

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

Public Servants Accessibility

By Keith Colville

The other day I went to my computer to contact my legislators concerning some important legislation that was about to be voted on. I went to the North Dakota legislative web site and clicked on contact information and what I found was very good. The three legislators from our district had their names, addresses, e-mail addresses, home phone numbers, business phone numbers and even their cell numbers. When they say they want to hear from you they appear to mean it and give you almost every available way to contact them.

I thought for a minute and I wondered if the Barnes County Commissioners had the same “want to hear from their constituents” attitude. I went to the Barnes County web site and found the same information there. I clicked on Commissioner Cindy Schwehr’s contact information and there it was, name, address, e-mail address, home phone, office number, office #2 number and her cell number. Now

Cont. on Page 2

CCI WEBSITE!!!

We are pleased to announce that CCI now has its own "Official" web site. You can be the first to read the latest "City Watch" and have access to all past issues, take a poll, see what's new and much much more! Go to www.valleycitycci.com today and add it to your favorites.
Regularly updated



Bob Drake and Keith Colville stop by and visit with Governor Hoenen while at the capital to attend a House committee hearing.

Extraterritorial Zoning

CCI was invited by a state legislator to a hearing concerning HB 1321 Extraterritorial Zoning. The bill in a nutshell reduces the extraterritorial zoning authority cities now have outside of the city limits. Presently, if you live within this area you are dictated to by the city and you have very little recourse. You can't vote or petition. In essence - regulation without representation.

A few members of CCI did attend the hearing to support passage of HB 1321. Here are some of the main points that were made during testimony.

- * Private Property Rights
- * There is no reason for cities to need zoning and permitting authority far outside the city limits.

Cont. on Page 2

State Legislatures Take Real ID Act to Task

In past issues of "City Watch" we have informed you of the Real ID Act that Congress passed in 2005 that requires each state to adopt uniform driver's licenses and identification cards by 2008. This new law has been opposed by some lawmakers from the beginning because it poses a threat to the privacy of American citizens. After its passage, the act went largely uncritiqued. However, now that states are finally realizing the fiscal implications of the act, more and more states are opposing its final implementation.

Maine, Idaho and Arkansas state legislatures have voted to reject Real ID with an additional 20 states that have formally introduced legislation opposing the Real ID Act, and an estimated 20 more states are planning to introduce such legislation.

Real ID is built on the false premise that this attack on privacy and security will make our nation more secure. But the truth is that Real ID does little to make us safer.

Consider what Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) said "We are, after all, for the first time in the history of a liberty-loving nation, creating a national identification card with all the ramifications of that. Real ID was stuffed into the supplemental appropriations bill for Hurricane Katrina and the troops in Iraq, so of course, we had to vote for the bill, but we had no chance to amend it " no debate, no hearing, and no consideration of other alternatives, And now we impose on the states an \$11 billion unfunded mandate. I would say we wouldn't be doing our job if we didn't stop and think about what we've done."

North Dakotans must join the rebellion now and call on their elected officials to end the real nightmare that is Real ID. Go to our web site for more information www.valleycitycci.com

Public Servants Accessibility

Cont. from Page 1

when I hear Cindy Schwehr say she wants to hear from us I believe her.

I thought as long as I was at it I would go and check out Valley City's web site. Surely they would have the same open information. I was wrong. There wasn't any contact information given for any of the Valley City commissioners and only city information to contact the mayor. I wondered how accessible other city's elected were. I went to Wahpeton's web site to compare (similar population) and there it was, contact information

Do you have a question? Do you want to find something about Valley City? ASK US and we will look into it for you. Do you have a question about our Town but do not want to deal with 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 help with CITY HALL, let us know and we will take it from there.

for all their elected personnel. Name, position, address, and usually two phone numbers - home and office.

I applaud Larry Robinson, Phil Mueller, Ralph Metcalf, Cindy Schwehr and the other County Commissioners for meaning what they say when they say they want to hear from us, their constituents. I wonder why Mary Lee Nielson, Jon Wagar, Steve Ondracek, Ken Evenson and George Dutton are hiding this information. In fact at a CCI meeting last year that Mary Lee Nielson attended, we asked for her e-mail address so we could get some information to her. She reluctantly gave it to us with the caveat not to give it out to anyone else. Hmmmmm

Public servants should be accessible, after all, we are their bosses. If you owned a company and your employees wouldn't give you their contact numbers, I wonder how long they would keep their job? If it was my company they would be fired!

