

from our viewpoint...

Tax vote on hold; process changes

The wheels were in motion to have the city voters step forward and move the joint road program into high gear.

Then an unexpected glitch forced an abrupt change in direction. When the bond attorney from Gilmore and Bell of Wichita went to match the proposed \$12 million road program to the expected income from the 1 percent city sales tax, the numbers didn't match.

In fact, the numbers were so far off of what the city and county commissioners had been using to discuss the project, it would have been next to impossible for the whole list of roads to be fixed using the income from the city sales tax. The estimate was that at \$500,000 a year, it would take a minimum of 20 years to pay off the bonds to fix all the roads on the list, not 10 as planned.

Well, so much for taking the easy route. Passing a city sales tax would have short cut the process and gotten the tax in place by spring.

Without that option, the city and county agreed to take the matter to Topeka and request permission from the state Legislature to have a countywide vote to establish a 1 percent sales tax. That will pay to fix the roads in about 10 years — about what had originally been planned.

The city already has authority to raise a sales tax, but for a countywide tax, we must ask the 165 Legislators, nearly 400 miles away, to give us permission to fix our roads. While there may be some delays in getting through the political process, we are sure Rep. Jim Morrison and Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer will do their best to husband the issue through the houses as quickly as possible.

With luck, the Legislature could approve the request early in the session, which begins in January. With an early approval, a special election could be held in May and if approved by the citizens of Sherman County, the tax would go into effect in October. Without a quick approval it could be May before the election could be scheduled and then it would probably be held in August along with the primary elections. An August election would mean the tax would go into effect in January 2007.

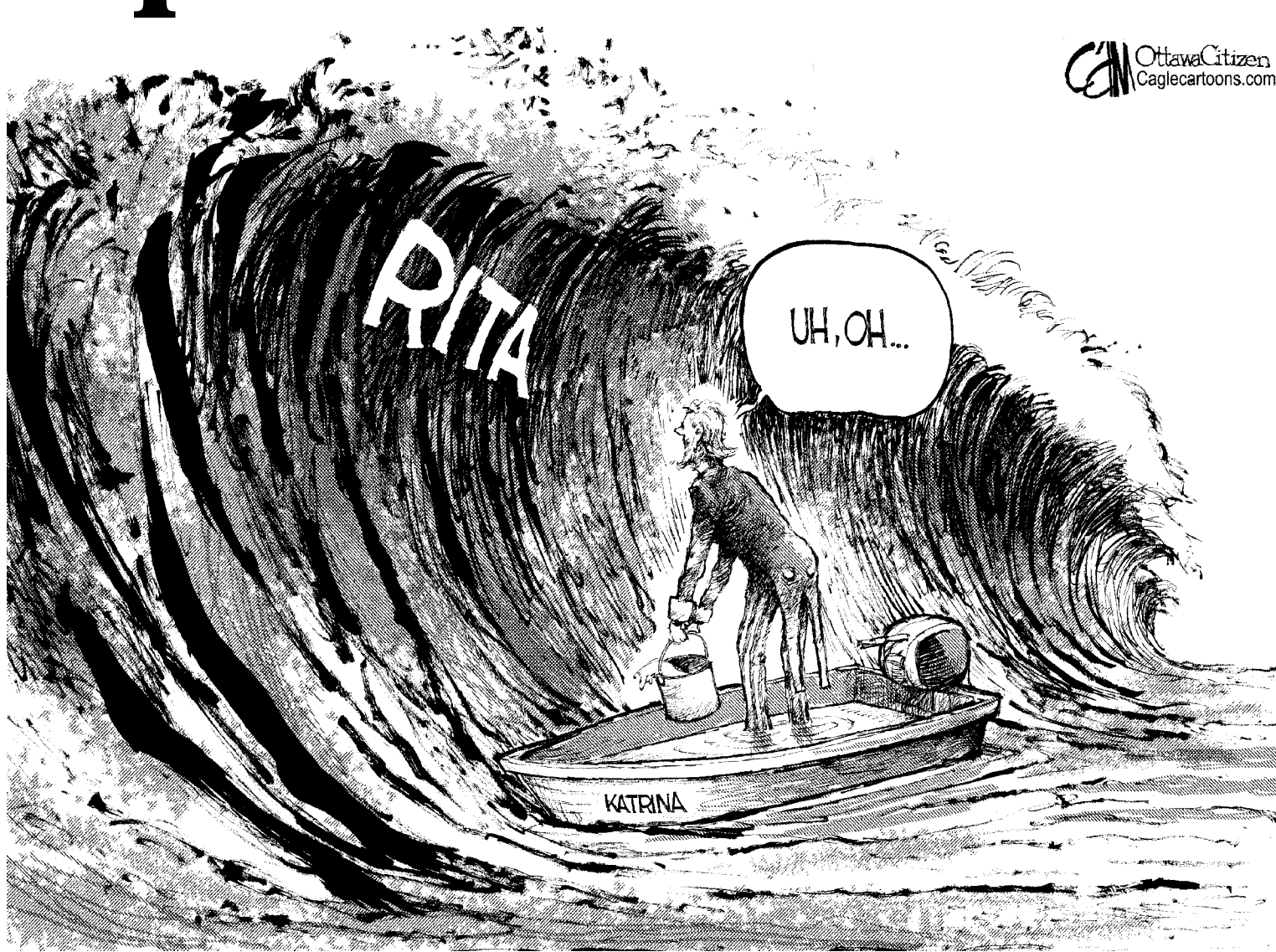
Because of the delay, the city and county will not be able to take advantage of the increased sales tax from the construction of the Energy Center west of the city, but that expansion will bring new jobs and the increases from those jobs and other potential projects, such as the new diner and a new motel planned out by the freeway, will help expand the sales tax income.

