

# No Standing News

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

Volume I

Number 50

December 30, 1999

## THE END OF DEMOCRACY AS WE KNOW IT?

This is Part One of a Series on the desperate spin-doctoring taking place by Mayor Morgan and the Rolla Area Chamber of Commerce as a result of the Rolla City Council's decision on December 20th to put the sale of Buehler Park on the April ballot for a popular vote. The ordinance, which will put this hot issue on the April ballot, will be voted on by the council on Monday night, January 3rd (assuming the lights stay on) so they can meet the January 25th deadline for adding items to the April ballot. Mayor Morgan, Councilmen Owsley and Magdits (Wiggins, Brown and Williams were absent for that vote) and the Chamber of Commerce are opposed to letting the public decide whether they want their park sold to a commercial developer.

The following conversation was aired on KTTR program "Facts for Folks" on December 24, 1999. This program was moderated by Buz Harvey, past Chairman of the Board of the Rolla Area Chamber of Commerce and Bob Jones and is sponsored by **Medi-Value Pharmacy, Wood Jones & Associates and Scott's Printing**. So that they will not be able to say we took their statements out of context, we have transcribed as much of their discussion about the referendum on the sale of Buehler Park as we were able to catch on tape. The only thing missing is a small part of the introduction. We think the conversation is very revealing and we want you to judge for yourself if their arguments against a referendum

have merit. If you get to vote on this public policy issue will it really bring all of our democratic institutions down around our ears? Will there really be a public vote on the purchase of every garbage truck as they say? Will this one vote bring about "disarray, and inactivity and inertia in our city, state and local government" as Buz fears? If a public park is cannibalized to appease the Rolla Area Chamber of Commerce will it really, as Buz claims, improve the quality of life for everyone in Rolla - or will it only improve the quality of life for the Chamber?

### From the "Facts for Folks" program:

**Buz Harvey:** "...and I certainly understand the city council's desire to put this thing to bed once and for all. Nevertheless, it is my humble opinion that people like Joe Morgan are correct; we elect those people at the city council to make responsible decisions for us as a city. We elect the people at the county commission to make responsible decisions for us as members of the citizenry of Phelps County. And anytime that we run to the polls, which, contrary to what some may believe, does cost money..."

**Bob Jones:** "Every time it's done..."

**Buz:** "Every time it's done, when we basically short circuit their ability to make the administrative, legislative, and executive decisions that we elected them to do, then we can cause disarray, and inactivity and inertia in our city, state and local government."

**Bob:** "If nothing else, politicians, and I put them all in that category, even though they're public

servants in reality, they're not really politicians. Many of them serve for no salary, no cost, at their own discretion. But these people have gotten to the point now where they're scared, actually frightened to make some decisions for the simple reason that they know that you've got a large, vocal group on either side and you're going to get .....

**Buz:** (interrupting Bob) "I question large, but that's neither here nor there."

**Bob:** "Well, large or small, but you have a vocal group, that's the key word, on either side of an issue, and sometimes both sides that eat you alive."

**Buz:** "Yeah."

**Bob:** "And, uh, no one likes that. No one really likes to be eaten alive."

**Buz:** "Yeah."

**Bob:** "But, I guess what I'm trying to say here, Buz, is it's kind of like a referee in throwing the ball up at a jump ball. He doesn't pick the shortest guy on the floor and the tallest guy on the floor, he picks two people of equal heights to do the jumpin'. And, uh, maybe, maybe that's what they're doing. This is just a jump ball by the voters (laughter) to get them in there and let them make the decision."

**Buz:** "Well, and that may be, that may be the analogy, but the bottom line on issues like this is that, uh, we have twelve decent human beings who represent the six wards of the city of Rolla, and we have a mayor who basically represents, all six wards of Rolla..."

**Bob:** "Shouldn't they be able to make those decisions?"

**Buz:** "And I trust them! I trust them collectively. I know every single one of them, and

I know every single one of them by name. They're not bad people. They understand the fundamental issues. They don't always agree on everything, but that is the nature of representative democracy..."

**Bob:** "That's what it's all about!"

**Buz:** "And, and they get the stuff out into in, in, into into the open. And regardless of the criticism that they have taken over time, the Rolla City Council generally does provide a reasonably decent uh, uh, amount of leadership for this community at this particular juncture."

**Bob:** "I would hope our system wouldn't degenerate to the point where everything that's decided on has to go before the voters. My God, you'd look on election day there'd be a ballot a hundred miles long."

**Buz:** "I know when I was at the hospital, we would get the bill every time for the election, and it was in excess of \$10,000. Now this is real money, folks. This is not..."

**Bob:** "This is not a drop in the bucket."

**Buz:** "No. I don't know what the city election costs, I have no idea, it doesn't really matter. But the bottom line is that it's not free. And the other thing is, is that, to be perfectly candid about it, if, if I were a publicly elected official, and every time a tough issue came up, that a, a, a, a group of people could make us go to the polls and vote, I'd say, "Why in the heck do you bother with electing a legislative body? If you're just going to vote on every cotton-, does it mean I have to vote if I want to buy a new backhoe over at the city street department?"

