

## EX ALDERMAN NEWSLETTER 163 AND CHESTERFIELD 108



By John Hoffmann

February 4, 2015

### **GANGS OF TOWN AND COUNTRY MEMBER HAS SENTENCING PUSHED BACK TO MARCH 13. U.S. ATTORNEY WANTS STIFF PUNISHMENT:**

Ex convict and flim-flam man Ronald Lee Roberts of 12931 N. Topping Estates pled guilty in Federal Court on July 23, 2014 to defrauding 29 people out of \$2.8. He sentencing was set for December of 2014. It was then continued to January 20, 2015, then to January 22 and now to March 13, 2015.



Roberts' home at 12931 N. Topping Estates, which is currently on the market for \$780,000.

The U.S. Attorney has filed a request that Roberts get a sentence toward the maximum end of the sentencing guidelines due to the number of victims, Roberts lack of remorse, no effort to make an restitution and the fact that he served time for similar crimes.

Here is some of the U.S. Attorney's brief that includes Roberts chocking a female victim who asked for her money back, attempts to get people to lie to federal authorities in his behalf and other acts obstruction of justice. The full brief is posted on our website.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
 EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI  
 EASTERN DIVISION UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, )  
 Plaintiff, )  
 v. )  
 RONALD L. ROBERTS, ) Case No. 4:13-cr-00506-ERW (TCM)  
 Defendant. )  
 )  
 )  
 )  
 )

**THE UNITED STATES’ SENTENCING MEMORANDUM**

The United States respectfully requests that this Court impose a sentence against Defendant Ronald Roberts at the high end of the Guidelines range recommended by the Presentence Investigation Report (“PSIR”). As set forth below, such a sentence is supported in this case by several considerations, including the egregious nature of Roberts’s conduct, the number of individuals harmed, its similarity to conduct for which Roberts has previously been convicted, the lengthy period over which Roberts’s criminal conduct continued, and Roberts’s continued unwillingness to admit the full scope of his criminal conduct, as evidenced by his objections to the findings of the PSIR. For these reasons and the others discussed herein, the United States respectfully suggests that a lengthy sentence of imprisonment is necessary to promote the purposes of punishment set forth in Title 18, United States Code, Section 3553(a), including most critically the protection of the public. The United States therefore requests a sentence of up to 87 months imprisonment.

**I. Overview of the Offense**

Ronald Roberts defrauded no fewer than 29 lenders of at least \$2,832,743.00 on the basis of the false representation that he would repay them using the proceeds of a fictitious land deal. ...

For more than three years, Roberts repeatedly sought loans from victim after victim, telling each of them that the closing would occur within weeks or even days. But the closing never came. When victims threatened legal action or to report him to the police, Roberts threatened them with physical violence. And even after Roberts believed he had been indicted, he sought to evade punishment by inducing his former co-defendant, Dr. Kenneth Powell, to come to the United States Attorney’s Office and lie for him.

As a result of these crimes, dozens of people have lost more than \$2.8 million. There appears to be little prospect that any of them will see any of that money returned to them, let alone obtain the return on their investment they were promised by Roberts. Although this Court has issued a Preliminary Order of Forfeiture in the case (Doc. #75), the United States has not discovered any substantial assets that can be used to satisfy the judgment this Court will impose upon Roberts at sentencing. ...

Five pages later:

## **2. Obstruction of Justice**

### **a. The Obstruction of Justice Enhancement Is Warranted by This Court's Prior Findings Alone**

Roberts's most vociferous dispute is with respect to the enhancement for obstruction of justice. This Court ordered Roberts detained pending trial on account of the fact that, among other things:

(1) Defendant contacted a United States Postal Inspection Special Agent, and attempted to dissuade her from pursuing an ongoing investigation into potential criminal activity . . . (2) Defendant put his hands around the neck of a witness when she asked him to repay her money loaned . . . (3) at least one witness observed Defendant occasionally practice speaking with different voices, in an apparent attempt to solidify one of his multiple aliases, "Ed Faulkenberry," . . . and (4) various verbal threats in efforts to discourage certain individuals from cooperating with the government . . . .

Mem. & Order (Doc. #45) at 2. The United States will present evidence at sentencing, as it did at the detention hearing, to support each of these findings.

### **b. Roberts Also Obstructed Justice by Attempting to Induce a Witness to Provide Investigators with False Information**

In addition, the United States will present evidence that, after Roberts believed that an indictment had been returned against him but before he turned himself into authorities, Roberts contacted his former co-defendant, Dr. Kenneth Powell, and attempted, in the voice of "Ed Faulkenberry," to persuade Powell to lie for Roberts in an interview scheduled with Powell at the U.S. Attorney's Office the next day. Although the phone call appeared to Powell to originate from a blocked number, phone records show that the call came from a cell phone registered to one of Roberts's companies, which cell phone was in Roberts's possession at the time of his arrest. In a recording of the phone call, which the United States will play at sentencing, Roberts ("Faulkenberry") can be heard to state:

"Sir, they'll believe if you go down there and tell these people that he didn't have anything to do with it and it's your deal, they're gonna let the shit go 'cause they got no case then. You come in there in a trial and say that, they ain't got no case against the man, sir. Their life is in your hands, basically, and mine."

Later in that same conversation, "Faulkenberry" states, as though he is talking to a third party, "We already know that he [Powell] can get him [Roberts] out of it, but you know, the thing is, is he gonna do it?" "Faulkenberry" then tells Powell to call Richard Sindel, Mr. Roberts's then-attorney, to receive instruction as to what he should state during the proffer: "That's his client, and for him to get his client off, that's what you need to do."

In light of these flagrant attempts to forestall detection of the scheme and avoid punishment for the crimes to which he has now confessed, the United States respectfully submits that an enhancement under § 3C1.1 is appropriate. As a result, the total offense level before acceptance is 29.

