

EX ALDERMAN NEWSLETTER 62

September 27, 2012

By John Hoffmann

BORED OF ALDERMEN? Not on September 24. THE LAST MEETING IN SEPTEMBER HAD LOTS OF ENTERTAINMENT...INCLUDING CITIZENS BEING LECTURED BY THE MAYOR FOR REACTING TO A RIDICULOUS STATEMENT BY PLANNING DIRECTOR SHARON ROTHMEL!

SIGNS EVERYWHERE THERE ARE SIGNS...EXCEPT ON RAY VINSON'S BUILDING. At the August 27 Board of Aldermen meeting mortgage lender Ray Vinson was asking for a large sign on the north side of the building he was renting. Vinson already had a sign on the east side of the building that sits alongside of I-270.

Planning director Sharon Rothmel said at the meeting only BJC had received similar exceptions to the city's sign ordinance, at Missouri Baptist Medical Center.

The statement wasn't exactly true. Missouri Baptist has oversized signs on two sides of a building and a third on the way, which only can be seen when the leaves are off the trees ...but there are 12 current businesses at Town and Country Crossing shopping center with signs on two sides of the building. The PNC bank has signs on three sides of the building. I think Rothmel might have meant buildings that face I-270 or I-64.

VINSON DISSED AGAIN FOR THE THIRD TIME: On September 24 Ray Vinson was back before the Board of Aldermen still requesting to get two signs on his building. He now has both Ward-1 Aldermen on his side. Vinson also now is renting 60% of the office building. He was asking for approval for a smaller sign on the north side of the building. He softened his approach. He spoke before the Aldermen and said all the nice things about how much he is honored to be part of the Town and Country community.

Alderman Skip Mange spoke how it was unfair not to give Vinson his signs since the other nearby buildings in the unincorporated area had similar size signs on both sides of their buildings.

Lynn Wright the other Ward-1 alderperson also spoke in support of the sign request.

Chuck Lenz who likely would have voted for the sign was missing as he had just had back surgery. Fred Meyland-Smith was also absent.

The other four alderpersons did not seem ready to give Vinson his sign. It was a voice vote. Mange and Wright voted Aye and the others voted Nay. I wasn't surprised but I think Vinson and his group consisting of his sign company rep and the owner of his office building were surprised.

Vinson rents an empty office building, brings jobs to Town and Country is once again rewarded with a refusal to give him signs on his building. I don't think Town and Country is a very business friendly city.



Vinson and his group in the back of the Aldermanic Chambers just before the vote to deny him a second sign on his building.

IS THE SOLAR POWER ORDINANCE READY? NOT SO FAST! On the agenda was a six page bill regulating solar panel use in residential areas. The bill was up for a first reading and there was public hearing at the beginning of the meeting on the bill since it was a zoning change.

In the work session Phil Behnen wanted to make some minor changes to wording. Everyone thought what a wonderful thing Town and Country was doing in support of solar energy. That was until the regular meeting when a couple from out of town said otherwise and had a lawsuit verdict to prove it.

Jim and Fran Babb live in Clarkson Valley. They wanted to put solar panels on their roof. When they went to get a permit, the Board of Aldermen in Clarkson Valley refused

to issue it. Clarkson Valley aldermen then passed a new ordinance outlawing the solar panels.

The Babbs sued, but not in St. Louis County. They sued in the Cole County Circuit Court in Jefferson City. They sued claiming no city in Missouri could pass ordinances or regulations that conflicted with the Missouri Public Service Commission rules and regulations. The Clarkson Valley ordinance like the proposed one in Town and Country does just that. Judge Green in Cole County ruled in favor of the Babbs and they had their solar panels installed within two weeks of the decision.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Babb spoke during the public hearing and presented the city with the copy of their lawsuit and ruling from Judge Green stating municipal laws more restrictive than the Public Service Commission regulations are illegal.

Former alderman and continued deer lover, Al Gerber spoke against the bill on the same grounds. Gerber, who is always nervous when speaking in public, read a prepared statement saying he was surprised the matter came out of the Planning and Zoning Commission and not the Architectural Review Board. He questioned why a person should have to get a special use permit to provide electric power to their home.

Principia resident tree hugger Dirk Maas also spoke against the bill and forcing residents to get a special use permit to install solar panels.

The bill will be voted on at the first meeting in October, unless city attorney Steve Garrett agrees with the Cole County Court ruling and makes a suggestion to pull the bill.

I originally wrote about the Babb's victory for our Chesterfield area newsletter.

I'm surprised that our city attorney was not on top of this and someone from a neighboring town would have to bring this to our attention.

