



# The *Platte County Newspaper* Landmark *"The News You Need to Read"*

Covering Platte County, Missouri Weekly Since 1865

- [Local News](#)
- [Between the Lines](#)
- [by Ivan Foley](#)
- [Off the Couch](#)
- [by Greg Hall](#)
- [Off the Wall](#)
- [by CK Rairden](#)
- [Parallax Look](#)
- [by Brian Kubicki](#)
- [Local Sports](#)

[Pigskin Picks](#)

[Chief Chatter](#)

[Ivan Foley's  
"Guaran-Dam-Tees"](#)

[Classifieds](#)

[Advertising](#)

[Community Calendar](#)

[Subscriptions](#)  
[TalkBack](#)

Weekly publication dates  
are Thursdays

Search

\*\*\*Sign up for \*\*\*  
**The Landmark's  
E\*Newsletter**

- Subscribe
- Unsubscribe

Update

**Featured Advertisers**

[Advertise Your  
Company Here](#)



## Between the Lines

by *Ivan Foley*  
*Landmark editor*

# HOMework NOT GETTING DONE ON PARK TAX PROPOSAL

Posted 5/28/09

The calendar says it's late May, but the weather over the past few days feels more like fall. And you know what? I love it.

I spent a relaxing several hours in *The Landmark* office on Memorial Day with the front door open, the back door open and a fan as the only background noise. Didn't turn on the radio, didn't turn on the television. It was a holiday so the phone didn't ring very often. The cool breeze coming through the building on the 60-something degree day was relaxing as I was cranking out some journalistic goodness for the second issue of *The Landmark's* 145th year of uninterrupted publication.

Monday holidays are not a convenient thing in the weekly newspaper biz, but that was about as relaxing a work environment as a guy can ask for. I'll take 60-something degree days year-round, please.

\*\*\*\*\*

Have you been out to the newly-renovated Kauffman Stadium for a Royals game yet this season? If you haven't, get there soon. It is awesome. The new outfield seating, the so-called party decks and other areas from where you can stand beyond the outfield fence to take in the game are impressive. Too much new stuff to list here but bottom line is that even if you're just a casual baseball fan this thing is worth a look.

And the team is playing about .500 baseball at this writing, so that helps make the trip worthwhile as well. I haven't been this excited about the Royals since Darryl Motley smacked a two-run homer in the bottom of the second inning in Game 7 of the 1985 World Series.

\*\*\*\*\*

Hey, have you heard the county will be asking for renewal of a half cent sales tax for parks? Yes, you have. You read it in The Landmark last week. The rest of the media has been trying to play catchup.

The best way to begin the study of the real need for a renewal of this tax at a level of a half cent is to first acknowledge the good that has been accomplished in the first 10 years of the tax. After all, proponents will try to paint anyone who opposes the half cent tax as anti-parks, heartless, anti-environment, uncaring, anti-community, blah, blah, blah. You know the drill. You've heard it before. The same softies try to paint the same picture anytime someone starts questioning a school spending matter. So let's do the early housecleaning.

No. 1. Parks were needed in this county when the tax was originally passed nearly ten years ago. No argument there. 2. The community centers serve a great purpose and have been very popular. No argument there. 3. The money has been, for the most part, well managed. No argument there. 4. The people should have the right to vote on renewing a park tax. No argument there.

The argument comes in the amount of the tax. Parks in the county have advanced to the point it's not necessary to ask for another half cent this time around. A quarter cent would be more realistic and responsible, an eighth of a cent would even be manageable. Examine the numbers (and we'll be helping you do that here over the course of the next several weeks). The first 10 years of the tax will have generated a net of at least \$60 million. The second 10 years of the half cent tax, if approved by voters in August, will net around \$76 to \$82 million. So after 20 years Platte County will have had around \$140 million to spend on parks. Are you kidding me? With this kind of runaway spending at the local level, is it any wonder we have the financial train wreck going on at the federal level? Good grief.

But even \$140 million doesn't sound like enough to the bureaucrats and big government types. Kathy Dusenbery, first district commissioner known for hyperbole and spewing comments first and worrying about their accuracy second, still declares Platte County doesn't spend as much on parks as comparable "regional communities." Really? There are counties the size of Platte spending more than \$140 million on parks in the span of 20 years? If Dusenbery is going to make statements like that I would hope she will soon be backing up the claim with a little more detailed explanation. This is how folks who hold journalism degrees get a bad name. We interrupt this award-winning newspaper column for the following warning from the emergency broadcast system: Just because a first district county commissioner says something really loudly, that doesn't mean it's true.

A solid parks program is in place in Platte County now. The fiscally sane among the populace want to know why a quarter cent tax wouldn't do. Cut that second 10-year park revenue from \$82 million to \$41 million. Wouldn't \$101 million over 20 years be enough for parks?

Not to the tax-and-spend types.

\*\*\*\*\*

Already some incorrect information is floating around about the park tax proposal. Unlike Dusenbery--remember, she has a journalism degree--I will actually back up that statement with something called a fact. An incorrect report floating around is that the Platte County parks department spends one-third of its revenue on maintenance of its facilities. I saw this report in at least one media outlet. Even my favorite county commissioner ever, Jim Plunkett, made the claim to me on the

phone Tuesday. And by the way, how unusual is it that the normally fiscally conservative, self-professed “numbers guy” Plunkett would be wrong about such a thing? It tells me Jim has simply put his fiscally conservative mindset into neutral and is letting the bureaucrats and liberals guide him on this matter without doing his own homework. It is very un-Plunkett like. And as a sidenote, let me say this is the first time I can remember disagreeing with Plunkett on a major fiscal question facing the county since he was elected in 2004. Sidenote, part two: He’s still my favorite county commissioner ever.

The problem with the claim that the county parks department spends one third of its revenue on maintenance is that it’s not accurate. In fact, it’s not even close to being accurate. The parks department in 2009 has budgeted expenditures of more than \$7.7 million. Want to know what the amount is in their budget line for operations and maintenance? It’s \$410,190. If \$410,190 is one third of \$7.7 million, we have some fuzzy math going on, my friends.

Heck, the parks department spends more on “administration and planning” (\$487,165) than it does on “operations and maintenance” (\$410,190).

So where is all the money going? That’s a future column topic.

*(The grass is always greener here in Park County, err, Platte County. Email the publisher at [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com))*

---

## TEN MORE YEARS OF HALF CENT PARK TAX WOULD BE OVERKILL

Posted 5/21/09

Well, it’s official. This is going to be a fun summer.

Erase any thoughts you may have had that the political scene in Platte County was going to be a designated quiet zone. It won’t be quiet here in the editorial pages of your fiscally conservative Landmark. Platte County commissioners are seeing to that.

Check out James Thomas’ column on page three to get your summer fun started. Thomas effectively broke an exclusive story with his column this week. I’m trying to bite my tongue here and let James’ excellent piece of work stand for itself. But you don’t read The Landmark to watch me bite my tongue.

All I can say is most of us knew it was only a matter of time before new first district commissioner Kathy Dusenbery’s active jaws would put her in a pickle. It took about five months but D-Day has arrived. Credit to Dusenbery for holding her tongue this long. I thought her loose lips would sink a ship by February or March.

Basically, Dusenbery--as Dusenbery does--on Saturday started spouting off to James Thomas about how the county commission has decided it will be asking voters to renew the county’s half cent park tax slush fund. This pronouncement by Dusenbery seemed odd for several reasons (for instance, like, uh, you know, when was this discussed in open session at a commission meeting?), especially when you consider that on Tuesday of this week Dusenbery told our reporter she was just at that moment getting into the written recommendation by parks director Brian

Nowotny. So on Saturday with James Thomas, Dusenbery already knew the commission will be putting renewal of the current half cent tax on the ballot, but on Tuesday she claimed she had just received a copy of a proposal from the parks director and was hinting she had no idea what the county's course of action would be? Hmm.

