

# commentary

from other pens...

## Public records costs must be reasonable

**The Garden City Telegram on costs for public records:**  
Kansas public record holders should take note of the directive given their neighbors to the north: The government cannot charge more than reasonable costs to copy public documents.

That's the word from Nebraska Attorney General Don Stenberg. Stenberg even went further to say that it is appropriate and desirable for government officials to make copies of requested documents available for free.

That would be a refreshing policy for public agencies to embrace, but the cynical guess is few will offer it to their citizenry.

Kansas law allows a reasonable charge for public records. The charge isn't to exceed the actual cost of providing a record, including staff time to locate it and copy it. The law suggest that 25-cents per page is an acceptable charge.

The idea is to recover the cost of producing a copy of a public document. But the reality is that the charge itself has the impact of limiting the number of requests made.

That's too bad. ...

The system many government agencies has established make requesting public documents a hassle. Indeed, citizens can be made to feel like their a nuisance when making request. ...

Government officials, particularly elected representatives, should embrace citizen involvement and encourage more of it.

Providing public records for free would be a bold step in that direction.

It would be appropriate and desirable.

**Winfield Daily Courier on state teacher shortage:**

Gov. Bill Graves said recently he had heard little from the public in support of more money for schools next year.

We are not surprised.

The demand around here is not for more money, it is for reform. If the governor really wants to help our public schools, he should raise a flag of reform.

Then perhaps the public will respond. If it does then teachers, school boards and the state board of education will see what it takes to restore public enthusiasm for their institution.

A good place for the governor to start would be the teacher shortage. Everyone understands from his or her own experience the importance of a teacher. Attacking one big problem would be better than trying to sell a list of relatively minor changes.

... Bill Graves is in a strong position to take up the cause of meeting Kansas' growing teacher—and administrator—shortage. The current estimate is we are 400 teachers short for next year, and that estimate can only grow.

The governor should not let partisan politics get in his way. Nor should he let the Kansas National Education Association, the teachers' union, gum up his Graves-goes-back-to-school initiative.

Attacking the teacher shortage may not exactly be reform, but it would send out a signal that our leadership in Topeka really does care about the future of Kansas public education. It is the kind of action hard-heads in the Legislature would have trouble resisting, and the kind needed to get the public moving in the right direction.

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## Remembering the art of ironing clothes

It had to be done and I knew I could do it. I had done it before but not for a long, long time. All I had to do is find the equipment, which lived in the basement, I thought, set it up and get to work. Ironing just isn't as easy as I remembered.

The biggest problem was finding the board and the iron.

My ironing board belonged to Steve's grandmother. When we inherited it 30 years ago, I put a new cover on it.

I got an iron for my birthday my senior year in high school so I would have one when I went off to college.

After Steve and I were married, I would iron all his shirts. His mother said I was crazy — they were permanent press — and why on earth would I iron if I didn't have to?

Well, mostly because I was bored. We lived in a tiny apartment, had no children and I didn't even have a job yet. I was afraid to go out by myself in Kansas City. I was from a small town and the thought of getting on a bus to take me anywhere scared me to death. So I learned to iron and cook.

Steve had great-looking shirts and gained 20 pounds. Then finally, I got a job.



**cynthia  
haynes**

• open season

The shirts went downhill but, since I didn't have time to cook, he lost 30 pounds.

Since then, I have not ironed much at all. When the children were little, I ironed the name tags on their clothes before they left for camp.

When the oldest was in the seventh grade, she took home economics and learned to iron. I never ironed another name tag. In fact, the last person to use my iron was my son, the youngest, the last one to go to camp. I remember seeing him ironing on his name tags. That was about four years ago.

Too bad he went to college. If he had been here, I might have tried to bribe him into ironing my stuff.

As it was, I was faced with two almost-new dresses that I had hand washed according to directions and they needed to be ironed, and the children were all gone.

In the past when faced with this problem, I took

them to the cleaners. But we have no cleaners in Oberlin and I never remember to take stuff with me when I go elsewhere.

It had to be faced. I had to iron those dresses or buy new ones, and Steve would probably object to that.

Ah, there was the ironing board leaning against the water heater. Now, where was the iron? Not with the other laundry supplies. Not with the odd small appliances (rice cooker, waffle iron, food processor and electric knife).

There it was behind the cat food.

Is this really my iron? It's not the one I got when I was 18. Somewhere along the line I must of gotten another one. I wonder what happened to the old one?

I found an outlet, set the board up and ironed not only my two dresses but the collar of a shirt and a shirt of Steve's that lied when it said permanent press.

I probably shouldn't have ironed that shirt. Now he's going to remember that I do know how to iron and expect me to do it every month or so.

Too bad none of the kids have kids. I could definitely use a grandchild in home-ec about now.

## 'Miss Haynes' starts her year as junior high teacher

We went to Lawrence last week to help our youngest daughter set up her apartment.

She had recruited the boys in her gang to do the heavy lifting, moving her from the student tenement she's been living in to her very own "real" apartment, actually more of a townhouse, two bedrooms and lots of space for a tiny girl.