## **B. Criminal History**

The PSIR indicates that Roberts is in criminal history category II on account of his prior conviction in 2001 before this very Court in a conspiracy to defraud investors that is strikingly similar to the

offense to which Mr. Roberts has now pled guilty. In both cases, Roberts obtained millions of dollars from investors based upon the fiction of a real estate transaction. As the United States will establish at sentencing, a witness in that prior case described how Roberts used false voices, including the voice of "Ed Faulkenberry," to lend credibility to the scheme. Roberts has repeated that ruse (and added others) in this case.

In that prior case, Roberts was charged with mail and wire fraud. The evidence in this case suggests that Roberts attempted to evade federal jurisdiction by requesting loans in cash in order to avoid receiving funds via mail or wire. Robert's intentions in this regard are implicit in his

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In that prior case, Roberts was charged with mail and wire fraud. The evidence in this case suggests that Roberts attempted to evade federal jurisdiction by requesting loans in cash in order to avoid receiving funds via mail or wire. Robert's intentions in this regard are implicit in his statement to an investigator, in an unsolicited phone call where Roberts attempted to dissuade her from continuing her investigation, that "there is no law against borrowing money from people" and that he "can borrow money from whoever he wants to." Likewise, as the Court will hear at sentencing, in a recorded conversations with a person whom Roberts believed to be a prospective lender, Roberts balked initially upon learning that his intended victim lived out of state (in Chicago), continuing with his pitch only after hearing that the caller had a trip to St. Louis planned the following week.

The PSIR in the prior case indicated that, under the Guidelines, Roberts was to receive a sentence between 108 and 135 months. This Court imposed a sentence against Roberts of 115 months, which was later reduced to 97 months. The PSIR also reflects that Roberts has two other criminal convictions, but neither meets the qualifications under the Guidelines to be counted towards his criminal history. In addition, the United States notes that, while the PSIR does not indicate that Roberts began the instant offense while on supervised release, the first fraudulent loan identified by the United States was solicited by Roberts approximately two months after his supervised release terminated. Thus, as explained below, these potential understatements in his criminal history warrant a sentence at the upper end of the Guidelines range.

The entire 15-page sentencing memorandum is posted on our website at the bottom of the right column after "Our Favorite Police Reports" section.

Also the \$70,643 tax judgment for 2010 and 2011 from the Department of Revenue issued on June 13, 2014 is still active and has not been satisfied.

<b>Date:</b> 06/13/2014	<b>Description:</b> <a href="#">Judgment Entered</a>	<b>Against:</b> ROBERTS, RONALD L
<b>Amount of Judgment:</b>	see text	<b>Date of Satisfaction:</b> not yet on file
<b>Text:</b>	CERTIFICATE OF TAX LIEN - INDIVIDUAL INCOME TAX. PETITIONER DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE HAVE AND RECOVER OF RESPONDENT RONALD L ROBERTS SR THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF \$70,643.51.	

**FINALLY PRINCIPIA HAZING CHARGES ARE FILED AND IT TURNS OUT TO BE A CASE OF RAPE:** We reported in our August 29 newsletter (Ex Alderman Newsletter 142) how three adult students at Principia on Clayton Road were arrested for hazing at a football summer camp for younger players earlier in August.

We also were the first to report that there was a sexual nature to the offenses as Town and Country Police booked the three players on charges of misdemeanor Child Molestation. That statute says:

**Child molestation, second degree, penalties.**

**566.068. 1. A person commits the crime of child molestation in the second degree if he or she subjects another person who is less than seventeen years of age to sexual contact.**

The County Prosecutor decided to up the charges against two of the adult suspects to felonies. Maverick Holmsley of Wright City, Mo and Joshua Brewer of 6 Rutherford Lane Town and Country located across the street from the west entrance of Principia, were each charged with four counts of Felony 1st Degree Sodomy. It is alleged that the suspects penetrated the victims' anuses or instructed others to have contact with the victims' anuses.



Holmsley



Brewer

**Sodomy First Degree 566.060. 1. A person commits the offense of sodomy in the first degree if he or she has deviate sexual intercourse with another person who is incapacitated, incapable of consent, or lacks the capacity to consent, or by the use of forcible compulsion. Forcible compulsion includes the use of a substance administered without a victim's knowledge or consent which renders the victim physically or mentally impaired so as to be incapable of making an informed consent to sexual intercourse.**

I would be very surprised if the charges of First Degree Sodomy are not later reduced. The minimum sentence for First Degree Sodomy is 5-year in prison and no Suspended Imposition of Suspended Execution of Sentence probation terms are allowed.

**2. The offense of sodomy in the first degree or an attempt to commit sodomy in the first degree is a felony for which the authorized term of imprisonment is life imprisonment or a term of years not less than five years,**

**4. No person found guilty of sodomy in the first degree or an attempt to commit sodomy in the first degree shall be granted a suspended imposition of sentence or suspended execution of sentence.**

Also **Ricardo Loma**, a third adult charged was not charged with a felony. Instead he was charged with seven counts of misdemeanor assault for striking campers. I have to wonder if the misdemeanor charges are not part of a deal for Loma to testify against Holmsley and Brewer.



One of the reasons it took six months to file charges was that the assistant prosecutor who handles serious sex offense cases had been assigned to the Michael Brown shooting grand jury.

This happening at a school based on a religion that doesn't believe in medicine, is interesting that members of the football team are interested in proctology. All kidding

aside you have to have some empathy for the victims, trying to grow up and fit-in within a small group (just one of two Christian Science High Schools in the country) and then to be assaulted in this manner by persons they should be looking up to.

**2014 POLICE ACTIVITY:** We had so many articles in January we had to push the December 2014 and the 2014 year end police activity report back to this issue.

