

People should know background of decisions

There's a hole in Kansas planning and zoning laws that keeps the public from having access to the full process of hearings to rezone property.

It's a problem that should be fixed by state legislators next session to give Kansans full information about zoning issues.

The hole in the law became apparent recently when the Anderson County Planning and Zoning Commission held a public hearing on a rezoning application which would have paved the way for yet another special use permit application — this one to place a rock quarry on the rezoned land. Neighbors were understandably concerned, and county commissioners, pressured by the applicant's attorney, made the odd move of sending the once-denied rezoning request back to the zoning board with instructions to consider only the merits of the rezoning request — and ignore the knowledge it was all aimed at placing a quarry on the land.

Board members heard from both sides during a public hearing which an audience of 50 or so people attended. The board then closed the hearing and proceeded to go into "executive session," meaning to meet outside the presence of the public, to deliberate the information and find a conclusion.

By law the board would have had to come back into public session to announce and record their decision, but the discussion among the board members, their interpretation of the facts and application of logic to the issue could have been conducted wholly in secret.

One of the board members refused to vote on the motion, saying she didn't believe it was legal to close the meeting to the public. *The*

Review also protested, and the board agreed to keep the meeting open while they pushed their chairs into a circle, deliberating the task before them in a huddle at the front of the room while the crowd waited.

Only a handful at the meeting took advantage of the chance to stand by the huddle to listen in. Most of the rest sat in the room, chatted quietly among themselves, and waited for the board to render an opinion.

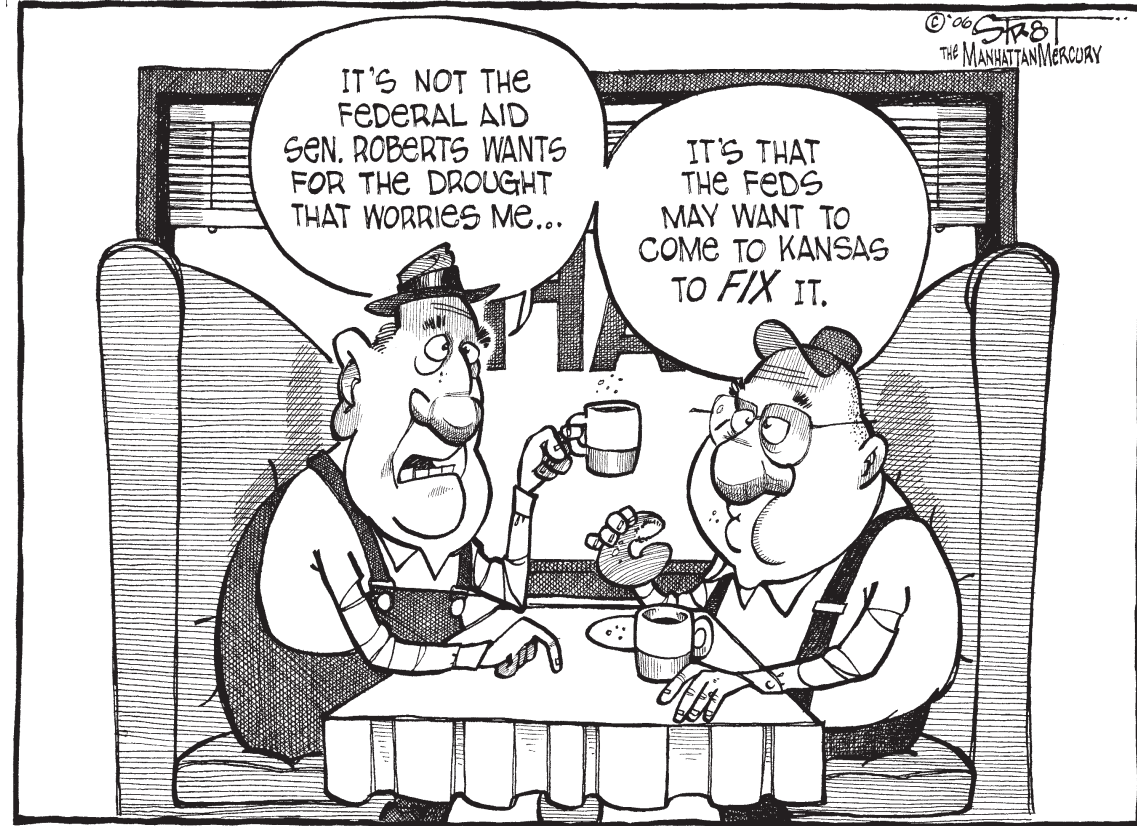
Though unorthodox, what the board did was legal. It would have been legal for the board to close the meeting and have its conversation truly in private before coming back to open session to render a decision. We applaud them for not doing that. It's important to note that Kansas' Open Meeting laws allow government to go into closed session on certain occasions like this, but *that* action is *never* required, as some elected officials and their staffs seem to believe.

