

UNAPPROVED CHESTERFIELD NEWSLETTER 5

July 17, 2012

By John Hoffmann

Clarkson Valley is More Than a Country Club It is Also a Money Pit or Be Careful

What You Wish For: In May Chesterfield Mayor Bruce Geiger opened a City Council meeting by mentioning that he along with the mayor of Wildwood had been contacted by Clarkson Valley mayor Scott Douglass who inquired about the possibility of being merged with either town. Some local press reports used the word annexation which was incorrect since Clarkson Valley is already an existing city.

http://www.stltoday.com/suburban-journals/metro/news/clarkson-valley-mayor-surprises-cities-with-map-plan-maneuver/article_612558b8-2d12-521b-95bd-8a8dde765641.html

Upon hearing this, three members of the council made side remarks on how that would mean a high quality golf course (Forest Green) in the city limits, apparently taking a shot at very flat Landings Golf Course next the Spirit of St Louis Airport and nine-hole course at the Four Seasons Country Club near Woods Mill Road and Olive Blvd.

Why would the mayor of the high end community like Clarkson Valley with plenty of snob appeal, be looking to dilute its position on the West County “I am Richer than You” meter by joining Chesterfield or Wildwood. The reason is simple. Rich people like to hang on to their money and it is getting expensive to operate the city of 2,632.

<http://www.city-data.com/city/Clarkson-Valley-Missouri.html>

Clarkson Valley does not have any commercial property to speak of, plus it belongs to the County sales tax pool. Over the last few years Clarkson Valley has operated at a deficit, which means property tax raises could be looming. The 2012-13 budget year that just started, showed a modest surplus of \$130,000. One major unexpected incident would quickly wipe that off the books.

While adding an area of 13 subdivisions plus a country club might be appealing, providing services isn't. Clarkson valley currently has one full time and two part time employees and contracts out police, roads and trash pickup.

Clarkson Valley is bordered by four cities, Ballwin, Ellisville, Wildwood and Chesterfield. Mayor Douglass is playing the “Snoburbia” card by only asking Chesterfield and Wildwood to consider consolidation in the future. I mean's what is the point of owning a

\$2.2 million home on several acres of land and having to tell people you live in Ballwin or Ellisville?

Chesterfield should avoid getting sucked into any talk of swallowing Clarkson Valley. It has just been two years since Chesterfield shaved closed to \$2,000,000 off its budget by eliminating unfilled jobs and laying off employees including cops. Inside the city limits of Clarkson Valley is a high school that requires a fair share of police presence. Also Clarkson valley is loaded with homes equipped with alarm systems, which is still more of a drain on police resources. .

Besides there are too many modest homes on small lots in Chesterfield! It is clear the folks in Clarkson Valley want to keep costs down but still have others know they are “swells.” To do that, they should only consider being consolidated with Wildwood.

SOLAR PANEL FLARE UPS OFTEN MAKE NO SENSE: In my home office is the “column chair.” It is where I toss newspaper articles whose subject matter I think might make a good column, first for Patch.com and now for the Unapproved Chesterfield Newsletter.

I had tossed a story by Post-Dispatch reporter Margaret Gillerman on how the City of Clayton was going to install 327 solar array panels on the parking garage for the new police station. In the article the total cost for the project is \$882,000 and was going to save the City of Clayton \$14,000 a year.

Clayton Mayor Linda Goldstein praised the project that is largely funded by federal stimulus money. I don't have to be math major to figure this out and it is not a savings at all but a boondoggle. Apparently Mayor Goldstein is one of those local politicians who believes “If it isn't from the Clayton city tax coffers it isn't really tax money.” It is as if the funding comes from state or Federal sources it isn't really tax money.

In this case it is real tax money and it is a rip off. The break even point if you don't have to replace the solar panels (which you will) is 64 years. I have a feeling in the next 64 years there just might be some even more energy efficient power sources than what will be installed on the Clayton Police parking garage in 2012.

I threw this article onto my future column chair only to see that I was not the only person to notice these numbers don't add up.

