



Elected officials need open meetings seminar

We'd like to urge every elected official in this area to take time out for a seminar on open-government laws being presented by the Kansas attorney general's office from 9 a.m. to noon Tuesday, July 23, in Colby.

Most city, county and school boards and commissions in our area do their best to follow state Open Meetings and Open Records laws. We think they do a darned good job, but it never hurts to learn more.

The seminar is part of a series the attorney general puts on across the state, and it may be awhile before we have another session in our area. It'd be great if each and every elected official would go to this one, and if the room fills up (reservations are required), maybe the attorney general could schedule an afternoon class.

The Kansas Open Meetings Act requires public meetings — state, county, city and school district — to be open to the public unless a given topic falls under one of several exemptions. Even then, the board or council has to take a vote and state why and how long it'll be in closed session. No binding action can be taken behind closed doors, either.

And while our officials have been pretty good about this, there have been some notable problems, especially when the governor invited whole committees of the Legislature to his mansion for evening discussions. Both he and the legislators should have known better.

The Open Records Act is more mysterious. Many agencies have trouble following it, because it makes most records open to public inspection.

That means they are supposed to be handed over to anyone who asks for them when the office is open, without questions or delay.

Often, officials are unsure what records they should release or want to talk "to the boss" before giving someone a document. Sheriff's departments seem to be suspicious of everyone, asking for identification and demanding to know why people want documents. None of that is allowed, but it happens all too often. Sheriffs, of all people, should want to follow the law.

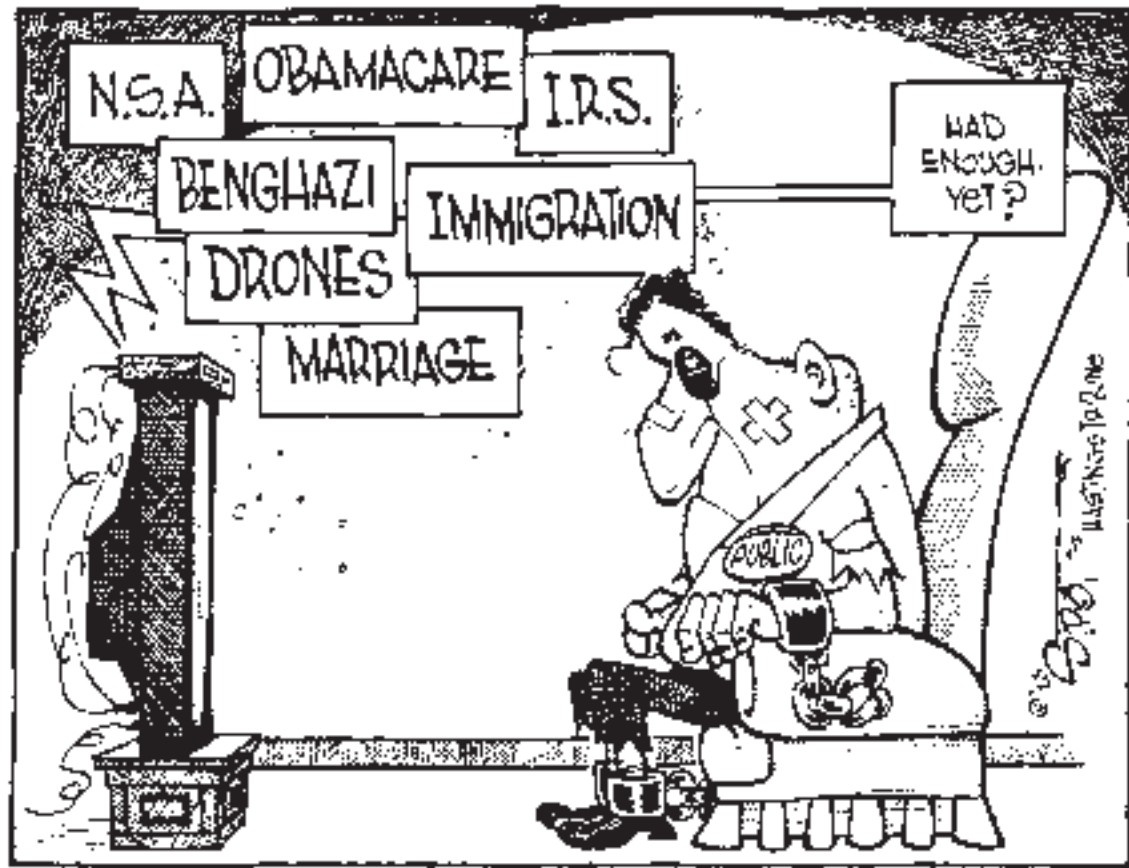
The proper response to a document request — unless the item falls into an exemption in the laws is a polite, "Sure. Let me get that." No questions asked, no delays, no obfuscation. And employees should be trained how to handle these request.

