

Opinion



Other Viewpoints

Money still pours into remodeling pit

No matter how many surprises keep pushing up the exorbitant cost of the Kansas Statehouse renovation, nor how dire the economy, the project seems untouchable. It shouldn't be that way.

Let's face it, the capitol is a money pit. Somewhere, state government needs to draw the line.

The state is eight years into the project, and its completion is now estimated at \$285 million. But that clearly is a moving target. The project started out as a \$90 million to \$120 million endeavor.

The state has issued \$211 million in bonds to finance it, but legislators will need to decide next year whether to expand the debt.

Part of the problem is that legislators have made expensive additions — namely an underground parking garage and basement visitors' center and offices. Concessions have had relatively minor price tags.

The renovation of the Statehouse was long overdue — 90 years had gone by since a top-to-bottom renovation — and the finished product so far has been fabulous. Many original architectural features have been uncovered and restored.

That said, the state is staring at a \$137 million budget deficit at the end of its fiscal year next June, which is projected to grow to nearly \$1 billion by the following year. ...

The Statehouse renovation shouldn't be off limits. In fact, if road projects are going to be suspended, so too should the Statehouse project.

Scaling back the project, or at least putting the brakes on it for a while, might not mean great savings in the big picture, but it would be symbolic if nothing else.

It gets increasingly harder to justify pouring money into the Statehouse when other priorities are being put on hold.

— *The Hutchinson News, via The Associated Press*

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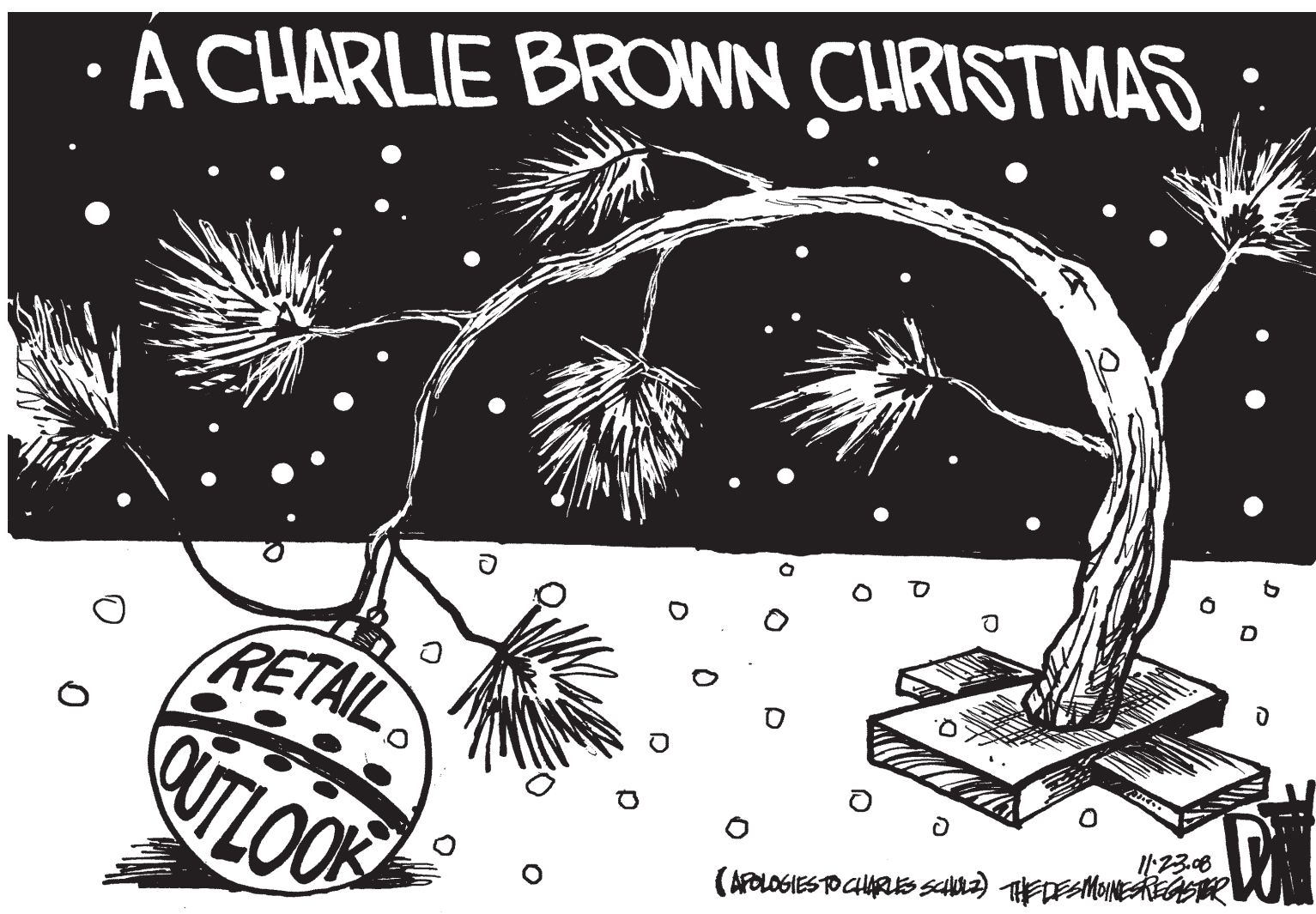
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Cocky sharp loses his tail

It was just one of those things you do, I guess.