**The following activity was reported by the police department during the month of December:**

**Officers responded to a total of 1333 calls for service and wrote a total of 185 reports, including:**

**74 Vehicle crashes**

**34 Criminal reports**

**9 Driving While Intoxicated arrests (0 Felony, 2 Misd, 7 Ordinance)**

**29 Misc Arrests (Traffic charges, Fugitive charges, Failure to Appear charges, etc)**

**417 Traffic citations issued (262 speeding)**

Police Activity Town and Country 2014 YTD

**YEAR TO DATE JANUARY THROUGH DECEMBER 2014:**

**Year to Date:**

885 Vehicle Crashes

412 Criminal Reports

254 DWI arrests

553 Misc Arrests

5913 Traffic citations

3955 Speeding Citations

**TICKETS TO ACCIDENTS RATIO:** It is interesting that the overall number of total traffic written per accident is now at **6.6 citations per accident.**

**ELECTION: Mary Steward is the lone challenger against Fred Meyland-Smith,** the alderman who over the years forgets about the first amendment rights that churches have and who likes to lecture people much more than listen to them. After winning office, Meyland-Smith has never had opposition for reelection until now.



Steward moved into Town and Country in 2010 with her husband buying a house, recently built from her sister, in Williamsburg Estates. Her father-in-law, David Steward was just named St. Louis Person of the Year.

Steward has a BA in Public Relations and a Masters degree in Public Health Administration. She formerly worked for the Centenne Corporation and Mercy Health in charitable donations units. She is now a mom with a one-year-old boy.

"What we noticed over the last few years is we don't know what is happening in city government. There is no feedback from our aldermen," said Steward.

When asked about Meyland-Smith. Steward's response was, "The position of 'alderman' is not a position of power."

Steward apparently was not impressed with the positions that Meyland-Smith and Ward-3 Alderwomen Gussie Crawford took by ignoring the concerns of people living near Longview Farm Park and the overwhelming number of Town and Country citizens who spoke in opposition to expanding the parking at the park. Both Meyland-Smith and Crawford voted for the expansion. However, it was especially Meyland-Smith who spearheaded increasing the parking to what many felt was an already overcrowded park.

Steward favors terms limits for alderpersons and the mayor. She also favors lethal deer management.

"I think the deer population has to be managed and the most effective way to do it is way Town and Country is doing it now," she told us.

In January Steward became the third person in the Ward-3 race. Bernie Zyk, a printing company owner who lives in the Wheatfield Farms subdivision had filed early on. Several backers of Zyk brokered a meeting between the two candidates to discuss

issues. After the meeting, Zyk removed himself from the race and threw his support to Steward. He issued this email to supporters:

Subject: Ward 3 candidate change

Date: Tue, 20 Jan 2015 19:47:41 +0000

After consultation with Richard Jensen and Mary Steward, the other candidate in Ward 3 that is challenging Fred, I have dropped out of the race and endorse Mary Steward for Ward 3 Alderman.

Let's all get behind her and elect a person that will represent our interests. Let's pass the word and give her all of our support.

Many Thanks,

Bernie

**ALL PRESENT AND ACCOUNTED FOR:** At the January 26 Board of Aldermen all candidates for the two contested races were present. Incumbent Fred Meyland-Smith was on the dais. His challenger Mary Steward along with her husband David were present. Ward-2 candidate Tiffany Fratutschi was present as was her opponent Tim Walsh, who was making his first appearance since filling for house. Fratutschi spoke with a number of people. We only saw Walsh talking with his buddies Alderman Tim Welby and Mayor/Cigarette Lobbyist Jon Dalton. Walsh sat by himself.



**WEST COUNTY EMS & FIRE INSISTS ON SENDING TOO MUCH EQUIPMENT:** For some time I have pointed out how WCEMS & FPD is happy to eliminate coverage to roll unnecessary fire equipment and ambulances. When they have four assigned to a fire truck and two on the ambulance, rather than increasing the manpower response by having one paramedic on the fire truck go out on the ambulance for an EMS call, they send the entire fire truck. So if another medical, rescue or fire call would come in they would have two units out of service requiring a response from further away.

Also the more emergency equipment that is sent out on calls with red lights and sirens the greater the risk is for an accident. Too much unneeded fire equipment was the cause of an accident on Thursday January 15 on an afternoon call of wires down along the side of the Mason Village Apartments on Mason Road just south of Clayton Road. This call could have easily been handled by the crew on a Fire District Pumper, but they also sent an ambulance too.

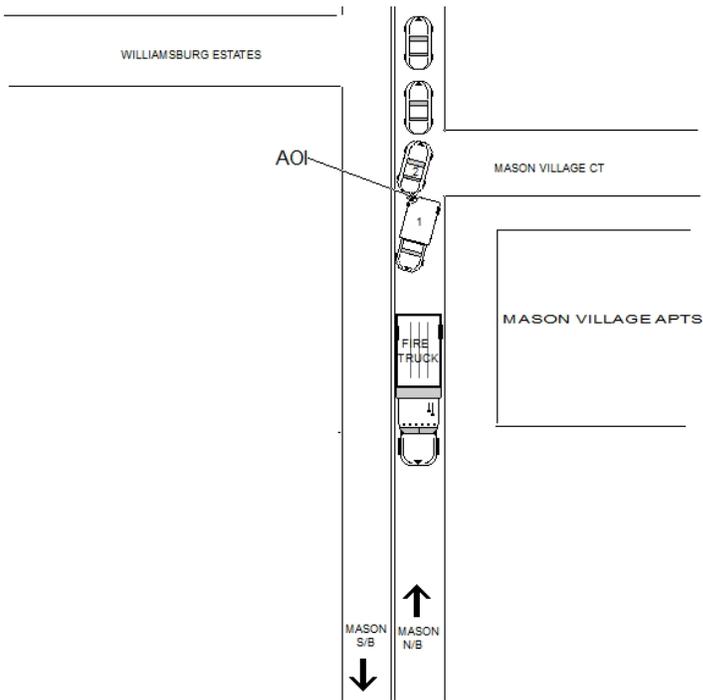
While most fire departments and fire districts buy ambulances for around \$250,000, in a perfect example of "Boys with Toys" the West county EMS & FPD folks paid over \$600,000 for specially built ambulances that are the same size as a fire truck.

Two large fire vehicles on the narrow Mason Road are dangerous from the beginning especially when one of them did not need to be there. Being parked behind each other the fire vehicles caused motorists going north on Mason Road to be on the wrong side of the street twice as long as necessary with traffic turning right from a blind intersection on Clayton and Mason.

