

from our viewpoint...

## Budget time raises frequent questions

Watching the city work on the budget is much simpler than watching the U.S. Congress try to deal with the national debt. Some of the discussions are similar, but on a smaller scale. The city has to balance the estimated income with the expenses, and to fund the general fund the city must rely on sales tax and property tax.

The city relies on user fees for the electric, water and sewer departments. These programs are supposed to at least break even. For Goodland the bright spot is the electric departments with production and distribution that brings in money to help fund general government.

The city will use about \$4 million of the reserves to pay for the completed water project. By using the city reserves the commission can save taxpayers more than \$1 million in interest. The raise in monthly water rates approved in September will repay the city reserves over time at a lower interest rate.

Past efforts by city commissions to build the reserves gave the city a good base to be able to handle such big projects.

Future commissions may face other problems, and at present the water fund is barely staying in the black, and the sewer fund is holding its own. These two go hand in hand, and Rich Simon, public works director, told the commissioners he has 47-57 blocks of water line that need to be replaced, and about the same number of blocks of sewer lines.

The city commissioners held the line on the general fund this year, and hopefully the sales tax will continue to trend upward to provide a bit of increased revenue to help in the future.

Next year's budget does not directly fund any of the civic programs the city has given money to in the past few years, but two "other" budget lines are where these could be paid out upon requests. The only community program specifically in the budget is \$2,000 for the Northwest Kansas Animal Shelter included in the police and dog pound budgets.

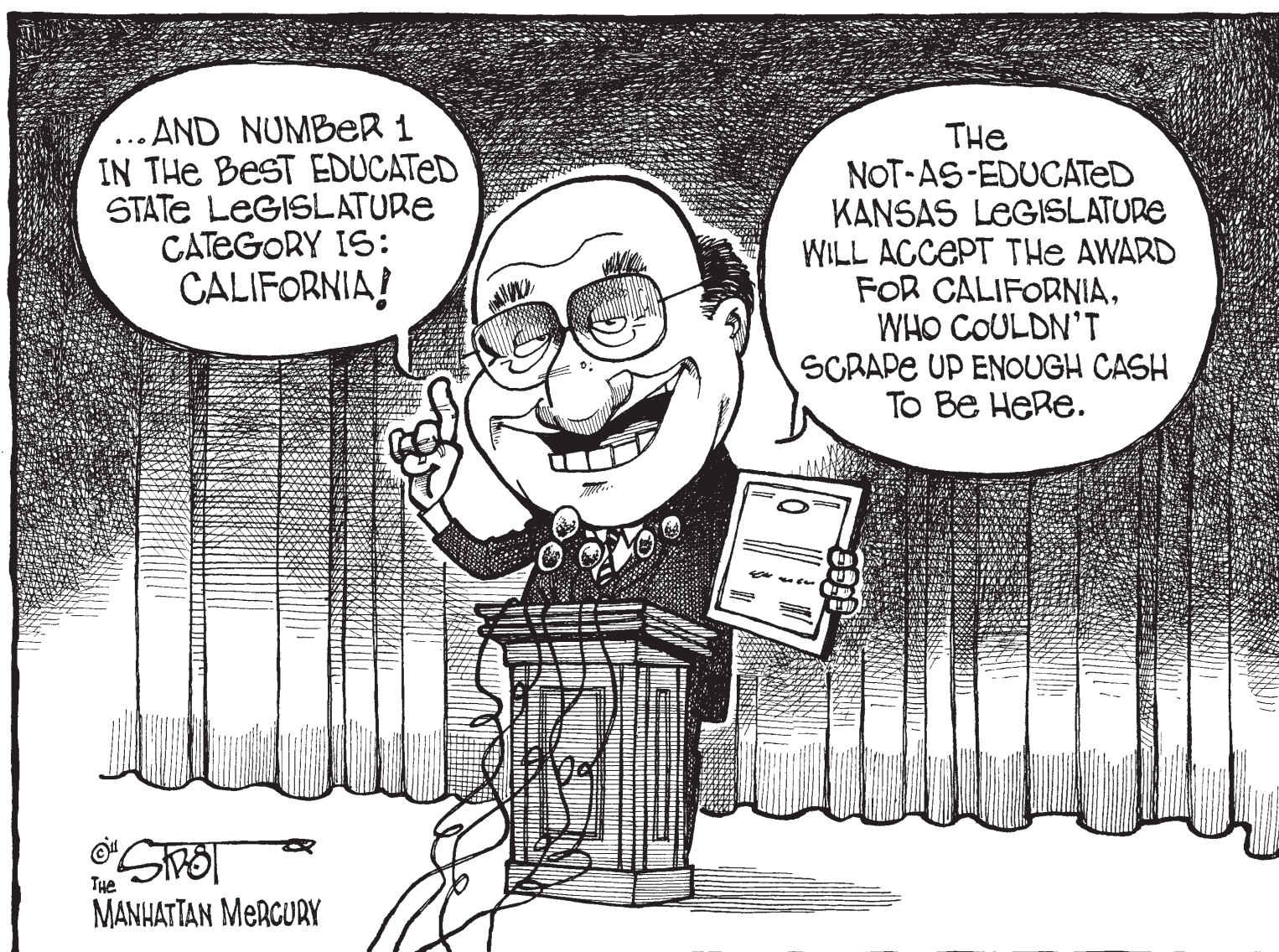
Things like the Carnegie Arts Center, Sherman County Historical Society, Freedom Fest fireworks, Relay for Life and Child Advocacy Group have not been given money as they were this year.

