

from our viewpoint...

Decision time for city, county

People spoke up last month to tell the city and county commissions that raising the sales tax for roads was acceptable, and the two boards had identified the most needed routes.

The next step was to decide how to do the sales tax increase, and Rep. Jim Morrison (R-Colby) told both commissions the best way was to use the city's one cent and to stay away from Topeka.

Using the city's one cent would put the program in place quicker, and with the announcement of the new plant developments the timing couldn't be better.

Next week the county will be talking to a bond company about the three county projects and the \$11 million joint road project.

The bond representative has said it is great that the city and county are working together on the road project. He said it will help the sale of the bonds.

City commissioners have been busy with another project, trying to replace Ron Pickman, former city manager. They have interviewed about half a dozen people over the past three weeks, and word is they are getting close to a shortened list or may have agreed to offer one a contract.

We hope the process of selecting the city manager will move quickly to give the city a fulltime person to help guide and support the new changes.

City commissioners spent a lot of hours on the budget in recent weeks, and faced a series of tough decisions. The framework that emerged from the work sessions should give the city financial stability, and bring the needs of the electric, water and general fund into balance.

We applaud the move to move the one-third of the water park payment from the beleaguered water department and put it in the general fund. That move gives the water fund a clearer picture, and eases the "extra" burden the payment of \$95,000 has been for the past six years.

True, the move puts the burden on the general fund. That is a better way to finish paying for the water park. There are four years of payments remaining, and the electric department continues to pay one-third as well.

Having the city in good financial shape is an advantage because the new plants will provide the growth to help expand the economy and help pay the bills.

When the city and county began talking about the joint road project they were looking at the county going for the one cent with legislative approval. At the time they did not know about the plans for the three plants near Caruso.

The new plants coupled with the increased valuation of the county is a perfect opportunity for the city to use the one cent sales tax to take maximum advantage of the construction phase of the new plants, and to get the road project moving quickly.

Last week the county commissioners talked about the difference in the city or county sales tax. The main difference is that businesses outside the city would not have to collect the increased sales tax. When the businesses were listed the commissioners realized most of them are already exempt because they are farm suppliers or manufacturing related.

The county is moving ahead with the bridge, the courthouse repair and plans for a storage building to allow them to remodel the Southwestern Bell Building and make it more useful.

Time marches ever forward, and the next year will be here before we know it. The events are moving quickly. It is time for the city and county commissions to show leadership and move quickly to get the road project and the sales tax in place. — *Tom Betz*

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Bear protection, bang two sticks together

The man finished putting his wife and three Yorkies in the truck and approached us as we were preparing to walk up a familiar trail.

"Did you bring protection?" he asked.

"Protection." we both thought. "What is this man talking about?"

We were in the Colorado Rockies, about a quarter mile from the Rio Grande and almost in sight of a subdivision. What was he thinking?

Steve said he thought, "Protection — like a tetanus shot, a payment to the Mafia, a condom, what the heck is this guy talking about?"

I thought, "Protection — hey we have rain gear, sunscreen, insect spray and good walking boots. There are no poisonous snakes or poison ivy up here. What is this guy talking about?"

Steve was the brave one who asked him what he was talking about as we both stood there feeling like fools.

"Bears," he said. "They saw a bear up here a couple of days ago. You should take a couple of sticks and pound them together as you walk to warn off the bears."

Ohhhhh, bears.

Well, we know about bears. There have been bears up this trail forever. We have friends who



**cynthia
haynes**

• open season

set up bear stands on top of the mountain.

In recent years, there have been bears in the garbage all over southern Colorado because of the drought, lack of food and overpopulation brought on by an initiative election that ended the spring bear hunt.

Do-gooders claimed that the spring hunt left baby bears to starve in their dens when mom was killed. Biologists warned that without the hunt, there'd be way too many bears.

Guess what?

Now the mountains are lousy with bears.

Several years ago a memo, purportedly from the Forest Service, was circulating in Colorado:

U.S. Forest Service

Southern Colorado District

"Due to the danger posed to persons and pets by the overpopulation of bears in the area, all

Daughter campaigning to save frogs

Our daughters are always on Instant Messenger during the workday, so it's easy to say hi or ask a question.

Like Cynthia and I, they spend a good part of the day at the computer. We chat a little most mornings, then go back to work.

The other day, I noticed the younger daughter, Lindsay, had one of those "I'm away" messages up. I sent her a message to see what the reply was.

"I'm out saving the frogs," it said.

OK, I asked for it. I'll bite.

"Saving frogs?"

Half hour later, the answer came, and, as usual with Lindsay, it was a story.

After three years teaching junior high science and biology, she enrolled at the University of South Carolina to get a master's degree in library science. She moved to Columbia, S.C., last fall and got a student job at the library. Later, she moved up to a full-time position in interlibrary lending.

It seems that the university maintenance crew drained a fountain in front of the library for cleaning. They left a little water in the bottom of the half-block-long pool, and campus frogs jumped in and did what frogs do.

When they filled the pool, she said, it was chock full of tadpoles. As they grew into frogs, though, they had a problem. Adult frogs have to breathe air, and there was no ledge for them to rest on, nor any way to scale the 18-inch lip to escape the pool.

So as their gills disappeared, the poor little frogs were drowning by the hundreds. She said they'd swim as long as they could, then turn belly up and sink to the bottom.

And Lindsay, ever the biologist, was out there on her breaks, saving the frogs.

Not on her lunch hour, though: "Daddy, I might get salmonella."

This is the girl who used to play with baby snakes while watching television. She drew the line at insects in those days, especially spiders.

If she saw a spider, she'd scream and leave the room.



**steve
haynes**

• along the sappa

When she was teaching, though, her classroom was full of creepy-crawlies, everything from hamsters to spiders to tarantulas to scorpions. She said the kids really got into her live lessons.

Now she has a boyfriend who hates anything that crawls or squirms, though, and we're not sure how she'll square that with her penchant for col-



garfield

