

Open government essential to democracy

By Randy Brown

Don't care about openness in government? Don't get hot and bothered when public officials do public business in secret?

You should. Open government is essential to our democracy. It's the only way that citizens can monitor the workings of their city, county, state and national officials. It brings accountability to police departments, courts, City Halls and school boards. Our very way of life demands that our democratic institutions be open.

But many citizens see this powerful cause to be little more than an excuse for media to abuse their First Amendment rights in the rush to build circulation and ratings. Or, even worse, citizens just don't care.

And, though most public officials say they embrace open government, they often don't act like it. Rather than living by the clear and overriding policy of the Kansas Open Records Act - that public records should be open to the public - many officials work to find reasons to keep them closed, and to close even more in the law.

In recent years, the Legislature has eagerly turned down a number of common-sense initiatives for openness and accountability. One

striking recent example: School districts in Wichita and Topeka spend tens of millions of dollars of our tax money every year to bus our children to and from school. Yet some school districts are not required by law to make public even the names of their bus drivers because the districts contract with a private company for school transportation. This is a blatant slap at public safety and accountability for tax dollars. It would be illegal in the case of any "official" school employee.

Lawmakers also have blocked attempts to require that executive sessions of public bodies be tape-recorded, and they have rejected efforts to fix the oppressive Kansas law that keeps secret probable cause affidavits in criminal arrests.

In these cases, legislators are not just missing opportunities to make state government more open and accountable. They are missing opportunities to build public trust in an era in which citizens are increasingly suspicious of "government," as if it were some alien entity.

Of course, citizens are missing opportunities, as well. Apathy doesn't work in a democracy. And until many more of us are willing to get involved, and until we tell public officials to do public business in

the daylight, we will get what we deserve: too many leaders who feel that the ideal of open government is little more than a messy and inconvenient business.

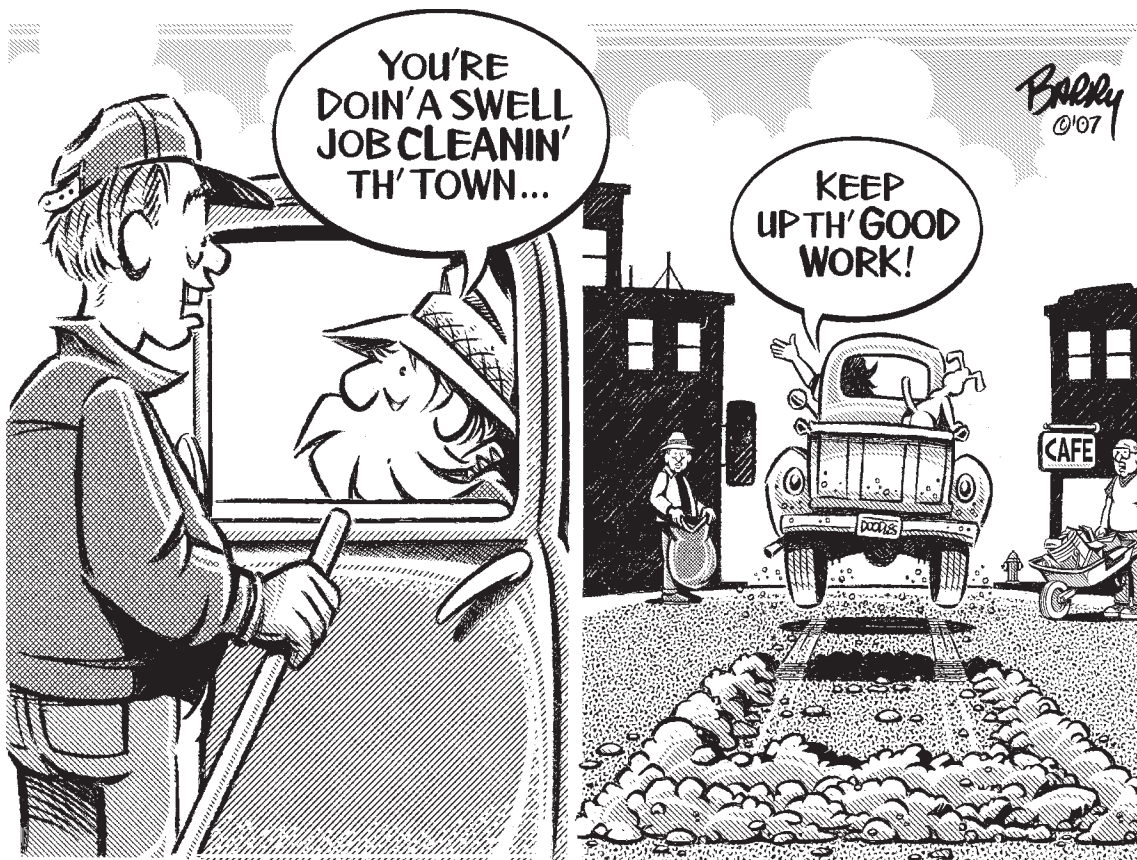
Open government is not about politicians or the media. It's about you.

