

STAND UP AND BE HEARD!

City Watch *It's Time*



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"It is not the function of our Government to keep the citizen from falling into error; it is the function of the citizen to keep the Government from falling into error."

U.S. Supreme Court in American Communications Association v. Douds, 339 U.S. 382,442

Is This Not Newsworthy?

By Keith Colville

After reading this, you should understand why CCI started "City Watch."

After two KLJ public meetings, Barnes County Commissioner Roger Berntson called me to ask if CCI would attend a final meeting in the city auditorium about the city park bridge. At that meeting we learned that only 30 people had commented on the three options of bridge construction and that 75% of those wanted one which would cost \$1,000,000 more than a bridge similar to the hospital bridge.

Following this meeting, CCI distributed a petition supporting a less-costly bridge; at the next county commission meeting, CCI president Bob Drake and I presented 110 signatures asking for a more economical bridge.

The Times-Record was present but did not report this.

We got 97 more signatures which we offered at the next meeting.

The Times-Record was again present but never reported this in their article following the meeting, and Roger Berntson said nothing about the over 200 signatures of Barnes County citizens. Why? Was this not newsworthy?

Next issue.

Are you aware that an AP story¹ about the locally-proposed regional jail was printed in newspapers across North Dakota but not here in Valley City? In it, when referring to VC Commissioner Jon Wagar's statement, "We're looking to the State for another group of inmates," State Corrections Director Leann Bertsch advised against looking to the state and said, "We're not guaranteeing any beds," and went on, "As far as regional facilities being a great place to house our regular inmates, it's not."

Newsworthy cont. on page 2-

Thank You Valley City Taxpayer!

By Robert Drake

I have written several letters to the editor recently about how property taxes affect the elderly and others in our community. In response I have received 58 comments, 19 by phone, the rest face-to-face from Valley City residents who like me and CCI members are fed up with City Hall. Of the 58, no one disagreed with me; most thanked me and CCI for our efforts.

I did get one bad review--in Mr. Gaukler's first letter to the editor. He felt my letter was a little tilted to the right and that I have an "agenda." Well, duh, of course I have an agenda. I've been screaming it for years, and people are just now hearing it, thanks to CCI and my big mouth.

Mr. Gaukler's second letter held a nice surprise. It seems CCI has converted George from the dark side. (But don't get too excited, as there is still a lot to be done.)

I applaud George for admitting commercial property has been undervalued, but I strongly disagree with his reasoning. There are two reasons for the low evaluations, and one is the good-old-boy system of tax collection. I have shown the people at city hall many times who is not paying their fair share--but no one has listened. Instead, they brought in Vanguard, making things worse. In his letter, Mr. Gaukler never even mentioned that some of his property worth nearly two million went up only 4.3% in 26 years! (If all paid their

Taxpayer cont. on page 2-

POP QUIZ

1. Name the five members of the “Simpsons” cartoon family.

2. Name the five freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights.

A study by the new McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum in Chicago found that 22% of Americans could name all 5 Simpson family members but just 1 in 1000 could name all 5 First Amendment freedoms. Only 1 in 4 could name more than 1 of the 5 freedoms in the First Amendment, but more than half could name at least 2 Simpson members.

As part of its 50th anniversary the McCormick Tribune Foundation built a museum dedicated to America’s freedom, with special emphasis on the First Amendment, to encourage generations to understand, value and protect our freedoms. For more information regarding the study or the museum, visit mccormicktribune.org.

Answers to POP QUIZ on page 4.

“I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into the other room and read a book.” —Groucho Marx

Newsworthy cont. from page 1-

In mid-February CCI took this article to the Times-Record. So far, the T-R has not printed it. Was this not newsworthy?

In the same AP story, Jon Wagar said “...We’ve got an agreement with the Federal Marshals Service to house 10 of their inmates in Valley City...”. I wonder what the terms of the agreement are. The other day I had a conversation with a recently-retired Sheriff who ran his county’s jail for 28 years. He told me that he got out of an agreement with the Federal Marshals service because it was not a good deal for their jail; he had to hold 10 beds for the Marshals, but if they only used 2, that’s all they paid for. Shouldn’t the press be asking Wagar for the terms of the agreement with the Marshals service? Is this not newsworthy?

In a Feb. 6, 2006, T-R article² Jon Wagar was quoted as saying that “...it’s currently costing about \$70 a day...” to house prisoners in the Barnes County jail. A Feb. 27 Ransom County Gazette article³ reported that Barnes County charges Ransom County only \$50 a day per inmate to house Ransom County prisoners. If Wagar’s numbers are accurate, do you think Barnes County taxpayers should subsidize other counties \$20/day for each such prisoner? Is this not newsworthy?

As the official Barnes County newspaper, doesn’t the Times-Record have a duty to report on these important issues?

