

from our viewpoint...

## City meetings should all be open

*"In recognition of the fact that a representative government is dependent upon an informed electorate, it is declared to be the policy of this state that meetings for the conduct of governmental affairs and the transaction of governmental business be open to the public." — Kansas Open Meetings Act*

The Goodland City Commission is considering closing some government discussions to the public by changing the quorum requirement from three to four, which would allow any two members to discuss public business outside an open meeting.

The proposal has been suggested by Commissioners John Garcia and Dave Daniels, who have been on the commission for over a year. They first mentioned this after being elected.

A quorum is the minimum number of members who must be present to have an official meeting. The commission's rule now is three, but the change would boost that to four.

Changing the quorum requirement is allowed under state law, and a few cities have done this, including Coffeyville, Liberal, Lawrence and El Dorado. Dodge City discussed the idea this year, but decided not to change.

The argument from Garcia and Daniels is that changing the rule would give commissioners a chance to discuss city issues outside the official meeting, and they could be better informed to serve citizens.

Under the law, "a majority of a quorum" cannot meet outside an open meeting to discuss public business. If a quorum is three, that means two commissioners cannot meet to talk about city matters.

If the quorum is raised to four, it would allow any commissioner to talk to one other commissioner about upcoming city business. However, it would not allow either of those to then contact another commissioner to discuss the same business. Two city commissioners could meet and talk, but none of the others would be privy to their thinking or discussion.

If there is a problem, we think this is the wrong answer. Open government means the discussion and decisions are made in front of anyone who wants to attend a city commission meeting.

The commissioners can talk with the city manager and through him discuss issues and get research about upcoming issues. They are free to consult with other citizens to ask their opinion and to draw on their experience.

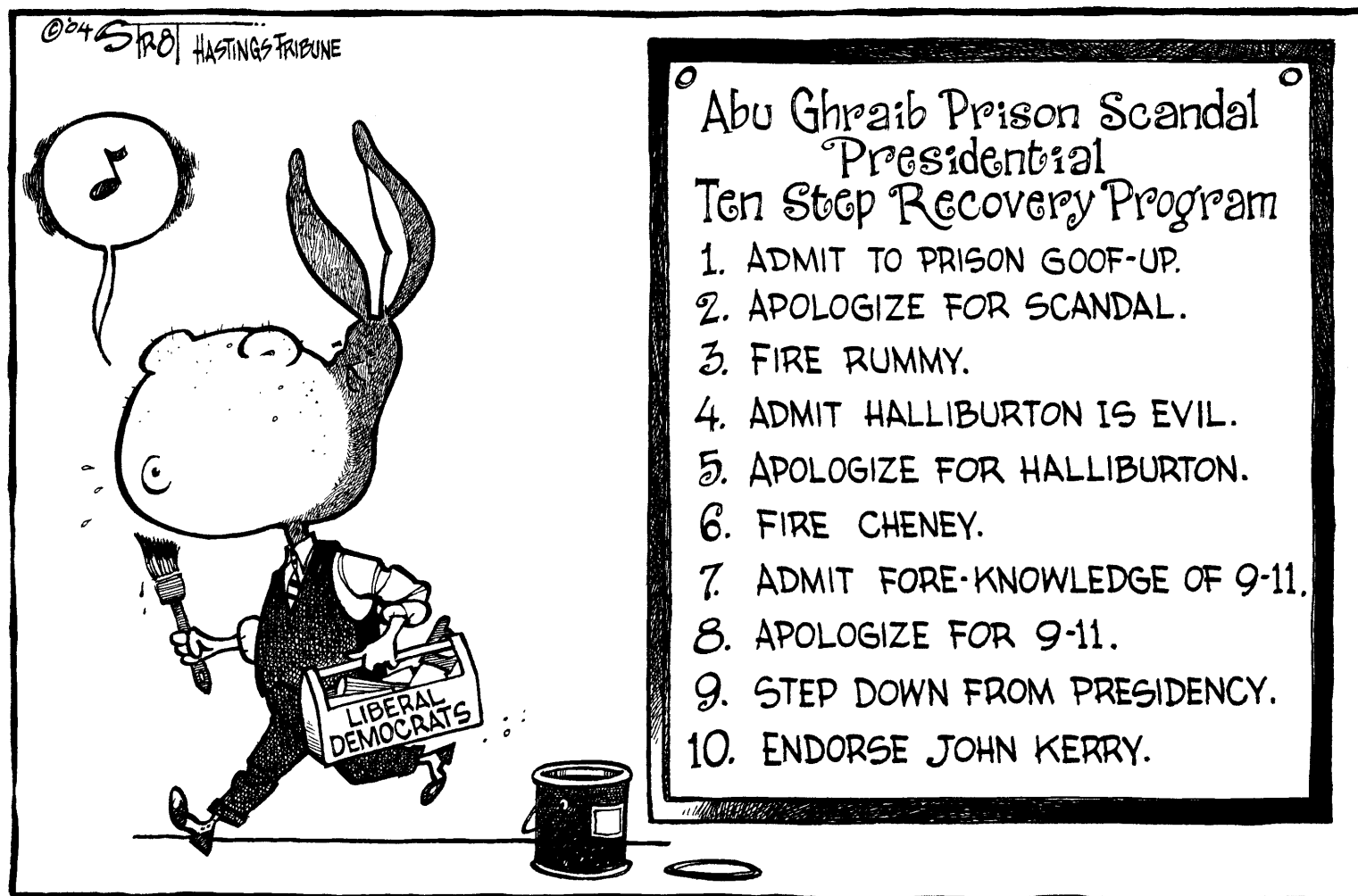
Part of the theory of open meetings is that it is unfair to the citizens and the other members of the commission if they do not hear the discussions of every member, but only get the "agreed upon" position of some.

If the commissioners do not feel they are getting enough time to discuss issues, there are other options, such as more work sessions or special meetings to allow all members to be involved.

We feel giving commissioners' the legal ability to discuss city business among themselves in private can lead to mistrust among the public — and among members of the commission.

Raising the quorum requirement to four of the five members might also make it difficult for the commission to hold some meetings. If more than one member is absent, or even late, a meeting would have to be put off.

Allowing everyone to take part and hear the discussion of public business — in open meetings — keeps everything where it belongs — in the open. — *Tom Betz*



### Abu Ghraib Prison Scandal Presidential Ten Step Recovery Program

1. ADMIT TO PRISON GOOF-UP.
2. APOLOGIZE FOR SCANDAL.
3. FIRE RUMMY.
4. ADMIT HALLIBURTON IS EVIL.
5. APOLOGIZE FOR HALLIBURTON.
6. FIRE CHENEY.
7. ADMIT FORE-KNOWLEDGE OF 9-11.
8. APOLOGIZE FOR 9-11.
9. STEP DOWN FROM PRESIDENCY.
10. ENDORSE JOHN KERRY.

## Robin takes chances bathing in cat bowl

I looked out the bedroom window, and there, down on the back deck, was a blur of feathers and water.

I watched, fascinated. A robin was taking a bath in the cat bowl. A very vigorous bath at that.

And this must have been one dirty bird, because when I checked later, all the water spots around the cat bowl were muddy. So was the cat water. By then, the miscreant was gone. I suppose he must have had a long, dusty flight in from "the South," wherever it is that robins go when they're not in the North.

He sure was cleaning up a storm. He wasn't the first robin of spring. In fact, if you keep your eyes open, you can see robins here pretty much year around. I imagine those are Canadian robins who leave for cooler climes when spring sets in and southern robins flock to this country.

But I digress. He might well have been the last robin if the cats had caught him in their water. But he was perfectly safe.

Miss April Alice was on the bedroom windowsill, taking in the water show. She was twitching and mewling like cats do when they want something they cannot have. There was



**steve  
haynes**

• along the sappa

no way, with a screen and a 15-foot plunge involved, that she could fulfill her fantasy.

Molly Monster (You notice, my wife is given to alliteration when naming cats, huh?) had found a sunbeam somewhere on the east side of the house and was not planning to move until about 2 p.m.

That bird had all the time in the world. You'd think an adult robin would know better than to bathe in the cat bowl, but I suppose it might be hard to identify. It's an old Club aluminum roaster, a wedding gift from 1971 that got drafted for cat-water duty. It was demoted from kitchen service after it warped, and newer and larger roasters came into service.

How often does anyone need three roasters, after all?

So this old yellow roaster sits on the back deck, filled occasionally with water for the felines, who often spend the day outdoors. They don't drink a lot of it. In fact, I couldn't prove

that they drink any of it. But it's there if they want to drink, and that satisfies the requirements of Cynthia and the humane society.

Between fillings, it grows algae and, periodically, the dog stops by to empty it. And, of course, our odd robin takes a bath.