It is the non-partisan issue of our time, drawing supporters across the political spectrum. Recent winners of the Sunshine Coalition's Friends of Open Government Award include such political opposites as Kansas Sens. Tim Huelskamp, R-Fowler, and Anthony Hensley, D-Topeka.

The patriots who helped create our nation knew the power of honest and open government because they faced so much venal and closed government. Thomas Jefferson said, "Whenever the people are well informed, they can be trusted with their government." Patrick Henry said liberty is never secure as long as government does business in secret.

Those are two sides of the same coin of freedom.

Randy Brown, the Senior Fellow in the Elliott School of Communication at Wichita State University, is the executive director of the Kansas Sunshine Coalition for Open Government, now housed at the Elliott School.



News From the Past

5 years ago - 2002

Dr. Brett Poling will open Poling Chiropractic and Family Health Center in what is now known as the County Health Office. What makes this facility to Dr. Poling is the fact that his grandparents, Joe and Harriet Winston once owned it as the Hilltop Motel and Market.

Janae Glidewell, St. Francis seventh grader, was the Cheyenne County Spelling Bee Champion.

Cheyenne County Junior Miss, Meaghan Jamison, will travel to Belleville to compete in the Kansas Junior Miss State Finals.

Wiley's Apothecary has a new owner and a new name. Kody and Penny Krien took over March 4 after buying the business from Scott Wiley. The new name is Krien Pharmacy.

Yost Ford-Mercury has a new sign to greet its customers.

First National Bank's latest merger is with the Security State Bank located in Bird City. First National plans on opening in a new building soon.

Basketball players earning

Northwest Kansas League honors are Kelsey Andrist, Marcus Dodd and Dustin Dunn.

Ten years ago the Cheyenne Theater was re-opened after being updated and decorated. To celebrate the 10 years and the 500th movie shown the Theater Committee will have free pop corn, prizes and movie tickets given away.

20 years ago - 1987

The St. Francis Board of Education accepted the Victory Bell from Vickers Gas Station. The bell will be rung after winning athletic events.

The St. Francis Chamber of Commerce donated \$500 to the Cheyenne County Historical Society to buy light fixtures for the Cheyenne County Museum.

Crystal DeGood and Shawna Stevens have been chosen to attend Sunflower Girls State.

Cub Scout Pack 120, Den 2, made a poster for Boy Scout Week. Marilyn Sedo and Deanna Krieger are the leaders. Members include Blake Feikert, Billy Gabel, Reid Krieger, Curtis Delaney and Tim Sedo.

60 years ago - 1947

As part of the Citizens State Bank

redecorating program, new fluorescent lights have been installed. Not only do the lights improve working conditions but they are an added improvement in appearance.

Farmers in Dent Township are organizing a coyote hunt for March 9.

An election is going to be held to submit to the voters a plan for issuance of bonds to pay for extending and improving the city's water works system. This is good news for the Park Hills District which was taken into the incorporated limits of the city two years ago.

Cheyenne County topped the state in average yield per acre in 1946 of winter wheat. Cheyenne County produced 4,051,000 bushels of wheat from a harvest acreage of 164,000 acres. This resulted in an average production of 24.7 bushels per acre.

Eddie's Quality Bakery, in the former Egan Drug Store location, will hold its formal opening on March 29. Mr. Zimelman has installed the latest and most modern equipment.

Hangin' With Marge

When grandchildren learn to talk

By Margaret Bucholtz



Most grandmothers can't wait until the grandchildren can talk to us. I think it is really important when they live a distance away from you that they begin talking on the phone.

I have been named a variety of different names, mostly grandma or grannie, but to Derek I was "grandma honeybunch" and both grandmas are called Button to

Tucker. Whatever the word was it was like music to my ears.

The other day my son Darrin called me and little 2-year-old Tucker, had something to tell me. Darrin told me the questions to ask and this is how the conversation went:

Tucker: Hi Button Bucholtz (which he does a fine job with that last name).

Me: Hi, Tucker. What does your dog say?

Tucker: Arf, Arf.

Me: What does your cat say?

Tucker: Meow.

What does your Daddy say?

Tucker: (Makes a loud snore).

What does your Mother say?

Tucker: NO, NO, TUCKER!!!

Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



I don't know why, but some folks around here need to be reminded of the importance of supporting local businesses. I'd like to share just one more example of a great benefit of shopping at home.

Buying a car or truck can be a difficult task. This is especially true when it comes to dealing with a big city auto trader.

As a teenager I was lucky to have a father who knew how to handle the city car salesman.

Dad always knew which vehicle he was after, having viewed the car ahead of time when the sales crew wasn't around.

On the day of the sale he had let his beard grow for a couple days, put on some dirty pants and a worn, white T-shirt. He held in his pockets what ever money was needed to make the purchase.

The car salesman would be waiting near the entrance of the lot, like a pack of coyotes. Once one approached Dad, he would simply ask what the bottom line price was on this chosen vehicle.

Sometimes they would listen to him and the deal would go smooth. Within minutes the check was signed and we drove off.