If you go to our web site www.valleycitycci.com and click on links page you'll find the ND Legislator's, Barnes County's and Valley City's web sites. Check them out and see for yourself. You can even find contact numbers for every township officers all the way down to the weed officers but not for the city commissioners.

Extraterritorial Zoning

* Cities who wish to exercise zoning and permitting regulations over landowners should annex or at least have annexation plans for those areas and thus provide all city services.

* While the city zoning board generally includes a member from the extraterritorial area, that person may not be allowed a vote and is not elected but instead serves at the pleasure of the city elected officials. Regulation without representation should not be allowed.

* Cooperation between cities, townships and counties should be encouraged and joint planning for roads and thoroughfares in metropolitan areas is essential. However, cities should not be allowed to dictate zoning requirements on personal property far outside their jurisdiction and area of their responsibility.

Current status of the bill is HB1321 passed the house Yes-53 No-37 and passed an amended version in the Senate Yes-36 No-11.

It now appears that because of the changes it will now go to a conference committee to work out the differences. Although HB 1321 has been watered down it is a step in the right direction.

The bill was introduced by Representatives Wrangham, Damschen, S. Meyer and Senators Heitkamp, O'Connell, Triplett. Please contact your Representatives.

*I wonder why
Mary Lee
Nielson, Jon
Wagar, Steve
Ondracek, Ken
Evenson and
George Dutton
are hiding this
information.*

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HOW IS CITY GOVERNMENT SPENDING YOUR MONEY?

This month's focus – Police Department

City of Valley City

POLICE DEPARTMENT HISTORY

ACCT # - REVENUES	BUDGET:			
	2003	2007		
3316 Grants 9,800 officer & 9,000 OT	17,147.76	18,800.00	222 Motor Vehicle Parts	766.39 1,500.00
3510 Parking fines	3,070.00	3,000.00	300 Services (ie blood alcohol tests)	293.25 1,500.00
3514 Municipal Court Receipts	99,339.46	125,000.00	307 Training Services	0 250.00
3223 Prisoner Board/Detox Fees	205.00	200.00	309 MIS Support from Barnes Cty	0 1,000.00
TOTAL REVENUES	102,614.46	147,000.00	314 Police Investigation	4,000.00 10,000.00
EXPENDITURES			317 Registration Fee	1,207.00 1,000.00
101 Employee Base Salaries	399,795.64	470,070.95	320 Subscriptions	591.32 0.00
101 Add'l. Salaries & Benefits		22,300.00	321 Telephone	6,587.39 7,000.00
102 Overtime Wage Exp. & Vac.		20,150.00	322 Postage	435.18 500.00
122 FICA City Share	31,215.44	37,888.23	323 Film Processing	1,004.43 750.00
125 Employee Pension	38,719.48	47,007.45	331 Travel Expenses	2,312.60 3,500.00
130 Blue Cross-Premium	8,834.74	8,500.00	340 Advertising	0.00 200.00
131 B.C. Self-Funding Wkly Clm	75,111.62	70,000.00	352 Publish-Printing	467.84 300.00
133 Standard Life Ins.	4,532.50	5,586.00	361 Liability Insurance	1,657.31 1,650.00
151 Worker's Compensation	4,757.29	4,000.00	362 Inland Marine Ins.	387.96 600.00
152 Worker's Comp Claims/Unem	337.21	500.00	363 Fleet Insurance	1,536.29 2,000.00
165 Cobra Plus & lex Admin Fees	224.97	300.00	384 Vehicle Service/Repair	2,817.30 5,000.00
201 Office Supplies	2,396.94	3,500.00	390 Other Services	652.74 650.00
202 Computer Supplies	381.92	1,500.00	400 Repair-Maint. Service	1,836.38 1,000.00
210 Operation-Main. supplies	2,722.38	2,600.00	410 Data Acquisition	5,290.00 9,000.00
212 Petroleum Products	8,643.60	27,500.00	433 Dues-Memberships	400.00 500.00
214 Clothing-Uniforms	3,539.41	4,500.00	439 Youth Programs	1,388.64 1,500.00
215 Weapons/Ammunition	3,167.83	5,500.00	490 Miscellaneous	699.28
			541 Electronic Equipment	25.95 1,150.00
			542 Pager/Radio Equipment	
			570 Office Furniture-Equip.	49.00 0
			580 Entry Team Equip.	2,960.63 1,500.00
			Total Expenditures	621,747.85 784,452.63
			Salary & Benefits	563,538.89 686,302.63
			Operations	58,218.96 98,150.00

Please call City Hall at 845-1700 for answers to any questions on this budget expenditure.