It turned out the oversized ambulance when attempting to leave at the end of the call after a utility crew had the downed wires well in hand...backed into a resident's (from Sturbridge Lane) 2012 Acura that was stopped for the Mason and Clayton Road red light.



This (top) is the view driving north on Mason Road with a fire truck and then extra large ambulance directly behind it. The photo on the bottom is the damaged Acura, a police officer who responded to write the report parked off the road with the extra large ambulance still blocking Mason Road now during rush hour.



## **BOARD OF ALDERMEN APPROVE TOPPING ROAD IMPROVEMENT**

**GRANT REQUEST:** On January 26 the Town and Country Board of Aldermen approved to resolution to spend \$246,000 in local funds if they can receive \$984,000 in Federal Funds for improvements to Topping Road. A similar request that involved more funding was turned down in 2013. This grant application scales back the project to just include a little over one-third of Topping Road from Clayton Road to Manchester.

This planned project's Phase 1 would be from Clayton Road to Kent Manor.

**Sidewalks:** Director of Public Works Craig Wilde is using the term "Pedestrian Improvements" because it has not been decided if funding is obtained whether there would be traditional sidewalks or the larger version of sidewalk, called a trail that were installed along Clayton Road.

**MASON ROAD SIDEWALKS:** After years of saying there was nothing they could do about making it safe to walk to Queeny Park along Mason Road, (because Mason Road is a County Road) alderpersons have approved for a Parks Grant request for an engineering study for sidewalks along a portion of Mason Road.

**EXPECT DELAYS:** The construction has begun on adding the second lane to the ramp from Mason Road to Eastbound I-64. The ramp is being added in anticipation of additional traffic as part of the new BJC Pediatric Surgery Center being built at the northwest corner of Mason Road and I-64.



**Also expect more accidents:** There is nothing being added to EB I-64 to handle the additional traffic volume from a second entrance ramp, which is likely to be heaviest in the afternoons on weekdays. This mean there will be bottlenecks and stopped traffic at the end of the ramp and likely more accidents.

**SCAMS:** This one has been around for a while. It just landed in my email box at the end of the year. The email claims I owe \$40 for an outstanding parking ticket. The ticket is apparently from the City of Philadelphia. Have I ever driven in or around Philly? Sure back in 1993 when I was researching a magazine article I was writing for a law enforcement trade magazine. However, I was driving a car that had Maryland license plates that I sold in 1999. I certainly did not open the link in the email for fear of having a virus enter my computer.

-----Original Message-----

From: Parking Violations Bureau [mailto:support@grav-tech.com]  
Sent: Monday, December 29, 2014 6:13 PM  
To: johnhoffmann@charter.net  
Subject: Parking Violation Notice

Parking violation notice

City of Philadelphia records indicate that a parking citation(s) issued to the vehicle described below has not been paid. This fines and applicable penalties area past due and must be paid within the next ten calendar days. DMV records show that you are/were the registered owner at the time this vehicle was cited. Therefore, you are legally responsible for responding to this notice.

Ticket Number	Violation	Fine	Payment Received	AMOUNT DUE
4096997	PARKING IN "NO STOPPING-STANDING" ZONE	\$40	\$0.00	\$40

For more information, please visit here and get your parking ticket  
<<http://maxters.net/view.php?violation=mg/7RmSB49iBLg0sqN9A9e75fLnmmV+2D8f1HKdPApk=>> .

## UNAPPROVED CHESTERFIELD NEWSLETTER 108



**February 4, 2015**

### **CITY COUNCIL FAILS TO FIRE TORPEDOES OVER MAYOR'S VETOES**

**AGAIN:** For the third time since the first of the year, the Chesterfield City Council has voted to continue an attempt to override Mayor Bob Nation's four vetoes of specific items in the 2015 budget.

Nation made the straight four line item vetoes at the December 1 City Council meeting. The vetoes were of a 3% employee pay raise and employee gift cards that Nation felt were excessive, the hiring of two police officers to double the number of School Resource Officers at elementary schools, and the creation of a arts unit within the Parks Department.

Mayor Nation later claiming authority to veto just portions of bills in a compromise move changed his vetoes to the pay raise making it a 2.5% raise, to hire one more SRO police officer instead of two, to reduce the amount of the employee holiday gift cards from \$250 to \$100. The Arts Unit veto would stand as is.

Councilwoman Connie Fultz wanted to hold a special meeting to vote on the vetoes in December before the end of the year. Her motion was voted down.

Boy Councilman Derek "Grizzly" Grier, was absent from the first meeting in January and it was continued to the January 21 meeting Nancy Greenwood and Barry Flachsbart were absent on January 21, so it was continued to the February 2 meeting. If anyone bothered to check they would have known that Greenwood is out of town on February 2 on a winter vacation having purchased tickets long in advance.

Grier said he was fine with Mayor Nation doing an outright veto on the four items, but by changing three of the items to include lesser amounts, Grier said Nation was now legislating and that was not his job.



Mayor Nation responded to Grier's remarks by saying that Missouri statutes "allow me to veto any portion thereof of a bill."

The council voted 6-1 with Dan Hurt voting against the continuance.

City Attorney Rob Heggie warned that the matter needed to be voted on before the April elections, as the vetoes would stand when a new board was sworn in.

**PARKWAY TEACHER PLEAS GUILTY TO REDUCE CHARGE FOR SERVING UNDERAGE PERSONS AT PARTY:** On May 25, 2013 Lee Manna, then 49, a Parkway West Middle School shop teacher and high school club lacrosse coach was cited for Hosting a Party with Underage Drinking. Three former Parkway West students present for the party at Manna's house at 2050 Winterhaven Court were also cited for being "Minors in Possession of Alcohol." All three were 20-years-old. The police presence at the party occurred after Chesterfield Police responded to neighbor complaints of a loud party.

We were a little tardy in tracking this case through the Chesterfield Courts. On November 25, 2013 Manna pled guilty to a reduced charge in Chesterfield Municipal Court of "Peace Disturbance" and paid a \$100 fine.

