

from our viewpoint...

## Expansion issue second on ballot

Sherman County voters face two separate – yet related – issues on the upcoming Nov. 2 election ballot.

The first is the question on the at-large voting on the county commissioners, which has been put on the ballot through a special bill approved through the State Legislature.

The second issue is the re-vote on the expansion of the number of county commissioners from three to five. This question was put on the ballot by citizen petitions in February of 2009. The people voted in favor of the expansion in April 2009, but a lawsuit was filed and the election results were held invalid by a district judge saying the question had to be on a November election ballot.

The expansion of the number of commissioners is allowed under state law giving the voters the right to determine the number of commissioners from three to five or seven.

For Sherman County the expansion would give people two more officials to go to with problems, and mean it would take three commissioners to make decisions rather than the two as currently established.

The petitions were brought on the basis it would be better to have more people involved in the decision making process, and to spread the responsibility among two more people.

Citizens voted in favor of the expansion in the April election, and many felt it was because the existing commissioners appeared to be in a constant 2 to 1 deadlock. To some extent that appears to have changed.

As Commissioner Chuck Thomas said, adding two more commissioners does not prevent a deadlock.

The expansion issue does have some expense involved with the salary of \$12,000 a year for the commissioners and health care cost if the commissioners accept coverage under the county policy.

Related to the expansion issue is the question of at-large voting on the commissioners. Expansion of the numbers without approval of the at-large voting issue would increase the costs for the county to try to redivide the county into five districts. With approval of the at-large voting for commissioners it would not matter how many commissioners the voters decided was appropriate, and it would save the county money on the election process by simplifying the ballots.

Expanding the number of commissioners from three to five would put the county commissioners on more of a par with the city commission in Goodland, the city council in Kanorado and closer to the seven-member school board.

Another suggestion to improve the county operation is to hire an administrator much like the city manager and the school superintendent to help keep the county moving forward.

As the commissioners begin the effort to find a Public Works Director, the hope is they find someone with engineering experience to help direct the major effort of improving the county roads.

All of these are interrelated, and citizens will face the two main questions on the ballot on Tuesday, Nov. 2. We believe the best outcome is to approval the at-large voting of the commissioners – to give all the citizens a voice in selecting those who run the county – and the expansion of the number of commissioners from three to five. – *Tom Betz*



## Can you balance green, yellow of garden?

“I’ve been lying to people,” she shouted. Huh?

I should have known. I was speculating on what felonies she’s been accusing me of when she waved me over to the garden.

“Look,” she said, smiling. “This is *not* a yellow squash.”

In fact, I had noticed that plant when I was picking squash earlier in the day. Its leaves were a little darker, a little rougher, than the surrounding yellow squash.

It’s been an unusual harvest this year: usually the yellow squash dies off and the zucchini just grows and grows, producing mounds of long, green fruit.

Usually, we plant two or three hills of each type and the bugs get a couple of them. Usually, they get the yellow squash.

Not this year. Cynthia mixed up the seeds and planned rows of plants all mixed together. Squash plants came up everywhere, and for a while, we harvested both types.

We like that because having both means you can make more colorful dishes. They taste



steve  
haynes  
• along the sappa

about the same, the texture is similar, but the color helps dress up the plate.

At first, the two seemed about equally productive. We picked several small, firm zucchini and some cute little crook-necked yellows. Cynthia sliced them and made saute and melange and stir fry. Life was good.

Then the zucchini started to die off. Production all but ceased. She had to borrow zucchini to make her annual summer quota of bread for the sons-in-law. They both love her zucchini bread; it’s one of the recipes she uses to cement her status as a good, if slightly daffy, mother-in-law.

They got green squash in their zucchini bread. Green squash and real sugar. Not me. I got yellow squash and fake sweetener. The

bread was great, so I’m not complaining, but you do notice the yellow “zucchini” in the loaf. It tastes the same; it just looks wrong.

But imagine the embarrassment for a veteran gardener, 40 years’ experience, in having to beg for zucchini. Most people have to leave the stuff in unlocked cars.