Having to wait a year to get the process moving will increase the cost of the project, and the effects of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita will put some stresses on the price of construction materials. However, now that the figures have been corrected, we can get the ball rolling down I-70 to Topeka.

Voters will have to wait six to nine months to decide if the roads get repaired. Having to wait is miserable, and having to go to Topeka to ask other people for permission to fix our roads with our own money is a roadblock we could do without.

At the end of the first road project, which will take about 10-12 years, the city and county will need to have money for maintenance of the new roads. There will be other roads that need fixing, and it is likely way to pay for them will be a sales tax.

If at all possible, when the Legislature gives Sherman County permission for this one-percent sales tax, it should be written to give the county permanent authority for the sales tax as long as each time it is imposed, the citizens vote to approve the purpose the money will be used for. — Tom Betz



Celebrating our 12 years back in Kansas

We've been back in Kansas for a dozen years and we decided it was time for a small celebration.

Actually, the anniversary was just an excuse to see another baseball game before the end of the season, even though our Rockies aren't anywhere near being in the playoffs.

Since I had to work Saturday, we decided to go to a Sunday game, leaving Saturday when I got off work and spending the night in Denver.

I tried to get a room at my favorite downtown hotel but all the reasonably priced ones were gone, and I wasn't about to pay more for a room than I make in a week, so I started checking around. The Adam's Mark, a nice hotel on 16th Street at the end of the mall, had a good deal, so we decided to stay there.

As soon as we arrived, Steve laid down. I had taken a nap on the four-hour trip to Denver while he drove. While I had worked in a nice, cool store, he had mowed the lawn in 90-degree-plus weather.

Well, I wanted to go to the book store and he wanted a nap. No problem. I headed downstairs.

As I started out the front door, I came face to face with our best friends, Merle and Mary Barnczyk from Salida, Colo. Since I didn't know they were coming to Denver, let alone staying at the Adam's Mark, I was stunned, if not very surprised.

(I have always said, never have an affair. No



cynthia haynes

• open season

matter where you go, you'll run into someone you know.)

Merle and Mary were in Denver with their grandchildren because they had won a one-night stay at the hotel and dinner for two. They all planned to go to the amusement park on Sunday.

Merle and Mary are also in the newspaper business, and the two men always get lost in computers, presses and problems with the papers. Mary and I talk about our children, her grandchildren, what's happening and where we are going next.

We've been friends for more than 20 years, and even though we sometimes don't see each other for months at a time, we always seem to stay close.

Later, as Merle and Mary and their crew headed for the hotel dining room, Steve and I started walking down 16th Street to find a quiet little restaurant for a romantic dinner.

Halfway down the mall, we ran into some more friends from Colorado. Boy, am I glad I was with my husband.

Shane and Susan Birdsey have a sporting goods store in Creede, the little town in the mountains where we settled 25 years ago to run our own newspaper and raise a family.

Back then, Shane was in high school and a source of gray hair for both his parents and the sheriff. Today he's a prosperous businessman with a wife and two children and works as a deputy for the same sheriff to whom he gave all those gray hairs.

The Birdseys were in town for a fly fishing equipment retailers conference, and the kids were home with grandma. They promised to say hi to all our friends back in the high country.

We found a good restaurant, but it wasn't too quiet. While the food was wonderful and the atmosphere inside great, there was the annual Octoberfest going on in Larimer Square right outside.

I know, it's not October. Larimer Square holds Octoberfest in September because you never know what the October weather will be like in the Mile-High City.