A little training wouldn't hurt anyone who deals with open records requests, and here's a great chance for officials and their employees to get that. It's a way to help serve the public better, not a nuisance or a problem.

The seminar will run from 9 a.m. to noon July 23 at the student union at Colby Community College. Everyone — public officials, reporters, private citizens — can and should go. This law is for the people, not just one special group or two. To sign up, go to www.ag.ks.gov or call (785) 296-2215.

And remember, please, that meetings and document files of all kinds are open to the public because they belong to the public, except for those narrow exemptions. That's the law, and that's the way things should be.

— Steve Haynes



The Gardener

By Kay Melia



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You may have heard this story already, but I think I'll tell it again.

There was a day when I used to play quite a bit of golf. I never had a hole-in-one; never parred the course; never had a handicap less than 10; and never realized my ambition of playing in a five-some with Kevin Finley, Kevan Taylor, Kevin Cox, and Kevin Shaw. But I enjoyed the camaraderie and competition with good friends on a Saturday afternoon, and occasionally on Wednesdays, and maybe even Sunday afternoon if there was a tournament.

One afternoon after golf, I came home and my wife asked me why I wasn't wearing my wedding band. Sure enough, it was gone.....

nothing there except the normal crease around the finger that comes from years of ring wearing. I had lost a little weight at the time, so we figured that during the swing of a golf club, the ring must of flew off my finger. My wife bought me a new one, and life went on.

About 10 years later, I was digging potatoes in the garden when a golden glint in the soil caught my eye, and it certainly wasn't a Yukon Gold. Sure enough, it was my wedding band, which had obviously survived many rototillings and hoe chops over the years.

I thought about the ring episode last month when I was mulching the potatoes and the cucumbers

in my garden, and was sure that I had been mulching when the ring slipped off. Mulching is an absolute must in my garden, and I do lots of it every summer, and have lost only one ring.

Placing great gobs of mulch around my garden crops just may be the most important job I do each summer. Mulch, any kind of mulch, accomplishes a whole host of good things in the garden. Mulching should be done when soil temperatures reach about 70 degrees. Mulching any garden crop will help to keep the root system just a bit cooler, keeping the sun off the top soil. Soils will stay moist longer under the mulch, and weeds cannot sprout and grow under an application of mulch.

But arguably, the best thing about mulching comes the following year, after you plow the spent garden, mulch and all, in October or November. All the biodegradable values of the mulch become a part of the soil enrichment process in the new gardening season.

Any kind of mulch that is biodegradable will do the job. I prefer leaves, ones that I have bagged up last fall when they were there for the taking. Dry grass clippings make good mulch, as does straw, old hay, dry manure, shredded newspaper, or compost. Press the mulch firmly and tightly around tomato vines, squash plants, beans, cucumbers, egg plant, beans and cantaloupe. You will be rewarded in so many ways, this summer and next.

But if you have lost a little weight, keep your eye on your ring finger! But then, most of us don't have to worry about the weight thing, do we?

Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



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With July Fourth approaching, the pastor of our church encouraged the congregation to spend a few minutes reading the Declaration of Independence.

In so doing I was struck by the courage it must have taken those men to sign what could have been their death warrants.

They lived under the English monarchy of King George III. Although the colonists tried to ask the king to treat them better, they were not in a position to bargain. The ruler held all power and the New World transfers were to be his loyal subjects while he did as he pleased, like it or not.

An earlier rebellion against Mother England occurred a few

years before in Scotland. The Jacobites supported the return of a Catholic king and followed Bonnie Prince Charles, the "Young Pretender," in a military action to replace Charles' father, James II, the "Old Pretender." This was in 1745 and thus became known as the "Forty-Five."

Although the Scottish forces had some initial success at Prestonpans and Falkirk, their uprising came to a decisive halt on the field of Culloden Moor.

Many of the highlanders were killed on the field of battle. Those who survived fared no better as they were hunted down by the English. Their failure was cause for many years of brutal treatment

to much of Scotland in retaliation for the country's mutinous behavior.