Neighbors to the property as well as the applicants themselves involved in such an issue should have the right to hear what logic an appointed board of regulators uses to interpret the information provided in the hearing. But interpretations of the state's law defining the authority of those boards allows them to deliberate in secret. That's wrong.

What justification can there possibly be to allow non-elected members of a zoning board to shut the public out of such deliberations? If someone wanted to put a pig farm next to your house, wouldn't you want to know how the decision was made, and why?

Legislators should act immediately next session to plug this gaping hole in the public's right to know.

— *The Anderson County Review, Garnett*



Balls, bats fly out of ballpark

I thought the seats were pretty good — just 10 rows up from the third-base dugout — until I saw the bat spiraling toward us.

We've always done the conventional thing when we wanted baseball tickets, buying them from the team, scrounging them from charity auctions and cadging them from the bank.

The ones the team sells over the phone, we've found, often aren't the best. Season ticket holders have a special line they can call to buy extra seats, and they get first crack at the best of what's left.

We kept talking about a more daring plan — the scalpers who line the streets around any major ballpark.

The streetside vendors buy and sell, scoring extra seats from people headed to the game and selling them (with a markup, of course) to those who need them. It's a vital service, but most teams keep them off the stadium property and away from their box office — for some reason.

The first time we tried this was in Milwaukee this spring, where we decided on the spur of the moment to go to a Brewers game. We were there and we had some spare time and the Braves were in town.

County Stadium is one of those out-of-downtown parks where the team controls all the parking and streets for a mile around, but there in the middle of the lots was one lone scalper astride a bike. I figured that was so he could scoot if the cops spotted him.

"You want the good seats?" he asked. (They always say that, by the way.)

We looked — one row behind the visitor's dugout. We bought — \$5 off the printed price. We enjoyed — you could hear Bobby Cox grunt every time the Braves did something wrong.

So when we decided to go to Denver for one more game, even though we really didn't have time, we had



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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to scrape up some tickets. The bank's were gone, so the scalpers were our choice.

The first guy was buying, not selling. The next pair, a couple of homies in baggy pants and backward caps, had pavilion seats — baseball doublespeak for outfield bleachers.

The next guy turned out to be a lawyer whose firm has a dozen seats. He was unloading his surplus. Bingo.

So there we were, 10 rows behind the visitors' dugout. A bonus, the employees thought we must be clients, so they were extra nice to us.

Behind us were Jenna and her mother, friends of someone in the firm, and a couple with their 3-month-old baby.

Jenna, 5, blonde, cute and talkative as could be, was at her first baseball game. So, I guess, was the baby.

You might say things started off with a bang in the first when Austin Kearns, the Washington center fielder, struck out swinging. He took such a big cut that his bat just kept on going. And going. Right toward us, spiraling ever higher into the stands.

I was about to cut and run when it veered to the right and landed in the aisle six seats down. The guy in the row behind us grabbed it. An usher rushed up to check him out.

Next inning, the usher came back to get the bat, explaining that Mr. Kearns would really, really like his game bat back, but he'd be glad to trade a practice bat. An inning later

he followed through.

After a foul ball, he came back and tried to get the baby's parents to move somewhere safer. When they turned him down, he sat in front of them and guarded the tike the rest of the night.

The Rocks followed their modus operandi for the week, surging ahead in the first couple of innings, letting Washington tie the game at 6 in the sixth, then winning in the eighth and ninth. Three home runs, a triple, a couple of doubles — there was plenty of action.

Late in the game, I glanced at the scoreboard and thought, "That looks a lot like Jenna and her mom."

Hey, it was Jenna and her mom. I pointed, they looked and my sleeve got on the scoreboard. So much for instant fame.

"Now," her mom asked, "aren't you glad we didn't go to a movie?"

"Well," Jenna replied, all mock serious, "it would have been a *whole* lot safer."

The guy with the bat was complaining about the "piece of *@#*\$" bat Kearns had sent him. I was about to tell him to cool it. He was, I thought, the only fan going home with a major league bat that night.

How wrong I was. How right Jenna was.

In the ninth, with the Nats trailing 9-6, the center fielder came out swinging. With men at second and third, he fanned — sending that same bat back into the crowd.

I don't think he got it back that time.