The three 20-year-olds found drinking at Manna's house all pled guilty on August 6, 2013, to to most prevalent crime in Chesterfield according to prosecutor Tim Engelmeyer's guilty verdict records. They were all convicted of "Littering" and fined \$250.

What is wrong with this picture? Not that these offense are a big deal...They are not! But the fines seem to be reversed. The person whose house the party is being held is a middle school teacher at Parkway Schools, a person who should know about the perils of underage drinking. He is only fined \$100, but the three, Carter Smith of Claymark Drive Town and Country, Bradley Seabaugh of Manderleigh Woods Drive Town and Country and Adam Edelman of Shagbark Court Chesterfield all had to pay fines two-and-a-half times higher than the person allowing the property to be used for a party.

The three were doing what 20-years are likely to do. However, normally society holds teachers at a higher level. Maybe society does, but Chesterfield Municipal prosecutor Tim Engelmeyer and Judge Rick Brunk don't have those same high standards.

**THE MONARCH FIRE BOARD RACE:** 48-year-old Kelley Denise Miller who has lived in the unincorporated section of the Monarch Fire District east of the Chesterfield city limits for less than 2-years, is the only opposition to Monarch Fire Prevention District president Robin Harris.

Miller is the Director of Human Resources at the St. Louis Arc, a United Way agency that provides services to adults and children with mental disabilities.



The incumbent, Robin Harris, 60, is a former Navy pilot and is now a senior pilot for Delta Airlines.

At a November board meeting Miller made public comments that seemed to be right from the office of Firefighters Local 2665 when she complained of the hiring of the current assistant fire chief and fire chief.

Harris used "The President's Reports" portion of the January 22 Monarch Board meeting to make a clear campaign point.



Board President Robin Harris makes a statement about how the former Board and command staff were preparing to ask voters for a \$33-million bond issue, which was killed when the fire union lost control of the Fire Board.

While other fire districts have bond issues on the ballot, Monarch does not and in fact a Harris claimed that a \$33-million bond issue that had been in the works prior to the 2013 election of Pro-taxpayer candidate former Senator Jane Cunningham to the Board of Directors. When Cunningham was elected, she and Harris had majority control of the board and the bond issue was quashed.

"Former Chief Tom Vineyard and former Assistant Chief John Borgman with a union committee come up with a \$33-million bond issue they planned to put on the ballot. But the election in 2013 changed that. Because of that we are not having to repay a \$33-million bond debt," said Harris.

Harris pointed out that while Local 2665 had contacted the press about old equipment in the Monarch district, the District has been replacing fire trucks, ambulances and adding a new fire boat without raising taxes or passing a bond issue.

Immediately after Harris' remarks two bids were opened for a new ambulance. The bids were \$261,141 and \$259,449.

At the start of the meeting Dan Thompson of the Chesterfield Rotary club presented the Board with a new set of turnout gear (a firefighter's boots, fire resistant pants and coat and a helmet. The total cost was \$2,207 with the local Rotary Club paying \$1,207 and the Rotary International chipping in \$1,000.



I immediately thought it strange that a fire district in an affluent area like Chesterfield was accepting donated high dollar equipment from local charities. I thought about the Worth County Fire Protection District in Grant City, Missouri. Worth County FPD and Grant City have had financial problems for years! The volunteer fire district has two older fire trucks and a photo of the engine room shows that the turnout gear is old and incomplete.



Old turnout gear in the engine house in Worth County. An old pumper still in use in Worth County.

Of course I was brought back to the reality of the Monarch Fire Protection District during the treasurer's report when a \$22,107 bill was presented for one month legal services dealing with lawsuits filed against the Board by Local 2665 of the Firefighter's Union. That number could have equaled 10 new sets of turnout gear.

**SLICE OF LIFE WEST COUNTY STYLE: Paying Taxes:** Our checking account with the most cash is with our brokerage firm. We were informed in November that the brokerage firm as changing banks and that account would be closed on

December 26 with checks arriving for the new account at about the same time. I normally use the brokerage account to pay bills over \$250.

The Real Estate property tax bill arrived followed two days later by the Personal Property Tax bill from the County. I used the brokerage checking account to pay each tax bill. The Real Estate Tax bill was mailed on December 1. It should have arrived at the County Government Center the next day. The check was promptly cashed and a receipt was mailed to us.

The Personal Property Tax bill was received on December 3 and mailed with a check on December 4. It should have arrived in Clayton on December 5. The County sent me a "Paid" receipt dated December 26. They had my check for 21 days. To make matters worse they did not attempt to deposit the check until after the first of the year.

My wife and I figured out before the County that the Personal Property Tax check "bounced". My wife went to Clayton to replace the check. The clerk in the revenue department told her to wait until a revised bill with fees, interest and penalties was received. In essence the County was refusing to accept the money. My wife demanded to see a supervisor who agreed to accept the second check but demanded a \$15 fee.

Because the County Revenue Department could not deposit a check in a timely manner and waited over a month to deposit it, I was hit with a misc. fee and the County's website shows I did not pay the car taxes until January 14, 2015 when in fact I paid them on December 5.

## **SLICE OF LIFE WEST COUNTY STYLE:**

**CLEANING AND SEALING THE TILE FLOOR... A CAUTIONARY TALE** Before I tell you what happened to us...I do want to say that the Woodard Rug Company management handled what happened to us quickly and professionally...but the big problem was what happened. We have used Woodward to help restore area rugs and Oriental rugs purchased at estate sales. The results were top notch.



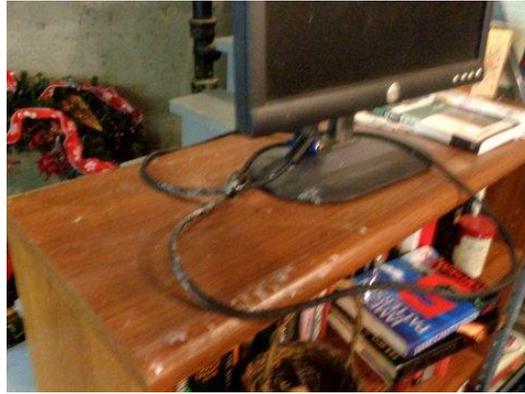
So when my wife saw Woodard would now clean tile floors and then apply a sealer it was just what she was looking for. The tile floor in our house covers a large area, including the kitchen, family area off the kitchen and front and rear entry ways. You could take a wet Swifter and pick up a lot of dirt, then do it over again and again. Even with a steam cleaner it never seemed to be clean. Between us and two dogs we could not keep the floor clean. My wife called Woodard and was told tile floors cost between \$1.25 and \$1.75 a square foot. She knew the area was about 500 sq ft.