**Bob:** "Yep!"

**Buz:** "Does it mean I need to put, yeah, do I have, do I have to vote when I want to invest 3 million dollars in a new MRI machine out at the

hospital? Uh, does it mean that I need to vote when I want to chip and seal another 20 miles of highway? I mean, I realize I'm being a little bit, taking it a little bit far..."

**Bob:** "But it's not, not far from reality in a way."

**Buz:** "We've got to trust these people. If you don't trust these people, I, uh, duh then change them."

**Bob:** "Absolutely. Absolutely. (Turning to Tonya) You want to say something, don't you?"

**Tonya (KTTR employee):** "I have plenty to say about it, but I probably shouldn't. I, I attend every council meeting, cover it for the radio station. And I thoroughly believe that these people are intelligent. And I don't agree with everyone of them on every issue, but that's kind of the whole point: is to have people that have different views; they think differently, and they're representing a majority of that ward, and they should be allowed to vote and make the decision on their own because that's what they're put there for."

**Bob:** "That's what they were put there for. Right."

**Tonya:** "Yes! And I think they..."

**Bob:** "And they are debating on the floor, and they are arguing points. And they are bringing up their own..."

**Tonya:** "Yes, yes they are. And I think that the whole reason that this was put to a vote is because one group was losing and they thought that this would be an easy way...this is my opinion."

**Bob:** "OH...MY...GOODNESS, BUZ! What did *she* say?"

**Tonya:** "I'm sorry! That was, you asked for my opinion, and..."

**Buz:** "I do believe that the majority of the people of the city of Rolla are intelligent. And I believe, and the great majority, I might add. And I believe if given a fair amount of information, they will decide, uh, appropriately in any election. Nevertheless, we all know that there are instances in every jurisdiction in this country, where a small group of people have been able to thwart the general public intention. And, uh, and, I, it, it, it may occur here, it may not occur here. I hope it does not. I hope it does provide one final test of the general wisdom of the people who call Rolla, Missouri home."

**Bob:** "Yep. And again, it comes back to this other situation, now, we're in a 90-day swing. Uh, this is one of those elections that's gonna be decided in 90 days. Let's just hope that all the information can get out to the voters, since it's a decision that's left to them that they can get honestly all the information necessary to make an informed decision. That's the key. That's what we don't see in most politics is informed decisions. Instead of getting the information that they really need to make a decision, what they get is the little sound bites, or the keys here, or the reasons to vote against this, you know, on issues that motivate. They don't get the facts. But given the facts, I believe that the public, as a rule, almost every time, well I don't know of anytime when they haven't, given the proper information, they will, the majority will prevail."

**Buz:** "I will say this: that Buehler Park was an issue that should've been thought about more seriously 37-1/2 acres ago when it was 40 acres. **I will say that 3.2 acres is an awfully small area when there's another 10 acres right across the street that does represent a superior park presence for the people on the west side of Rolla.** (Emphasis added) And I think that the city of Rolla can benefit from the funds that would be generated by the sale of that small

piece of property in the entire park system, and the entire city will be a better place to live. And I hope that the people of Rolla, Missouri understand that."

**Bob:** "Absolutely."

(End of program segment.)

**Editors note:** Notice that Buz Harvey let the cat out of the bag in his wrap-up statement. They are planning for the proceeds of the sale to be used to purchase the 10 acres of land under the Chamber Tourism building under the guise of making it a "replacement park." This has been the plan since 1995. Is Buz correct? Will "the entire city be a better place to live", will the quality of your life improve if the city sells one of your parks? Is there no limit to the demands of this local merchant association? Must the children sacrifice a park so the Chamber can secure the land under their clubhouse where they can meet in comfort to decide how to spend their public tax income of \$180,000 a year?

**Reality Check:** After hearing Buz Harvey plant the idea that adding one referendum question to the April ballot might be exorbitantly expensive for the taxpayers, we asked the Rolla City Clerk the cost of adding this question to the April council election ballot. She replied that the additional cost is very, very small. So much for Bob Jones' hope that voters will "get honestly all the information necessary to make an informed decision."

**In addition, Buz' claim that Buehler Park was once 40 acres is a well-circulated myth. Buehler Park has always been the same size that it is today, and has, since 1958, been protected with deed-specific restrictions to remain as a park.**

**Tomorrow Part Two:** And the Spin Goes On & more panic, exaggerations and scare tactics contained in Mayor Morgan's letter to council

members in an attempt to talk them into reversing their decision on the park referendum.

-----  
Views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of No Standing News, nor of its Editor-in-Chief.

-----  
To receive " No Standing News " by e-mail, free of charge, send a message to [rwnash@rollanet.org](mailto:rwnash@rollanet.org) with the word **SUBSCRIBE** in the Subject line.

To unsubscribe this list, send a message to [rwnash@rollanet.org](mailto:rwnash@rollanet.org) with the word **UNSUBSCRIBE** in the Subject line.

-----  
Editors note: Copies of No Standing News can be obtained free from the Rolla Public Library who is a subscriber, and from Mail Boxes Etc Of Rolla Also visit our web site at: <http://www.rollanet.org/~rwnash/nsn.html>

-----  
I encourage distribution of " No Standing News ". Please feel free to copy and distribute any issue.