

## UNAPPROVED CHESTERFIELD NEWSLETTER 48



October 31, 2013

By John Hoffmann

**FIREFIGHTERS AND UNION MEMBERS PICKET IN THE RAIN BEFORE MONARCH MEETING:** Immediately before the Tuesday October 29 Monarch Fire Protection Board of Directors meeting a large group of Monarch firefighters and other union firefighters from Local 2665 picketed outside of the headquarters building on Olive Blvd. The reason for the pickets was to show support for Assistant Fire Chief John Borgmann, who was facing a discipline hearing before the Board of Directors.



At first it looked odd since Borgmann is no longer a member of the union and is a non-union command officer. However if you go back to November of 2011 the former board that was considered by many to be “pro-union” fired the entire command staff with the exception of the fire chief who retired. The firings came after female firefighters won a sexual harassment lawsuit. Oddly enough the non-union command staff was fired, but the shift supervisors, all union members had apparently either not seen the harassment or allowed it to happen.

Tom Vineyard was hired as the new chief. Vineyard came from the old Wellston Fire Protection District, which had just one firehouse and only a one-pumper company. He was however considered a strong “union man.”

The other vacancies on command staff were filled with all fire captains who all belonged to local 2665. This included Borgmann who was made Assistant Fire Chief.

According to union supporters Borgmann was brought up a charges of “insubordination” for comments he made at a September 4 Budget Workshop meeting that were directed at Fire Board Director Jane Cunningham. The meeting was open to the public but from what we have learned there were no members of the public in attendance. There is no transcript of the meeting or minutes.

It is also interesting that Borgmann was represented at the “closed” disciplinary hearing on Tuesday by Local 2665 attorney Rick Berry.



Borgmann and Chief vineyard, not exactly all smiles, after posing with new fire board member and former state senator Jane Cunningham in April.

There was no action taken on October 29 according to Berry.

At most meetings Borgmann sits at the end of the dais and doesn't say a thing unless spoken to. However, the few times he and Chief Vineyard have spoken they seem to be somewhat annoyed with the new board. At the last two meetings I have attended Chief Vineyard has asked to be heard on a subject, Board President Harris tells him to go ahead and then stops him in mid sentence.



Fire union members crowded into the District meeting rooms. The fire marshal rating for the room is 49 persons. I counted 52.

**LABOR NEGOTIATIONS THE MONARCH WAY:** Despite being out of town for 12 days, I was able to pick up on the Monarch news without missing a beat. They are interesting to say the least.



Negotiations under way on October 14.



A different configuration for the October 29 session.

**SAME OLD SAME OLD:** The October 14 labor negotiations began with a familiar refrain. The firefighters union was still very upset that the negotiations were being done in public open meetings instead of behind closed doors.

“We are still under protest that these are open meetings,” said Local 2665 negotiator Keith Goldstein. Who approved this proposal, all of you?

“Yes,” replied fire board president, Robin Harris, indicating that even Steven Swyers, considered the pro union member of the board favored open public meetings.

**JAMIE ALLMAN HAS NEW LISTENERS:** The October 14 negotiations session included a review of Jane Cunningham's appearance on the Jamie Allman in the Morning radio show the previous Friday. The review by firefighter Chris Obery, who is on the negotiating team, was not favorable but was accurate, causing Cunningham to apologize for misstating facts concerning the negotiations and the current contract.

Using the misstatement of facts by Cunningham he made a request.

"We ask that this contract is not negotiated in the media," he said. This is a point Local 2665 has to keep in mind. Cunningham is extremely popular in West County and if they can politely keep her from discussing the contract in the media they will be miles ahead. However, if they get aggressive and attack her in the media they will be having problems with the taxpayers who are funding the operation.

**FIREFIGHTERS ASK FOR ONE YEAR CONTRACT:** The union negotiating team asked for a one-year contract only. Board president Robin Harris was not too keen on that idea.

"You hate to be repeating this process every year. The last one took 1½-years to negotiate," said Harris, indicating that one-year deal would mean the board would be in constant negotiations year round.

At the October 29 meeting Harris compromised and stated that the District would instead of asking for a 3-year contract be satisfied with a 2-year deal. The union team did not do cartwheels and made no comment on the offer.