In mid November a single Woodard employee arrived late. He told my wife it would be \$2.00 a sq. ft. (I think someone was on a commission!) My wife told him the price range quoted was less. He managed the six hour job in less than three hours, which I found a bit suspicious. The \$1,000 bill was unhappily paid by credit card. The employee told my wife she could get the residue up the next time she mopped. She told him for \$2 a square foot the floor better be spotless. However within an hour of him leaving suddenly white solvent began to appear on the floor in between tiles. A closer inspection also found the floor cleaning machine left a scratch in some lower cabinet doors. Then we also found cleaning solvent splashed inside our refrigerator/freezer, the bottom of doorways and other areas.



But what really got me was that the wooden stairs to the basement along with a bookcase and computer screen were coated in tile cleaning solvent. The Woodard employee apparently decided to dump the used cleaning solvent in our basement sink. In doing so he spilled it on our steps and on my bookcase.

One could say..."why didn't you just clean it up." That was not the point. The point was we had just paid a company over \$1,000 to do a cleaning job and instead of having a clean and sealed floor and we had damage and more cleaning to do.



Again Woodard management responded to our complaint. The white residue was cleaned up and the floor was redone. The scratched cabinets and doorways were repaired, the cleaning solvent was cleaned up and our bill was reduced in half.

The moral of this story is if you have a rug or carpet that needs cleaning or restored Woodard is a wonderful company to call. If you want some tile cleaned and sealed you may want to look for someone else.

**RESTAURANT REVIEW:** When my wife, Diana, and I lived in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, DC we ate a Red Lobster almost once a week. As much as I had enjoyed and preferred independent and family run restaurants while living in St. Louis and Kansas City there was a dollar and sense problem about going to them in the Washington, DC area. The land prices, rents, taxes and utilities were so high and it was difficult to compete with nation chains that had fixed menu prices everywhere but Hawaii and Alaska. The local places were often 20-percent higher and sometimes not as good.

Sure we went to local places but not nearly as often as we did in Kansas City or we do now. In Maryland our neighbor and her daughter would meet us at Red Lobster every Sunday during the winter when I wasn't covering a minor league baseball game. Even if tables were available we would often wait 10 or 15 minutes so we could sit in the section with our favorite waiter, Stan, this kind of made it seem more like a local joint. Since we have returned to St. Louis it is unusual for us to eat at a national chain more than once a month.

Over the last few years going to Red Lobster once every six months or longer we noticed that portion size and sometimes quality were shrinking. Six months after Darden allegedly (there have been some trade reports that Darden has in interest in the company that bought Red Lobster) sold off Red Lobster we thought we try them again.



Here is some free advice I left with the manager. Since Red Lobster is under new management do something different. If you notice outside they are flying a Missouri State flag. There are no lobsters in Missouri. Corporate headquarters needs to send out a State of Maine flag to every restaurant and have it flown outside.



**The tale of two dinners:** Diana chose the four course feast that included soup and salad, a main course plus dessert. She went with the Shrimp and scallop pasta, a garden salad **with blue cheese on the side**, a cup of clam chowder and the caramel cheesecake all for \$16.99.

The cheddar biscuits which have been around on the table of Red Lobster for almost 40 years were okay. They are only truly great when they are served hot, which happens sometimes. However Olive Garden's breadsticks always arrive hot, so I don't know what the problem is.



My wife's salad arrived with dressing on it. She likes a much smaller dose of the blue cheese dressing and that is why she asks for it on the side. She didn't eat much of it. The waitress was told about this when she asked if everything was alright. She immediately offered to get another salad and my wife told her it was not necessary. To the credit of Red Lobster, the waitress, to our pleasant surprise did deliver a salad to go with a separate container of dressing.

For a place that prides itself as a slice of New England, the Clam Chowder is like it came out of a can, which I'm sure it did, certainly a very large can. It was missing that thick creamy flavor and thick stock you would get at a mom and pop clam strip joint on Cape Cod or a lobster shack in Maine. It might be better if Red Lobster offered it in take home cans. I always thought Red Lobster should have sold its tater sauce in grocery stores, because it was that good, the clam chowder is average.



Diana was not crazy about her Shrimp and Scallop Pasta. Both the shrimp and scallops were very small. The blah Alfredo sauce did not save it.

**The Good and the Bad!** My order started with a Clam Strip Appetizer (\$3.29). This was a disappointment. I always found this item to be pretty good. But on this day I received more small broken off pieces of clam strips than actual clam strips.

However my entree was great. I ordered the half portion Rainbow Trout (\$13.29). It was perfect, with excellent flavor and just the right amount for a person who had already had two biscuits, a salad and some sad tiny clam strips.