¹ <http://www.grandforks.com/mld/grandforks/13834016.htm>

² <http://times-online.com/articles/2006/02/06/news?01jail.txt>

³ <http://www.rcgazette.com/news/022706.htm>

Posterity: “You will never know how much it has cost my generation to preserve your freedom.

I hope you will make good use of it.”

--John Quincy Adams

Taxpayer cont. from page 1-

own way, we wouldn’t have a problem.)

I’m sick of our city commissioners giving out tax exemptions like candy with no regard to the consequences for the rest of us paying the bills.

The second reason for under valued commercial property is Vanguard, which was 100% wrong in how they determined commercial property values. First, they should never have used railroad property as comparable sales. Second, they did not consider that revenue from the one-cent sales tax has gone up each year but one in the past ten years. (How can commercial property value be stagnate while money from the one-cent sales tax keeps going up?)

The fact is that those who should be paying are not. Until we have a city commission in tune with the community, we will continue out-of-control spending, higher taxes, and people like Mr. Gaukler waving a flag in our faces and telling us to do our share. Well, I think most Valley Citians have done their share and more.

I’ve gone over Mr. Gaukler’s letters several times, and I encourage you to do that, too. Something is missing in those letters. Let’s see. He blames the state for the property tax situation and the schools for eating up 50% of property taxes, and he pats himself on the back for all the good that’s happened in Valley City. Yet something is missing. Oh, yes, when was the last time any of our city’s leaders thanked YOU for YOUR commitment to this community. If you complain, you are labeled a trouble maker, not a concerned citizen.

Well, I want to thank all of you.

I thank you, George, (really) for how hard you and others work for Valley City.

I thank CCI for all it has done. The Committee for Community Involvement did something no other group in the state has. It is the only group that ever petitioned to amend three city ordinances and won all three.

This all tells me Valley City is special, a place where things are happening, where people do matter, where things can change.

Thank you, Valley City Taxpayer! How you have stood it this long is a miracle. The hard work you do every day is a tribute to you and our community! Thank you!

“I’m sick of our city commissioners giving out tax exemptions like candy...”

“If you complain, you are labeled a trouble maker, not a concerned citizen.”

“(CCI) is the only group that ever petitioned to amend three city ordinances and won all three.”

REAL ID ACT: New Hampshire Decides To Stand Up and Be Heard

The last issue of CITY WATCH reported on the Real ID Act of 2005, Public Law 109-13, which mandates that each State must change its drivers' licenses to become national information sources—in effect, national ID's.

New Hampshire declared its opposition to the federal Real ID Act of 2005, and Passed a resolution urging Congress to repeal it. Here are some of the points of the resolution:

“...implementation of the Real ID Act requires the collection of biometric identifying information, which is an intrusion of privacy and may be subject to theft, creates a de facto national identification card that could be used to gather and manage information on citizens which is not the business or responsibility of government, creates a process of mandated compliance with federal law at the cost and inconvenience of the states, costs may run well into the hundreds of millions of dollars over the next 5 years.”

“This small state cannot be coerced or bribed into abandoning the principles embodied in its state motto,” said Rep. Neal Kurk (R). He urged lawmakers to fire “a shot that will be heard around the nation.” -Concord Monitor 3-9-06. (New Hampshire's state motto is “Live Free or Die.”)

We need to encourage our legislature to do the same in North Dakota. Call or write your representatives today!

STAND UP AND BE HEARD!

Officials in California say that meeting federal requirements could cost the state hundreds of millions of dollars, and that it could also increase identity theft and lead to invasions of privacy. The (Real ID) act is “a man-made disaster,” said state Senate leader Don Perata (D-Oakland).

DISENFRACTHISED

By Lloyd Nelson

DISENFRACTHISED—a long word, perhaps not understood by everyone—but the meaning will be made clear in this article.

City Commissioner Jon Wagar heads the committee seeking a new \$8-\$10 million dollar Valley City jail. (Yes, he said it would cost \$5 million, but this has risen from \$5 to \$6 million in the past 90 days. And when has government ever held a cost to the original stated price?) And what about other costs, such as—

—Do the stated millions include the land?

—How many security personnel, 24 hours a day?

—Will it have a kitchen, and how many personnel (and at what cost) will that take?

—How many medical (around the clock?) and dental personnel? (The Bismarck and Jamestown detention centers reportedly have spent \$150,000/year due to rising meth/mouth disease.)

—How many other personnel such as administrators, switchboard operators, and others to check in prisoners at all hours?

—How much for office supplies? Medical supplies?

—Will much food will be wasted because of faulty estimates of inmates who might arrive and leave day or night?

—How many vehicles to transport prisoners back and forth to attend

court? Also, will vehicles be supplied to administrators and department heads? At whose cost?

—How much in salaries and other benefits for administrators and other staff? If the jail is not full, will we still have to pay for a full staff?

—If counties are guaranteed a certain number of cells, will they pay for them even if they are not used?