First I got an email from Manchester blogger Lee Presser who pointed out how Mayor Goldstein was throwing money down a “green hole.” Next on Monday July 9, 2012

there were two letters to the editor in the St. Louis Post Dispatch from residents of Des Peres and Glendale that point out the same thing. The Post-Dispatch runs two letters on a subject it usually means they had a large number of letters to choose from. Here are the thoughts of Brian Kleber of Glendale and Betty Stuckhoff of Des Peres. I am shocked that none of the smart people in Clayton were able to figure this out.

Wasting money on uneconomical projects like solar panels in Clayton

The article "Solar power expected to cut costs in Clayton" (July 4) mentions two projects: a project for retrofitting a building in Clayton with energy-efficient equipment and a solar project.

The retrofit project at a cost of \$978,000 and an annual savings of \$191,000 is an economical project with a relatively short pay-back period of around six years.

However, the article also clearly shows that the solar project is not economically justified. The cost of the solar project is \$882,000, and the annual savings is \$14,000. Pay-back would be in excess of 63 years, but solar panels last only 20 to 40 years. In addition, the \$882,000 is the first cost and does not reflect any maintenance or replacement costs.

Public funds, whether from the federal government or local sources, should not be spent on uneconomical projects such as this. This is why we have a deficit.

Brian Kleber • Glendale

Other people's money

While the article "Solar power expected to cut costs in Clayton" (July 4) seems accurately reported, the headline is anything but accurate. For \$882,000, mostly federal stimulus money, St. Louis County expects a savings of \$14,000 per year. That's a 63-year pay-back without taking into account the time value of money. Would any sensible homeowner make an investment of \$882 to save \$14 a year?

Perhaps the green energy benefits are worth the investment, perhaps not. But the project is not a savings for taxpayers. A better headline would have been: "What happens when politicians spend other people's money."

Betty Struckhoff • Des Peres

Read more: http://www.stltoday.com/news/opinion/mailbag/letters-to-the-editor-july/article_433b0567-9372-57ad-a841-e0b23b88ac66.html#ixzz208Z4Z9A1

WEST COUNTY SOLAR CASES: The City of Manchester installed solar panels on their Public Works facility with little fanfare and no controversy.

PARKWAY SCHOOLS: The Parkway School District just entered into a 20-year agreement with Brightergy to put solar panels on 33 buildings and maintain the system. The cost for Parkway will be \$72,300 a year. The district expects to save \$1.2 million over 20 years, but the system will cost \$1.4 million. With discounts for early payments the Parkway plans to break even.

I sure hope Parkway has it fingers crossed. 20-years can be a long time. A couple of cool and cloudy years with less sunshine could play havoc with the figures. Life expectancy of the solar panels being shorter than planned is a real concern.

In the June press release the school district seems to be hedging against the public relations problem of losing money by announcing the solar panels would be used as a teaching tool and pointing out the reduction is carbon CO2 emissions.

However the panels will only result in replacing 2.2-percent of electricity purchased from Ameren UE. You have to wonder if by waiting on technology improvements over five-to-10-years that the savings could not be greater. <http://townandcountry-manchester.patch.com/articles/parkway-schools-ok-rooftop-solar-panels-for-electricity>

TOWN AND COUNTRY: The first West County solar project that got some media attention was in Town and Country. This issue was not so much about solar but where the panels were going to be installed.

A young couple with lots of money were building a tear down on the end of Town and Country Lane. The house would not qualify as a McMansion, but a straight up mansion.

They wanted to have solar panels, but did not want them on their roof or to have ground mounted panels that they could see from their windows. Instead they opted to put the panels along their rear property line next to the backyards of their neighbors in a different subdivision.

The couple promised to use plantings to hide the panels, but of course they could not completely hid the panels and not block the sun from reaching them.



(This wasn't going to be a modest house. It was built for a husband, wife and daughter. The solar panels were to be out of their view.)



(So they built a large retaining wall along the rear of the house and put the solar panels where the plastic tarps are shown. Out of their sight but in view to their rear neighbors, in a different subdivision.)