Apparently Dusenbery didn't believe James Thomas would share his Dusenbery moment with other Landmarkers and with readers of his column.

So there's the early background on this developing saga. That's not the most important angle. Just a notable one.

\*\*\*\*\*

As the summer develops, we'll get into the financial meat and potatoes of this topic. Basically, unless you're a tax-and-spend bureaucratic type, what you'll see when we dive into the numbers for you is that there really is no need to support renewal of the park tax at its current level. It is overkill. Another example of tax-and-spend types not recognizing when enough is enough.

Don't misunderstand what I'm saying. I'm not saying voters shouldn't have the right to vote on a park tax, and I'm not saying a small level tax isn't needed (as James Thomas suggests, a one-eighth cent tax would be plenty with the park system already well established).

What I am saying is that in these tough economic times it's not fiscally responsible to promote continuation of a tax that will have netted \$60 million--that's not gross, that's net after TIF deductions, etc.--in its first 10 years. It is absolutely ridiculous to believe this county needs at least another \$60 million over the next 10 years to support what has become a layer of bloated bureaucracy at the county. Did you realize the county parks department has grown to seven full time and five part-time employees? Unbelievable.

So is this half cent sales tax proposal about a need for more parks or a need to protect some government jobs? Commissioners didn't have any problem whacking some jobs from other officeholders a few years back, if needed shouldn't the commission be open to the idea of eliminating some jobs from a department that is operated directly under the commission's wing?

There has been so much revenue generated from this tax it has become laughable. Don't forget, county officials had to go looking for ways to get rid some of this park pork. Remember when former county commissioner Steve Wegner used to run around to every municipality in northern Platte County begging the cities to take some of the park pork? He was trying to hand out gifts of park cash so often I nicknamed him Santa Claus. Even Wegner himself saw the humor in the situation.

Then the county realized it was rolling in so much slush that commissioners decided to do what this columnist predicted would happen when the park tax was originally passed in 2000--and what county commissioners at the time insisted was not in the future plan--they decided to route some of that park pork to support a money-losing golf course. Again, voters were misled about this in 2000. The public was directly told the park tax wouldn't go to Shiloh Springs Golf Course. I can dig up the old quotes for you if you'd like.

\*\*\*\*\*

Two things county commissioners will be proving if they indeed put this half cent park tax on the ballot in August and promote its passage through their public comments: 1. They aren't acting as true fiscal conservatives. 2. They aren't politically stupid. I say this knowing that the park tax proposal would be the only thing on any county ballot this summer. So why is that smart? In a one-issue election, the folks who are most likely to get out to vote are those who are truly passionate about the topic at hand. Those who support every park issue that comes along are truly passionate. They will get out to vote. The more passive observers--those most likely to study the true fiscal impact and ask questions about the true level of need--aren't as likely to be in tune with a one-issue summer ballot initiative. County commissioners know how to play that game.

\*\*\*\*\*

County park director Brian Nowotny last Thursday gave a report on the park system's master plan to the county commission. While doing so, Nowotny twice made a comment that the park department currently owns 800 acres "that does not have a park plan for it yet."

While there was no discussion that day about any upcoming half cent sales tax renewal proposal, I believe Nowotny emphasized this 800 acre factoid as a way to promote the cause for renewal of the existing tax. But many of us can view that 800 acre factoid as another reason the county doesn't need to ask for a half cent this time around.

There are so many angles this issue can be scrutinized. Stay tuned. It is indeed going to be an active summer.

*(Though sometimes he may be bloated, the publisher is never bureaucratic.  
Email him at [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com))*

---

## **SCHOOL DISTRICTS SHOULD EMBRACE FISCAL TRANSPARENCY**

**Posted 5/15/09**

A recent headline in the Washington Times caught my eye. "Schools pushed for fiscal transparency."

Schools typically are your largest taxing entities, yet somehow they often end up being less scrutinized than other jurisdictions. This is puzzling because it goes against common sense. Any experienced watchdog will tell you if you want to find the greatest amount of waste, go to where there is the highest amount of spending. That would be your local school districts, my friends.

As the above article--which ran in the April 19 issue of The Washington Times--points out, the 'let's leave the schools alone' attitude is changing. It's a thought process that is long overdue.

The article points out that schools across the nation are posting district checkbooks and other financial documents online "as part of a national transparency trend for communities seeking a little taxpayer sunshine on public spending in the midst of the country's fiscal crisis," the D.C. paper reports. In Texas 309 school districts are

now online, including such large school systems as Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio. In Illinois, more than 40 districts already post their checkbooks online. A group known as “Show Michigan the Money” has asked all of that state’s 551 school districts to make a move toward more accountability by putting their check registers on their school websites. That center for public policy says it has been contacted by other states who’d like to participate. Proponents say one of the biggest benefits is that trends of favoritism among school district vendors are being exposed, making the process more fair and creating competition among vendors that allows the school districts to end up saving money.

Even the left wing liberals should love this. You know why? Because it dovetails President Obama’s promise to use the internet to make government more open, for example, putting online a detailed accounting of his economic porkulus bill.

But in reality you know the liberals will fight this trend with every ounce of energy in them. I can already hear the libs at organizations such as the Missouri School Boards Association groaning. Opponents argue that posting checkbooks on the web is time-consuming and a burden on existing staff. What they really mean is that they don’t want anybody with a computer being able to get all up in their business.

Can you imagine how beneficial this would be to the taxpaying public? Wouldn’t it be nice to easily spot if certain vendors’ wheels are getting greased excessively with your tax dollars? And wouldn’t it be nice to see if those vendors are then in turn helping finance parties for retiring school executives or furnishing food for school board members to devour at board meetings? Those are just some examples of how this information could be beneficial to taxpayers.

If school districts have nothing to hide, they won’t fight the trend. Guess that means we’ll see a lot of school districts fighting the trend.

More on this fascinating topic in the future.

\*\*\*\*\*

I want to take a moment to praise our editorial cartoon guy, the talented Matthew Silber. The man has been on a roll of late, ever since the March cartoon that ruffled the feathers of now-famous R-3 board member Mary Temperamental. Silber--a North Platte grad who now lives in Kansas City--has cranked out some winners of late. He is happy to take suggestions and ideas from readers, so send those to me and I will forward them on.

His piece last week, in fact, came off an email conversation I had with an avid reader over the recent At Home in the Northland magazine feature on 32nd District State Rep. Jason Grill. That fluff article, unintentionally I’m sure, painted Grill as being long on GQ style and short on substance. For instance, Grill was quoted extensively in the piece and must have used the word “cool” about a dozen times as he was lobbed softball questions from a reporter who had obviously stepped out of her comfort zone. Check out Silber’s cartoons each week on our opinion pages. They’re always worth a look.

\*\*\*\*\*

As has become tradition each time one of the publisher’s kids reaches high school graduation day, we close the column with a little tribute.

This weekend, our youngest child, better known as your *Landmark* intern/facilities

manager/Looking Back columnist Kurt Foley, takes his first step into the real world. This is the guy who in his lower elementary school years would walk home from school with his older sisters and often hurriedly grab the phone to call his dad at work with this question: "Hey Dad, whatchu doin'?" What was said from that point wasn't much--like a lot of guys, he's not big on a lot of talk time--but just the fact he made the call, and the signature way he started every conversation, was all I needed to hear.

This is the little guy--though we can't call him little any longer, as he now towers above the rest of the family at 6' 1" tall--who always felt compassion for others. It broke my heart to watch him try to fight back tears at the funeral of a female classmate who was killed in a car wreck in junior high. I think back to watching him as a toddler run into his Grandma Foley's house and jump into her arms with such force it often knocked her off balance. Then he would give her a quick kiss and ask for some microwave popcorn, while his grandma ate up all the attention.