And now she’ll have to admit that she wasn’t exactly telling the truth. Her zucchini plants, it seems, did not all die. One apparently was only on hiatus. It’s back now. In the cool of September, it’s blooming and one little zucchini clings to a flower. In two or three days, it’ll be ready to pick. In four or five, it’ll be a dark green war club.

My, you have to watch those things.

So, just when we’d settled down to borrowed zucchini, yellow rind in the squash bread and monochrome mixtures, we’ve got to learn to deal with green squash again.

It shouldn’t be too bad.

One little plant can’t produce too much squash. Can it?

## Bail-outs for foreign companies

American taxpayers bailed out the banks. They bailed out auto manufacturers. But at least they were our banks and automakers.

Now, taxpayers are once again being asked to lend a hand. This time it’s to subsidize multi-billion-dollar foreign companies with names like Toshiba, Hitachi and Areva. If the going gets rough for them, taxpayers will be forced to dig into their pockets to bail them out, too.

America needs to invest in new forms of energy: to combat climate change and increase security by reducing our dependence on foreign suppliers. But that reality is being used by some on Capitol Hill to justify the expenditure of billions of dollars to construct new nuclear reactors – a high-cost, high-risk gamble.

Various proposals in both the House and Senate call for as much as \$54 billion in taxpayer-supplied loan guarantees for new reactors. Another bill would put no ceiling on the amount of guarantees.

In the haste to make the case for these massive public investments there’s one detail that rarely receives much mention: The construction push will largely benefit global companies and overseas workers. They get the profits; U.S. taxpayers assume the risks.

All 18 of the energy companies seeking approval to build new reactors will be relying on foreign manufacturers to fill the bulk of their orders. That means revenue and jobs in Japan and France, not Ohio or North Carolina or any other state.

Foreign involvement in nuclear construction in this country goes even deeper than manufacturing. Two reactor projects at the head of the line for federal loan guarantees have foreign investors. Calvert Cliffs in Maryland is dominated by the French government-owned EDF



from  
other pens  
• commentary

Group and Areva (Constellation Energy is a partner) and the South Texas Project is a partnership between NRG Energy of New Jersey, Toshiba and Tokyo Electric Power Company, both of Japan. A third reactor project awaiting approval, Nine Mile Point in New York, is co-owned by Constellation and EDF.

Earlier this year, Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY) took issue with the fact federal stimulus money was being used to purchase foreign-made equipment for solar and wind projects. That money should be spent here, Schumer argued, not abroad. Unfortunately, that same question has not been raised when it comes to insuring billions in nuclear investments.

Each of these new reactors is estimated to cost about \$10 billion or more. If the projects fail – and the Congressional Budget Office has put the odds of that happening at 50-50 – U.S. taxpayers will be forced to foot the bill to make good on the debt. In other words, another bail-out to benefit Areva or Toshiba or Hitachi.

Why are U.S. taxpayers being asked to stake profitable global companies looking to make money in American markets? Wall Street is gun-shy. Investors there have looked at the risks of nuclear power and said no. So, to get these projects moving, nuclear backers in Washington have volunteered the taxpayers.

Why aren’t U.S. companies vying for these projects?

The U.S. nuclear manufacturing industry is

moribund, its production facilities shuttered. No new reactors have been ordered in this country since Palo Verde in 1973.

Once, the number of U.S. suppliers licensed to produce nuclear-grade building components was 400; now it is down to 80. Today, for example, the only companies capable of building giant steel reactor vessels are located in Japan, China and Russia. While some new manufacturing capacity is being developed in the U.S., it will be years, if ever, before it could play a major role in reactor construction. Thus the U.S. is forced to look overseas for the foreseeable future.

We live in a global economy. American consumers are accustomed to seeing foreign-made labels on their clothing, cars and computers. Foreign investment in the U.S. is nothing new, either.

But what sets apart this latest entry into the U.S. market is the fact when it comes to nuclear expansion, Washington wants taxpayers to take the risk out of making those investments. That wouldn’t make sense even if the nuclear companies’ owners were all living on Main Street. It makes absolutely no sense to expect U.S. taxpayers to bail out foreign companies – or the French government – if things go sour.

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