Another program, the Invest in the Future scholarship program for Northwest Tech, has not been listed separately.

With the two line items there is enough to contribute up to \$20,000 to the college scholarship program, and the other programs totaled about \$3,550 this year and the commission can approve those at a later date.

These programs have been the target both at the county and city level on the basis they are for special interest groups. That may be true, but those interest groups are Sherman County taxpayers who have the right to ask their elected officials to contribute some of their tax money to these special interests, especially those which bring people to town, and help children.

We feel the national scene will resolve itself in time to avoid disaster, and we feel the city will consider the importance of the local programs to be sure they continue in the years to come. We salute the city employees for the great work they do all year long to make this a wonderful place to live and work. — Tom Betz



## We need more 'E' and 'PI' today

Hold your fire! Hold your fire! And while you are doing that, keep these three letters in mind: E and PI.

I think I know why obesity is running out of control among our young people in the NiftyFifty.

Many kids today — not all of them — but many of them, pig out day in and day out on stuff seemingly designed to pack on the pounds. If you've got kids at home you know what I'm talking about. Overlooked, sadly, is something so vital but so absent.

The problem, as this 'Man of the Plains' sees it, is simply something kids did when I was growing up that just doesn't seem to have any room in today's world.

In my day, we had some kids we would call 'fat', but they couldn't begin to hold a candle to what's going on in our obesity community in this day and age.

As I look back on my years as a youngster — late 1930s to the late 1940s — when the school bell rang sending us home for the rest of the day, we walked home, tossed our books on the front room couch then hit the kitchen for an apple or an orange, and then out the door we went.

We would join our neighborhood buddies and walk a block or two to an empty field where we'd engage in a baseball game with other friends already there.

Or we would cross the street to a friend's home where a basketball goal was nailed to the front of the garage and see who could hit the longest shot and make the most free throws.

Or we would determine, while walking home from school, that football would be the game of the day and began a search for a vacant lot.



**tom dreiling**

• man of the plains

Or we would see how far we could run before needing a break, then head back and see who could reach home first.

These weren't just 'now and then' activities, they were practically commitments.

By the time supper was ready, we were ready to sit down and eat with our parents and siblings and engage in conversation. (We had breakfast, dinner and supper. We didn't 'do lunch'.)

All of the activities mentioned above were forms of — okay, what's the word? "EXERCISE!" — one of the three letters mentioned above.