I think back to my cancer diagnosis in the summer of 1998 and the weekend of my first chemotherapy. Most of my chemotherapy sessions didn't hit me hard at all, but that first one did. I was zapped of energy. The rest of the family was scheduled to spend the weekend out of town seeing the in-laws. I encouraged them not to cancel the trip. Kurt, age 7 at the time, refused to go. He insisted on staying home while the others traveled "so I can take care of Dad," he pronounced. With endless trips out to the yard to play catch with the football, to wrestling in the living room while Chuck Norris was kicking some bad guy's butt on TV, to taking Grandma Foley out to eat, he kept me jumping that entire weekend. If he saw me lying on the couch with my eyes closed, he was quickly over poking his little face in mine with these words: "Dad, whatchu doin'?" It later hit me--he was worried I was about to drift off into the deepest of sleeps.

He has been a class leader, had much success on the basketball court, taken three summer mission trips to help the needy with his Fellowship of Christian Athletes group, been selected to the National Honor Society, and is the winner of his high school's "Pride" award. His parents couldn't be prouder of the way he has conducted himself during his school years.

After toying with the idea of journalism, he is now targeting a career in physical therapy.

Best of luck, son. And as you know, luck is when preparation meets opportunity.

*(Email the transparently proud publisher at [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com))*

---

## **COLORING BETWEEN THE LINES; WATCHDOG UPDATE**

**Posted 5/8/09**

Welcome back to Between the Lines, proud to have been blacklisted more often than Michael Savage.

\*\*\*\*\*

Color me nostalgic.

When former *Landmark* editor--the late Clay McGinnis--and I way back in May of 1982 decided to begin what we hoped would be a long-running and notable community service effort, we settled on The Landmark Award for English. The idea was to foster an interest in the English language among Platte County R-3 High School students. We liked the idea because it involved young people and was academic in nature. It just seemed much more meaningful than, say, hosting a little kids' coloring contest or playing in a small time golf tournament. Anyway, school leadership at the time quickly embraced the idea, and I remember how excited Clay was when he saw the school had listed the award on the graduation ceremony program in 1982. To him, that mention in the award's first year made it legit.

Here we are many years later and it's a big week at *The Landmark*. Why? We get to announce the winner of this year's Landmark English Award, given annually to a top senior English student at Platte County R-3 High School. The winner is chosen by a faculty panel at the high school. Winner gets a \$250 cash prize from this newspaper and a certificate with the autographs of top high school officials and your *Landmark* publisher.

As you'll see in a story elsewhere on the front page, the winner this year is Hannah Rickman.

This is the 28th year *The Landmark* has given the scholarship award. The first few years the prize was \$100 but was soon raised to \$250. Many notable students over the years have captured the award--some of whom later became Landmark employees--as you'll see if you peruse the list of all previous winners in the article in this issue.

Congratulations to Hannah.

\*\*\*\*\*

Color it a week for congratulations.

A tip of the hat to Jack Coots, one of the guys on the local business scene who I respect the most, for surviving and prospering 50 years in the banking business. Jack was being honored by his friends and co-workers from Wells Bank at a reception Wednesday evening as this edition of your *Landmark* was hitting the streets.

I've always thought of Jack as a classy gentleman, the kind of guy you could tell a personal secret and trust that it would be safe, or the kind of guy to whom you could hand a million one dollar bills and ask him to haul them across town, knowing that when he got there every one of those bills would be accounted for.

At our most recent Christmas party, I told the now-retired Wells Hull, who like Jack is well known for his many years with Wells Bank, that I always considered him among the men I admired most in the Platte County community. Until now I hadn't taken the chance to extend the same thoughts to Jack in a public setting. Consider it done.

And speaking of *The Landmark* Christmas party, Jack was among the original cast of six or seven people who formed the gathering when that thing was just a private and very casual occasion to give a toast while standing around the old printing equipment in the back of the office. At that time we had no idea the party would turn into the public monster it is today. You've heard me say in those days it was only John Elliott, Todd Graves, myself and three wise men from Wells Bank. Jack was one of the wise men.



\*\*\*\*\*

Color me anything but shocked.

Remember last week when I talked about a planned catered “retirement” event for Superintendent Mark Harpst set to be held at the beautiful and not inexpensive Seven Bridges clubhouse? I mentioned watchdogs are keeping an eye on expenses the Platte County R-3 School District would incur in connection with said event. In last week’s piece, I then predicted that “with watchdog notice now served, look for school officials to either quietly downsize the scope of the event or ask for private donations to cover the cost.”

The ink was barely dry on last week’s issue when I got a phone call I was expecting. Tina Zubeck, school board secretary and the paid official public relations person for the school district, called to say that the Seven Bridges event is being planned by herself, Harpst’s family, friends, and some R-3 “business associates.”

“No tax dollars will be spent on it,” Zubeck claimed.

With recent history fresh in mind, was it the plan all along for this to be a completely privately-funded affair or is this another patented after-the-whistle-has-been-blown public relations recovery act? With locked door meetings and the hiding from the public--and even its own staff--the hiring of Harpst as a consultant with some bonus transitional money thrown in for good measure, top level school leaders have painted themselves into a credibility corner the past several months. After all, if they’ll try to hide a major decision involving the man who has served as the public face of the district for 13 or 14 years, what else are they trying to hide from the public?

\*\*\*\*\*

It is worth noting that on Friday, just one day after Zubeck emphasized “call me anytime you have questions,” I left her a voicemail asking her specifically who were the school district “business associates” helping fund the Seven Bridges retirement event for Harpst. Zubeck has yet to return my call or provide an answer.

I guess I am only to call if I have comfortable questions.

\*\*\*\*\*

Next week, our Democratic columnist Russ Purvis will be unavailable but a strong replacement will again be furnished. Susan Montee, Missouri state auditor, will pen an exclusive column for your *Landmark* in our next issue.

*(Color the publisher anything you’d like via email to [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com))*

---

## **GOOD NEWS, BAD NEWS FOR PROPERTY OWNERS**

Posted 5/1/09

Good news for 96% of real estate property owners in Platte County: The county's assessed value on your real estate is not--I repeat, not--going up this year. The bad news is you likely won't be seeing an assessed value decrease, which is a bit surprising considering the recent downturn in the real estate climate.

That's the word from Lisa Pope, county assessor, who says only about four percent of properties are seeing an increase--and most of the four percent are commercial buildings. "We tried to leave the homeowners alone," Pope told me about her reassessment method of operation this year.

A few properties are seeing a decrease in assessed value. But here's the catch on that--you had to protest your assessed value to get it. It wasn't issued automatically. Don't you wish the times your assessed value shoots upward the county had to ask you for your opinion first?

"If they have come in and talked to us, and if they showed a decrease is warranted, then it went down," Pope said. The best way to argue for a decrease is to show a sales comparison of other properties that are similar to your own.

If your value is staying the same, you didn't get a notice in the mail. So if you thought your value was too high last year, you need to contact Pope's office at 858-3316 to file a protest in an effort to get it lowered. It's not too late to seek a lower assessment, Pope said.

Not sure of your property's assessed value? Check the county's web site by clicking on the GIS mapping link on the home page at [www.co.platte.mo.us](http://www.co.platte.mo.us)

\*\*\*\*\*

Pope says in her opinion, Platte County is one of the few counties in the state that is holding its own in property values. I've heard from many folks who would disagree. Some reports indicate many homeowners in some of the higher priced neighborhoods have either sold their property for less than they originally paid for it and/or have had to significantly reduce their asking price during this economic downturn.

"The law states I just have to be within 5% of the market value of that property," Pope remarked.