SCHOOL WINS APPROVAL DESPITE NEIGHBORS' OBJECTIONS. SHARON ROTHMEL SAYS SOMETHING STUPID AND MAYOR THEN CHEWS OUT CITIZENS.

The bill to allow the Raintree Community School to build on the abandoned Amonte subdivision property was up for a vote. At this meeting the two next door neighbors of the property appeared in support of the school. A representative of Laurel Lakes Subdivision, behind the property, had spoken in favor of the school at an earlier meeting. The neighbors were tired of having the empty subdivision with empty lots

where trash and furniture was dumped, teenagers parked at night and delivery drivers took breaks to sleep during the day.

However opposition to the project was in the majority at the meeting as it has been at past meetings.

Mary Sertl presented a petition with 139 signatures against the school being allowed. Clearly Mary was unaware of the similar petition from residents against expanded parking at Longview Park, which the Board ignored. The difference was this school meets the zoning ordinance requirements and basically the board has to approve it. The parking lot issue the Board of Alderman could have followed the overwhelming wishes of the residents but choose not to.

Mrs. Sertl who lives in the 1800 block of South Mason Road also mentioned that at the August meeting her stress level was so high on this issue she had a heart attack. Clearly this was an important issue for Mrs. Sertl since she returned for another meeting.

One resident stated that with any added traffic all the deer in the area would Mason Road more dangerous.

A theme with the people who spoke against the school was the increase in traffic and many were upset on how the public hearing sign about the issue was hidden from view by being posted at the second lot into the subdivision completely out of view of northbound Mason Road traffic and difficult to see for southbound motorists.

I brought this up in July at the Planning and Zoning public hearing. It was almost as if the city did not want anyone to see the sign. Public Hearing signs come under the domain of Planning Director Sharon Rothmel.

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY STUPID: Toward the end of the public comments about the school Mayor/Cigarette Lobbyist Jon “Snidely” Dalton asked Sharon Rothmel to go over the history of the proposed school.

Instead of starting at the beginning Rothmel attempted to defend herself about the lack of a visible Public Hearing” sign being posted.

“Our city employee who posted the sign had to get far enough off the road for their safety,” said Rothmel.

The chambers broke out in laughs, snickers and loud side comments. The reason was that the sign was not posted anywhere close to the road but at least 200 feet off of Mason Road. If what Rothmel had said was true the first lot of the planned subdivision was completely unsafe and never should have been approved. It also played into the hands of people claiming there was too much traffic on Mason Road for the school, if a city employee couldn't place a sign that could be seen for safety reasons.

Upon hearing this Rothmel sat down saying she didn't have to put up with this.

THE SCOLDING: Instead of Dalton hitting his gravel a couple of times to quiet the crowd and making Rothmel continue, he turned red as a beet and started lecturing the citizens for over a couple of minutes on how rude they had been to a city employee. "This isn't how we do things in Town and Country," Dalton said at one point. Dalton must have a very short memory.

Of course the residents had simply reacted to an amazingly stupid statement by a city employee.

Rothmel is apparently special: In the five years I have heard the deer lovers shout down speakers, boo, yell at Aldermen, disrupt Deer Task Force meetings and accuse Capt. Gary Hoelzer of being a blood thirsty animal hater. I never saw Dalton chastise these people or stick up Hoelzer, who he appointed to run the deer management program.

NOT THE FIRST TIME FOR DALTON: Getting red in the face and chewing out people isn't a first for Dalton. The worst case of Dalton becoming enraged was in 2009 when aldermanic candidate Barbara Ann Hughes spoke at a meeting complaining how there were to be no debates before the election. She said someone at the Chamber of Commerce which normally sponsors the debates told her Dalton had a conflict in his schedule for all the proposed dates for the debates. (Of course he did. He had to be in Jefferson City glad handing for tobacco companies!)

When Dalton heard this he turned on Hughes and demanded who told her this and when. He proclaimed it was a lie and Hughes should be ashamed to say such a thing in a public meeting.

Well, it turned out what Hughes had said was true. I confirmed this with a call to the Chamber. She told me that Dalton later privately apologized to her but he never made a public apology after he call Hughes a liar.

THE VOTE: Before voting Skip mange told the crowd the bill protects them as it only allows the school building to be used Monday-through-Friday from 7am to 6pm. It cannot be used at night or on the weekends. The bill passed 6-0.

LONGVIEW PARKING: At the start of the workshop/agenda meeting Skip Mange gave an update on the Longview Park Parking space increase. There no longer seems to be a committee/task force and instead Mange had taken this on as a crusade.

PRICE GOES UP: At first the price to add 15 parking spaces at Longview Park was \$100,000 with funding coming from a parks grant generated by a county wide sales tax in St. Louis and St. Charles counties and from T&C coffers.