That is the simple ingredient missing from the lives of many, many young people today. And folks, exercise is free. Stuffing your kids with foods that sicken, is costly. And eventually your child becomes part of the obesity crowd. You can ward that off by inserting the "E" word in each day's routine.

Unfortunately, today's youngsters come home from school, and in many cases sit down in front of a computer, or put their latest state of the art phones to work, and the only things getting any exercise are their fingers and their mouths.

Enter letters PI. That stands for Parent Involvement! And without question parents certainly can do a lot better job. Sure you are tired from a day at your workplace, but the youngsters at home need your focus when you enter

that front door. And if your family doesn't eat the evening meal together, today's a good day to start. And the conversation can be centered around obesity and the need for exercise. Once obesity takes over, well...good luck!

My little straw poll is not off to a good start, and some of you responding are of the opinion I shelve it until the rest of the wannabe presidents get into the race. So I'll hold off for that to happen and use the few I've already received later.

Briefly, on the political scene, here is what I see: Michelle Bachmann's dream of becoming the Commistress-in-Chief just isn't going to happen; former governor Mitt Romney will get the Republican nomination for president; President Barack Obama is hanging by a thread that could snap at any time if he doesn't refocus on the middle class and 'my class'; Texas Gov. Rick Perry just might be Mr. Romney's running mate; Donald Trump won't run as president as an Independent; Sarah Palen will probably end up owning the bus line that courting here all over the place; and best bumper sticker, "Forget it! It's Already too Late!"

Snippets will return in my next column; lots of them to share.

Won't you be glad when winter gets here?

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## Do we really 'get it' about financial crisis?

Watching and listening the other day at Rep. Tim Huelskamp's "town hall" meeting in Oberlin, it occurred to me that a lot of us really don't "get it" when it comes to the financial crisis in Washington.

While the congressman was talking about voting against an increase in the federal debt limit to bring the White House to its senses on spending, people were still asking about federal grants.

We agree, Oberlin needs airport improvements promised by the government. Cities and school and counties need money for a lot of things. But like everyone else, we need to face reality: The government has promised to spend a lot of money it doesn't have.

We know the people who want to spend that money are going to complain like crazy if they don't get it.

And while we think Oberlin will get money to repair and relocate the main north-south runway at the airport, and maybe even to build



**steve haynes**

• along the sappa

a new 5,500-foot runway, it may take longer than expected as the government spreads out the spending.

The Federal Aviation Administration doesn't know how much it will have to spend this year. That will continue until the transportation budget is settled in Congress, and that could be a few months.

We need to expect some delays, and maybe even welcome them. It means the government is finally waking up to the problem of every-increasing deficits and debt. The American people seem to agree that's the top priority.

At the same time, we all want "our" pro-

grams to continue without cuts. We want "our" grants and we want our money to spend from the government. That's only natural.

This time, however, the government may finally have hit the wall, as the bloc of "tea party" members elected to Congress last year pushes for an end to endless spending.

"The bottom line is this," Mr. Huelskamp said. "Washington can't do everything." Amen to that.

Yet, important as curbing spending is, it's also vital to free up the economy to get people back to work.

"Forty-five million Americans are on Food Stamps," he said. "Three years ago, it was only 27 million. And 13.9 million are out of work. That is unacceptable."

Dr. Jay Anderson asked what the administration's vision for the country is.

"To spend more money to grow the economy," the congressman replied. "To regulate more."

Someone asked if they wanted to ruin the country. He replied, "No."

"They just have a different vision than we do. One's going to work; one isn't."

"I'm not going to challenge people's motives. I'm gong to challenge their policies."

Noting that changes to federal law after the mortgage crisis may make it nearly impossible to get a home loan, he said: "We're going to have a major credit crisis in rural America because of it. The result will be fewer community banks in rural America."

Someone asked what people could do.

"Pray for me," Mr. Huelskamp replied.

"Pray for all our leaders. We have some real issues to face, and we need some real wisdom to face them with."

## where to write

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