

Letters to the Editor

Recently our mayor stepped out of his role as an impartial arbiter among his constituent's concerns and used the platform of his office to disseminate his opinions concerning the proposal for a single trash hauler. Excerpts of his responses were later posted in the Pikes Peak Bulletin. Since these are opinions and not fact, a mayor of Manitou Springs in a parallel universe might just as easily, and accurately, answered the same questions in the following way:

Q. Given the importance of this proposal, why wasn't it brought to a vote of the citizens?

A. In hind sight this would have been a more appropriate way to have dealt with such an important and invasive proposal. While this proposal could still be referred to the ballot, I feel that since the initial proposal was not brought about by a citizen petition, I don't feel it would be fair for us to require our citizens to initiate a citizen petition to regain their right to vote against this proposal. As such, we will be removing the proposal.

Q. Why can't each of us choose our own hauler? What happened to Freedom of Choice in Manitou?

A. This is difficult because as a government we only want to take away Freedom of Choice in the rarest of circumstances; when public safety is concerned or when the benefits far outweigh the costs. Since there is nothing in this proposal that cannot be achieved by allowing our citizens to maintain their Freedom of Choice, I believe it best to trust our citizens to make the decisions they believe best for their given circumstances.

Ultimately, as leaders we recognize by protecting our neighbor's right to Freedom of Choice we protect our own.

Moreover, I know how upset members of council, restaurants, and local business owners would feel if they were forced to give up their current trash hauler of choice. With this in mind, council wants to be as even-handed and fair as possible because citizens and future bidders watching this process may wonder if tomorrow they will find themselves in the same position as those treated unfairly today.

Q. Will this proposal actually lower are carbon footprint, lower the cost to the customer at no cost to the city?

A. I believe it is incumbent upon our council to empirically demonstrate that this proposal will actually reduce our carbon footprint, especially in light of concerns over the commercial exemption and issues over carbon relocation. Since at present we can not demonstrate this, it is a difficult proposal to justify. The proposal does -not lower costs for all citizens, but instead shifts costs from single family residential homes to multi-family residential homes. Finally, I have serious concerns that this proposal is not cost effective, especially when one factors in the \$ 100,000 cost for new software, the necessity to create a new position in the finance department for \$43,000 and the high probability of rate increases to the customer in the future.

Q. When you get only one bid, shouldn't you automatically re-bid it?

A. Not necessarily, but given the circumstances surrounding this particular bid process the city should re-bid it. It is not uncommon for only one bid to be received, nor is it uncommon for a municipality to re-bid a contract. However, if bids are not submitted because of unaddressed concerns over the bid process or over confusion as to the actual terms of the program, the proposal should be re-bid. When one considers that even some of our city council members are confused as to the actual terms and design of the program, it argues strongly for the program to

be discarded, or clarified and re-bid. To maintain the public's trust it is critical that the city does not give even the slightest suggestion of impropriety.

Q. Shouldn't Springs Waste be given a second opportunity to bid?

A. Yes. In light of the problems surrounding the bid process detailed in the previous response, I believe Springs Waste's concerns should be addressed and an open and transparent bid process be conducted.

In conclusion, as mayor, I want our constituents to know that council is sensitive to their concerns. We recognize that in the end this is their money that we are making decisions about and during these economically straining times we will not spend their money unless it is absolutely necessary. Lest anyone say council is concerned for the environment so long as it doesn't come out of their pocket, I hereby pledge that should council pass this measure, should anyone's trash removal costs increase council will permit them to have an opt out or council will pay the increase out of their own pockets.

Eric Fredrickson

To the City Council:

As Ollie would say to Stan, "This is a fine mess you've got us in!"

On March 25, the headline in the Pikes Peak Bulletin for an article written by Jeanne Davant read, "Trash collection service will start May 1." It was an assertion that would effectively make one think the matter of trash collection was no longer to be discussed.

Many, I'm sure, were disarmed. We were told that only one company had offered a bid and in the first paragraph of the story, we read, "... the new single-hauler waste disposal that is set to go into effect May 1."

One needed to read no further. It was a done deal.

If one reads the entire article, it is apparent that the headline is misleading. Much is to yet be considered.

On March 24, Dan Shrader, Springs Waste Systems manager, wrote a letter to all Manitou residents in which he explained his reason for not submitting a bid for the contract. In spite of what the highly-trained and arrogant mountain runner Matt Carpenter called "trash," I found Mr. Shrader's letter to be quite informative.

As a result of questions asked by Bestway owner Phil Kiemer at the April 14 council meeting, and raised in Mr. Shrader's letter, Shrader was proven correct in maintaining that he could not, in good faith, offer a bid until such questions as were later raised, were answered. Hmmm?

In an article appearing in the Gazette on April 18 by Scott Rappold, I learned of the mysterious and apparently powerful Teri Christman. In the article, I am told that Ms. Christman, recent arrival from Minneapolis, is shocked at this backward little town who still must believe in free enterprise. I quote from the Gazette, "... She did some research and got the ear of city officials, who agreed to consider a single-hauler system. She convinced the city to issue a request for bids and wrote the contract with Bestway and the proposed ordinance.

Wow! I didn't know I could do stuff like that as a resident. Hmmm?

In a letter to the editor in the Pikes Peak Bulletin, Mayor Marc Snyder mentions what a hard worker Teri is, but didn't tell us she was the author of the contract and ordinance.

It appears that some transparency (the word of the year) is needed. Something doesn't smell right. No pun intended.

We have a question or two.

Why has Mr. Shrader been treated so poorly?

Is this \$48,000 figure that is burning a hole in the council's collective pockets as liquid as purported, or is Mr. Shrader right about the \$21,000 of added expense for servicing city properties?

According to many studies, carbon dioxide makes up but 2 percent of the atmosphere. Is the "carbon footprint" a reality or a concocted hoax by global warming myth makers and those who think government force is fabulous?

Further action on this scheme should be scrapped altogether. Don't we have more than enough government breathing down bur necks?

John C. and Joanne E. Seelye

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