**UNION FIGHTS ELIMINATION OF PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS FOR DUES:** The union is none too happy about the proposal to eliminate the fire district withholding union dues from employee paychecks. Brent Coleman of the Local 2665 negotiation team asked how much the deduction of dues costs the district and asked if Harris, a senior airline pilot has his union dues deducted from his check. Harris said his dues are deducted. But there is a difference. Delta Airlines is a private company. Monarch FPD is a taxpayer supported government agency.

Harris asked if the district should pay firefighters' utility bills and car payments too.

Jane Cunningham stated that the question of the costs of payroll deduction of union dues is simple. There is a cost for all additional banking or payroll services.

Keith Goldstein, who has had a hardcore attitude in the negotiations, asked Steven Swyers at the October 14 session if he favored eliminating the union dues payroll deduction. Swyers said he was not in favor of the proposal but did want to see the union pay for all costs associated with the process and indemnifying the districts against any mistakes.

Goldstein attempted to ask Swyers again at the October 29 session but was told his question was not on topic by Harris.

Swyers however answered and repeated that he had no problem with the deductions if they did not cost the district any money or if the union paid for any additional costs.

“I have no problem with it (union dues deductions) if it doesn’t impact the bottom line,” said Swyers.

Goldstein got Cunningham to admit that several attempts to have the State of Missouri stop deducting union dues from payroll checks have failed.

Cunningham was quick to point out that the State of Tennessee has stopped the practice, causing Goldstein and a number of firefighters in the audience to say, “We aren’t in Tennessee.”

**ALCOHOL AND DRUG TESTING:** The October 29 contract session opened with Cunningham talking about the need for additional alcohol and drug testing of employees. Currently engineers (firefighters assigned to drive fire trucks) and paramedics who are driving ambulances involved in accidents are tested. However Cunningham wants employees who are injured at fire scenes, medical emergencies and vehicle accident scenes to be tested also. She cited the high number of past work comp claims and the need for the district to be sure employees are alcohol and drug free.

Brent Coleman questioned Cunningham by asking her if a paramedic caught the flu by being exposed to a sick patient, should he be tested also. She paused and then said yes. Union attorney Rick Berry took exception to her answer.

Cunningham admitted that while state law does not require the alcohol and drug testing it allows it to be required if a policy requires it.





Cunningham also wants random drug and alcohol tests and the policy authority to search employees' cars on District property.

"The District does not have the right to open my truck," said Brent Coleman.

Cunningham then mentioned the policy could include "reasonable suspicion" to search a vehicle. This brought questions as to who she would want to conduct the searches. Shift supervisors were mentioned. Of course shift supervisors are also union members.



The Local 2665 negotiation team (from top to bottom, Keith Goldstein, Brent Coleman, Capt. John Schupp, attorney Rick Berry).

**PROMOTION EVALUATORS:** Cunningham also presented a list of people to be sit on the merit based evaluation panels for promotions.

The fire union was not happy with this. Their position is there is currently a promotion list and the district should promote off that list.

“The District is blatantly violating the terms of the current agreement,” said Rick Berry.

Board member Steven Swyers agreed.

Cunningham presented a list of 17 names. Many of them are well known in the St. Louis region and in the fire service. The list includes current and former fire chiefs, Gene Gieselmann, the former trainer of the St. Louis Cardinals for 29 years (until being forced out by Tony La Russa), a former NFL referee and a person who last was on the front page for sending threatening emails to a fellow alderman in Town and Country

Cunningham’s list looked pretty good until you came to the name of David Karney. In late October of 2010 a Town and Country alderman received an email from someone claiming to be “J. Storehouse.” The email proclaimed that it was people like the alderman who should be shot and not deer.

The alderman made a police report. By December the police had traced the email to one of Karney’s computers. Karney then admitted the email came from his computer but that he did not send it. Karney had been a former mayor and at the time was a sitting alderman.

For one year I served on the Town and Country Board of Aldermen with Karney. I searched my computer email files and found that I had received an email from “J. Storehouse” also. Karney was forced to withdraw from an upcoming election. Bill McClellan even wrote a column about it.

[http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/columns/bill-mcclellan/civility-takes-a-hit-in-dignified-suburb/article\\_f86597b0-74a7-53ef-9af6-f2b336f8637c.html](http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/columns/bill-mcclellan/civility-takes-a-hit-in-dignified-suburb/article_f86597b0-74a7-53ef-9af6-f2b336f8637c.html)

Karney was active with Town and Country’s contract fire and EMS provider, the West County EMS and Fire Protection District. In fact as mayor Karney had approved what a decade later was determined to be grossly overpriced fire service contract. Karney loved to go to fires and fire training events for politicians.

