

City, county need to work together

"The farmer and the cowman should be friends."
So says a little girl in the musical "Oklahoma" just as a fight is about to break out between farmers and ranchers.
If we could paraphrase this to, "The city and the county should be friends."
In the musical, after the tiny voice pipes out this amazing statement, everyone breaks into song and dance and all is sweetness and light.
Boy, wouldn't it be nice if that were so in real life.
But, here in Norton, Kansas, we just have to work our problems out the old-fashioned way. We talk about them, around them, over them, under them and pretty much talk them to death.
So, the council is sitting in City Hall talking about a problem and the commissioners sit at the courthouse trying to hash out the same problems from a slightly different angle.
Right now, they have three thorny problems they are trying to resolve.

1. Dispatch Services.
After many years of working together, the city and county have hit a snag on the cost of dispatching emergency vehicles. The city has paid 40 percent of the cost, but its contract puts a lid on that at \$44,000. But times have changed and costs continue to climb. The city doesn't want to pay more, but it probably will have to so that it can keep the service it needs and the county sheriff can keep his budget, of which dispatch is a part, in line and not raise taxes.

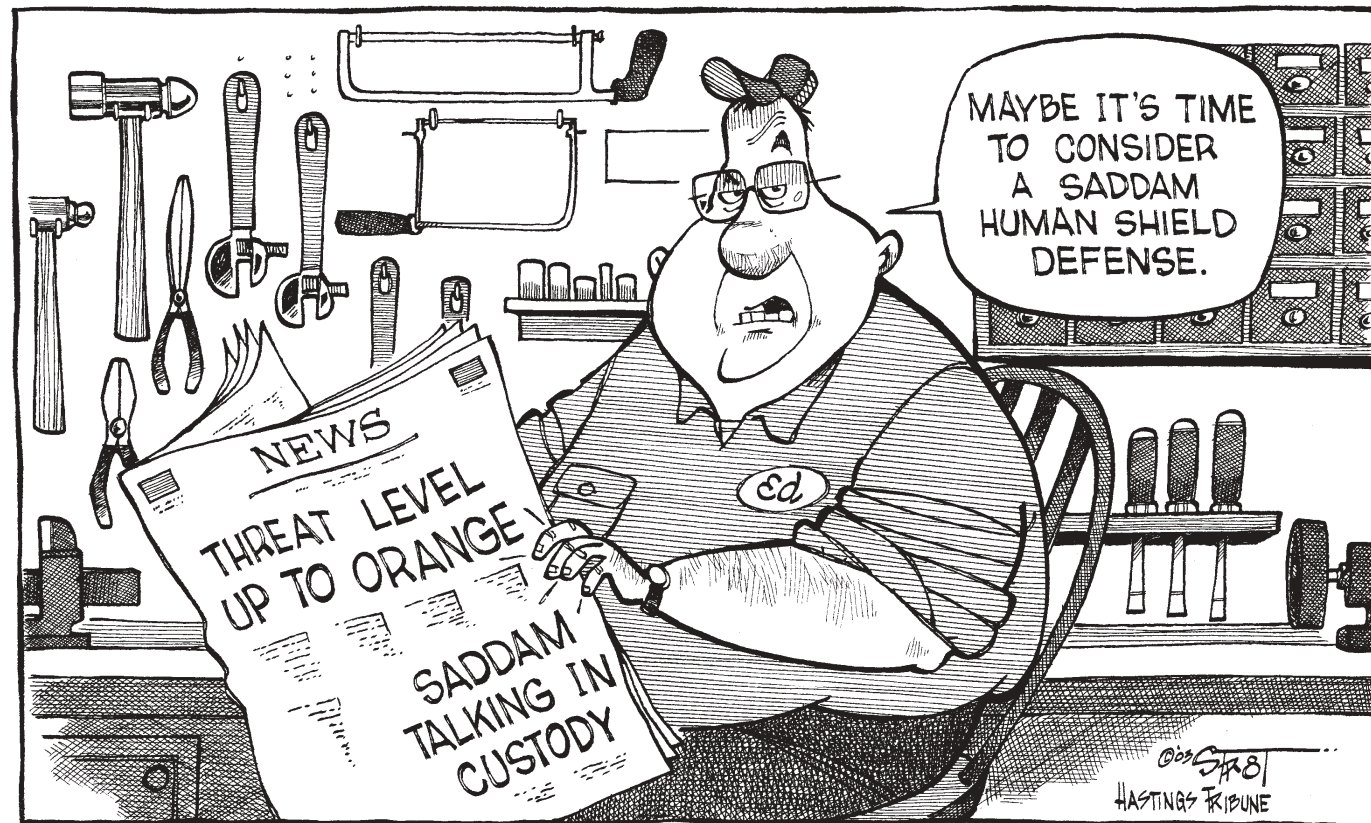
2. Trash and Dump Services
After finding contamination in its landfill several years ago, the county closed it and built an incinerator to burn trash. After a few years, the incinerator became unsafe and the county is trying to build a new landfill.
In the meantime, trash is being trucked to Phillips County — an expensive and not very satisfactory solution, but the best that can be done for now.