\*\*\*\*\*

While lapdogs might be getting misty-eyed with emotion reminiscing over the big spending days of the not-too-distant past, watchdogs are already keeping an eye on expenses the Platte County R-3 School District will be incurring for the "retirement" party for its unretiring superintendent in June.

Reliable sources say the beautiful and not inexpensive clubhouse at the Seven Bridges Development south of Platte City has been tabbed to host a catered retirement party for unretiring superintendent Mark Harpst, who in reality will still be on the R-3 payroll for the next couple of years as a "financial consultant." Harpst will earn a total of \$75,000 in "transition" duties and "consultant" pay. That's not a bad "retirement" gift from taxpayers.

Something tells me now that the word is out, the school board will once again go into CYA mode (*Many of you have admitted to me how much fun you're having watching them scramble every time they get called out on an issue, and chuckle as*

*they try to pretend they didn't get caught).*

With watchdog notice now served, look for the school officials to either quietly downsize the scope of the event or ask for private donations to cover the cost. Personally, watchdogs are good with that, right? Consider it another public service performed. Harpst has put in a lot of time and effort for the district. While Harpst never met a tax dollar he wouldn't grab out of your pocket and spend, and then grab another and spend again, he is a nice guy and a good fellow on a personal level. Watchdogs have no problem at all with a reasonable little unretirement reception, and would not have a problem with private funds picking up the tab to appease the "let's party with somebody else's money" crowd.

\*\*\*\*\*

Here's what the thousands of folks who attended the Tax Day Tea Party rally at the Liberty Memorial did to help folks in need of a hand: They donated \$1,700 in cash and--get this--enough toilet paper and paper towels to serve 65-75 needy families throughout the Kansas City metro area for 4-6 months.

"It was absolutely phenomenal," said Mindy Davis, case manager in Platte County for Hillcrest Ministries. Hillcrest--which was also the beneficiary of a drive hosted by *The Landmark* and the two Platte County political parties during this newspaper's non-taxpayer-funded annual open to the public, come eat all you want on us Christmas party--helps families who are homeless get back on their feet. The Hillcrest program helps needy families move to self-sufficiency through a 90-day program that stresses learning the tools of financial management while providing them temporary housing. "We help them save up enough to get back into a place of their own," Davis explains.

The Kansas City Tax Day Tea Party, which was promoted by media outlets KCMO 710 AM and *The Landmark* and sponsored by KCMO 710 AM and Axiom Strategies, was "huge for us," said Katie Cramer-Eck, director of the Clay County affiliate of Hillcrest Transitional Housing. "We're thrilled," she said, adding that a 26-ft. long moving truck was filled with the donated goods that the estimated 5,000 Tax Day Tea Party attendees brought to the event at the Liberty Memorial.

There's your proof that folks can believe in a fiscally conservative government and be passionate about issues while still being compassionate and community-minded at the same time. Most often, these types of folks are some of the biggest givers to charitable causes.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Platte County R-3 School Board may be asked to share its "practices and methodology" with its peers at the Missouri School Boards Association leadership summit in June. It appears the board could be hosting seminars on how to build a monument to school administrators, how to hold a public meeting in a locked building, how to hide from the public the hiring of your retiring superintendent as a consultant, and how to gorge yourself while meeting in front of a hungry audience at the dinner hour.

Board member Mary Temperamental could be holding a special seminar on how to maintain a calm disposition.

*(Always on alert yet always calm unless the Pirates are playing in a really big game on the field turf, Ivan Foley can be reached at*

[ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com)

---

## **THIS WASN'T YOUR NORMAL TAX DAY IN KANSAS CITY**

Posted 4/24/09

Wow.

That's the word that kept going through my head as I looked around at the crowd spilling onto the lawn at last Wednesday's Kansas City Tax Day Tea ( Taxed Enough Already) Party. I was proud to be included as one of the featured speakers, which included a couple others with Platte County connections, including Platte County Prosecutor Eric Zahnd and former assistant prosecutor Rob Willard. The emotional high of speaking in front of a crowd of thousands and having them react in a positive way is a feeling that will stay with me forever.

As for the crowd count, 710 KCMO radio talk show host Chris Stigall, who was keynote speaker, reported on his show that Kansas City police told him they estimated the crowd at around 5,000 people, which is really amazing considering there were smaller Tea Parties going on in Lee's Summit and Johnson County at the same time. How big would the crowd have been if those events had been combined into one?

I can never put my finger on exact crowd counts, but I can tell you if that Liberty Memorial tea party had been a Platte City HOG Rally, former Mayor Dave Brooks would have estimated the crowd at 75,000.

\*\*\*\*\*

Young Andrea Plunkett of Platte County was the chief organizer of the Tax Day Tea Party at the Liberty Memorial and did a fantastic job putting this together. Andrea joked with me that she may have a future as a community organizer--and we all know what kind of a resume builder that can be.

Ms. Plunkett has a bright future in the world of politics, in whatever aspect of the field she chooses to pursue.

\*\*\*\*\*

It was good to see many Platte County faces in the crowd at the rally. Surprisingly, I saw several county residents--including a couple of former elected officials--who I wouldn't normally think of as being the fiscally conservative type. Come on, you know who you are. Thanks for coming.

Were you there because you have seen the light or were you there strictly on a reconnaissance mission?

\*\*\*\*\*

With momentum now established, the next version of a Taxed Enough Already party is being planned for July 4. As soon as we know more so will you.

\*\*\*\*\*

Another of my favorite moments from the Tea Party was a behind-the-scenes deadpanned line from Platte County Prosecutor Eric Zahnd, and by the way don't let his straight-laced personality fool you--Zahnd is a much more entertaining public speaker than some folks expect him to be. This is the second time Zahnd and I have been handed a microphone at the same event (the first time being a roast of then U.S. Attorney Todd Graves in 2003) and he has done a fine job delivering the goods both times.

Anyway, Zahnd, fellow speaker Rob Willard of Club for Growth and I were sitting on a concrete wall many yards behind the podium where keynote speaker Chris Stigall of KCMO 710 AM had just wrapped up his address. As thousands of people scurried about on the lawn, some starting to head to their cars while others were headed toward the main stage to take photos of the crowd from the elevated spot, Zahnd looked over and quipped:

“Well, our work here is done.”

\*\*\*\*\*

One practice I have is that shortly after an important event occurs--and the Tea Party experience was one, thanks to the large and enthusiastic crowd--I like to grab a few moments alone. The quick quiet time allows me to fully soak up the experience as a way to mentally record the moment. More importantly, it allows me to clear my head, give thanks where it needs to be given, and wonder what my parents would say or think if they were here and/or able.

So I decided to exit down the south lawn of the memorial away from the crowd, then chose what looked like the quietest path back to my car, which was parked about a day away in the Crown Center parking garage. With the sun setting in the distance, there were polite greetings with a couple of passers-by on the sidewalk, and soon a man walking from the opposite direction made eye contact and struck up a conversation.

“I really enjoyed your speech,” he said.

“Thank you and thanks for coming,” I responded to the gentleman as we shook hands.

“Oh, I had to,” he said. “Chris is my son.”

Chris, of course, is Chris Stigall, the 30-something conservative morning radio talk show host on KCMO 710 AM who had just given the keynote address. I've written in this spot before how I have been a fan of Stigall since first hearing him on the Randy Miller radio show when he was in his teen years.

“You've done a fine job with your son,” I told the elder Stigall, who told me he works at Hallmark.

“I didn't do it. He has done it on his own,” the proud father responded.

Kind of a surreal experience that in my “get away from it all” moment, in what was perhaps the quietest spot that could have been found in the area at that time, I ran into the father of the keynote speaker. I couldn't help but wonder if he was using his walking time as one of those quiet moments of his own.

\*\*\*\*\*

With the Tea Party experience behind us at least until the next one rolls around, next week it's on to other pressing matters. Such as?