Why have no studies been done to ascertain the cost of upgrading the old jail? Wouldn't that be cheaper than a new multi-county facility? Does not the 100-year-old present jail have historic value? And how much will a new building and heating plant cost for the Courthouse if the old jail is removed?

CCI has invited Mr. Wagar to a meeting to answer these and other questions, but for six months now, he has not attended. He has **said** he would be glad to come. When he went on the radio to push the new jail, he did not take calls. (Can it be such a good deal if he won't even take calls?)

CCI members are gathering signatures to force a vote in Valley City. Let the people decide. Perhaps Wagar and others on that committee will then answer these questions.

If such a major addition to the city (one which may ultimately be paid for by the taxpayer) continues without a vote, **the citizens will have been DIS-ENFRANCHISED!**

We will have been denied our right to vote on a major expenditure in our city and county.



CCI would like to thank all those that came to our pancake fundraiser!! It was a great time for all. Here is Lloyd Nelson serving coffee to a couple who stopped by for pancakes.

Animal ID System Spells Trouble For Farmers, Citizens

By Barry Borg

I would like to bring to your attention to a US Department of Agriculture proposal entitled The National Animal Identification System (NAIS). Small farmers and backyard flock/herd keepers are facing a serious threat to their way of life. Supposedly to fight diseases, NAIS will require the registration of property and individual animals, even if you have only one chicken, pig, cow, horse, etc. This must be stopped, or all small farmers will be driven out of business.

Anyone with any animal on the list (or future amendments to it) would have to obtain a 7-digit Premise ID Number. Under the proposal, the owner of one potbelly pig would be subject to the same regulations as a factory farm with 20,000 hens. And the fine would be \$1,000/day per incident for non-compliance.

Animals would have to be tagged with a 15-digit Animal Identification Number costing as much as \$20.00 per animal.

Owners must report all "events" within 24 hours by phone or computer that would include change of ownership, co-mingling of animals owned by different entities, movement of animals off or onto a premise for any reason. This includes buying, selling, trips to the vet, going to breed or bringing in a stud, trail rides, 4-H meetings, road trips, shows & travel on a public road, etc.

Will all these stop diseases from spreading? Government documents admit it will not. (<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~comm/bsefaq.html>)

One might wonder if he could simply avoid complying. No. Animal health providers (like vets), service providers (police, butchers, gas, electric, etc.) would have to report unregistered animal sightings or face consequences.

In 2001, Congress voted enormous new powers to the government in the Patriot Act. Using these powers, NAIS could search your property without a warrant and confiscate or kill your animals at will.

The federal government is already spending \$50 million/year on NAIS prior to implementation. States and animal owners are expected to pay for the vast majority of the cost. Studies show the real cost at over \$15 billion per year - a new tax on food and "we the people" are going to foot the bill. Food prices will soar.

This proposal is scheduled to go into effect in the year 2008, and, as it stands, will affect every American citizen, even those who do not own animals. Write state and federal legislators about NAIS. Write your newspapers. Spread the word to friends and neighbors. For information on handouts and posters go to NoNAIS.org.

Answers to POP QUIZ from page 2:

1. Homer, Marge, Lisa, Bart and Maggie.

2. Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of **religion**, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of **speech**, or of the **press**; or the right of the people peaceably to **assemble**, and to **petition the Government for a redress of grievances**.

CCI POLL

Please send replies to:

CCI, PO Box 403, Valley City, ND 58072

or email: valleycitycci@yahoo.com

Feel free to include comments.

1. Do you think it fair to Barnes County taxpayers to subsidize other counties \$20/day for each prisoner they bring here?
__Yes __No __Not Sure
2. If a regional jail is built in or near Valley City, are you concerned about out-of-town inmates being released right here in Valley City?
__Yes __No __Not Sure
3. Do you believe Valley City government is in tune with Valley City citizens?
__Yes __No __Not Sure
4. How important do you think the rights guaranteed by the Bill of Rights are to a secure America?
__Very __Somewhat __Not Very

Do you have a question?

Do you want to find something out about Valley City? ASK US and we will look into it for you. For example how come the Winter Show gets a mill levy? Where does all the taxes that are collected for the 1 cent Food and Beverage tax go? Who decides how they are spent? What is a sunset clause? These are all important questions that we have been asked and we feel that there are more people out there that want to ask questions about our Town but do not want to battle CITY HALL for the information. Well we at CCI enjoy working with CITY HALL and boy do they LOVE us down there. So if you want us to ask CITY HALL let us know and we will take it from there.

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Mission Statement

The Committee for Community Involvement is an inclusive nonpartisan coalition of Valley City area citizens working together for the following purposes:

*To encourage local government to listen to and implement the wishes of the citizens

*To encourage local government to provide accurate and complete information to the citizens

*To encourage citizen involvement in local decision making

*To encourage all members of local government to maintain high ethical standards and to remember always their accountability to the citizens they represent

*To strengthen our community by protecting the individual liberties of citizens and their posterity

*To provide citizens with a means to **Stand Up And Be Heard**