In a law enforcement career that was over 30 years, 10 of those years I worked as an arson investigator. We had a name for people like Karney...we called them "fire fruits." They were people who could never actually be a firefighter but really wanted to be.

Here is a photo of Karney at an event put on by some fire districts for local politicians.



If Karney's name stays on the Evaluator List, the fire union should have a field day.

**THE WELL DRESSED FIRE CAPTAIN:** I guess I have reached the stage of life where I'm now an old fart. I believe in being comfortable and dressing casual. Two years that I was on the Town and Country Board of Aldermen I never wore a tie to a meeting. Jane Cunningham is always the best dressed at a Monarch Fire Protection meeting, while Robin Harris and Steven Swyers often take the casual approach.

However the appearance of Monarch FPD Captain Dave Schmidt made me wonder if I was completely out of the loop when it comes to dressing. Schmidt showed up to the October 14 Monarch meeting to give a report to the Board of Directors on the need to purchase 50 new Self-contained Breathing Apparatus face pieces. He was wearing a t-shirt, shorts, no socks and sneakers.





On October 29 Cunningham had matching leopard print scarf and shoes. No fire Captains addressed the board in shorts and flip flops at that meeting.

**SECURITY/POLICE PROTECTION DOUBLED:** After the first Monarch meeting in October that saw a room full of people upset over the Pink T-shirt issue, the board doubled the security at the October 14 meeting, by adding a second off-duty St. Louis County police officer. The Union had gone to the media and created the Pink controversy claiming the fire Board was against firefighters raising money for breast cancer research. The board relented and allowed them to wear pink-shirts in place of their district uniform, but the shirts had to meet the specifications of the charity and the board. Both don't want union logos on the shirts. That somewhat backfired on the union when a few days later the Post-Dispatch ran a story where the leader of the charity came out and said political and union logos should not be on apparel associated with the charity.



Two officers in opposite sides of the room at the October 14 Monarch meeting.



Two different officers were on guard before the October 29 meeting.

**EXPENSIVE PREMIUMS FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS:** On October 14 the Board of Directors voted to obtain \$5,000,000 in personal coverage to protect their personal assets in the event they were sued for something that occurred in the performance of their jobs. The board as a whole is protected under the current insurance policy, but individual board members were not. The cost of the coverage was a whopping premium of \$146,000.

On October 29 the Board goosed the coverage up even more by voting 2-to-1 to obtain excess personal coverage in the event that \$5,000,000 is not enough. The premium for the excess coverage is \$60,000. That is a total of \$206,000 for individual coverage of the board members. Steve Swyers voted against spending more money.

Of course from an insurance standpoint, Monarch in recent years has been a bad risk against lawsuits. The two-year long sex harassment and discrimination lawsuit was followed by lawsuits filed by the command staff that was fired.

**THE VIPER PIT?** I saw a t-shirt being worn by a Monarch firefighter at the October 29 meeting that got my attention. On the back of the T-Shirt was “The Viper Pit House 1 Monarch FPD.”

Now, fire stations (also known as engine houses) in large metropolitan areas get nicknames, usually because the station responds to the most calls or the most multiple alarm fires.

In New York City almost every fire station has a nickname, such as the “Red Hook Raiders” in Brooklyn or a ladder company also in Brooklyn calling itself “The Happy Hookers.” In Queens one fire station is called “The Vipers’ Nest.”

But to have such a nickname in Chesterfield, where there are not any fires to speak of struck me as peculiar. The Viper Pit in the Monarch District is House 1 located on Baxter Road near Clarkson Road. Who are the vipers? Are they the residents in the area that crews respond to on EMS calls? Are the fellow firefighters at House 1 snakes? For a group of firefighters working in an area without any fire calls to speak of to come up with nicknames like “The Viper Pit” might be an indication of people with too much time on their hands.



**MILLION DOLLAR DIEHL STILL RAKING IT IN:** Town and Country State Rep John Diehl, who since 2008 has always run unopposed in primary and general elections pulled in another \$86,180 in campaign contributions in the third quarter of this non-election year. **That brings Diehl's total for money raised to run against no one to a staggering \$1,324,896.**

If you remember over the years Diehl has been accepting almost all of this money from companies and persons outside of his legislative district. Contributors have included those from the tobacco, liquor, gambling and health care industries.