They don't agree on temperature

This little cold snap has us grabbing for the covers. My cold-blooded husband was ready to dig out the electric blanket.

Jim and I are very much alike in many ways, but we seem to be opposed in our internal thermostats. He is hot when I am cold and I am hot when he is cold.

We can never find a happy medium. Furnace or air conditioner adjusting is a constant with us.

As we get older, I can only see it getting worse. One or the other of us will always be bundled up.

—ob—

Our daughter, Jennifer (Alex and Ani's mom), called the other day. Her best friend in San Antonio is a native Texan and operates under the theory that "nothing is too big" in Texas.



Ani Auxier

Big houses, big cars and big hair — that's the Texan way.

You should see the headband Deborah found for baby Aniston. It has a bow on it about as big as Texas.

—ob—

The house is progressing nicely. To the untrained eye, I'm sure the goal of us moving in in six weeks looks like an impossibility. But I can



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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tell that things are happening.

The bathroom is all but done, the countertop and wall ovens are about all that remain in the kitchen and then it's into the new family room.

My dreams of having it all done before we move in have been set aside.

Just enough to make it livable is the goal for now. The rest will come later.

—ob—

We make our car payments to our friendly family auto mechanic. And lately, my car has taken up residence at his garage.

Our kids keep telling us to get rid of it, but we're not ready to do that. I'm convinced the old girl has another 100,000 miles in her.

A new vehicle would be nice, but really, do we need all the bells and whistles?

I just need the pistons to go up and down and the wheels to go 'round and 'round.

—ob—

Talk about late bloomers. Our tomato plants have produced only two slicers all summer. But now, when it's about time to frost, we're getting tomatoes.

Probably not enough to can, but we still might get some fried green tomatoes this year.

There's no middle ground with fried tomatoes; you either love 'em or hate 'em.

From the Bible

Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

II Peter 3: 13, 14

Pet tiger peddled in Missouri

We called him Sterling and he was the sweetest tiger you've ever seen.

I'm a sucker for cats and for stuffed animals, so when I saw the stuffed tiger — about half to two-thirds life size, in the bookstore in Durango, Colo., I was sold.

Not so Steve.

He's a fisherman. I'm a hunter-gatherer.

He goes fishing and I go hunting for bargains and gather them in.

It took a bit of work, but eventually he saw something he wanted to buy and I smiled and said sure, but it's going to cost you a tiger.

I ran back to the bookstore just as it was ready to close and lugged Sterling back up the street as wasted college boys stepped back and said, "Cool!"

And he was. He looked great lounging on the back of my sofa.

My cats weren't too happy about the newcomer. The back of the sofa is their territory — but nobody argues with a tiger.

The cats are happier now. Sterling has a new home.

We went to the annual Missouri Press Association meeting at the



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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Lake of the Ozarks last week.

Where better to take a tiger than into University of Missouri territory?

My tiger was even named after a popular Missouri fan — Scarf Man, also known as Jim Sterling, a rabid Tigers fan who sits under the basket and waves his long gold-and-black scarf whenever his team does something good. Or the other team wants to shoot a free throw.

Jim and his wife Nancy are friends of ours from many press association meetings, and naming a tiger after him just seemed right. He's the biggest Tiger I know.

My idea was to put Sterling, the tiger, into the Missouri Press silent auction. Money raised at the auction goes into the Missouri Press Foundation, which uses it to give schol-

arships to students in journalism school at MU.

Now, I admit, I paid \$49.95 for the tiger in Durango.

One of the press association workers got him a black and gold scarf and he was ready for bids.

A Mizzou fan paid \$450 for him at the auction. (Steve said if they buy like that, he's moving to Missouri to sell real estate.)

The last I saw of Sterling, he was sitting on a luggage rack headed to his new home. And, I swear, he had a smile on his face.

That bookstore also had a lion, an ocelot, a penguin and a whole pack of dogs.

Hey Steve, how about another visit to Durango?

Editor's Note: Fine by me if you've got a market for 'em.

Reader deplores waste of money

To the Editor:

To give or keep. How did Bill Gates or Warren Buffett sneak that much money past their wives?

Their combined wealth is a pittance compared to the cost of the Iraq war. (One live Saddam Hussein is a poor trade for any dead American!) The road department and border security could both use a donation. The death tax is fairer than the in-

come tax! Could Bill Gates and Warren Buffett be circumventing it?

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Mark 8:36.

Frank Sowers, Benkelman, Neb. P.S.: Common-law marriage is better than abortion.

Letter to the Editor



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Office hours: 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri. (Also open most Saturdays when someone is in.)

