expensive learning curve but shoot, pick any lawyer you like.

The point is State Auditor Margaret Kelly told you in 1998 that City Hall and RMU were robbing you with “hidden taxes” but nobody knew how to make them stop it without paying a fortune for a lawsuit and none of the local lawyers had the guts to sue them anyway. The city and RMU and RCDC had already been milking you for decades then and they've continued to do it every day since. Now there are these guys at this big law firm who obviously know what they're doing and have laid out the whole road map and it sure looks like they're going to pull it off. The people in Hermann, Marceline and Salem are going for it because they've had enough of being victimized by their own elected city governments.

It's probably the last chance you'll ever have so the question is this, how long are you going to put up with letting these chicken-killing dogs hang around your yard stinking up the place?

[Armstrong Teasdale LLP,](#)

James E. Mello

Phone: 314-621-5070

Direct Phone: 314-342-4154

Fax: 314-621-5065

jmello@armstrongteasdale.com

Jeff McPherson

Phone: 314-552-6610

7700 Forsyth, Suite 1800

St. Louis, Missouri 63105

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