If you read our Ex-Alderman Newsletter 91 from July you'd know that Diehl was hoping to win the Republican caucus Speaker of the House vote this year for the 2015 term. In garnering support his finance report filed with the Missouri Ethics Commission showed he was taking individual Republican caucus members out to dinners ranging in price from \$113 to \$682. The \$242 dinner for two at the Ecco Lounge in Jefferson City really got our attention. The Ecco Lounge is similar to Smitty's on Clayton Road where most entrees are between \$12 and \$16.

[http://www.johnhoffmann.net/ex\\_newsletter\\_91.pdf](http://www.johnhoffmann.net/ex_newsletter_91.pdf)

Here are some of Diehl's contributors from the third quarter of this year giving \$500 or more :

\$5,000	Mark Gardner	Springfield, MO	Lawyer
\$2,500	AT&T	St. Louis	Telecommunications
\$5,000	Major Brands	St. Louis	Liquor Distributor
\$2,000	Liberty Mutual	Sunset Hills	Insurance
\$500	Missouri Troopers Assoc	Jefferson City	Labor Org
\$500	Assoc of MO Electric Coop	Jefferson City	Utility PAC
\$1,000	Ameren Missouri PAC	Jefferson City	Utility PAC
\$500	MO Council of Firefighters	Blue Springs	Labor PAC
\$1,000	John Bardgett & Associates	Chesterfield	Lobbyist
\$4,000	Maco Development Co	Clarkton	Commercial Dev
\$5,000	Fred Weber Construction	Maryland Heights	Road construction
\$2,500	WalMart	Bentonville, AR	Retailer
\$1,000	McBride and Sons	Chesterfield	Home builder
\$300	Casey General Stores	Ankeny, IA	Retailer

\$500	Walgreens	Deerfield, IL	Retailer
\$500	Mo Healthcare Assoc	Jefferson City	Healthcare PAC
\$1,000	Norfolk Southern	Norfolk, VA	Railroad
\$1,000	MO Independent Bankers	Liberty	Banking
\$500	Tenet	Dallas, TX	Healthcare
\$1,000	MO Ambulatory Surgery	Lees Summit	Healthcare
\$1,000	Eli Lilly	Indianapolis, IN	Drug Manufacturer
\$500	CGI Technologies & Sol.	Fairfax, VA	Business Services
\$1,000	MLPA	Jefferson City	Limestone Producers PAC
\$500	MO Medical PAC	Jefferson City	Healthcare PAC
\$500	Credit Union PAC	Jefferson City	Banking PAC
\$500	MO Energy Development	Jefferson City	PAC
\$1,000	MO Petro & Conv. Stores	Jefferson City	Retailers' PAC
\$500	MO County Collectors	Edina	Government Association
\$1,500	Realtors' PAC	Columbia	Real Estate PAC
\$1,000	BNSF	Ft. Worth, TX	Railroad
\$500	Hy-Vee Employees' PAC	Des Moines, IA	Retail
\$1,000	MO Healthcare Assn	Jefferson City	Healthcare PAC
\$1,000	HCA Good Govt Fund	Jefferson City	PAC
\$500	MO Asphalt Pavers Assoc	Jefferson City	Construction PAC
\$1,000	MO Consumer Lenders	Jefferson City	Banking PAC
\$1,000	MO Pharmacy PAC	Jefferson City	Drugs
\$500	Rosana Biondo	Kansas City	President Mark One Electric
\$1,000	Terrance Dunn	Leawood, KS	J.E. Dunn Construction
\$500	Treanor Architects	Lawrence, KS	Construction
\$1,200	Hallmark Cards	Kansas City	Greeting Cards
\$500	Builders Construction PAC	Kansas City	Construction PAC
\$1,000	Polsinelli	Kansas City	Law firm
\$2,500	J.E. Dunn Construction	Kansas City	Construction
\$2,500	William Henry Agency	Kansas City	Insurance
\$1,000	MO Chamber PAC	Jefferson City	PAC
\$5,000	Noranda	New Madrid	Mining/Recycling
\$4,500	Altria Client Services	Richmond, VA	Tobacco
\$500	General Motors PAC	Washington, DC	Auto Manufacturing
\$500	Merck, sharp & Dohme	Whitehouse Sta. NJ	Healthcare
\$1,000	ANR Pipeline	Houston, TX	Energy
\$2,500	United Healthcare	Minneapolis, MN	Healthcare
\$500	RGA Reinsurance	Chesterfield	Insurance
\$1,000	Ameristar Casino	St. Charles	Gambling
\$1,000	Ameristar Casino	Kansas City	Gambling

\$2,000	Charter Communications	Town and Country	Cable TV
\$2,000	Comcast	Philadelphia, PA	Cable TV
\$1,000	Anheuser-Busch	St. Louis	Beer

**WHERE DID THE MONEY GO?** A large chunk of it as usual went to paying off credit card debt to the tune of \$13,456. That is a lot of money for a non-election year. Plus Diehl paid tens of thousands to political consults, a campaign worker, bank fees and postage.