How about a discussion over whether the county assessor will recognize market conditions have changed and the assessed value on your property should be dropping accordingly, which could mean a lower tax bill for you this year? Will assessors be willing to react to the reality of the market now that values are headed down? Or will bureaucratic pressure from the tax-and-spend types force them to keep property values at a higher level? Should be fascinating to watch.

*(Assess the publisher's value via email to [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com))*

---

## KANSAS CITY'S TAX DAY TEA PARTY A HUGE SUCCESS; PICTURES FROM THE SCENE

Posted 4/16/09 4 p.m.

Organizers say Kansas City police officials estimated the turnout at nearly 5,000 for the Kansas City Tax Day Tea Party event at the Liberty Memorial on Wednesday afternoon, April 15.

Among the speakers? Your *Landmark* publisher. Pictures from the event, taken by Greg Hall, can be viewed by clicking the links below. The top link is about my part of the day, the lower link focuses on the more important aspect--the crowd. More on the event later and in next week's print edition of *The Landmark*.

<http://picasaweb.google.com/greghall24/IvanAtTeaParty#>

<http://picasaweb.google.com/greghall24/TaxDayTeaParty2009#>

---

## REVIEWING SOME OF THE PAST QUOTES FROM FOLKS AT PLATTE COUNTY R-3

*Written 4/15/09*

It's been a busy time for your Landmark staff. We have been--and are in the process of being--all over the Kansas City metropolitan area. Here's a rundown on just a few of the things your Landmarkers are up to:

- Greg Hall, our sports media sound bite columnist who has been posting multiple pieces at [plattecountylandmark.com](http://plattecountylandmark.com) each week, now has a permanent daily

appearance on Kansas City radio. Catch GH every morning at 6:35 a.m. on the Chris Stigall show on KCMO 710 AM. He appears live--or as close to live as a hard-working guy can be at 6:35 a.m.--and then they run a replay of his spot later in the Stigall show.

That in itself is exciting stuff, but that's not all Hall has had on his plate. In addition to the columns he has been posting at [plattecountylandmark.com](http://plattecountylandmark.com) and at [kcconfidential.com](http://kcconfidential.com), GH appeared on Metro Sports television Tuesday night. Metro Sports' Dave Stewart invited Hall on to discuss with host Leif Lisec a new uprising in the sports talk radio "war" in Kansas City, as 610 Sports this week announced it is revamping its lineup to try to cut into the market share currently enjoyed by WHB Sports Radio 810.

•*The Landmark* has been front and center this week as far as involvement in the Kansas City Tax Day Tea Party, held today (Wednesday) at the Liberty Memorial. Columnist Hearne Christopher and yours truly were happy to be asked to be among the speakers at this event. Similar Tea Parties were scheduled across the country to send a message to Washington, urging our elected representatives to do a better job exercising responsible spending habits with your tax money.

I'm headed out the door to the Tea Party just as soon as I'm done with this memorable column. Expect a full report in next week's issue. Check our website later this week in case we have an update that just can't wait till our next print edition.

Bottom line is it's an exciting time around *The Landmark*. If you have a friend or neighbor who is not yet a *Landmark* reader, give them a verbal spanking and then tell them it's time to get a subscription. Tell them to ask for the Between the Lines Stimulus Package when they call or email. Between now and April 30, I'll cover half the cost of anyone coming on board as a new subscriber. That means new (and sorry, this is limited to only new readers--there has to be a limit to my kindness, you know) subscribers can get a year's worth of journalistic goodness for only \$12.50.

Call 816-858-2313 or email [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com) to ask for the special half price deal.

\*\*\*\*\*

Speaking of Greg Hall and his Off the Couch columns, it's time to imitate his format for a bit. The topic? All the quotes that hit the local media as the Platte County R-3 School Board announced it had completed a very diligent "nationwide" search, leaving no stone unturned before it hired the guy sitting across the room--assistant superintendent Mike Reik to replace the "retiring" Mark Harpst. These quotes, which are from December, have become very interesting to review. Keep in mind the school board is now spending \$75,000 over the next two years to give Harpst a \$26,600 payment for "transitional duties" and a \$2,000 per month check over the next 24 months to serve as a "financial consultant" for Reik and the school district.

Here we go, with quotes and information from various local media accounts as reported in December. Any editorial comments I add will be preceded with the initials BTL (that's short for Between the Lines, by the way).

•"I'm really proud of all the board members. Collectively, we put in hundreds of hours in this process."

**Bob Shaw, R-3 board president, in December.**

*BTL: Hundreds of hours and their later actions indicate they feel they still didn't get a person who could handle all the duties the previous superintendent has been handling. Time well spent?*

•“Many school districts in this position would have hired a consultant, which would have cost the district a minimum of \$20,000. The board saved a considerable amount of money in shouldering the process itself.”

**Bob Shaw, school board president, in December.**

*BTL: I guess the board's definition of 'saving money' is to save \$20,000 with one act, then spend an extra \$75,000 with its next act. I guess this is some kind of New Age Math.*

•“The more I think about it, the happier I am in the choice the board made.”

**Bob Shaw, school board president, in December.**

*BTL: I guess this means Shaw is happy spending an extra \$75,000. Liberalism exposed. Before he became board president, Shaw used to try to convince us he was a conservative. Those of us who know Bob know he isn't this free spending with his own money, only with your money.*

•“I look forward the next six months to sponging up as much of Dr. Harpst's knowledge and expertise as I can.”

**Mike Reik, after being announced as the next superintendent in December.**

*BTL: The school board didn't give Reik six months to sponge up knowledge from Harpst. On Feb. 26, they hired Harpst to hold Reik's hand over the next two years at a cost that will total \$75,000. The board can't explain why Reik couldn't have learned all the tricks of the financial trade from Harpst from December through July.*

•“I think Mike will do an outstanding job. I'm very confident he has the skill set, vision and work ethic to ensure the school district and its students are successful.”

**Mark Harpst in December.**

*BTL: Apparently by February Harpst had changed his mind. Harpst took a job consulting Reik over the next two years, and will pocket \$75,000 in the process. He either wasn't really all that confident in Reik or he simply fooled the board into giving him \$75,000 of R-3 taxpayer cash for no reason. You decide.*

*(When he isn't busy compiling past quotes or expressing frustration with runaway government spending at a Tax Day Tea Party, you can reach the publisher via email at [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com))*

## **COMPLETE LIST OF SPEAKERS FOR KANSAS CITY TAX DAY TEA PARTY EVENT**

Posted 4/13/09 10:25 p.m.

Speakers for the Kansas City Tax Day Tea Party are set as follows. Times are approximate and will probably be later than listed because a band will be providing entertainment after every three to four speakers to break up the talks. Two of the



speakers have ties to The Landmark.

The Kansas City Tax Day Tea Party will run from 4-7 p.m. on the north lawn of the Liberty Memorial.

4:35-Dr. Darrel Drumright

4:40-Paul Hamby, Campaign for Liberty, "Audit the Fed"

4:45-Rob Willard, Club for Growth

4:35-Joseph Bridgman, TeenPact, "Leadership"

4:50-Platte County Prosecutor Eric Zahnd, "Internet Crimes"

4:55-Mike Ferguson, Libertarian Party, "Yes We Can"

5:00-Michelle Davis, American Family Association

**5:05- Hearne Christopher**, media columnist, The Landmark and [kccconfidential.com](http://kccconfidential.com)

**5:10-Ivan Foley, Publisher, Platte County Landmark**

5:15-Dee Vantuyl--blogger

5:20-Becky Cordero, Americans For Prosperity

5:25-Chris Stigall--KCMO 710 AM

For more info on the event, surf to <http://kcmogop.blogspot.com>

---

## GREG HALL TO GET TV TIME TUESDAY ON METRO SPORTS

Posted 4/13/09 10:15 p.m.

