



Editorial: The Elbert County Tea Party Trinity

By Tony Corrado

Whenever I hear Commissioner Kurt Schlegel lecture the BOCC public audience on the fact that the USA is a republic and not a democracy I cannot help but wonder if he just cannot force himself to say the word “democratic.” As in “democratic republic,” the actual form of our government in which we elect our representatives, democratically, and have the right to expect that they will act in the interest of the majority of citizens and not in the narrow interests of a small minority of ideological radicals.

In Elbert County we are hampered by the lack of a single effective media outlet from which county news can be gleaned. Never the less, the last few months have produced a number of insights into the dysfunctional state of Elbert County governance. The Denver Post, Prairie Times, Elbert County News, www.New-Plains.com and others have been printing the results of our BOCC’s complete meltdown on terms of effective governance. Polls and citizens’ letters clearly indicate that a majority of Elbert County citizens want a change from our current non-representative governance.

Whether by deliberate intent and design or by happenstance we are bearing witness to a takeover of our county by a trinity befitting any number of other republics such as the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea or the former German Democratic Republic of East Germany. Tea Party Potentates Rowland and Schlegel have anointed an unqualified Director of Planning to head up a key county department, Community Development Services (read, [Kyle Fenner, Girl Planning Director](#)). At first this appeared to be a simple political payback; however, as events continue to unfold a more sinister motive is coming to light.

Scene One: One of the first acts by the Tea Party Potentates Rowland and Schlegel was to summarily reject the most apolitical, citizen driven effort seen in Elbert County in decades. As a Tea Party voting bloc, Rowland and Schlegel voted down the *non-partisan set of oil and gas regulations created and unanimously approved by the Planning Commission* (after a two year creation process). The rejected regulations provided property and homeowner protection for the urbanized western part of our county while enabling less fettered oil and gas exploitation to take place in the eastern portion of our county where larger property holders could elect to bypass certain requirements, such as setbacks. Potentate reasons given for the rejection vote ... zero.

Potentates Rowland and Schlegel then proceeded to have their new, unqualified Director of Planning generate a new set of regulations which did not have these safeguards built in. The underlying agenda; to simply override the citizens’ desires by having Kyle Fenner present these new regulations directly to the BOCC, regardless of the final Planning Commission decision, where they would summarily pass by a Tea Party bloc vote of two to one. This plan was

somewhat thwarted since the Planning Commission is vested with the task of reviewing and recommending any revisions to the zoning regulations to the BOCC. This policy has been in place since the inception of our Planning Commission purposely to prevent poor policies from being passed without a thorough review. (*Editor's Note: Remember the Carl Nyquist attempted water grab a few summers ago when this process was not adequately followed? Schlegel was in on that one too.*)

Scene Two: The long standing Planning Commission Chairman, Grant Thayer, resigned in protest over the corruption of the long standing approval policy. The new chairman, Paul Crisan wisely decided to ensure that the Planning Commission fulfilled its role to thoughtfully review the proposed regulations. Abruptly, potentates Rowland and Schlegel seeing this action as threatening their authoritarian rule concocted a trumped up political scheme and publicly dismissed Paul Crisan. (*Editor's Note: Legal opinion is that this is an actionable offense that Crisan would win.*)

Now, Kyle Fenner, the third leg of the Tea Party Trinity stool, has stated that she alone is authorized to write and recommend changes to the county's zoning regulations. If the Planning Commission does not support her "recommendations" then she will simply reject their inputs and requests for changes and put her personally prepared documents before the BOCC. Then Rowland and Schlegel will approve the ineffectual regulations they have orchestrated all along. This act will severely weaken the role of the Planning Commission and ensures that only policies that the Tea Party Potentate Trinity agrees with will become the law for the rest of Elbert County.

Scene Three: It's actually all about the water. This political setup currently impacts the proposed oil and gas regulations, but also portends far greater reaches and abuse of power. For example, when another water district comes to the BOCC what will the Tea Party Trinity do? The likely possibility is that the Planning Commission will ask for additional information before approving any major request. Planning Director Fenner can then simply state that she does not agree with the Planning Commission and pass on the new water grab request for BOCC approval. And the Tea Party Potentates will pass it. After all, if any government regulation, regardless of how useful or how vital to the well-being of Elbert County, does not fit the extreme Tea Party ideology of the current Elbert County BOCC, it is DOA.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea or the former German Democratic Republic of East Germany are now joined by the Elbert County Tea Party Republic. Patriotism is sometimes viewed through the narrow eyes of political philosophy, but local politics should not have such narrow perspectives. Potentates Rowland and Schlegel do not understand the meaning of the word patriot nor the meaning and intent of the phrase "democratic republic." And they certainly aren't representing the best interests of the Elbert County citizens as a whole.

* *Potentate* - a person so powerful they don't have to follow the rules that govern everyone else; a dictator.