The city would like a cheaper alternative for its trash, but the county says it can't afford to put in a landfill if its biggest customer goes elsewhere.
We think the city should give on this one, also.
Norton needs a place for its trash and its silly to truck it to another county's landfill if there is one sitting outside town. Folks around here are going to have to pay for a new landfill no matter what, so we might as well use it.

3. The Airport.
The county's insurance carrier is pulling a federal government trick. We won't insure you, they say, if you have an airport.
With the threat of loss of insurance coverage and possible legal problems if anything happened at the airport, the county is pulling out of its long-term commitments there.
That said, we should note that the commissioners have not stopped paying for the things that they had previously promised to pay for and even helped the airport board out of a nasty fix when higher-than-expected bond payments put the airport in the red.

Well, its OK for the county to give up all control of the airport, as long as it doesn't stop supporting the facility.
The county gets as much good out of having an airport here as the city does. Many businesses use the airport, and those businesses own property and pay taxes.
The best solution would be for the city and county to set up an Airport Authority and provide for its support with tax money.
This would take a change in state law, but that could be done if commissioners and council members work together with Sen. Stan Clark and Rep. John Faber.

City, county, all of us. We need to work together out here in northwest Kansas.
"The farmer and the cowman should be friends."
— Cynthia Haynes



Be it ever so humble and grateful too

Hi, Honey, we're home!
No matter how humble, home looks pretty good after being in Mexico for a few days. And I always feel humbled after being in Mexico.
I complain about having to "camp out" in our second house while we remodel our home. Meanwhile, the entire house we built for a Mexican family of six is not as big as our front room. I complain about needing new carpeting while Rosa has to sprinkle her floor with water every day to help pack the dirt. I complain that my microwave is practically an antique while the only appliances I saw in Rosa's house were an old electric skillet and a crock pot.
It's not guilt for having so much. It's more that I forget to be grateful for being so fortunate.

—ob—
We made 29 new friends out of the experience. Our telephone briefing with the Casas por Cristo staff before the trip informed us we would be working with a team of Mennonites.

Neither Jim or I knew much about the Mennonite denomination. I have seen a few Mennonite couples in our part of the country; the men had beards and the women wore dresses with little white caps to cover their hair.
Not wanting to offend anyone, Jim determined that if need be, he wouldn't shave for the week and I bought a bandana to use as a scarf and agreed to forego make-up during our time with them.
You can imagine my relief when their team pulled into the parking lot of our ren-

devous point and jean-clad, make-up wearing women and clean-shaven men disembarked from the bus.

Later that night, Jim shared our secret concerns with the team.
Everyone had a good laugh at our expense and someone said, "Oh, we're the new liberal Mennonites."

It's a very small world. One of the women on the team and I were getting acquainted. You know, the standard "where are you from," "how close is that to (wherever)," and so on. We hadn't talked too long when Elaine said, "Do you know Greg and Yvonne Sumner?"

"Well, sure," I answered. "Greg and I went to Sunday School together and Yvonne was in my office just last week."
Turns out Elaine and her husband Dennis operate an employment agency that places agricultural workers from foreign countries with American employers. The Sumners are among their clients.

An added bonus for this team came in the form of a retired husband/wife missionary team who spoke fluent Spanish. Gene and Lillian were great. He helped me get a flat tire repaired at a Mexican

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



shop and Lillian told Bible stories to the neighborhood children.

One of their daughters, Susan, a personal trainer from Tulsa, made the trip. Since she had spent many years in Mexico, her Spanish was very good, too. Susan brought her teen-age sons, Cade and Logan, who both did man-size jobs.