Landmark personalities are popping up everywhere. In another cool development for The Landmark, our sports guy Greg Hall, whose Off the Couch columns you can read at <http://www.plattecountylandmark.com/ghall.htm> will be a guest on Metro Sports Television on Tuesday night during a live show. Hall will be talking about the changes being made by 610 Sports and how that will affect the sports talk radio wars between 610 Sports and WHB 810 AM.

And check out the print edition of Between the Lines this week for new information on Hall's morning radio appearances on KCMO 710 AM.

---

## TEA PARTY UPDATE: PUBLISHER'S

## TALK TIME NOW SET FOR 5:15

Posted 4/13/09

This just in: The speech time assigned to yours truly at Wednesday's Tax Day Tea Party has been moved. I'm now pegged to get the microphone at around 5:15 p.m., which sounds like a quality slot since keynote speaker Chris Stigall of KCMO 710 AM will take the stage at around 5:30.

The Kansas City Tax Day Tea Party will run from 4-7 p.m. Wednesday, April 15 at the Liberty Memorial. It's a non-partisan event intended to attract and rally folks who are in opposition to government bailouts, runaway government spending and in favor of fiscal responsibility and accountability and a smaller, less intrusive government. Based on reaction, this sounds like the typical *Landmark* reader, don't you think?

Be there if you can.

## THIS WILL BE A TEA PARTY YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS; HARPST BONUS MONEY; ELECTION STUFF

Posted 4/9/09

You're getting two *Between the Lines* columns for the price of one this week. Scroll down to read the one I posted on Monday, the day before the spring elections. I draw it to your attention just in case you didn't get around to checking this site on Monday or Tuesday prior to the vote.

\*\*\*\*\*

Tea parties not normally your thing? I know what you mean. But this tea party will be different.

Kansas City's version of the nationwide mania known as Tax Day Tea Parties will take place next Wednesday, April 15. It's an effort to rally folks who are in opposition to government bailouts, pork barrel politics, runaway government spending and in favor of lower taxes. Thousands are expected to show their civil disobedience in a peaceful but determined way (*and heck, let's plan on having a little fun along the way*). Organizers are estimating a crowd of 5,000 to 10,000 people for this gathering at the Liberty Memorial, 100 W. 26th St. in Kansas City.

Here's hoping you'll be there. I'm humbled to report I've been asked to be one of the speakers at the Kansas City event. This means I'll be locking myself in a room this weekend, listening only to those "stop the taxing and spending madness" voices in my head while compiling thoughts for what should be a good and meaningful time.

Many of you met Chris Stigall, morning radio host for KCMO 710 AM, at The

Landmark's Christmas party this past year. Stigall will be the headlining speaker at the Kansas City Tax Day Tea Party. Various times for the event have been reported, as this thing has taken on a life of its own. Most recent information sent to me indicates the event at Liberty Memorial will run from 4-7 p.m. They currently have me slotted to speak around 4:20 p.m. though I'm told that may change as final preparations are made. Check *The Landmark's* web site for special Between the Lines postings between now and Tax Day for this and other announcements related to this shindig. In the meantime, surf to this site for more info:

<http://wesurroundthemkc.ning.com/events/tax-day-tea-party>

These tea parties are going on in more than 500 cities throughout the nation on April 15. In Atlanta, Sean Hannity from Fox News will be the headlining speaker. Neal Cavuto of Fox News will host his show from the Sacramento tea party, Glenn Beck of Fox News will broadcast from the San Antonio event, and former Congressman Newt Gingrich will be the featured speaker at the New York City gathering.

\*\*\*\*\*

Before some analysis of Tuesday's school board and city elections, let's revisit one of the primary topics from last week: The top-secret hiring of "retiring" Platte County R-3 Superintendent Mark Harpst as a \$2,000 per month financial consultant for R-3, and the \$26,600 the school board has voted to also give to Harpst for "transitional duties."

His two year deal as a consultant--with no minimum number of hours specified in his contract--will give him \$48,000 plus benefits. Add in the \$26,600 for those curious "transitional duties" and you have what amounts to, as columnist CK Rairden aptly points out in his column this week, a nearly \$75,000 bonus to Harpst funded by the taxpayers.

Apparently that's the way the school board members view it too, because if this were a deal they were proud of they never would have tried to hide it. The move was made on Feb. 26 and never announced by the school district, until board members became aware *The Landmark* had acquired the information via a Sunshine Law request and was ready to run with the story. At that time school leadership decided they better try to soften the blow and sent out an email to staff last Monday.

\*\*\*\*\*

By the way, our columnist CK Rairden is a Platte County High School graduate and is living proof that just because you're a graduate of a particular school, there's no need to unprofessionally throw away your journalistic principles when commenting on news of the district.

\*\*\*\*\*

Here's an analogy for you. Remember all those years when Platte City aldermen quietly would admit they knew they had some public relations problems with former city administrator Keith Moody? There would always be talk of a movement to fire Moody, but then a majority of aldermen would back down--they were convinced that Moody was such a financial specialist the city could not survive without him. Well, Moody was finally canned more than a year ago and the city seems to be operating better than ever, thank you very much. While Harpst has none of the bad PR baggage that Moody carried, the one thing he does have in

common with the ex-administrator is that he has convinced his bosses that he works financial wonders no one else would be able to do.

It's simply not reality. Superintendents--just like city administrators--come and go. School districts--just like cities--survive and advance under new staff leadership. Harpst is retiring and there is no need for this school board to be flipping out with separation anxiety. No person is irreplaceable, no matter what we're being led to believe. What would happen if for any reason in the future Mark Harpst is not available? The way some of these board members talk, we could surmise R-3 would have to close the doors to its "business."

Give the guy a bonus if you want but be prepared to take some heat for it and don't try to hide it from taxpayers who are footing the bill. And keep in mind if in fact you're confident you just hired the right guy as the next superintendent after a thorough nationwide search you bragged about, you shouldn't need to hire a financial consultant for him.

\*\*\*\*\*

Tuesday's election of a new Platte County R-3 School Board member sent a message: Voters want more independent thinkers on the board. They'll get it in newcomer Jeana Houlahan, who carried the top spot by a wide margin. Incumbent go-with-the-flow type Karen Wagoner was a distant second but will retain her seat, as two positions were open. Alan Williams and Bill Kephart were unsuccessful. Houlahan should provide much needed help to Trish Stinnett, the current board member with the most backbone.

Another message? Current board member Mary Temperamental, who suddenly has become a household name with *Landmark readers* whether she wanted to or not, reportedly worked diligently in support of Williams--who was a very distant third in the voting. Based on the convincing results, Mary's influence didn't carry much positive weight. Houlahan even beat Williams in Mary's home precinct.

*(Send your tea party etiquette tips--you know he'll need them--to the publisher at [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com))*

---

## **BRACKET BATTLE RESULTS: THERE'S A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE**

Posted 4/10/09

Dr. Ann Riggs of the Heartland Clinic in Platte City is this year's winner of The Landmark's annual Bracket Battle. There more than 100 entries in this year's contest, and the good doctor's point total was 214. Close behind were Brian Atkinson and Stan Pomeroy with 209 each. For her NCAA basketball expertise, Dr. Riggs wins the \$100 cash prize. And by the way, she is no stranger to the world of college basketball--she played college hoops for BYU from 1995-98.