We were at the park, getting ready to walk. It was dusk. It's always about dusk when we finally get to the park, it seems.

And I remember talking about the way the transmitter for the dog's collar goes together. I was screwing it together — the antenna screws into the base, like a pool cue — and saying I felt like a pool sharp getting ready for his games. Or something like that.

And then we were off around the old lake bed. It was one of those nights where there was lots of game to see, plenty to talk about and good walking, if a little cool. As I remember, we were racing the gloom as we headed into the final quarter mile to the car.

There was still enough light to see the trail and pick our way around the island, but barely.

There was never an occasion to grab the control for the dog's collar. She's nearly 8 now, and about as well trained as she's going to get.

In town once and a while, something gets too interesting and I have to buzz her a little, but not often. And never at the lake. She obeys pretty well out there. She's having fun, and I don't think she wants to get into any trouble.

We jumped up a young whitetail buck with a



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

couple of does. There's quite a herd of white-tails out there this year, and the sight of one, or three or four, bounding away, tails waiving, is nothing unusual.

Wasn't until I got back to the car that I realized that the antenna had worked its way off the controller.

I figured I'd been talking too much and paying not nearly enough attention to what I was doing. Instead of checking to see that the antenna was tight, I must have put it on my belt a little loose.

No big deal, I figured. We'd either find it or get another one.

Next day, Cynthia got to go on the Business-to-Business Tour, and I got to take the dog to the lake to look for the antenna. We retraced our steps without spotting it, but I realized there were places on that trail — while it's mostly bare dirt or short grass — where the leaves were deep enough to hide the whole

collar, let alone thin, black antenna.

I chalked it up to experience. That night, I went on the web and ordered a new antenna: \$12, plus \$12.95 shipping and handling.

I tested the controller without one. It worked, but I figured it wouldn't have much range. The new one came Thursday — pretty quick service, I thought — and we put it on for the walk that night.

And that was it until Saturday. We were back on the trail at dusk, and I was telling Cynthia how the dog and I had covered our tracks without finding the antenna. I pointed out that there were places under the cottonwoods where the weeds could hide a couple of antennas. Maybe the dog, too.

"And other places," I said, "with the bare ground, you'd spot it right away... just ... like ... that."

And there it was. My \$25 antenna.

Which is why we now have two of them in the carry case for the dog collar. And probably will until well after the dog is dead and buried.

As they say, easy come, easy go.

Steve Haynes is editor and publisher of The Colby Free Press and president of Nor'West Newspapers. In his spare time, whenever that is, he like to ride and watch trains.

Citation story called misleading

To the Editor:

I am writing in response to the article you recently printed (Thursday, Nov. 20, *Colby Free Press*) regarding the violations I received on my property. It appears that your reporters do not do their homework.

I was telephoned last week and asked to comment on the issue, although you reported in your article that I was contacted and I "refused to comment," you neglected to add that my refusal to comment on the issue was based on my lack of information on the results of the City Council meeting, which I had explained this to your reporter. Yet this is only one of the many inaccuracies you reported.

Note, I have not been cited several times for violations on my property that I have not complied with. Did your reporter even take the time to come and view my property for himself? Did he take any photos?

As to the refuse in my alleyway that I was cited for, let what happened to me serve as an example to all Colby residents. Remember, as property owners you are responsible for the



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

maintenance of your alley, regardless of who puts what where.

How many of you have had your neighbors cut and trim trees or have grass clippings and leave their remains on your property or alleyways? As for myself, I do not use my alleyway and foolishly assumed it had remained clean, as I had left it. Be forewarned to check your alleys frequently, as you never know what has been discarded and left for you to dispose of.

As for the statement at the end of the article about me having untagged "cars" parked on my property, again another inaccuracy reported. I do, however have one car parked on my

property that was not tagged. Again, let this serve as another example to all residents.

My understanding was that if you had a nonoperated untagged vehicle on your private property, on a concrete or rocked surface, that this was within city compliance. I was wrong. Apparently all vehicles, nonoperational or operational, need to be tagged to remain on your property. Again, inaccurate information I received and based my actions on. Also, I would like to add that it has come to my attention that just because you may have a six-foot privacy fence around your property does not mean you have privacy.

Rest assured, I will be in compliance (as I have in the past) with the city by the deadline they have provided me. However, I would like to let what happened to me serve as an example to other residents. Do not trust on what you "think" you know to be accurate. This, too, applies to your reporters.

Jacqueline Horner
Colby

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