Usually it went downhill from the start. The salesman would say, "Well, Mr. McCormick, that's just not how it works around here."

Dad knew the game and had a short

fuse. It didn't take long for him to walk away, after a few choice words, and I'd be running to catch up.

Around here, the area dealers know their customers and visa versa. There is a mutual respect that is unique to small towns. If a buyer

is treated dishonestly, it won't take long for the word to get out.

Just another reason to shop at home. Use it or lose it!

Resident has suggestion for naming the building

Letter to the Editor

To the editor,

As I write this "Letter to the Editor," I am mailing the same suggestion to various committees and governing bodies of St. Francis and Cheyenne County.

I propose that the new "Emergency Building" be named for our most famous son, Ron Evans. Can there be a greater achievement than

that of going to the moon? I think this a fitting tribute.

I am suggesting this in addition to, and not in place of, the present "capsule" which should be restored.

Thank you, Rachel Huffman St. Francis

GOD SAYS

The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.

Psalms 145:8, 9

The Saint Francis Herald
(USPS 475-960)
A Century of Service to Cheyenne County

P.O. Box 1050, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050
Published each Thursday by Haynes Publishing Co., 310 W. Washington, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050. Entered as periodicals matter at the post office at St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050, and at additional offices.

Official newspaper of Cheyenne County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association and Inland Press Association.

Subscriptions: One year \$33 (tax included) in Cheyenne and adjacent counties; \$38 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$42 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$25 extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to Box 1050, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050

Nor'West Newspapers
8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Mon.-Fri.
(785) 332-3162 Fax - (785) 332-3001
E-mail - sfherald@nwkansan.com

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Extension Notes

Livestock Feeding Sites

The use of temporary feeding sites during winter and early spring to supply feed and/or water to livestock is a common livestock management practice.

Honor Roll

New and renewed Herald subscriptions: Shelly Monasmith, Aurora, Neb.; Charlise Rogers, St. Francis; Amy Hathaway, St. Francis; Patti Lawrukiewicz, Caldwell; Dorothy Stasser, Mustang, Okla.; Noel and Alisa Rath, St. Francis; Sheree Wingo, Golden, Colo.; Floyd Jensen, St. Francis.

When selecting a location, producers should be aware of how these sites affect environmental and animal performance.

Animal growth performance can be greatly affected by improper site selection and management. The National Research Council (1981) reports that small amounts of mud (4 to 8 inches deep) can reduce feed intake of animals by 5 to 15 percent, while larger amounts of mud (12 to 24 inches deep) can decrease feed intake by up to 15 to 30 percent.

Winter feeding sites can become

muddy quickly when animals are active after moisture falls. Research is clear on the negative effect of muddy conditions on animal performance.

Risk potential caused by mud, 21 to 39°F

Mud Depth Potential Loss of Gain

No mud 0 percent.
Dewclaw deep 7 percent.
Shin deep 14 percent.
Below hock 21 percent.
Hock deep 28 percent.
Belly deep 35 percent. sign-up
Beef Feeder, University of Nebraska, August 1991.

Praise the Lord

Church of Christ
332-2380, Pars. 332-3424
502 W. Spencer
Norman Morrow - Minister
Bible Class 11 a.m.
Morning Worship 10 a.m.
Wed. Bible Study 7 p.m.

United Methodist
Church Office 332-2292,
Church 332-2254,
512 S. Scott
Pastor Morita Truman
Early Bird Service 8:30 a.m.
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Worship 10:30 a.m.

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church
625 S. River • 332-2680
Fr. Roger Meitl
Sunday Mass 10:30 a.m.
Weekday Mass 8 a.m.
Confessions Sat. 4-4:30

First Christian Church
332-2956 • 118 E. Webster
Sunday School 9:20 a.m.
Church Service 10:30 a.m.
Wed. night Bible Study 7 p.m.

Grace Assembly of God
332-2925, Pars. 332-2899
208 E. 2nd
Rev. Rob Meyer
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Worship 10:30
Sunday Eve. Service 6 p.m.

Salem Lutheran Church
332-3002
Pastor Chris Farmer
Sunday School 10 a.m.
Morning Worship 11 a.m.

St. Francis Community Church
332-3150
204 N. Quincy Street
Pastor: David Butler
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Worship Service 10:30 a.m.
Wednesday Bible Study 7 p.m.

Seventh-Day Adventist Church
332-2888 • 3rd & Adams
Pastor Mike Larson
Sabbath School 9:30
Morning Worship 10:45

First Baptist Church
2nd & Scott • 332-3921
J.W. Glidewell, Pastor
Sunday School 9:30
Worship 10:30 a.m.
Sunday Evening Service 6:30 p.m.,
Wed. AWANA Club 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Peace Lutheran Church
202 N. College
Pastor Ken Hart
332-2928 Pars. 332-2312
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Worship 10:30 a.m.

Clough Valley Church of Hope
12 m. west, 6 m. north of SF
Pastor Jason Howard
332-3152
Saturdays 8 p.m. CT or 7 p.m. MT

St. Francis Equity

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Knodel Funeral Home
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785-332-3131