The couple made the neighbors to the rear out to be a bunch of old fogies with their heads in the sand against modern technology. Of course this was not the case. Several of the complaining neighbors were doctors who used modern technology daily. The neighbors were also all for solar power and panels. They just thought the couple should enjoy having the solar panels in their view out the window and remove them from the neighbors' property line.

Town and Country aldermen granted permission for the “out of sight” solar panels. It was an interesting vote, as politicians voted for the couple or two registered voters, despite 23 homeowners representing 46 voters from the adjoining subdivision having signed a petition against their location.

Clarkson Valley: In Clarkson Valley Jim and Frances Babb wanted to put solar panels on their roof. They needed a permit from the city. A number of the Babb’s neighbors complained that the solar panels would adversely affect the price of their houses.

I would have to think if your neighbor drops big bucks to put solar panels on their roof the valuation of their house would go up and not down, but what do I know.

Clarkson Valley refused to issue a permit for the solar panels and passed an ordinance regulating the use of solar panels. The Babbs then sued. They didn’t sue in St. Louis County Circuit Court, but instead filed suit with the Cole County Circuit Court in Jefferson City, alleging the Clarkson Valley board of aldermen cannot pass laws that conflict with the regulations of the Missouri Public Service Commission, which is located in Jefferson City.

The court ruled in the Babbs favor.

This almost harkens back to the early days of satellite TV when some cities outlawed the large dishes in yards or the smaller dishes on rooftops.

To me it is as if a city is trying to tell me I can only have one kind of shingle on my roof.

OUTLET MALLS MOVE DIRT AND NOT MUCH ELSE: The battle of the Outlet Malls continues and is frankly getting amusing. To refresh your memory there are two high end outfits that want to build outlet malls along I-64 in Chesterfield Valley. There is the Taubman Prestige development on the north side of I-64 next to the Ice Rick. We call this the Hockey Mall.

Then there is the proposed Premium Outlet development on the south side of I-64 at the Missouri River. We call this the River Mall.

Both developers want to get shoppers to pay much of their development costs through special sales taxes. The Hockey Mall wants a TDD (Traffic Development District) sales tax that would charge shoppers an extra sales tax for building the roads, parking lots, street lighting, storm water runoff, snow plowing, signs and more over decades.

The River Mall people received a CID (Community Improvement District) sales tax that would pay for much of the development costs over the next 22-years. There was strong opposition against this tax from many people. However, the elected officials sitting on the Chesterfield City Council who seemed to be running a public relations campaign for the developer.

The Hockey Mall broke ground last March by grading the property and putting up a sign. They did not have an official “ground breaking ceremony.”

The River Mall people had a special ground breaking ceremony attended by Mayor Bruce Geiger on July 11. They will also be grading the property and putting up a sign. http://www.stltoday.com/business/local/outlet-mall-duel-in-chesterfield-takes-a-surreal-turn/article_d88166ee-cba1-11e1-a742-0019bb30f31a.html

Just recently Taubman (Hockey Mall) issued a press release listing all the city permits it has received and all the permits that Premium Outlets have not received.

TaubmanPrestigeOutlets CHESTERFIELD									October 24, 2013 10:00 a.m.
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (\$4MM)	Yes	Grand Opening
Site Zoned	Site Plan Approval	Army Corps Entitlements	Levee District Approval	Drainage Rights	Traffic Improvement Rights	Grading Permits	Escrows/ Fees Paid	Construction Underway	?
Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	?
St. Louis Premium Outlets									

Here is one thing neither group will be doing yet...building anything. However, the Hockey Mall folks have the permits and claim when they hold a ground breaking ceremony on July 25 they will actually start building a mall.

The River Mall people are not building yet, but they are announcing a list of future tenants. It is interesting one has permits to build, but is not banging the drum about which retailers will be in the mall. The other is telling everyone who the tenants will be but don't have the building permits in place.

Many including Mayor Geiger and most council persons believes there is only room in Chesterfield for one outlet mall and have publicly and privately said they anticipate one of the developers will fold up their tent and leave.