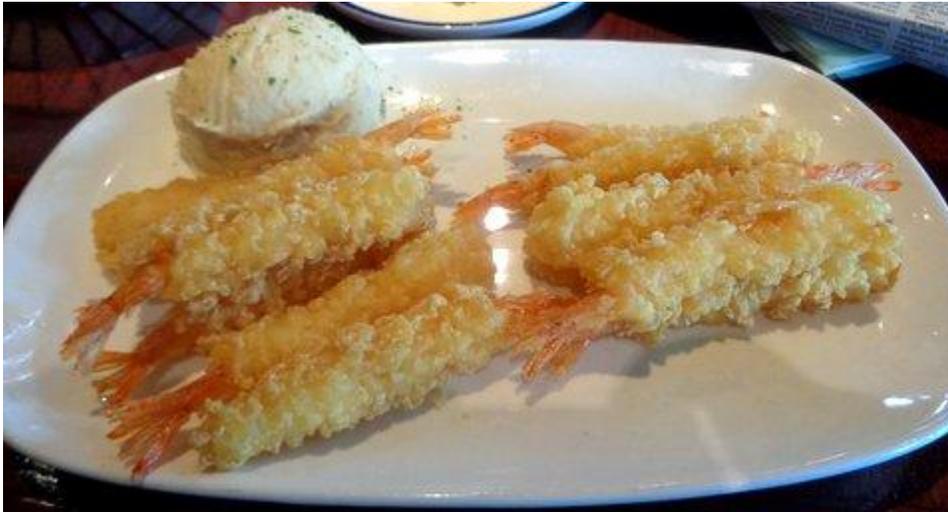
The real treat was the delicious sautéed green beans. I am not normally a person to fuss about presentation choosing to go with taste instead. However the scoop of potatoes looked like they came out of an Army mess hall, although they were warm and tasted okay.

The cheesecake that came with my wife's dinner was small, but what would you expect for a \$17 meal? The presentation was nice and it tasted great.



The day we dined was the day before the "Shrimp Feast" promotion. Red Lobster was advertising a new item, Shrimp Tempura. I went back in the afternoon on Tuesday January 20 just to try the Shrimp Tempura.

Unfortunately I could not just have a single order of Shrimp Tempura. I had to have it with at least one of five other shrimp entrees. I didn't feel like getting any of the other dishes, so I ordered a double order of Shrimp Tempura (\$15.99). That was a mistake. Of course it came with the salad, biscuits and more potatoes.



The tempura coating was fine for the first five. Then it got old. The reason for that was the almost nonexistent amount of shrimp under the coating. The pulled shrimp was clearly not from a large variety and was pencil lead thin. After the first five, the next five were tired and the lack of shrimp was annoying as it was harder and harder to taste any shrimp.

The mashed potatoes were still served up from a scoop and this time they were cool.

Frankly I felt a little cheated like there had been a bait and switch. The TV commercial hyping the "New Tempura Shrimp" got me through the restaurant's doors, but instead of letting me try a single order for say \$9.99 or \$10.99, they wanted to increase my calorie and cholesterol intake by getting a double entree order all while increasing the bill.

I still have a soft spot in my heart having gone to the Crestwood Red Lobster in 1974 on dates and actually being able to afford lobster on a limited budget. I still will likely return in six or seven months, but the once a week days are long over. My wife says I will have to go alone for any return trips.

**MUSIC: COME ON OUT FOR FUN...**Last year I hired six musicians and vocalists for a fun Monday night in February for music and comedy. It was such a big hit that the restaurant, One-19 North in Kirkwood, hired a trio from that group to perform once a month doing music from the Rat Pack era. The February Bash is coming back on Monday February 9 from 7:30 to about 10 pm. It will be six musicians that will be at the front of the restaurant this year so you can see all their moves. There will also be three or four "special guests" in attendance who may join in the fun and perform or sit back and enjoy a busman's holiday.

Here are some photos from last year's fun.



Dean Christopher on top of the bar...later Dean and Jerry Moser do an off-the cuff comedy routine



Top sax player Larry Johnson puts down the smooth notes for guests Anita Rosamond and Valerie Tichacek.



Everyone had a good time, including the kitchen staff that took turns coming out to watch Dean and Charlie B perform.

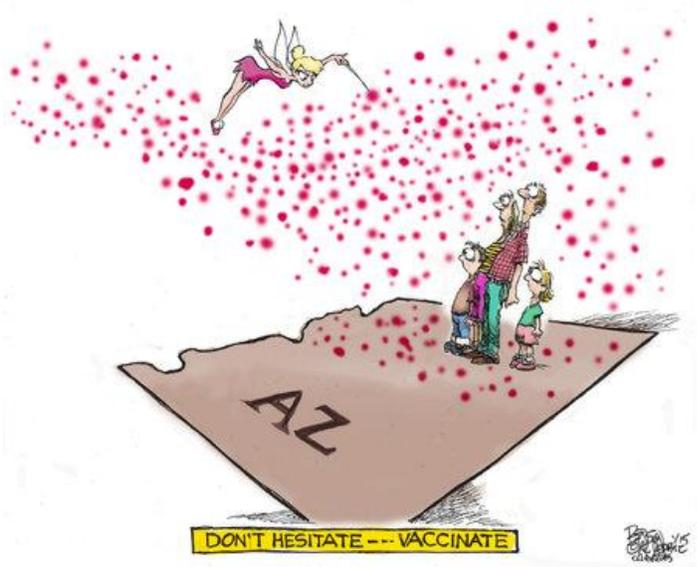
Stop by and nurse a drink, a glass of wine or a Coke and have some fun...or make a reservation at 314-821-4119 and get something to eat while watching the show.