Our fore-fathers certainly knew the possibilities of a similar outcome. Victory was not a guarantee and by signing the Declaration of Independence they threw their lots into a serious gamble for themselves and countrymen.

So somewhere between taking a holiday from work and watching the kids light fireworks, it doesn't hurt any of us to take a quick look at that important document.

Photo Policy

The Saint Francis Herald and Bird City Times wants to emphasize photos of people doing things in the community. If you know of an event or new happening that we should attend, please call 332-3162.

Please be sure to allow a couple of days' notice so we can be there.

Space in the paper is limited and so is the time of our staff, so we may not be able to get to every event. Because space is so limited, we cannot run team or group photos, any pictures of people lined up or of people passing checks, certificates and the like. (We will always try to make room for a story about any of these events, however.)

We do run wedding and engagement pictures and "mug" shots with stories and obituaries, when they are provided to us. Please remember that we need a clear, sharp picture. Dark or fuzzy prints will not work.

We cannot return photos unless you submit a self-addressed, stamped envelope with clear in-

structions for return. Other photos submitted may be picked up at our office within two weeks. After that, they will be disposed of.

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Reader believes it is a 'Sign'

Letter to the Editor:

The Bella's Market Grocery sign fell of its own volition Saturday morning on the east side of the store. A loud crash was heard by store employee's around 10 a.m.

Luckily now, with very few customers no one was hurt. I believe this is a "sign of better time's to come." The end of one season, making way for the next to follow.

I, myself, have been on a quest speaking with several potential buyer's for this store. Once I heard that it was in bankruptcy, I moved on this opportunity fast.

Contacting Patrick White of Whites Liners Groceries throughout Kansas. I was informed by him, "that the Williams Brothers Grocery had been trying to buy the Saintry Super Store for over five years." He was also interested, but he wanted to allow them "the first bid."

Letters to the Editor

I outlined to him the procedure's to follow to purchase a business directly from a bankruptcy court. He then said, "he would call several other grocery store owners, too."

Now it seems to me, after everything I have heard that your community has been going through concerning the Saintry Grocery store. That there is justice in the

end!

I believe now, there is a God, and he came through with his own "sign" once again, that of a thundering loud boom!

Good luck with your new grocery store!

Lane C. Hatcher
Atwood

GOD SAYS
Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God: and knoweth God.
I John 4:7

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 Morning Worship 10 a.m.

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 Church Office 332-2292,
 Church 332-2254,
 512 S. Scott
 Pastor Warren Cico
 Early Bird Service 8:30 a.m.
 Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
 Worship 10:30 a.m.

Seventh-Day
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 423-650-5663 • 3rd & Adams
 Pastor James McCurdy
 Sabbath School 9:30
 Morning Worship 10:45

St. Francis of Assisi
Catholic Church
 625 S. River • 332-2680
 Fr. Carlos Ruiz Santos
 1st Sunday of the month
 Morning Mass 8:30 am
 Sunday Mass 10:30 a.m.
 Weekday Mass 8:00 a.m.
 Confessions Sat. 4-4:30

Salem Lutheran Church
 332-3002
 Pastor Chris Farmer
 Morning Worship 10:30 a.m.
 Communion 3rd Sunday

Solid Rock
Baptist Church
 412 S. Denison
 Welcomes You!
 Pastor Allen Coon
 Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
 Worship 10:30
 Prayer Meeting, Wed
 7:30 p.m.

First Christian Church
 Pastor Jeff Landers
 332-2956 • 118 E. Webster
 Bible Fellowship 9:15 a.m.
 Church Service 10:15 a.m.

First Baptist Church
 2nd & Scott • 332-3921
 J.W. Gildewell, Pastor
 Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
 Worship 10:30 a.m.
 Sunday Evening
 Service 6:30 p.m.,
 Wed. AWANA Club
 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

St. Francis
Community Church
 332-3150
 204 N. Quincy Street
www.sfccfamily.com
 Pastor: David Butler
 Sunday School 9:15 a.m.
 Worship Service 10:30 a.m.
 Potluck & Communion -
 Every 2nd Sunday
 Wednesday Bible Study 7 p.m.

Peace Lutheran Church, AFLC
 202 N. College
 Pastor Randy Nelson
 Church 332-2928
 Parsonage 332-2312
 Worship 9:30 a.m.
 Communion 1st Sunday

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