Then there were the hotels and airplane tickets. Diehl represents Town and Country and Chesterfield in Jefferson City. So what was he doing spending \$827 at the Crown Point Golf Club in Farmington, MO. He claimed it was for fundraising, but listed no fundraising revenue. Then there were the hotel stays at the Hilton in Chicago, Illinois, The Hampton Inn in Kansas City, The Embassy Suites in Kansas City, The Hampton Inn in St. Joseph, Ramada Inn in Springfield and food at Legal Seafood in Atlanta, plus all the airline tickets.

But the big money...\$63,300 went to all current Republicans House members in the form of contributions of either \$500 or \$1,000. While it was a non-election year, Diehl wanted his fellow Republicans to elect him as speaker of the house for 2015 in a 2013 party caucus. It worked he was tentatively elected the speaker for 2015. Of course that might not happen if the Democrats take control of the House, an unlikely scenario or if Diehl finally faces some opposition in 2014 for his house seat and loses, also if history is a guide an unlikely event.

Some might call this Diehl being generous with his fellow lawmakers. Others might see it as Diehl simply buying votes. I tend to be in the second group.

**CATCHING UP ON OUR READING** When we returned from our third and final vacation for 2013 I spent several days catching up on my reading from local papers and magazines. Here are a few things I noticed:

**From the Post-Dispatch:**

**Boy 16, is fatally shot on baseball field at city park...**The article from the October 23 edition of the Post was a about a 16-year-old shot and killed on a baseball field at Goodfellow Blvd. and St. Louis Avenue. The article mentioned that the shooting may have been in retaliation for a shooting a week earlier. I was surprised...not about the shooting of a teenager in North St. Louis but that there was a baseball field on Goodfellow at St. Louis Ave.



**Speed sign ‘advice’ to vanish on I-270, I-255...**...A story on how MODOT was going to remove the electronic speed limit signs.

I was working as an editor for Nokia which provided traffic reporting services for websites, TV and radio stations. I worked at the MODOT Traffic Management Center on I-64 at Hwy 141. I was there in 2008 when MODOT spent \$1,000,000 to install these electronic speed limit signs where the speed limit would be lowered based on traffic conditions. For over a year MODOT hired two part time employees during morning and evening rush hours just to work the signs and lower the speed limits when accidents occurred or volume caused traffic to slow.

It quickly became clear to those of us working on the floor monitoring all the cameras that the variable speed limit system was a waste of money. Simple message boards already in place could advise motorists of slow traffic ahead. However it took MODOT over five years to figure this out.

**TOWN AND STYLE MAGAZINE:** We have pointed out repeatedly how Bill Beggs, Jr. does not know crap about West County. Beggs, typically never actually goes out and attends a meeting or interviews anyone. He normally lifts stories from other publications for his Talk of the Towns column. Several years ago he blatantly lifted a column I wrote for the Chesterfield Patch.

Recently he placed the Manchester WalMart store in Ballwin. He or the editors routinely use the logo for the City of Rock Hill to accompany stories about Richmond Heights.

Now in the October 16 edition of Town and Style he claims that the AKC Museum of the Dog in Queeny Park along Mason Road is in Ballwin. While all of Queeny Park is in unincorporated St. Louis County, Mason Road in front of the Dog Museum is in Town and Country. In fact 2/3s of Queeny Park is surrounded by Town and Country. Not an inch of the park borders Ballwin.

The zip code for the Dog Museum is 63131, the Des Peres Post Office. Heck the mailman who delivers my mail also delivers the mail at the Dog Museum. The City of Manchester is between the Dog Museum and the City of Ballwin. Correctness has never appeared to be important to either Mr. Beggs or the editors of Town and Style.

**MUSIC:** Normally I run in this space some of the jazz or big band events I have been at or that will be upcoming in the area. However, I have been out of town for a

while...so here are a few shots of music I was enjoying and in some cases not enjoying that much.