We had breakfast with Merle and Mary and their kids, went to church and watched the Rockies beat the Arizona Diamondbacks 7-2 without running into anyone else we knew, even though we stopped at the filling station at Byers, Colo., where you can meet someone from northwest Kansas almost any day of the week.

The Goodland Star-News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association

Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association

National Newspaper Association

e-mail: star-news@nwkans.com

Steve Haynes, President

Tom Betz, Editor

Erica Harlan, Copy Editor

Sharon Corcoran, Society Editor

Kathryn Burke, Reporter

Greg Stover, Sports Editor

Advertising Coordinator

Mona Carver, Advertising Sales

Sheila Smith, Office Manager

Nor'west Press

Jim Baker, General Manager

Richard Westfahl, Ron VanLoenen, Judy McKnight, Betty Morris,

Joshua Ford, Jerry Kirkpatrick, Lana Westfahl

nwkans.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

(ntbetz@nwkans.com)

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

nwkans.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

(ntbetz@nwkans.com)

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

Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year's Day and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Star-News, 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: star-news@nwkans.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: goodlandads@nwkans.com

The Goodland Star-News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$24; six months, \$42; 12 months, \$76. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$34; six months, \$49; 12 months, \$84. Mailed individually each day: 12 months, \$119. (All tax included.)

Incorporating:

The Goodland Daily News

1932-2003

The Sherman

County Herald

Founded by Thomas McCants

1935-1989

THE SHERMAN COUNTY

STAR

Founded by Eric and

Roxie Yonkey

1994-2001

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company

Katrina, Act II — starring George Bush

By Dick Morris

Politicians in Washington are often like motorists who drive only by consulting their rearview mirrors and never look out of their windshields to see what is going on right now.

Our national political/journalistic complex is obsessed with blaming President Bush for failing to respond quickly to the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina. After weeks of media pounding and casualty figures that were, apparently, wildly and widely exaggerated, polls suggest that the public has no choice but to agree with the critique.

The CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll of Sept. 8-11 shows that only 44 percent of Americans approve of the job Bush did immediately after the storm. But so what? The same survey shows that 58 percent approve of the work he has done since then in helping New Orleans and the Gulf Coast to recover from the effects of the disaster.

The low job approval of Bush's efforts in the week after the storm will fade into history and take its place alongside similar criticism of his slowness to act after the planes hit on Sept. 11 or after the tsunami struck late last year. What counts for the future is that the ratings on his recent performance are 20 points higher than his overall job approval.

This positive affirmation of the president's role in the past few weeks is the leading indicator Washington should be following. While all current polls show Bush falling three or four points in job approval to the lowest of his administration, these surveys reflect neither the increasingly positive view of the president's



from other pens

• commentary

disaster-relief efforts nor the bounce that he always gets when we are reminded of the horrendous attacks of Sept. 11 on its grim anniversary.

Democrats, such as Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.), who are assuming a harsh critical role in attacking the administration are making a huge mistake. They are presenting an image of partisanship and rancor at a time when the nation wants its political leaders to spread healing balm and work together on reconstruction.

The stories of the rapidity with which the Federal Emergency Management Agency is bringing in mobile homes and building temporary housing, the bonding that seems to be happening between refugees and their new communities, the record outpouring of charitable giving — greater even than after Sept. 11 or the tsunami — all attest to the national mood. If there is one time voters will be impatient with critics and those who they feel are raking over the past to score political points, it is now.

That is not to say that voters will not demand a fair, impartial and thorough review of what went wrong in the relief efforts and of why hospital patients died awaiting evacuation. They will be particularly interested in why federal money that should have gone to strength-

ening the levees went to other pork-barrel projects that Louisiana senators wanted to be funded instead. The Sept. 11 commission model should be followed to be certain we get the whole picture.

But now Americans want us to face the need not just to recover from the storm but to deal with the underlying poverty it exposed. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice put it best when she said that the storm-devastated areas should not be rebuilt the way they were when the storm hit. Rather, she said that "maybe now on the heels of New Orleans" we could "deal with the problem of persistent poverty."

Michael Harrington, in his book "The Other America," awakened our national consciousness to the "invisible poor" who live in our cities. Katrina has blown away the veil that kept them from sight and put their plight on all of our television screens. So now we have an opportunity and an obligation to remedy it.

In this task of relief, recovery and reconstruction, Bush has a job that will occupy most of his second term and will lend it a theme and a grandeur that Sept. 11 imparted to his first four years in office.

Bush is a conservative who doesn't believe government should do a lot. But two things he does think it should do are protect us against foreign foes and shelter us from the forces of nature. And now he has both on his plate.

Dick Morris was an adviser to Bill Clinton for 20 years. Look for Dick's new book "Because He Could" about Bill Clinton. Email for Dick Morris is dmredding@aol.com

garfield