**CARTOONS:** With editorial cartoons there seemed to be a theme between measles and the Super Bowl.

**CLOSE TO HOME**

**BY JOHN McPHERSON**

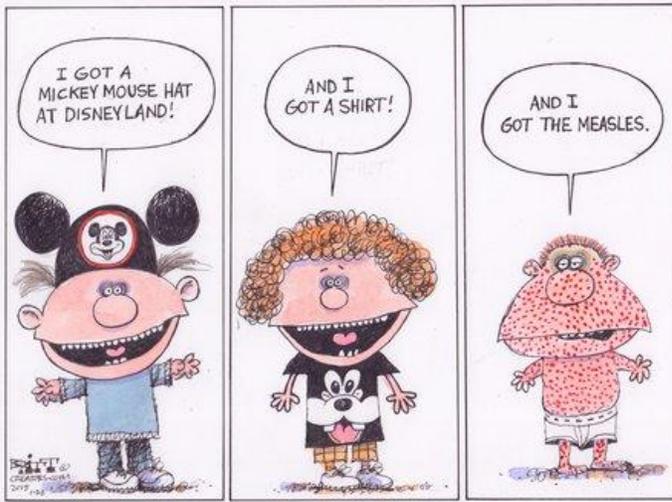


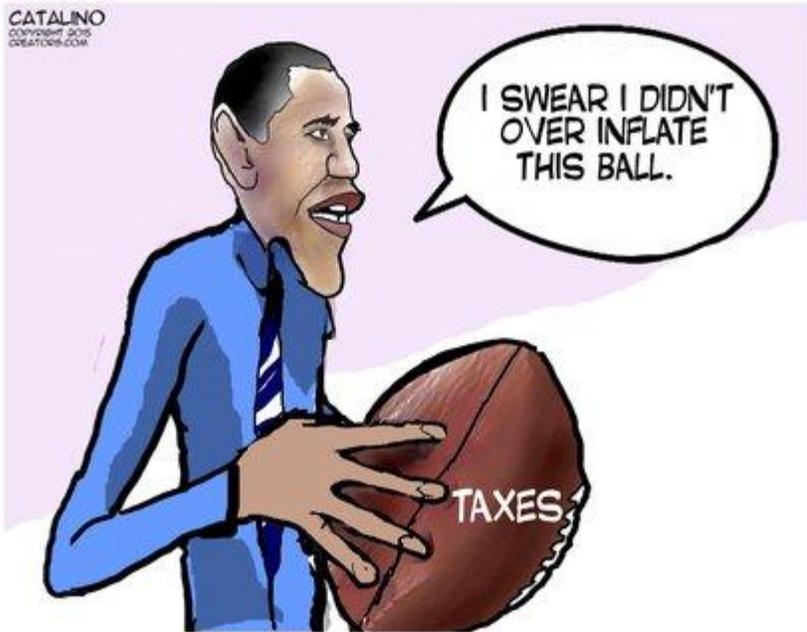


PARENTS OPPOSED TO MEASLES VACCINE:

Measles

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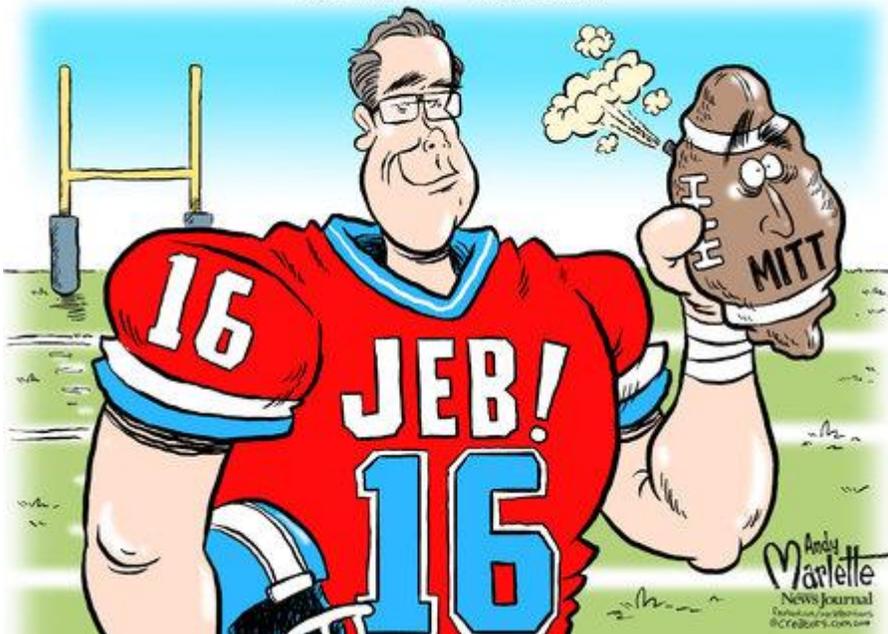




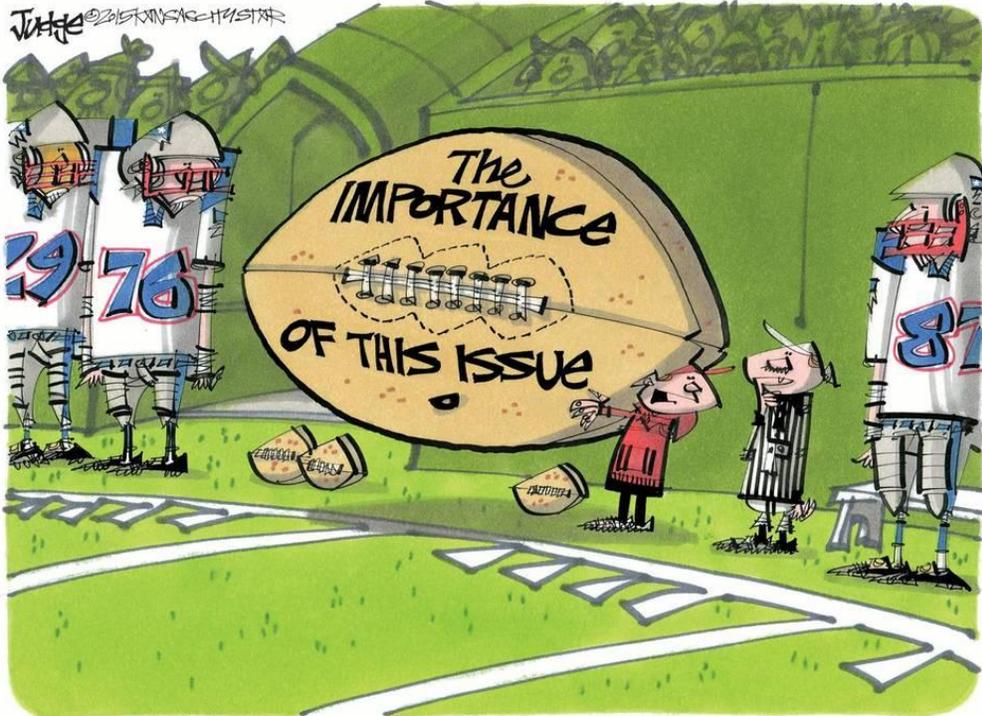
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### DEFLATED GAMEBALL







"THAT'S ODD...THIS ONE APPEARS TO BE OVERINFLATED."