We were on the Cunard Queen Mary 2 cruise ship. While I cannot recommend it, I certainly can recommend the Mark Hodgson Jazz Trio that played every night in the Chart Room Bar. While the drummer and bass player are youngsters, Hodgson, born outside of Yorkshire and now living with his wife on Bali, when he is not on a cruise ship, is a talent on the piano doing jazz.



The Canadian Royal Navy Reserve Concert Band's sax section played in the ship terminal in Quebec City. They were okay. However, a full concert by the Canadian Navy Concert Band later that night, made me glad to be an American with the US Navy and Air force bands which are soooo much better than these guys.



The Manhattan Dolls performing with the Queen Mary 2 Dance Band, doing some of the Andrew Sisters greatest hits. The difference is that none of the Dolls were the least bit homely as were all of the Andrew Sisters.

**VACATION PHOTOS:** Here are a few of my favorite shots from our New England and Canada vacation. My wife and I make it a point to try and avoid the usual tourist spots and if in Canada or the US to rent a car whether we have flown in or on cruise ships and explore off the beaten path.



We were driving down residential streets of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia about 90 minutes south of Halifax at 10:30 in the morning when we saw an antique fire truck being pulled out of a garage on Lorne Street. Of course I stopped and started to talk to Will Brooks, a retired PhD in Psychology from a local university and a former command staffer with the local volunteer fire department. Will built a garage behind his house that is like a firehouse. He has a 1937 American La France pumper from Cumberland, Maryland and a 1915 Model T fire truck. We spent an hour visiting with him.





Boston

Boston is one of America's greatest cities to walk in. However this was the view of Boston from the balcony on the cruise ship. It looked like an area in Eastern Europe that was bombed during WWII and never rebuilt.



Fall colors along the Gold River in Nova

Scotia. Nova Scotia was the best for leaf peeping.

## FOOD:



Maine

A lunch of lobster, a crab roll, sweet potato crinkle fries, home cut regular fries and slaw in a small town an hour north of Bar Harbor, Maine. Note the bottle of Capt. Eli's Blueberry Pop.

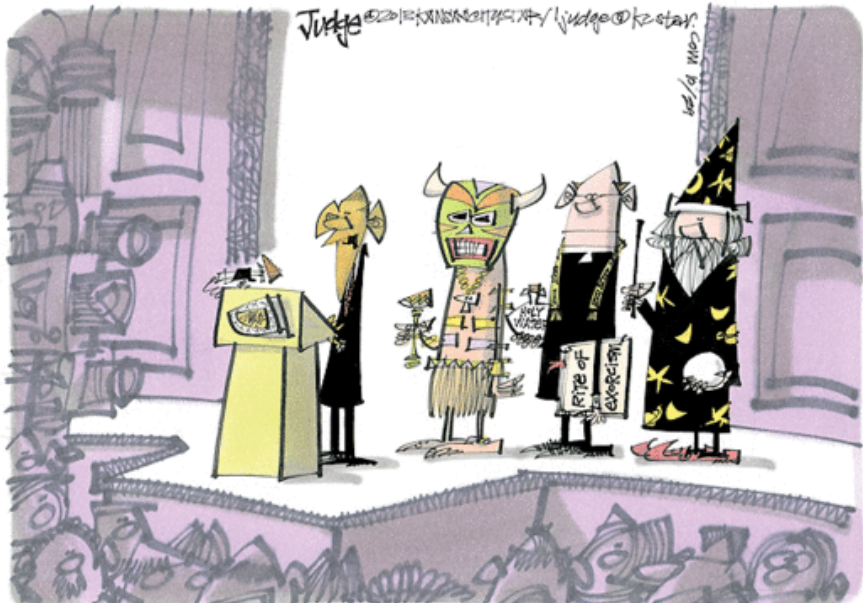


The best bowl of Chowder on our trip was at Kedy's Inlet Café in Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia. White gloved tea service was every day on the cruise ship from 3:30-to-4:30. Luckily we were off the ship at that time on most days. Early on you figured out you had to eliminate meals each day or you would explode.

## CARTOONS:



"The kitchen needs some upgrading, but you're going to love the media room!"



"The good news is we've assembled a team of experts with the skills necessary to fix our website."





"SO THEN WE FIGURED AS LONG AS WE WERE EXHIBITING RARE BIRDS FIGHTING EXTINCTION..."