Mayor should be careful: Mayor Geiger continues as the head cheerleader for the River Mall development and was present for the ground breaking. Ribbon cutting and ground breaking are in mayors' job descriptions. However, I would think Geiger would be wise to keep a low profile if he truly believes only one of these malls will be built. Why show favoritism? If I was Geiger I would be sitting back and watching this play out rather than becoming an active participant beyond his legislative role.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING REVIEW:

Party buster bill passes: The bill that will hold property owners responsible if large parties involving people under 21 occur where there are alcohol or drugs and illegal parking and loud or excessive noise. The property owner could be fined up to \$1,000 and be held liable for the cost of the police or a EMS response, even if they are out of town and unaware of the party.

This ordinance is somewhat flawed. For instance if some teenagers were smart, they would hold a party where they made sure everyone legally parked and there was no loud noise. A dozen kids could be passed out on the front lawn but the property owner could not be charged.

What was interesting the police department did not think they needed this ordinance until the Rockwood Drug Free Coalition proposed a sample ordinance to all the cities covered by the school district.

Karl Daubel spoke against the bill, while three other people, all associated with the Rockwood Drug free group spoke in favor of it.

The bill passed on a 6-to-1 vote with Councilman Mike Casey voting against it. Casey said in the pre meeting, "I think this ordinance is redundant with laws we already have."

I think Casey was probably right.

IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER I'D SWEAR THESE PEOPLE ARE TAX AND SPEND DEMOCRATS: Okay we know the Chesterfield is a hot bed for Republicans, with far right wingers such as Todd Akin and Jane Cunningham being elected by wide margins. But you would not have known at time on Monday night.

\$250,000 celebration: The city wants to spend \$250,000 over the year in 2013 to celebrate the city's 25th anniversary. WHAT?

This is the same group that two years ago eliminated 18 jobs and laid off police officers. This is from the same group that in recent months have been lecturing residents how the city needed to give Outlet Malls special sales taxes to succeed that went to their development costs, because the city needed the real estate taxes and other sales taxes that would be generated.

How can a City Council that slashes jobs and lays off employees, cries they need to give tax deals to rich developers for high end retail shopping centers because the city needs the new revenue, decide they have \$250,000 to spend on a 25th anniversary party spread out over a year?

The function of a municipal government is to provide services, not throw parties. When the Monarch Fire District went into closed session claiming it was a "Personnel Matter" and then voted to spend \$26,000 for an employee party, I thought perhaps it was a Labor Union or fire district thing. I guess I was wrong and it is really a Chesterfield thing to waste money on parties.

REALITY CHECK: You have a celebration for 100 or 200 years, not 25-years. City government is just beginning to develop a history at 25. You need to wait and see how things turn out.

I was able to save Town and Country from wasting similar money back in 2009, when I was an alderman. The city staff and board of aldermen were convinced the city would be celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2008. Town and Country was originally incorporated as a village in 1950. Just before its real 25th anniversary in 1974 it was almost broke because it had no retail or commercial properties and as a village could only tax real estate up to 50-cents on the hundred. They needed 60-cents to provide police and fire services. To do that they needed to change from a village to a city status. Voters passed a special ballot issue in 1974.

In 1983 Town and Country tripled its size when it annexed past 141 and down to Manchester Road. The current city elected officials and staff all thought the change from village to a city was in 1983. I was more than happy to point out they were wrong and the 25th anniversary had happened nine years earlier, which saved a bunch of money and torpedoed the mayor's wife from heading a special anniversary committee.

Recommendation: If celebrating 25 years is that important they city could have a dinner for all the original elected officials and staff members who are still around. Have it at a recreation facility or city hall. Spend \$1,000 on the dinner and save \$249,000.

On Monday the City Council voted to send the matter back to the staff for more ideas and preparation. A good suggestion by staff would be to forget about it and give everyone a raise.

MAKING GOVERNMENT BIGGER AND BIGGER: Matt Segal the City Councilman who emailed City Administrator Mike Herring asking for advice on what to do about my opinion column on grading politicians for political corrections by the cars they drive, came up with a good one. This idea reminded me of the Jimmy Carter White House where new agencies were being created every month.