Her parents were needed to carry the plastic while she shopped for her kitchen. We made it her birthday present, and she was pleased.

Of course, Daddy had to go with her to retrieve the antique china hutch her grandmother had given her — the boys not to be trusted with all that fancy glass — and any help carrying stuff around the mess was appreciated.

After six years in college (one more than her degree required, because she changed majors a little late in the game), she's on her own now.

By the time you read this, she'll be "Miss Haynes," facing a hundred or more squirming seventh and eighth graders in science class every day.

And tiny as she is at 5 foot (or is that 4 foot 11?), they'll think she's an adult. Especially when they get the look she's been cultivating the last couple



**steve  
haynes**

• along the sappa

of years.

It's kind of hard for me to grasp this. It seems like only yesterday that she was a baby, cradled in her big sister's arms the day she came to our home in Kansas City.

Not that long ago that she was a 3-year-old waif, wispy blonde hair flying, at our place in Colorado. She never sat still, never took no for an answer (at least not well) and always got what she set out for.

She confessed last week that she might be getting pretty nervous by the time we got there.

"You know how I am, Daddy."

Oh yes, I know. She was the girl who spent the entire summer before seventh grade with her stomach in a knot. Junior high would change everything in her life, she anguished.

## District engineer has different view of construction

To the Editor:

Recent articles in *The Goodland Daily News* as well as some bumper stickers circulating around Goodland have painted a negative picture of the Kansas Department of Transportation and its involvement with construction projects in and around the city of Goodland. I'd like to offer you a different perspective.

I wonder if the people sporting those "KDOT - Killing Dead Our Town" bumper stickers have ever thought about what their "town" would be like without KDOT? Here is a breakdown of the transportation dollars coming to the city of Goodland:

- Current K-27 Major Modification north of Goodland — \$11 million (for two projects). KDOT contributed \$75,000 to Sherman County to maintain and upgrade county roads for local traffic.

- Current Cherry Street Geometric Improvement project — \$765,000 (KDOT contributed \$430,000).

- 2000 Interstate-70 Concrete Pavement — \$22 million (for two projects).

- 2000 K-27 South Overlay — \$1.1 million.

- 2000 K-27 Geometric Improvement Project (repaving north of I-70) — \$1.3 million. KDOT contributed \$139,000 to cover inspection costs, because the city of Goodland could not come up with the funding.

This amounts to about \$36 million that the department has spent maintaining and improving the transportation infrastructure in Sherman County in just the past two years. I am leaving out of the equation the dollars that are paid to construction workers that find their way into the cash registers of hotels, gas stations, shops and restaurants in Sherman County.



**from our  
readers**

• to the editor

Any economic development expert will tell you that an efficient and safe transportation infrastructure is essential to a city's future growth and prosperity. Perhaps a more accurate bumper sticker would read: "KDOT - Keeping Development On Track."

The truth is that none of these improvements can happen without some inconvenience to somebody. At times this inconvenience will translate into some loss of business. Yet any business that undergoes a major remodeling will also experience a temporary loss — a loss they willingly take because they understand the remodeling will improve business later. The same is true with the construction projects: temporary loss for future gain. The temporary influx of workers and their purchases also offsets some of this temporary loss.

I'd like to address another aspect of this issue. I believe KDOT has been unfairly targeted as the "villain" regarding the Cherry Street construction project and the resulting road closures. This is a city-administrated Geometric Improvement Project. The department sets aside money each year to assist cities with geometric improvements of city connecting links (city streets which connect two portions of rural state highway). The state funds 75 to 100 percent and the city funds up to 25 percent. In this case, KDOT is funding 95 percent of the project (up to a maximum of \$430,000).

The city of Goodland went through a lengthy application process to win approval for the Cherry Street project. Many Kansas communities did not get funding for their applications. I wonder what they would think about this hubbub? My guess is they would think it's a pretty good problem to have.

What this all means is that the city is solely responsible for the administration of the Cherry Street project. This includes the closures of roads and how they are structured. KDOT reviewed and approved a set of plans (prepared by the city and their consultant) that included phasing of the project to allow access to the businesses along Cherry Street. The city or their hired consultant accepted a request from the contractor to combine several phases of work — a city decision, not KDOT's. This combination created some of the recent access problems to businesses. As to a "breakdown in communications" when closing the K-27 viaduct/bridge, the city was aware that the closure was necessary for the work north of town to progress in a timely manner.

The highway system was not designed nor can it be expected to be the ultimate system forever. Thus we at KDOT are charged with the responsibilities to maintain and update it as necessary. We always try to minimize inconveniences and losses to local businesses and constituents when making road improvements. We have done just that in the case of Goodland, and will continue to do so. We greatly appreciate the patience shown by most of the public and are thankful for the support we receive from the majority of the community. Thank you for the opportunity to address this issue.

Chriss B. McDiffett, P.E.  
District Engineer  
Norton