

from our viewpoint...

City struggled through decision

City commissions always have some internal power issues, and the art of compromise is what keeps things moving forward and gets decisions made.

The apparent power struggle acted out at Monday's city commission meeting with the 2-2 tie vote was rectified Thursday morning with the unanimous 4-0 approval of the electric power purchase contract with Goodland Energy Resources.

Investors in the new power plant were at the meeting expecting to see the city commission complete the annexation of the Kemp Sugar Company land, and witness the approval of the electric power purchase contract as the next step in the development process.

However, what they saw was a city commission with power struggle issues between two factions, and with the mayor sidelined because of his conflict of interest two of the commissioners were able to exercise power to delay the contract and make people wonder if the city truly wants the development opportunities the new plants can provide.

The 2-2 vote was not unexpected, but left the audience wondering about the unity of the commission. The audience was expecting to see the contract approved because the power company had been asked to provide a firm price contract when approached by a city official last Thursday.

Talk about getting a bid from Sunflower, the current power supplier, and asking for a delay to review the contract for two more days were apparent excuses. Every question was answered, and the city commissioners had several days to review the requested contract.

The city attorney recommended one change. The power company agreed to the change. Everyone was able to ask questions of the investors and several made statements about how important the development can be for Sherman County.

Power costs continue to rise for the city, and the firm price contract being offered by the new power company appears to be reasonable. Based on costs to produce power using the city's diesel plant is estimated to be \$85-\$90 per mega watt. The contract price of 47 cent per kilowatt hour for five years is a workable price.

It was disturbing the mayor did not declare his conflict of interest before the power contract discussion began. He acted properly by abstaining from the voting, but he could have declared the conflict before it began. Truly disturbing was that the mayor was the one who told the power company representatives to bring a firm price contract to the city on Thursday to be on Monday's agenda.

Being a stockholder of the new project put the mayor in a vulnerable position, and left the commission in a leadership vacuum. More disturbing was when one of the two commissioners who wanted the delay made the comment — directed at the mayor — that the contract "was not what they had talked about previously." That left one wondering when some of the commissioners had discussed the contract outside a regular meeting, and if so clearly in violation of the state open meetings law.

With less discussion and minor changes at the special meeting Thursday the commission approved the power purchase contract on a 4-0 vote. That is a positive move, but those who witnessed the result on Monday will always wonder. An investor in the power plant said if Goodland didn't care it could move to Colby.

The project will move forward. This momentary lapse will be forgotten by people in the excitement of the development the project will bring to the county.

The commission's division may leave some wondering if there are other areas or decisions, which may be thwarted or delayed. — *Tom Betz*

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Member: Kansas Press Association
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e-mail: star-news@nwkanssas.com

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nwkanssas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

(ntbetz@nwkanssas.com)

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin.(support@nwkanssas.com)

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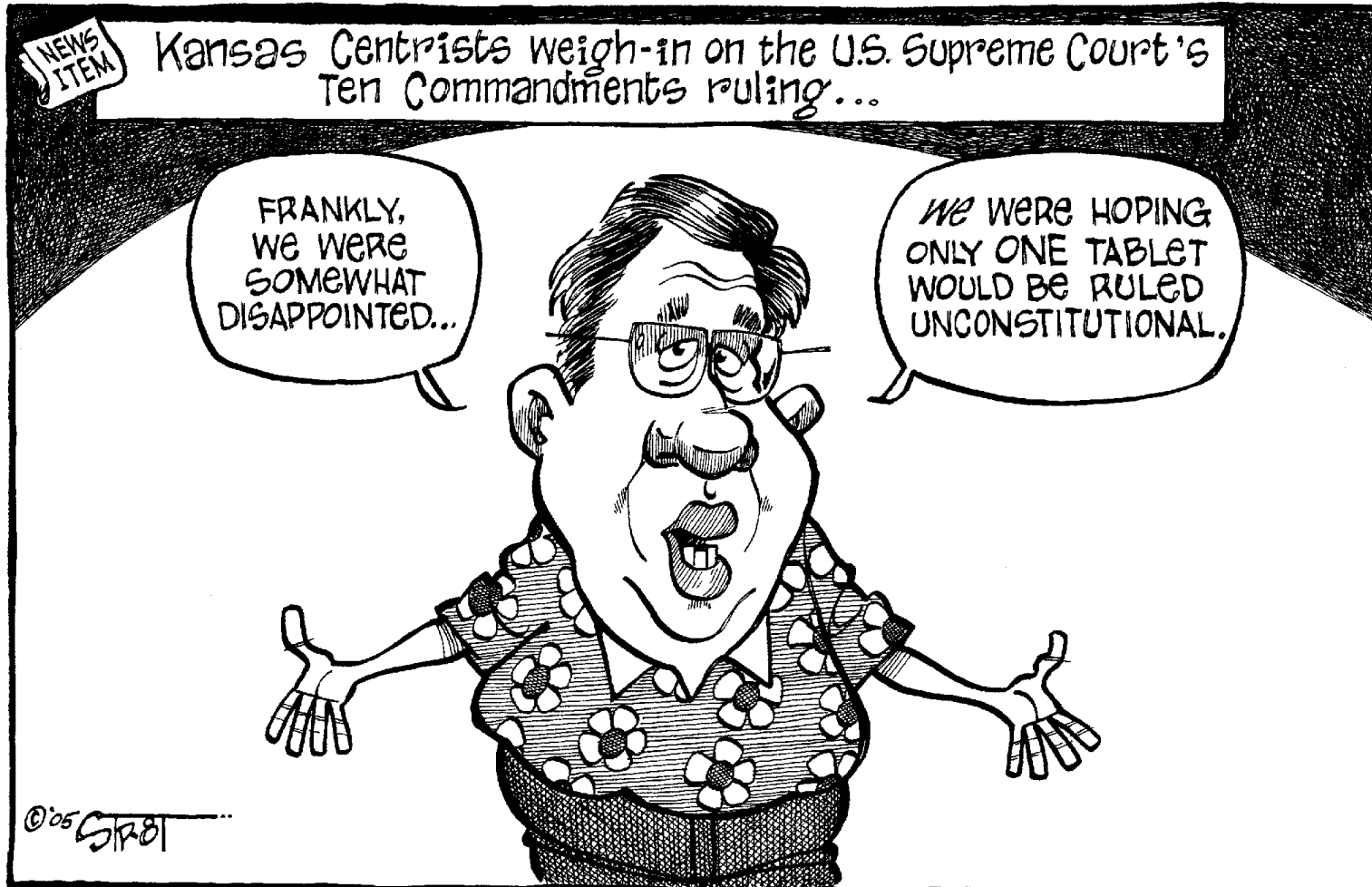
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'Toadly' is new garage pet