Segal and his Administration Committee want to create an “Older **Adult Advisory Task Force**.” It was mentioned that 25% is over 65 years-old. (Hell over half of the City Council meets that criteria!)

It was mentioned they wanted the task force to see if residents needed services to help keep them from being victims of fraud or scams and to provide programs.

Cities normally provide police and fire protection, safe streets and roads, parks and zoning. Cities like Chicago have elderly services, because aldermen want them to get votes.

Does Chesterfield really need such services? I think not. The police department has Community Services Officers who are not assigned to regular patrol or detective duties. They could handle inquires about possible scams. Plus doesn't the BBB and the Attorney General's Office already do this?

To me this is another example of city council people with too much time on their hands.

Remark of the Night: Councilman Randy Logan, who I think is normally full of himself, came up with the best comment of the night after hearing about the Older Adult Advisory Task Force.

“Maybe we should consider a task force for mothers of pre-school children who don't have a SUV,” cracked Logan.



(Councilman Randy Logan looking like the cat who swallowed the canary, sitting next to Councilman Matt Segal who wants expand local government with an Older Adult Task Force.)

All Talk No Action: When there was a voice vote to create the Older Adult Advisory Task Force, Logan did not vote Nay. He can crack wise during the agenda meeting, but when it comes up to actually showing some common sense in a vote he doesn't have it.

THREE TO PHOENIX or BY THE TIME I GET TO PHOENIX I'LL BILL THE

TAXPAYERS: It was also mentioned that Mayor Geiger, City Administrator Herring and Police Chief Johnson will be going to Phoenix this weekend as the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement renews Chesterfield accreditation for the third time. The city already pays a lot of money for the accreditation process, which is not required by law and is strictly voluntary. This organization is made up of former police chiefs who hire other former police chiefs to do the department accreditations.

Once again if the city is in great need to get tax revenue from proposed outlet malls, why is it sending three people to Phoenix when two would be plenty?

CALAMITY JANE SPEAKS: State Senator Jane Cunningham, also known as Calamity Jane for many of crazy bills she has introduced over the years that never passed, spoke at the start of the council meeting. Jane would have had one more term she could have served as a State Senator before term limits would have removed her from office. Unfortunately for Jane after two redistricting maps kept her district intact, the Courts overturned them. The court approved redistrict moved her district to outside of Kansas City. Chesterfield instead of having one state senator is now represented by mid-term senators from Ladue, Kirkwood and Washington, Mo.

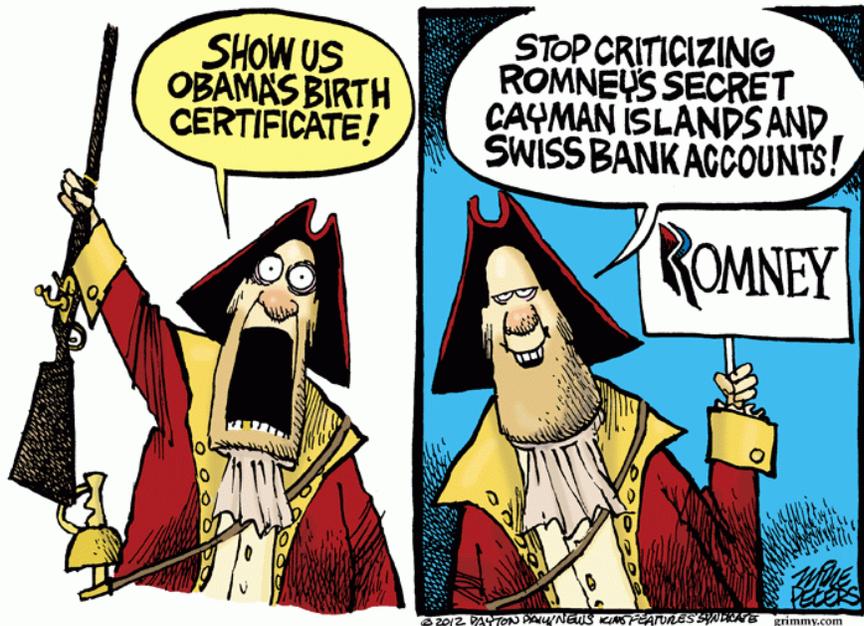
Jane spent most of her time under the guise of her annual report railing about how the redistricting was unfair.

GRAND JURY INDICTS FORMER CHESTERFIELD MAN: 67-year-old Thomas Marvin Hill, formerly of 14966 Country Ridge Drive in Chesterfield was arrested in April of 2012 by Chesterfield police and charged with multiple counts of “Child Molestation.”

Rather than having a preliminary hearing which would require the victims to testify in open court the case was sent to the St. Louis County Grand Jury. On June 13 six counts of Child Molestation were issued and unsealed by the Grand Jury against Hill.

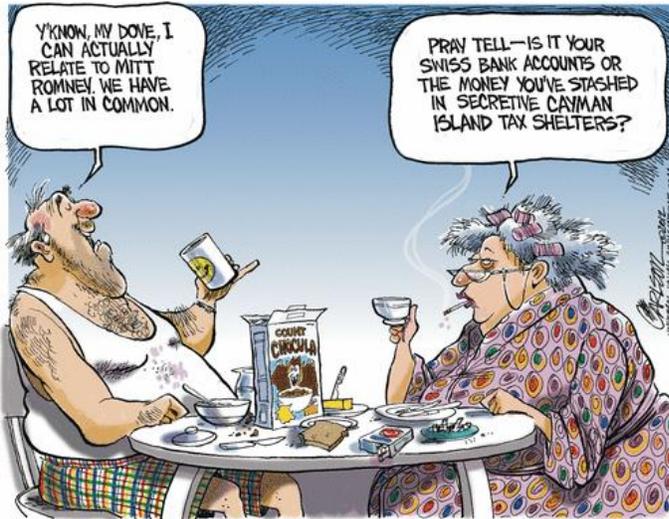
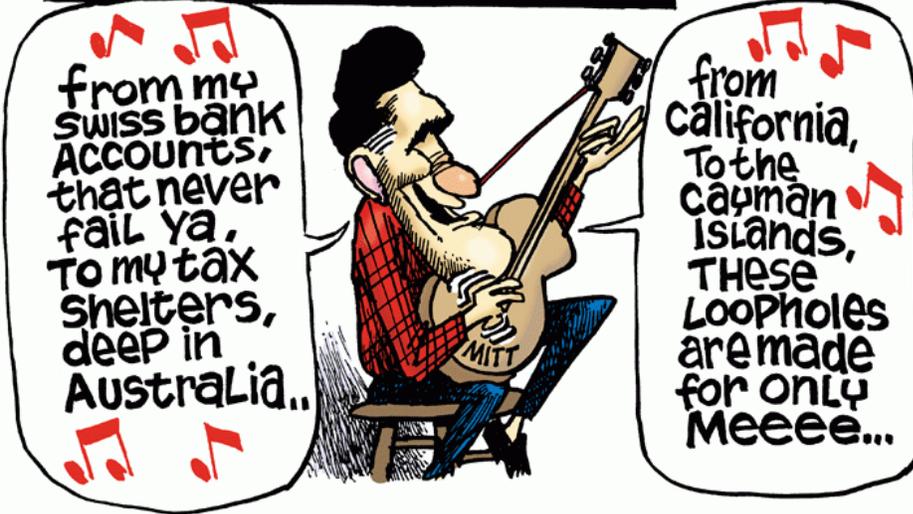
The indictment shows the Country Ridge Drive address, but immediately after his arrest in April he moved to an address in Richmond Heights. He has been in jail since April.

CARTOONS: I’m not trying to take on position on one national candidate over another. I pick the cartoons that I think are the funniest each week. Many weeks there are mostly cartoons lampooning President Obama. That is not the case this week.



SUNG TO "THIS LAND IS MY LAND"

*Wipe
Fingers*





"Houston, the good news is we have discovered life on another planet! The bad news is..."



7-9-12 NEWSWORKS.ORG - UNIVERSAL CLICK.