

No Standing News

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

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MORGAN'S NEW RULE: "TAKE MY ORDERS OR TAKE A HIKE!"

This is the new "Joe Morgan Rule": If Mayor Morgan doesn't like the way you vote or the way you think or if he has "issues" with you, he will remove you from a committee and replace you with someone who can be counted on to vote the way he wants.

This story was buried on page 7A of the Wednesday, April 12th Rolla Daily News. It's worth digging out the paper to read it because it's almost unbelievable that any adult holding elected office in America could be dense enough to say the things that came out of Joe Morgan's mouth. The story started with the Tuesday, April 11th, Planning & Zoning meeting. Mike Woessner and Frank Lange asked the zoning board to recommend the city council annex 7.6 acres on Highway 63 south (the site of the old drive-in which is north not south) for commercial purposes. The P&Z vote to recommend another annexation to the council was unanimous. Councilman DeFrieze arrived at the meeting just after the vote was taken. Nothing remarkable about any of that.

The newspaper then took the opportunity to make an announcement for the Mayor. The Mayor revealed to his newspaper friends (before he told the council) that he is removing Councilman DeFrieze from the Planning and Zoning Commission and he will appoint Judy Jepsen to "assume that role" because her

husband had been on P&Z for many years. Morgan seems to view the P&Z seat as a hereditary position. The RDN continued, "**Morgan told the Daily News DeFrieze's quotidian vote against commercial zoning issues, issues involving the University of Missouri-Rolla and issues concerning Rolla Municipal Utilities among others was the reason he asked for DeFrieze's resignation from the commission.**" Joe claimed he told DeFrieze he wanted him to resign and DeFrieze agreed. Does that really sound like Brian DeFrieze - to meekly agree to remove himself because Joe doesn't like how he votes? We didn't think so either. The reporter, whoever it was, did not call Councilman DeFrieze for comment, but we did. Councilman DeFrieze said they did have that conversation but he didn't agree to resign. That sounds more like it.

Morgan and the RDN have hammered DeFrieze every way they can think of. If they haven't been able to get rid of DeFrieze by calling him names, exposing his tax situation or running candidates against him it just isn't believable that he would tamely agree to remove himself for Joe's convenience. DeFrieze has become such a target for abuse that some other council members, who tell him privately they agree with him, fear to speak up during council meetings because they are afraid of getting the same treatment. Morgan rules by benefit of council cowardice. Only Councilperson Sheffield has had the guts to stand up to Morgan and she will no longer be on the council.

There is this problem with Mayor Joe's new Rule. He can't remove anyone from anything without the consent of a

majority vote of the city council. He can't appoint anyone without their consent and he can't remove them at his royal whim. After two agonizing years as mayor (agonizing for us), Joe still doesn't appear to understand that he has no royal powers and no magic wand. But on the other hand, Joe could be so confident that he has eleven puppets who will vote exactly as he tells them that he has anticipated their consent and felt free to announce the result of their vote before they gave it. If I were a council member I would be highly offended by his show of contempt to me and my vote.

What does another petty, and unnecessary, tactic tell us about the mayor? Unnecessary because Brian's occasional dissenting vote never makes a difference - he always gets outvoted by the other seven members. It tells us, loud and clear, that if you don't vote the way Joe wants he will replace you with someone more obedient. In this case, Morgan has all but declared that Councilperson Judy Jepsen has promised to be subservient and vote the way the Mayor tells her. Has she? It tells us that Joe is still ignorant about how city government works - but that's old news. It tells us that he doesn't have the courtesy to inform the council before he runs to the newspaper - but Joe is famous for being the rudest mayor in decades. It tells us that if the Mayor has "issues" with you he will do anything he can to get you out of his way.

We think it also tells us something else. If DeFrieze's votes never have, and probably never would, affect the outcome of the pro-development P&Z votes - why go to the trouble to remove him? Is this crude exercise of power just another

Morgan temper tantrum or is something going to come up soon at a Planning & Zoning meeting that Morgan, and others, don't want Brian DeFriese to see or hear? We suspect the latter. It could be something connected with the Mayor's sale of Buehler Park. Does the mystery buyer we told you about in NSN #52 need some kind of special zoning approval? In the letter* from John Williams to Butz setting out the buyer's demands, the mystery developer wanted a guarantee from the city that the park would be zoned commercial. In other words, "Do you own the zoning board and the council and can you guarantee the zoning I want?" He seemed to expect a guaranteed fast track for whatever he wanted.

Another possibility is that a lot of rezoning and annexation is about to take place to exploit the new road, which will provide a back entrance to Morgan's subdivision and open up all the land along the road for Morgan and others to start more housing developments. The road is referred to as the Lions Club Drive "improvement" but it's much more than just a little "improvement." It's a major arterial road that will be bulldozed from Highway 63 all the way over to Highway O. The road will cost millions of your tax dollars and dominate the street budget for years. When he took office Joe thought it would be easy to appropriate a few million from the city street budget to get "his" road started but he found out that it wasn't that simple. Grabbing that much money for the Lion's Club Drive "improvement" out of street work that had been scheduled for years would have eliminated most of the other major street work in the city - that's a little too obvious even for this council. People might notice something was rotten if the only street work getting done for the next few years was Morgan's.

Well, time will tell why it's suddenly urgent to remove Councilman DeFriese from Planning and Zoning. It won't be difficult to figure out what they're

plotting because they're so bad at it. If Morgan had been the Allied Commander in WWII we'd all be speaking German. The council "workshop" Monday night will be interesting. Every council member who votes to remove DeFriese will be publicly declaring himself to be Morgan's puppet. A vote to remove DeFriese from a committee they put him on, is a public declaration that they are weak and afraid to cross the Mayor. After they do this to one of their own, they have to ask themselves which one of them will be next - which member of the council will Morgan have "issues" with next? If they knuckle under to Morgan Monday night it will tell all of us that no one can be on a city board or committee if they think for themselves, ask questions or have an opinion different from Joe Morgan's. No wonder so few capable and intelligent people want to run for the city council. No wonder Joe whines that he can't find people to fill the large number of empty seats on city boards and committees. What self-respecting, intelligent person in Rolla wants to swear allegiance to Morgan to qualify for an appointment to a city board or committee?

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<http://rollanet.org/~rwnash/Buehler_1tr.htm>

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