

from our viewpoint...

The devil is always in the little details

The concrete barricades are gone from in front of the Conoco Travel Shoppe out by I-70, and it appears the city and Service Oil Co. have an agreement about how to fix the street.

At first blush the case appeared to be one where Service Oil should stand the cost of fixing the street before dedicating it to the city. That is what former Mayor Wade Barnett wanted back in the '80s, and told the council repeatedly.

What Barnett and most of the people at the city commission meeting last week did not know was that all the land involved does not belong to Service Oil, with the second player being the Comfort Inn.

The original problem was spawned years ago, during Barnett's term, when the city was trying to build the frontage roads along K-27, Enterprise and Commerce. Most landowners agreed to a special assessment to help pay for the new roads, but on the east side, Service Oil decided not to participate.

Mayor Barnett and the president of Service Oil at the time got into a log jam on the street. Barnett maintains the Service Oil man told him the company would do the street to the city's requirements, but would not dedicate it to the city.

Warren Sweat of Service Oil said the president at the time told his people they should never give the street to the city, and that he was not going to "give Goodland anything."

The deadlock has persisted for more than 20 years, and the private road has fallen into bad and then worse shape. The impasse hit all the buttons when the firm put up concrete barricades in August.

With a precedent of using assessments to pay for other parts of the frontage roads, it appeared the city was in a no-win situation unless Service could be convinced to change their tune.

Thinking all the land belonged to the oil firm, the city suggested to Sweat his company pay for rebuilding the road and then dedicate it to the city.

Last Monday, Sweat came back to say he had checked and Miller Construction of Goodland was willing to stand by the \$62,000 price. Sweat suggested that his company would be willing to pay for half the cost if the city would pay the other half.

Former Mayor Barnett again said this was not what was agreed to, and suggested the city commission demand that Service pay for the whole project.

The council declined that advice, and after Darin Neufeld, engineer for Evans, Bierly, Hutchison and Associates, explained the land ownership, there appeared to be an opening for an agreement.

Not only is the Comfort Inn owner involved, it appears from the deeds Neufeld dug up, the motel owns most of the land in the intersection, leaving only a small opening on the south side to Service.

At the time the road was built the motel did not exist, and everyone assumed the land to the east of the intersection belonged to Service and they had an access agreement with the Comfort Inn. That turns out to be a myth. Neufeld added that the bid Miller submitted was 25 feet short of covering all the Service Oil land.

The city commission agreed that in most street construction, the landowners have paid for the main part of the street and the city has paid for the intersections. In this case, if Service and the Comfort Inn agree to help pay for half the project, the city promised to find a way to pay for the other.

Finally the problem may be solved and everyone will be better for cutting through the old hard feelings.

The American art of compromise has been upheld. There may be things to be put in writing, but the barricades are gone and there is a reasonable feeling of success on both sides. — Tom Betz



Wow, what about those Rockies!

I supposed you could hear me yelling from here, which happens to be Augusta, Ga., this week.

No, it's way too soon for the Masters. That's in the spring, when the azaleas bloom. We're here for our daughter's wedding.

I'm talking about those Rockies, who came from last place to tie for a wildcard berth in the National League playoffs.

What a finish. What a summer. Wow! By the time you read this, you'll know who won and so will I. The Rockies' season will be history or they'll be playing the Phillies in the so-called Division series.

Cynthia and I bought some tickets, but we most likely won't be at the park. The second Denver home game (if there is one) wouldn't be until Sunday, the day after the wedding and the day we fly back to Colorado. We have to work on Monday.

Maybe we can sell them. Maybe we'll get a refund, if the game isn't played.

I scored the tickets on line last week, when nobody believed the Rockies would make it. You could buy all the really good seats you wanted (up to 16, at least) for a mere \$75 each.



steve haynes

• along the sappa

This week, they're already selling tickets to the next round, the League Championship series. And already, there's nothing left but singles. What a change.

It probably was silly to buy tickets sight unseen and day unknown, but it's been a dozen years since the then-young Rockies got this far. We're among the long-suffering fans, though not in any league with Chicago Cubs backers.

We started out as Royals fans when we lived in Kansas City. It took them eight years to make the playoffs, if I remember right, and they were miserable, losing quickly to the Yankees both times they were in contention in the late '70s.

We sat through miserable weather, north wind and poor play (George Brett was so nervous he couldn't even stop a grounder, it seemed) those years. By the time the Royals won it all in '85, we were watching on the

television in Colorado.

Then came the Rockies. They filled Coors Field for game after game, breaking into the playoffs in 1995. Since then, their record and the crowds have shrunk — until this year.

After a July slump, the season seemed to be about over, the Rocks in fifth (last) place in the National League West — though most of the time, their record would have been good enough for first place in the NL Central Division.

Then they caught fire, closing with an 11-game win streak before losing one, and winning 13 out of 14 at the end. The team pulled together, despite having many starters hurt at one time or another and at least two starting pitchers gone for most of the season.

If left fielder Matt Holliday doesn't win Most Valuable Player after taking the league batting title, leading in hits and being second in runs batted in, then we've been robbed. Same goes for Troy Tulowitzki at short; he deserves to be Rookie of the Year.

Ah, the long-overdue, sweet smell of success.

Take me out to the ball game!

A thank you to Commissioner Rasure

To the Editor:
As a lifelong resident and taxpayer of Sherman County, I felt compelled to write this letter about the Sherman County commissioners. First, I want to commend and thank Commissioner Kevin Rasure on his stand against raising property taxes.

It may not sound like much for each resident or business, but it seems this is the solution to every budget problem. Whatever happened to "tighten your belt, make do with what you have," etc.?

That's what the taxpayers have to do to pay these taxes!

Will this be a guarantee that the roads will improve, our streets will be safer or that this will solve the problem for several years? I don't have much confidence that this will be the case.

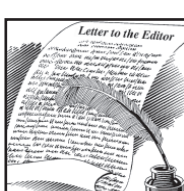
I have seen our population decrease, businesses close up or move away, and yet the taxes keep going up. The people and businesses that stay in Sherman County can't keep paying more tax to make up for those who leave. If I were thinking of starting a business or moving here, the tax issue would definitely influence my decision. Our taxes are already too high for what we can offer our residents.

Do the taxpayers have any say in this increase? I guess not: just pay-up when the tax statements come out!

Thanks again, Kevin, for a job well done. You have my vote.

Judy Hayden
Goodland

To the Editor:
Several people have been wondering about me and wanted my mailing address, so I am



from our readers

• to the editor

writing this letter for their benefit. I have been in the National Guard for 23 years with most of it spend with the Kansas unit there in Goodland.

In April 2005, I was notified I was being activated for a maintenance mission, which was supposed to be in Washington State, but was changed to Fort Riley. I worked at Fort Riley with other mechanics from the 70th Maintenance Company, along with people from the 995th Maintenance Company.

That mission lasted from May to November. I started a new job in Junction City in January of 2006. I took a promotion to sergeant, but had to transfer to the 731st Transportation

Company. They were based out of Wichita, Larned and Hays. I had to stay with that unit for one year before I could transfer back to the Goodland unit.

The 731st was activated to go to Iraq in November, and we were sent to Ford Dix, N.J., for two months before going to Iraq. We spent two months training for our 12-month deployment.

I am at Camp Adder on Tallil Air Force Base in southern Iraq. I arrived in February and will be here until sometime next year. We will fly back to Fort Dix for demobilization, briefing and medical check ups. Hopefully I will be home sometime in January.

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