



WHAT HAVE THEY DONE?- Continued

We remember the 3rd Amendment to the Elbert and Hwy 86 Water District, which was planning to run a pipe between Elizabeth and Lamar last summer. Some of the alarmed 1200 citizens who showed up at the County Fairgrounds in protest can attest that the Commissioners obviously had no clue as to what Karl Nyquist was proposing in his Amendment to the Water District and were summarily prepared to approve it. Does this reveal a collusion between Karl Nyquist and the Incumbents, or does it reveal a lack of oversight on the part of the Incumbents?

Schwab and Shipper are responsible for taking out the \$7 million loan from Wells-Fargo, which limits the amount the County can borrow until it's paid off. This means that if the County has an emergency where cash is needed, the Commissioners have to go, hat in hand, to Wells-Fargo, and negotiate another loan, facing the prospect of being handed more onerous terms on the original note or worse.

Many have said that Schwab and Shipper were only apprised of the true financial state of the County once they assumed office, which is odd, because Schwab, on more than one occasion, said he'd met with Commissioners Goetz, Metli, and Graeff between the election and January, when the budget was presumably one of the topics of conversation. Could the Incumbents have anticipated that they'd need a loan and worked out more favorable terms?

Because of this note, County real estate is being used as collateral, which means that Wells-Fargo has a say in County water rights and County mineral rights. It means the County's hands are tied to one lender for the next twenty years, when a balloon payment must be made. Balloon payments were one of the reasons the mortgage bubble burst when they were elected.

The Incumbents established a Water Task Force to address and be ready in future if someone wants to pipe Elbert County water out. Its members are some very knowledgeable people; many with careers in oil and gas. This has led to some suspicion on the part of citizens who wonder if the Water Task Force will recommend and cause some County water to be diverted from everyday use to hydraulic fracturing. This does not seem to be the case.

The Incumbents have also established an editing committee to vet our proposed oil and gas regulations and recommend changes. The selection process for this committee included two members of the Elbert County Oil and Gas Interest Group, (ECOGIG), which has been active regarding the issue since it came up in spring, 2011. Because of varied backgrounds and interests reflected by its membership, the regulations will likely be acceptable to the majority of the citizenry.

Without explanation as to why they would change their hiring policies, the current Commissioners hired Alex Beltz, (late of the perennially present Reed and Sheffel), as County Attorney, passing over more qualified and longer-serving applicants. While Mr. Beltz has conducted himself with professionalism, the questions remain: why was he chosen; why he was chosen from Reed and Sheffel, (the law firm that advised the BOCC previously); and what experience he has dealing with litigation; governmental law; and giving sound advice to his clients.

(Before he became a State Senator, Mark Sheffel was County Attorney. He advised the previous BOCC regarding its debacle over the Justice Center, which sent the County over the financial precipice). Is an attorney from his firm any more qualified to advise the current BOCC?

Community Resource Services, (CRS), owned by Diane Miller, attorney for Karl Nyquist's Elbert and Hwy 86 Water District (and legal representative to scores of others), was hired to do the County Budget and oversee budget issues for the County. Diane Miller is also the attorney for the Elkhorn Metropolitan District, of which Commissioner Schlegel is a Board Member. Ms. Miller's clientele and her business could set up a conflict of interest for the BOCC as well as a question of what might be going on between Elbert and Hwy 86 and Elbert County government. Calls to immediately remove CRS from County business have gone unheeded.

The incumbents have urged Ed Ehmman, head of Road and Bridge, to implement a leasing program for equipment. Now just about every vehicle and piece of equipment is leased. This is seen as a positive because the equipment then goes back to its owner after the County uses it. Maintenance issues are at a minimum. Although we have not seen the contracts, which specify a certain number of hours or miles on each piece of equipment, we hope there is a clause concerning overuse of the equipment in an emergency.

A new proposed Rubbish Ordinance will likely be passed and enforced by the Sheriff's Department. This allows a peace officer to cite the offending party and then enforce the Rubbish Ordinance. Concerns have been raised that the Sheriff's Office has enough to do; why give them the authority to root out garbage? Objections have been raised regarding interference of a landowner's right to his property. Further concerns have been raised that this is merely a revenue generating ploy that could also be used against selective citizens for political retribution.

Grants were obtained to finish the Kiowa-Bennet Road and begin the process of refurbishing and rebuilding on the Fairgrounds. The finishing of the Kiowa-Bennet Road is long overdue, and citizens have been told that it will be good for commerce. It will hopefully cut down on the myriad traffic accidents on that route. The refurbishment of the Fairgrounds bleachers is almost complete, with plans to build a first-class horse area afterwards, then rebuild the barns and create new spaces as funding becomes available. The plan has been needed for years. It will generate revenue for the Fairgrounds and the County and it is a collaboration of citizens, the architect/engineering firm, and the BOCC. The new bleachers are first rate and will be a great asset to the community.

Concerns by the Public are given a specific time during BOCC meetings to speak on whatever subject they wish within a certain time limit. Many citizens have spoken during this time; many wishing to get answers to their concerns. The answers do not seem forthcoming and frustration has been expressed that the concerns are falling on deaf ears or that the public comment time is merely "window dressing."

While we don't expect our elected officials to be perfect, we should measure them by their deeds in office and the intention behind those deeds.