Lillian's brother Leonard, an electrician, came along, as well as Leonard's wife, Janice. Janice's parents had been missionaries in Mexico, so she, too, spoke Spanish.
There was Jess the engineer who had such a quick wit and his two daughters, Angie and Nicky; Bob, a retired school principal and his grandson, Dakota; Travis, a truck driver by profession was also the church's bus driver, his wife Sonya, and their two kids, Hannah and Josiah; Dianah, another teacher, and bus driver, too; Brad and Melvina plus their two little boys; R.D., a carpenter, and his twelve-year-old son Ashton; high schoolers Chloe and Scott; and trip organizers Bud, who runs a lumber yard, and his wife, Candy. A real mixed bag. And a bunch of really great people.

As soon as we crossed the border and could get cell phone service again, I called our kids to tell them we were back on U.S. soil.
Jennifer asked, "How was the team?"
"Oh, they were wonderful," I said.
"You say that about every team," she replied.
Yes, I know I do. Because it's true.

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Color code confounds country

Here's a look at some of the stories that touched our lives in 2003 and a few the *New York Times* just made up:

January
Terror Alert Code: Reddish Orange Alert (Slightly increased high risk of space invaders poisoning our national cheese-doodle supply.)

The year in news started off with the president delivering his usual accurate report of how well things are going in the country with his annual State of the Union Address. The title of the speech was "War, terrorism and economic recession: Good Times for America." The president also proposed a large tax cut, which was denounced by Al Gore in a major policy address he pretended to make one morning in the shower.

February
Terror Alert Code: Fuchsia Alert (Moderately-high elevated low risk)
After the president's speech calmed a weary nation and Gore's speech calmed a weary former vice president, American citizens started fighting back against the terrorists by renaming French fries. The new "Freedom Fries," were a hit. In other French fry news, McDonalds announced it would be moving towards 100 percent vegetable-free French fries by 2005 after a survey revealed customers resented a vegetable—potato—being the main ingredient in the popular side-dish.

March
Terror Alert Code: Yellow Alert (Fear, but not panic, advised by government)
President Bush declares war on Iraq, promising to bring tax cuts to the Iraqi people. Saddam Hussein promises to practice supply side economics by giving himself a tax cut. It isn't enough. The U.S. invades.

April
Terror Alert Code: Orange Alert (Organized hysteria, but not overthrow-the-government-type-hysteria advised.)

May
Terror Alert Code: Red Alert (Oh, go ahead and panic already)
A \$330 billion tax cut passes. Lawmakers herald its passage, calling it the third largest tax cut ever passed by President Bush in the month of May. Major combat operations end in Iraq successfully. Democrats change strategy from criticizing president Bush's war policy to saying they like his cowboy boots but think the cowboy hat should go.

June
Terror Alert Code: Seafoam Alert (Government doesn't know what color Seafoam is and doesn't know how worried about terrorism we should be.)
Just when things are looking up, the nation's handycrafters are dealt a crippling blow when Martha Stewart is indicted on insider-trading charges. Martha knits a lovely "Not Guilty" quilt and several cigarette case cozies, just in case.

July
Terror Alert Code: Tie Die Alert (Elevated risk of hippies taking everything over.)
Astronomers find oldest, most distant planet ever discovered. Tabloids rejoice

College Bound Brandon Gay



at finding of new place in the universe for Elvis sightings.

August
Terror Alert Code: Black and White and Red All Over Alert (High risk *The New York Times* is just making up alert code system)
A computer in Ohio malfunctions causing millions of people in the Northeast and Midwest to lose power. Guy who tripped over power cord issues one-word press release, saying "Oops."

September
Terror Alert Code: Aquamarine Alert (Decreased risk of annoying dinner time phone calls.)
Federal Communications Commission says it will enforce do-not-call list. President Bush approves, saying war on evil is in full swing.

October
Terror Alert Code: Gray Alert (Elevated risk of Gray Davis losing control of world's fifth-largest economy to body builder.)
Comedian Gallagher loses California recall election. Nation's humor columnists see no need to elaborate.

November
Terror Alert Code: Brown With Little White Spots Alert (President Bush cautiously eats pretzels received in the mail in a mysterious package.)
Rush Limbaugh returns to radio after 5 week layoff. Democrats say war on evil has a little more work to do.

December
Terror Alert Code: Burnt Sienna (High risk of Americans becoming sick of terror alert color codes and rebelling.)
Saddam Hussein emerges from his hole, asks what US thought of "hilarious weapons of mass destruction practical joke." John Ashcroft demands Santa Claus turn over his "naughty list" to the government.

THE NORTON TELEGRAM

Office hours:
8 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.
Phone: (785) 877-3361
Fax: (785) 877-3732
E-mail: telegram@nwkansas.com

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STAFF
Cynthia Haynes editor and publisher
Veronica Monier staff reporter
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