Now Mange announced after the \$15,000 engineering study, which the city spent \$11,000 on with \$4,000 coming from another Parks Grant, they needed to add \$25,000 for the project.

This means each new parking space will come out to \$8,333.

The police sight line study showed the best sight line to the east was from the east driveway, which Mange insists in making into an entrance only.

“You can study this all you want,” Mange said realizing that despite facts he is sticking to his plan to have traffic exit at the west driveway.

I did study it just a little and saw that the report had misspelled “sight” throughout as “site.”

Mange said the higher price included electrical lines to the new entrance for lighting and water lines for irrigation.

PLUS \$5,000 TO THE GARDEN CLUB: Mange also proposed giving \$5,000 to Claire Chosid, the long time self appointed president of the Longview Garden Club for landscaping. YIKES! When I was an alderman I was able to stop thousands of dollars going to Chosid and the garden club showing they had no expertise with landscaping, just flowers and gardens. Nothing has changed, except Mange is now on the board and Mange apparently has little regard for tax money.

ANGLES AND DANGLES: Mange reported that the engineers recommended having angled spaces at the entrance on the east side of the parking area. They eliminated a plan for three additional spaces on the west side next to the tennis court as it would

have an adverse effect on the health of a tree. Mange said they would lose four more spaces on the west side if the angled spaces to show a traffic flow for cars to exit on the west side. Instead they recommend keeping the straight-in spaces and putting up one-way signs.

NEXT MEETING TO PASS INCREASING PARKING: Throughout this issue Mange and others have said that the increase in parking is not a done deal until there is a request for the final construction grant. Mange apparently is now assuming it is a done deal as he reported to fellow aldermen they will need to vote on the resolution to forward the request to the Parks Grants Commission which should issue the grant in January.

POT GROWERS ARRESTED ON WEIDMAN ROAD: On Thursday August 20 some area residents noticed Town and Country Police at a house in the 1100 block of Weidman Road. Besides the police, the resident's pit bulls were observed in the yard.

Capt. Gary Hoelzer, who runs the day to day operation of the T&C Police, reported that Town and Country Police were assisting a County Drug Unit which was seizing a number of marijuana plants and making arrests.

FORMER TOWN AND COUNTRY MUNICIPAL JUDGE DIES: Cy Clancy died this week. He was the city's municipal judge in the 1970s until he was forced to resign. This was back in the days before the annexation that doubled the size of the city. Court was held at the old firehouse at Clayton and Ballas. The building is now an insurance office.

Clancy was forced to resign in 1977 after his arrest by a St. Louis Police mounted officer (the the nephew of then police chief, Eugene Camp) in a Forest Park restroom for lewd behavior. Also arrested was a St. Louis resident, Napoleon Rogers.

Few people would have been aware of the arrest, but Ben Thomas, the owner and editor of the weekly Evening Whirl, that covered crime in the north half of the city, put the arrest on the front page of the paper. The story was below the fold because Thomas was unaware that Clancy was a judge.

The Whirl was sold throughout North St. Louis but was also sold at World News across the street of the County courthouse in Clayton. Thomas' stories often had sensational quotes that may or may not have ever been uttered. Many of us still remember the almost X-rated quote from this story.

As a police detective at the time I subscribed to the Whirl because the stories had the names of so many area thieves and their recent arrests.

DEER ACCIDENTS: The police only report two deer car crashes in August. That is down from six deer-car accidents in 2011. YTD there have been 43 deer-accidents as compared with 47 in 2011.

Both accidents were in Ward-3. One was at Clayton Road and Weidman at 8:03pm and the other on Clayton Road at Hwy 141 at 6:36am. Almost half the deer accidents with vehicles will occur in the last four months of the year.

I PREDICT...MANGE TO RUN FOR MAYOR: Skip Mange is giving every indication he wants to run for mayor. What are the indications? He is acting like the mayor now. Mange clearly had been advising Ray Vinson on what steps to take in an attempt to get his sign variance passed. He was also involved with the Raintree school project in Ward-2, having made some of the modifications to the bill. Mange is currently saying more at meetings than Dalton is.

NEWSLETTER SAVES \$18,900: I got an email followed by a telephone call from a resident of the Pittsburgh, PA area. He said thanks to my Patch.com opinion pieces and this newsletter features on Brian Marchant-Calsyn he saved almost \$19,000. He said he was about to send a wire transfer for \$18,900 for a franchise to the healthcare executive search company offered by Dr. Peter Stanos. At the last minute he was cautioned by his bank about the transfer and then decided to run a Google on the name of the person who had been trying to sell him the franchise, Brian Calsyn.