I wonder.....By Leroy Neubauer

I wonder why we elected city commissioners when all the decisions seem to be made by special committees and/or the city administrator?

I wonder how the special committee members feel about being used as scapegoats for the bad decisions being made in city hall? The commissioners always say that the committee decided.

I wonder how Valley City residents could approve of providing city hall with a \$900,000 annual, no limitations, cash infrastructure fund to be spent as the commissioners deemed.

The mayor has stated that all expenditures from this fund will be decided as they feel is warranted at the time the decision is made.

I wonder if any VC resident feels that elected officials are not biased?

I wonder if any VC business owner realizes that the infrastructure fund will remove about \$900,000 from the economy of VC? That is money that people will no longer have available to spend in your store. Maybe the business owner can get a loan from city hall to avoid bankruptcy.

I wonder why VC residents did not get to vote on resolution #1591 which established all the special charges for infrastructure R&R that appeared on your utility bill?

I wonder if VC residents know that infrastructure replacement has been ongoing since at least 1980. I wonder if all that's being done is necessary. In that span of time we should have gotten rid of all of the bad stuff! Maybe we should slow the R&R effort down.

I wonder if the county paid anything towards the cost of redoing 5th Ave. NE. In the morning there are a steady stream of cars coming into VC from the north. I would guess that they go north in the evening.

I wonder where the approx. \$575,000 is spent that is generated from one percent of the city sales tax? \$143,000 of that is for property tax relief; where is that used? \$402,000 of that is for economic development and \$28,000 is designated for retail image enhancement. How is that being spent and has city hall ever reported this information?

I wonder if VC taxpayers know that they may have to pay \$30,000 towards operation of the new jail?

I wonder if VC taxpayers realize that they will have to pay part of the county's \$30,000 cost for operation of the new jail? VC taxpayers may get to provide approx. \$45,000 of the \$60,000 commitment from VC and BC annually for 5 years towards operation of the new jail! Thank you to the jail committee!

It is time for a change...

By Robert Drake

It is time to amend the Home Rule Charter. It seems that our elected officials are not getting the message that we the tax paying public is sending. So it will be up to us to do what city hall refuses to do.

City Hall refuses to fire David Johnson so we the people will.

CCI conducted an online pole concerning whether or not the Chief of Police should be elected or appointed. The results of the pole (69%) concluded that the position of Chief of Police should be elected, so we the people will get it done.

Right now at city hall there are plans to increase the burden on the tax payer once again by increasing the number of bureaucrats at city hall by hiring a full time Building inspector. That would be another \$100,000.00 job for us to pay for.

What we propose is to cut spending by limiting the Tax Assessor's job to a part time position 20 hours per week and a part time Building Inspector 20 hours per week.

What Valley City needs most of all is a qualified Public Works Director. Public Works is the one part of our city that actually generates money which in turn lowers the tax burden for all of us.

The elected leadership of our community are not qualified to run Public Works and they continually use Public Works as a political poker chip. Public Works is the greatest asset this community has and it should be managed by a qualified person. So we the people will get it done.

How the Amendment will change City Hall

1. It will get rid of the position of City Administrator (the position we did not want in the first place) this will also get rid of David B. Johnson!

2. It will require the Position of Police Chief to be an elected position rather than an appointed position.

3. Would require a part time Building Inspector and a part time Tax Assessor .

4. Would require a qualified Public Works Director .

These changes are needed and will require a vote of the people but as you read through these changes they are a positive approach and cost effective solution to some very serious problems that we have here in Valley City. It seems appropriate that we the people given the opportunity will gladly take the Bull by the horns, and fix a few problems for ourselves!

Q. What had over 1500 hits in it's first 6 weeks?

A. Our Web site www.valleycitycci.com

CCI RAFFLE TICKETS

AVAILABLE!

1st prize - Shotgun or meat

2nd prize - \$100.00 gas

3-7 prize - Bucket of Chicken

Great way to support CCI

Contact any CCI member

Drawing April 21, 2007

CCI POLL

- 1) Do you think the Time-Record withholds information, news and/or letters to the editor that are critical of local government?
 Yes No Not Sure
- 2) What local morning radio talk show host do you listen to the most?
 Ryan Cunningham Scott Hennen Ed Schultz
- 3) Should Valley City Police Chief position be elected?
 Yes No Not Sure
- 4) Has the City Administrator improved relations between City Hall and Citizens?
 Yes No Not Sure
- 5) What punishment do you think David B. Johnson (City Administrator) should have been given for creating the slanderous web site before last June's city election?
 Fired Two Weeks without pay
 No Punishment Other

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**