Every entrant who scored more than yours truly gets two years worth of Landmark subscriptions for free. There were almost 30 of you who somehow scored more than your favorite columnist. My total was 175. If you see your name listed with a better score than mine, you must claim your prize by calling The Landmark office at 816-858-2313 or emailing me at [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com)

Here are the final standings:

**Dr. Ann Riggs 214**

Stan Pomeroy 209  
Brian Atkinson 209  
Bobby Hensley 207  
Daryl Grame 207  
Dorothy Anderson 205  
Kathy McKay 204  
Stan Palmer 201  
Derek Shultz 196  
Jeremy White 193  
Anna Nutt 193  
Steve Stampsell 193  
Taylor Sampsell 193  
James Thomas 191  
Lawrence Anderson 191  
Melissa Hill 191  
Randy Meers 185  
Deana Anderson 185  
Cacy Williams 185  
Sue Shultz 185  
Tom Sellmeyer 185  
Brienne Steffel 183  
Andy Hyland 183  
Kenneth Miller 183  
Steve Manville 183  
Robert Schultz 181  
Earl Shultz 181  
Duane Eckhart 179  
Kenna Sampsell 179  
Jerry Grame 179

All those listed above this mark win 2 yrs. worth of Landmarks

**Ivan Foley 175**

Lew Meyer 175  
Judy Williams 175  
Steve Heuton 175  
Johnny Shultz 175  
Craig Fisher 173  
Eddie Highlander 167  
Adam McGinness 165  
Shannon Thomas 165  
Russ Purvis 164  
Michael Kincaid 162  
Cory Kincaid 161  
Brett Anderson 161  
Bill Williams 161  
CK Rairden 161  
Tom Taulbee 159  
Kevin Lockhart 157  
Kurt Foley 157  
Lori Meyer 153  
Brian Kubicki 153  
Aaron Black 152  
Randy West 151  
Helen Steffel 150

Ron Nelson 148  
Greg Hall 148  
Anne Thomas 145  
Clayton Freeman 145  
David Richey 144  
Jenny Steffel 143  
Bill Hankins 142  
Linda Foley 142  
Corbin Smith 140  
Mark Harpst 140  
Sherry King 140  
Whiteny Meers 139  
Brad Taulbee 138  
Steve Kincaid 138  
Irvin Reineke 138  
John L. Steffel 136  
Brad Babcock 136  
Sue Palm 136  
Melvin Grame 134  
Rick Porter 134  
Matt Demarco 134  
Mark Jackson 132  
David Lowry 132  
Alyssa Foley 130  
Sally Jackson 130  
Georgie Anderson 130  
Larry Van Fosson 130  
Joy Pepper 130  
John Steffel 130  
Nick Palmer 128  
Laura Petty 128  
Judy Eckhart 126  
Judy Grame 126  
Linda Whitmore 126  
Andy Kules 126  
Beth Taulbee 124  
Heather Ryan 122  
Kinsey Barton 122  
Randy Knox 120  
Cameron Kincaid 120  
Travis Steffel 120  
Mitch Lindstrom 116  
Sydney Meers 113  
David Pypes 110  
Blair Sampsell 104  
Donna Van Fosson 100  
Connie Knox 100  
Frank Thurman 100  
Graham Sampsell 88

**The Landmark thanks you all for playing. Let's do it again next year!**

**If you have questions or to claim your prize, email [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com) or call the office at 816-858-2313.**

---

## JEANA HOULAHAN, ANDY STANTON DESERVING OF SUPPORT

Posted 4/6/09, 5:05 p.m.

It's Election Eve.

Time for some last minute, quick-hitting analysis on some of the contested races facing voters at the city/school ballot boxes tomorrow (that's Tuesday, April 7).

**PLATTE COUNTY R-3 SCHOOL BOARD:** Finally, an interesting and somewhat unpredictable school board race at R-3. There are four candidates seeking the two open seats. On the ballot are **Karen Wagoner (incumbent), Bill Kephart, Jeana Houlahan, and Alan Williams.**

The school board has had an interesting and newsworthy year that can be reviewed by reading past *Between the Lines* columns. If you care enough to be reading this analysis, you already know some of the stuff that has gone down involving the school board over the past 12 months. There have been some ups and downs and strange behaviors--with much unnecessary and suspicious secrecy--which is never acceptable when it is your money being spent and your children's education involved.

That will make it interesting to see how the lone incumbent on the ballot fares tomorrow. Incumbent Karen Wagoner--who I have criticized in the past for being too much of a softie in her 'let's take the easy way' role as a school board member while often being overly combative with those of us who have questioned her in her role as local Chamber of Commerce executive director--has traditionally run fairly strong, but some of the school board's drama over the past several months may take off a bit of the shine. In 2006, Wagoner pulled 886 votes to be the top vote-getter among a field that included Dick Modin (734), Greg Henson (538), David Edwards (464), and Bob Williams (209).

The 886 sounds like a lot of votes but is it really? In 2007, Mary Temperamental was top vote-catcher with 976, followed by Bob Shaw (788) and David Edwards (503).

Last year, Trish Stinnett--the lone fighter on what often is a bureaucratic board operating under a hypnotic trance placed upon it by the current administration--was the leading recipient of votes with a whopping 1,470 followed by Sharon Sherwood with 1050, Dave Holland (1021), Deana Hon (906) and Bill Kephart 582. Stinnett's strong showing should have sent a message to other board members that the public likes independent thinkers--other board members haven't grasped that reality to this point.

Speaking of independent thinkers, that leads this columnist to his only endorsement for school board: **Jeana Houlahan**, a hard-working, intelligent person with an attention to detail and willingness to do research that will absolutely drive the "don't rock the boat" crowd crazy if she gets elected. Houlahan is by far the best potential board member on this ballot. She is a PC R-3 graduate and a mother of

three kids currently attending various schools in the district. She has management level experience in budgeting, strategic planning and human resources and has been a school volunteer and substitute teacher.

"I understand you need accountability for your tax dollars," Houlahan has told R-3 patrons. Amen, Jeana.

Though voters are free to vote for two of the four candidates, **cast your ballot for Houlahan and only Houlahan**. It is vitally important that she finish in the top two, so no sense throwing a vote to someone less deserving.

Alan Williams, who is recognized as an involved parent, has placed many wordy yard signs around the district. Memo to Alan: You can't stuff an elephant in a thimble, you can't take a shower in a parakeet cage and you don't want to try to print the Declaration of Independence on a yard sign. Despite his practically illegible yard signs, some of Foley's Feelers in the Field (well-placed sources who report in) like Williams' chances of finishing in the top two. While I hope their projection is accurate, I'm going against those feelers in the field and predict the two winners will be Houlahan and Wagoner, with Williams and Kephart on the outside looking in. If I'm wrong and Foley's Feelers are right, I will likely never go against the feelers again.

Houlahan has run the most well-organized and aggressive campaign. Wagoner knows too many people to lose, doesn't she? Though admittedly it would be nice to see voters send a message to the free-spending bureaucratic types.

**CITY OF PLATTE CITY:** For **Ward 1 alderman, Ron Stone**, incumbent, is being challenged by **Lee Roy Van Lew**. Van Lew is trying to revive a political career derailed when Mayor Dave and the Sunshine Boys were starting to wear thin on many people. Two years ago, Stone thumped Van Lew 91-28 for this position. I would expect Stone to win easily again. Stone's biggest contribution in his first term has been to vote the right way on the firing of former city administrator Keith Moody last year. A lot of us didn't think Ron would have the Stones to join Andy Stanton, Aaron Jung, and Kenneth Brown in ousting Moody. He did. For that he will always be popular with a solid portion of the general public.

For **Ward 2 alderman**, incumbent Andy Stanton faces a challenge from Ron Porter, another former member of the former Mayor Dave Brooks' regime. Mike Walsh, a nice man who has unsuccessfully run for office previously, is also on the ballot here. Porter actually was the sharpest of the Sunshine Boys. He used to occasionally question Mayor Dave's madness before Brooks eventually won him over. **But Stanton is the preferred choice here**. He has proven to be the outspoken leader among the six member board, serving as board president. He questions every decision, gives thoughtful consideration, and is a diligent watchdog over tax dollars. He's the kind of leader you don't want to let get away in trying economic times. **Stanton deserves reelection**.