It was then he found the articles, columns and newsletters on Brian Marchant, the ex-con drug dealer who used to live on Topping Road who changed his name to Marchant-Calsyn in 2001 and now is going by Calsyn. It is a good way to distance yourself from the Federal prison time in the 1990s by changing your name regularly.

The man from Pittsburgh looked at Marchant-Calsyn's former company, Health Career Agents that has multiple judgments against it and found it was the exact same business model as Dr. Stanos operation where Marchant-Calsyn is a salesperson.

WHEN A POSITIVE IS A NEGATIVE: I recently experienced something that was called a "positive" but turned out to be a negative. I went in for a stress test and was told I had a "positive test." I thought, "gee that's great. I'm glad I didn't get a "negative test." Imagine my surprise that the very next day I was at St. Luke's in the Cardiac Lab for a heart catheterization.

VACATION PHOTOS: This year's vacation was a success. Neither myself or my wife were injured or charged with attempted murder after spending 14 days, sitting next to each other in small airline seats, while driving over 1,600 miles of highway in Oregon, Washington, California and British Columbia, sharing a 190 square foot stateroom on a cruise ship, and staying together at six different hotels and B&Bs.

The chowder run: We flew into Seattle and then headed toward the coast and went south. There were an amazing number of places claiming to have won awards for the best clam chowder. It was like being in Cape Cod but the sun sets over the ocean.

Here were the five best Chowder samplings we had:

5. Mo's Florence, Oregon
4. Fairmont Hotel Vancouver, BC
3. Paula's Seaside, Oregon
2. Albion Inn Restaurant South of Mendocino, CA
1. The public wharf in Monterey, CA

Best Chicken and Dumplings Troutdale, Oregon:



Tad's started as a depression era beer and fish place, but morphed into having a house specialty of Chicken and Dumplings after WWII. This neon sign has been around for 60 years in front of the roadhouse outside of Troutdale, Oregon along the Columbia River.



If you are going to the ocean you are obligated to snap at least one photo of a lighthouse. This one is at the mouth to the harbor of Vancouver.



You are also obligated to snap a shot of a sunset over the water. Here is mine at Bandon, Oregon.



Sure I could have shown you a photo of the Pacific Ocean from the front of the Glendeven B&B south of Mendocino, California, but instead I snapped my wife feeding our breakfast providers. The B&B uses eggs for breakfast from their own chickens. A packet of chicken feed is located in each guest room and guests are encouraged to feed the chickens while they walk the grounds.



Driving down Highway 1 you are on a constant lookout for bicyclists on curves and hills, but this was the most unique vehicle we had to pass.



I love driving through the twisting and winding mountain roads in Washington, Oregon and California. My second most favorite drive is CAL Highway 1 north of San Francisco, but the best still has to be Highway 1 through Big Sur.

BEST OF ST. LOUIS: The last piece I wrote for a print publication was a baseball preview piece for a east coast magazine in 2006. The last newspaper article I wrote was for a Washington Post commuter paper in 2005. The last hard news magazine print article I wrote was for a national police management magazine in 2000. But I have written thousands of articles, columns, sports stories for websites and this newsletter.

Still imagine my surprise when the Riverfront Times name me the best newspaper columnist in St. Louis for 2012.

<http://www.riverfronttimes.com/bestof/2012/award/best-newspaper-columnist-1699441/>

Best Newspaper Columnist - 2012

John Hoffmann

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You know you're doing something right as an opinion columnist when you manage to get under the skin of Charlie Brennan. And that's precisely what Chesterfield Patch writer John Hoffmann did this past March, when he used his, er, patch of virtual newsprint to tweak the KMOX (1120

AM) radio host for a column about St. Louis tourist attractions that Brennan had recently penned for *USA Today*. Shot back Brennan in Patch's comments queue: "It is irresponsible to promulgate Hoffman's [sic] misinformed straw man arguments in the Chesterfield Patch." Brennan is just one of several big shots to find themselves in Hoffmann's crosshairs over the past year. Last fall Hoffmann, a former cop and Town & Country alderman, put on his gumshoes to track down the police reports from Cardinals TV broadcaster Dan McLaughlin's DUIs. The results were comic gold: Chesterfield police suggested in one report that McLaughlin was so drunk when pulled over that he had soiled his pants. Another Hoffmann column, in which he revealed to readers the makes and models of the cars owned by area politicians, earned the ire of elected officials. One Chesterfield councilman complained that it was "insanity" for Hoffmann's editors to publish such information. And in the end, it seems Hoffmann was indeed too edgy for Patch.com. The AOL-owned publication quit running his ruminations over the summer. Fortunately we can still keep up with the cranky columnist via his own website, www.johnhoffmann.net.

CARTOONS:









