

from our viewpoint...

Legislative squabble unproductive mess

So far, the special session of the Legislature in Topeka is a mess.

We expected that. A week before the session began, Representative John Faber of Brewster, said he thought the mood in the House was “not to do anything.”

And so far, things are stalled in the House, where conservatives who don’t want to take orders from the state Supreme Court refuse to pass a spending bill, but don’t have the two-thirds majority required to pass a constitutional amendment slapping down the high court.

Just as well. An amendment did pass in the Senate, but the House conservatives are going to have a big say in whatever passes.

The governor, noting a big jump in state revenues, proposed a \$162 million package for schools with no tax increase, a real sticking point for the conservatives.

It hasn’t moved in the first five days of the session. There are problems.

For one thing, while it’s more than the amount the court demanded — \$142 million — there’s no guarantee the state can raise that much again next year.

Legislators who cut taxes in the early ’90s are standing firm against an increase today, and with good reason. That’s what voters say they want.

The tax-and-spend crowd, after losing on the floor of the Legislature, is happy to back the school lawsuit. The unelected Supreme Court seems to believe the mantra that schools need ever-increasing money supplies, and hang the budget.

But it’s the Legislature’s job to divvy up the state’s money, not the courts’, and something is going to have to give.

We suspect there will be a compromise.

Expect a move to limit the court now or later. Next year, perhaps, there’ll be a constitutional amendment to require justices to run for office again, rather than being appointed for life.

It’s quite possible there will be a campaign to have voters mark “no” when current justices come up for approval.

No justice has ever been voted off, but unhappy taxpayers might send them a message.

Whatever happens, the Legislature has to deal with the fact that the state has other needs besides schools. Overall, Kansas schools perform well, and they are not the state’s only priority.

Higher education has been cut sharply, and colleges are short of money. Tuition has shot up, though Kansas universities are still a bargain.

Other state agencies have seen nothing but cuts. State employees will want a raise.

Schools are the most important thing in the state budget, but they can’t and shouldn’t have it all.

And it’s the Legislature’s job to sort all that out and make some decisions, not the court’s. They need to get to it. — *Steve Haynes*

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Time to discontinue column and move on

This column is a bittersweet one for me. I have decided to discontinue writing a weekly column and move on to some other projects.

I have been writing a column for 10 years. It’s time to do something else.

I want to thank everyone who has written to me with words of encouragement and with disagreements. I have never asked for, nor expected, everyone to agree with me. If I have made anyone stop and think about something differently, I have accomplished my goal.

It is sad when I think that I will no longer be meeting a weekly deadline. It has become a part of my life that will be missed.

I thank all you readers for your loyalty; it has meant a lot to me. Everyone needs an outlet for telling their stories and sharing their opinions. Since I’ve had few other choices, this column has been my forum.

My plans are to work on various family history projects. I will have to re-discipline my life, spending at least as much time each week as I did on my column.

I ask your prayers for that, as I am not much of a self-starter. I’ve always needed deadlines. I suppose I’ll just have to manufacture some for myself.



**lorna
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• commentary

As I look through my files, I see I have many more things stored, which were intended to be shared. Deleting and throwing out all those words of wisdom will be hard for me to do.

Who knows, maybe I’ll change my mind about all this; maybe I’ll wait for retirement to do my family history.

I urge you to continue to think and analyze everything you read and hear.

Here are some finals quotes I’d like you to consider:

“I want to spit at the self-indulgence of my generation. My guilt as a father simmering deep inside, vapors of shame. We are a society that sheds spouses and takes on new lovers faster than a rajah can work through his harem.

“We dissolve entire families on a whimsey of lust. We pursue bald ambition if it were the true religion, leaving our children to come home

How to finance roads up for public debate

To the Editor:

I write in response to your recent editorial (Page 4, on Tuesday, June 21) in which you back the one-cent sales tax increase for selected road upgrades in Sherman County.

It is undeniably true that we must upgrade some of our roads. However, which roads we choose and how we finance them is still up for debate.

At the joint meeting of the city and county commissioners, citizens were asked to spread the word on this subject as long as it was in agreement with the officials’ point of view. Those with nerve enough to question the current proposal are indulging in “negativity.”

I urge readers to consider these facts. A one-cent sales tax increase falls most heavily on those least able to afford it — those on fixed incomes, retirees, widows, widowers and single parents among others. For these folks, as well as the youngster just entering the work force and earning \$6.35 hourly, their groceries just went up in cost one cent per dollar. Maybe they could stop eating.

Sales tax is collected by retailers. Has anyone noticed that retailers in Goodland are going out of business at an alarming rate? This tax makes them even less competitive.

Wal-Mart is building a full-size store in Colby. Will Colby residents come here? With the cost of gasoline at all-time highs and climbing, the commute from Burlington plus an even higher sales tax is going to reduce traffic at our Wal-Mart. Remember, in Colorado there is no sales tax on food.

Now, which roads are we going to upgrade? The most important among them is Old Highway 24. There is little argument that this road is far too important to the health of Goodland to ignore.

However, a substantial stretch of Eighth Street is up for improvement along with Road 16. This is largely for the benefit of the country club crowd. If those who are already



from our
readers

• to the editor

strapped for funds can’t afford to eat, they can be happy to know they have a smooth road to the golf course. A more cynical type might even suggest that this particular improvement is going to benefit the few folks who would like to develop land with golf course views.

Once the one-cent sales tax is imposed, that avenue of taxation is exhausted unless the Legislature authorizes more. Of course, there are property taxes, which can be raised — again. There are also enterprise funds, which can be raised — again.

The commissioners agree that our population is declining. Raising taxes and fees is not the way to bring people into a community. However, there is little doubt levies are inevitable. We cannot continue to neglect our infrastructure, but we need a comprehensive and intelligent plan, which includes not just a few roads, but storm drainage, sewage treatment, water treatment, and solid waste disposal.

Let’s think this through before we act rashly. Dave Walker Goodland

To the Editor:

I write to you for the sake of accuracy. In a recent report you referred to me as a case worker. In point of fact, the title is case manager. That point, however, is now moot. I no longer work at the Kit Carson County Correctional Facility, having chosen to return to work for my favorite boss — me.

On another point, I have a question. In that same report on the joint city and county com-

missioners’ meeting, you referred to me as an unsuccessful candidate for the city commission. While that is indeed accurate, I couldn’t help but notice that Brent Woods was not similarly identified. Why would that be?

I am simply a taxpaying citizen of Goodland who disagrees with the city commission on certain issues, and I do not hesitate to let that be known.

You agree with the commission, I disagree. You may recall, the commissioners asked that information concerning the road upgrades be taken to the public. Let us both do so. Dave Walker Goodland

To the Editor:
I would like to take this opportunity to comment on the great big welcome and western hospitality that was bestowed on the various organizations, amateurs, and professionals who took part in the 2005 archeological dig and training school close near I-70 at Kanorado. There is an individual who really stood out to me, and I feel needs special recognition and praise for his commitment, hard work, and people skills. I’m referring to Bob McClure, caretaker of Smoky Gardens. Bob exhibited the utmost in courtesy and hospitality. The campgrounds were finely groomed, the restrooms clean and sanitary. This guy really takes pride in his job and dedication to Smoky Gardens. He made the history of Smoky Gardens come alive with colorful details and items of interest. The county is fortunate to have such a dedicated individual on staff.

Again, I really felt welcome in Sherman County and will relay to the people in eastern Kansas what a friendly county you have and take pride in.

Kent Murray
Paola

garfield