We call him Toadly.

It's not very imaginative, but it fits him.

He lives under a bush near the garage during the day, and at night he hops out to catch his supper by the lights we have up on the garage.

He started out small, but he's growing. With the population of bugs around the garage, this toad could grow to monumental proportions.

We have to watch him pretty carefully, however, because he's hopped into the garage several times when we've gone in to get dog food, charcoal or a screwdriver.

We always chase him out because, while there's plenty of bugs in the garage, it would get too hot for him the next day and we like him like he is — big, fat and warty. By toad standards, he's a beaut.

It seems that every summer we get new pets.

Other people adopt cats and dogs; we gather toads, turtles and spiders.

And speaking of spiders, we have a lovely one living on the side of the back deck. Every night,



**cynthia
haynes**

• open season

she spins a beautiful web, and when we're home, we watch her at her work.

There are a half dozen wolf spiders making webs on the grass. I was worried that when Steve mowed he would destroy them. He said that when he mows, though, they would be near the ground and would just rebuild their webs that night.

I'm glad I'm not a spider — they're busier than ants. At least an ant doesn't have to rebuild its home every night.

Every night as we go for our walk, we listen to the night sounds and watch the fireflies.

Memo to Rehnquist: Give Bush a break

By Dick Morris

If President Bush has to find a Supreme Court nominee who will appease the religious right on the one hand and be confirmed by a majority of the Senate without a filibuster on the other, he's sunk.

There is no such person. Even the most obscure, Janus-faced among the possible court appointees could not thread that particular needle.

Thus, in the seminal event of his second term, the president would be doomed to failure and, due to the massive attention the battle will draw, to premature lame-duck status. The divisions that such a fight will kindle will rip the country's fragile political consensus apart, drive women into the arms of the Democratic Party for decades and destroy the Bush second term.

But if Bush has three jobs to give away — two seats on the court and one as chief justice — he can find a way to cut the Gordian knot. It's all up to Chief Justice William Rehnquist.

If Bush has to name a strong pro-lifer to hold his right-wing base intact — and has no offsetting appointment with which to balance it — he will widen the gender gap and virtually assure Hillary Clinton's election in 2008. The effect of a bruising battle where Bush lines up behind a pro-lifer will be the same on the single-female vote as Barry Goldwater's opposition to the 1964 Civil Rights Act was to black voters. A swing constituency became Democratic for life because Barry was one of only six Re-



from other
pens

• commentary

publican senators to vote against the bill.

But if Bush names a Souter, O'Connor or Stevens (all appointed by Republicans) to the court — and has no offsets — he will drive the base into rebellion and possibly fracture the Republican Party just when it appears on the verge of a permanent consolidation of its national strength.

The political consensus of this nation is divided, and that division can only be mirrored on the court if Bush has multiple seats to distribute.

To force this president, who barely mentioned abortion in either the campaigns of 2000 or of 2004, to make a choice as draconian as which one justice to put on the court is to invite a disaster.

If Rehnquist were not old and if he were not sick, the self-sacrifice of resignation would be unthinkable to ask. But let him stop kidding himself. He is too sick to sit on the Supreme Court and should resign. He can't participate in court sessions and only is able to vote through his clerks.

where to write

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; web address — roberts.senate.gov

U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521; web e-mail address — brownback.senate.gov/CMEmail.me

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2443 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715; Fax (202) 225-5124 e-mail address — jerry.moran@mail.house.gov

State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building Rm. 174-W, Topeka, KS 66612. (785) 296-7676; e-mail address — jmorrison@house.state.ks.us

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, Rm. 128-S, 300 SW 10th, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785)-296-7399; e-mail address — ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

Kansas Attorney General Phil Kline, 301 S.W. 10th, Lower Level, Topeka, KS 66612-1597 (785) 296-3751 Fax (785) 291-3699 TTY: (785) 291-3767

garfield