The cats alternate between lounging in the sunbeam and stalking prey around the yard. One or more of them — again, I can't prove which one — is a rather successful hunter, judging from the number of bird bodies and brown bats I find in the grass when I mow.

These are usually deposited under the pear tree directly north of the cat bowl, and I have to assume — had the cats been on duty that day — that the robin would have been lunch.

Usually, the victims are dead when I find them. Sometimes, the cats eat the best parts. Sometimes, apparently not. One day, when Cynthia told me to "do something about the dead bat in the yard," I refused on the grounds that it was hissing at me.

Such is life with the cats on the back porch.

The robin did not wind up on the prey heap, however. I presume he enjoyed his bath and went his way, a lot cleaner and no worse for the wear. Probably never knew what he was bathing in, and just as well.

## You can be a hero by giving blood

To the Editor:  
You don't have to leap tall buildings in a single bound to be someone's hero this summer.

You can save a life by giving blood at the Red Cross blood mobile noon to 6 p.m. on Tuesday, May 25, at Goodland Methodist Church, 12th and Sherman. Call (800) 448-3543 for at appointment today.

During the summer, blood supplies often drop to dangerously low levels. Because blood can only be stored for 42 days, it can't be saved up to get through this period. The Red Cross relies on people like you to help. All blood types are needed, especially types O-positive and O-negative.

Two-year-old Kolbey Bancroft of El Dorado needed blood twice during his first year of life following his heart surgery. He may need it again this summer when he has his second round of surgeries. Kolbey's mom said it is comforting to know people are willing to give blood in case he needs it again.

Every day, 500 blood donors in Kansas and northern Oklahoma are needed for hospital patients like Kolbey.

If everyone who was eligible to give blood would donate twice a year, there would never be blood shortages like the ones we see so often during summer months. Only 5 percent of the population donates when 60 percent of the population is eligible to give blood.

Please donate blood and encourage a friend or family member to join you in giving the gift of life. Donating blood is safe and easy.

Most medications are not a problem. Those with diabetes or high blood pressure may donate as long as their condition is controlled by medication, and they are feeling well that day.



**from our  
readers**

• to the editor

Potential donors should drink plenty of water beforehand.

For information on donating blood, how to volunteer or to schedule an appointment, call (800) 448-3543 or visit [www.redcross.org/br/](http://www.redcross.org/br/) central plains.

Luella Richardson, Kanorado publicity chairman

To the Editor:  
Upon reading your opinion in the May 5 paper, I find myself and others very angry — mad about your statement, "You can vote for Bush or vote in effect for bin Laden." I find this very disgusting coming from anyone, let alone from an official newspaper.

I believe you have insulted many good people just because they may not believe the way you do. Calling people terrorists because they don't believe the same as you is about as low as a person can get.

About 30-some years ago the Norton paper came out with headlines such as, "The educated will vote for Nixon." I don't need to tell you what "the educated" got. I canceled my subscription then and didn't renew until about two years ago, thinking maybe the paper had changed its tone.

The last time I checked, "9-11" happened on President Bush's watch. Now, I don't put all the blame on him. Maybe a little. Maybe a little on Clinton. But nevertheless, it did happen on

Bush's watch. That much we know. I feel like you owe a lot of good people an apology for the kind of statement you made.

I am a Democrat. I usually vote Democrat, but not always. I voted three or four times for Sen. Dole. I also voted twice for President Reagan. I did not vote for Bush, and will not this time. It is not that I am sold on Kerry, it is because I am not sold on Bush.

Now I believe you have the right to your beliefs, just as I do to mine. I don't believe it is right for you to belittle people in your paper for not believing the same as you.

I feel like you should have a retraction and an apology in your paper before the end of this month. If not, you can rest assured I will not renew my subscription and I am sure there will be others that feel the same way.

I know this handwriting is bad, but I am 68 years old and I have cardiopulmonary disease. I have enjoyed your paper very much up until now.

Dale Leidig  
Hill City

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** It's not customary to reply to letters, but yours asks for a reply. I respect your right to disagree with my opinion, but I think you overstate your case. The editorial does not say anyone who votes against President Bush is a terrorist. It says the terrorists want the American president who has hounded them to be ousted. Voting against the president would not make you a terrorist, but it might make Osama bin Laden happy.

I stand by my opinion. You are welcome to disagree. That's the American way. But we would hate to lose you as a reader. — *Steve Haynes*

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