**NORTH PLATTE SCHOOL BOARD:** Three candidates are seeking two open spots here. The guy not afraid to ask questions is our favorite candidate, **Jon McLaughlin**. McLaughlin, a detail-oriented financial analyst, has run previously without success because he makes some of the old guard at R-1 uncomfortable with his 'let's not just blindly follow the superintendent on everything' attitude. Which of course is why we love him here in Between the Lines. He does face a tough task in trying to unseat **Tim Nash** (good guy from a well-respected family) or **Mike Fisher**.



**PARK HILL SCHOOL BOARD:** Two full term seats open here (**held by Denise Schnell and John Thomas**), as well as one unexpired term (held by **Janice Bolin**). Incumbents Schnell and Thomas face a challenge from **Lathem Scott**. We'll be surprised if Schnell and Thomas are not both reelected. We haven't forgotten, however, that they were two board members present at that special Breakfast Club school board meeting Landmark reporter Alan McArthur crashed at the Corner Café at 7 a.m. one morning last year.

Bolin faces a challenge from **Dan Coronado and Mark Roy**. Neither Coronado nor Roy appeared at a recent candidate forum, which may make some folks question their sincerity in seeking the post.

**CITY OF PARKVILLE:** Four aldermen up for election, zero have opposition on the ballot. **Charlie Poole** has said he is running as a write-in against **Deborah Butcher**, but, my friends, that's a tough way to try to win an election. I guess no contested races means the people at Parkville are extremely satisfied--though traffic on my phone line and in my email inbox say differently. Until some of the concerned folks step up to find candidates, Parkville incumbents will continue to believe they are doing a fantastic job.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Regardless of your preferences, go vote Tuesday. And check this week's print edition of The Landmark for results and the only meaningful local analysis.

*(Have an election prediction or thought? Want to become one of Foley's Feelers in the Field? Send an email to [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com))*

---

## MANY WAYS TO SPECULATE ON THIS HARPST SITUATION

Posted 4/3/09

For those of you who thought the world as we know it had ended when Mexican restaurant Rancho Grande sold out and split town to make room for Walgreen's--and you know who you are, don't make me name names--relax. Rancho Grande may soon be headed back to Platte City. Word is Rancho is in serious negotiations with developer Bill Mann to buy an existing structure in the Platte Valley Plaza.

\*\*\*\*\*

There are so many angles the hiring of "retiring" superintendent Mark Harpst as a financial consultant for Platte County R-3 can be scrutinized and analyzed, I'm not sure I can get to all of them in this column. We may have to make this a miniseries.

Most importantly, why all the cloak-and-dagger, clandestine activity? Whether you believe the move is a good one or you feel it is unnecessary is immaterial. What should concern you the most is that such a decision was made in total darkness and would still be unknown to all had *The Landmark* not done some investigating.

The school board made the move to hire Harpst as a financial consultant in a closed session on Feb. 26. In that same closed session, the board hired Tammy DiPonio as a new assistant superintendent. A press release was immediately sent out announcing DiPonio's hire, though not a word was uttered about the "retiring"

superintendent being given a \$24,000 per year newly-created position.

Why not? Are they embarrassed by the move? Concerned that it sends a message of a lack of confidence in next year's superintendent? Or are board members concerned that it could appear they simply created a job and an annual salary for a friend of the district? After all, most folks who have spent 14 years of their lives putting their heart and soul into a position before leaving on good terms would gladly at no charge answer a phone call from a former underling seeking advice, wouldn't they? Or is the board concerned patrons will view the move as a duplication of services? Or is the board concerned patrons will ask why the time from January till August couldn't be spent having Harpst train Reik on all he needs to know about the finances?

Or was it simply the fact the vote was not unanimous, and you know how school boards love to put up this facade of "one voice?" Could be, after all the school board attorney did put a muzzle on the dissenting board member by incorrectly telling her she couldn't comment (*she could, in fact, have legally commented on the creation of the position of financial consultant without commenting on the employee involved, but was incorrectly told she couldn't comment at all*).

The Harpst situation didn't come to light until *The Landmark* put in a Sunshine Law request for closed session minutes. Heck, school officials hadn't even told R-3 staff members about it. It wasn't until the school board realized *The Landmark* had acquired the story and was ready to run with it this week that the central office--no doubt instructed to do so by school board leadership--sent out an email to R-3 staff letting them know Harpst would be staying on in a role as paid consultant. This allowed a couple of things--it served as a way to break the news to any staff members who might be asking why the district is paying an additional \$24,000 annually for someone to hold the hand of a new superintendent who the board said was the right choice after conducting a nationwide search--and it allowed them to leak the news to their shill, a school cheerleader who gets used and abused as the school board's spin doctor so often he can no longer even try to pass himself off as a real journalist. He is for the school board what Bob Gretz was for Carl Peterson. It's an embarrassment to the journalism profession.

No other news outlet had put in a Sunshine request for the closed session documents (*and trust me, there is factual information in our story you won't find anywhere else--cheerleaders provide the rah rah, The Landmark provides the real news and unafraid commentary*) so the story had to be fed to the school board's media puppet by one of the subjects involved in the decision. And tell me again who they say has a personal vendetta? These folks get caught up in their own web of spin so often they contradict themselves without even realizing they are doing it.

Thanks for joining me here each week so we can laugh at the irony of it all.

\*\*\*\*\*

One conclusion that can be drawn by his anxiousness to seek a \$24,000 per year consulting job with health benefits is that Mark Harpst has put out feelers in the political world and doesn't like what he hears. It has been no secret Harpst would like to run for office someday, perhaps presiding county commissioner or even state senator. It has also been no secret in political circles that conservatives are salivating at the thought of campaigning against Harpst, who could effectively be painted as a big government, taxing and spending specialist. The writing has been on the wall that Harpst will have a tough time winning locally if and when he puts his name on the ballot. To me, this move indicates he now realizes it.

\*\*\*\*\*

I am man enough to admit when I'm wrong. And I was wrong about Mary Temperelli last week--remember I said I was under the impression Mary is an extremely intelligent person? I need to retract that impression, or at least point out that brains does not equal smarts. After her pathetically incorrect interpretation of a political satire cartoon and her repeated references to the school district as a "business" in her quotes in our front page story, Mary for two consecutive weeks has dressed herself in a clown suit. Next Christmas, I'm giving Mary a sense of humor wrapped in a package of common sense. And as a stocking stuffer I'm throwing in a gift card for anger management courses.

\*\*\*\*\*

As I did last spring on Election Eve, check out a special Between the Lines column with comments on the school and city elections on Monday at [plattecountylandmark.com](http://plattecountylandmark.com)

\*\*\*\*\*

So who's in the lead in our Bracket Battle with three games to go?

Leaders are **Brian Atkinson** with 168 points, **Stan Pomeroy** with 164, **Daryl Grame**, **Bobby Hensley** and **Michael Kincaid** with 162 each, and **Dorothy Anderson** with 160. Check our the column posted directly below this one for a complete list of standings.

*(You'll catch Ivan Foley shopping in stores all over Platte County and investing his money in real estate in downtown Platte City but you still won't catch him wearing a cheerleading skirt. Email him at [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com))*

---

## BREAKING BRACKET BATTLE NEWS: AN UPDATE

Posted 4/5/09

I won't take the time to update the complete list of standings because in 24 hours it will change again, but after Saturday's pair of Final Four contests, we have nailed down the two possible scenarios in The Landmark's Bracket Battle: If North Carolina wins Monday night's championship game, our Bracket Battle champion (who will claim the \$100 cash prize) will be Dr. Ann Riggs. If Michigan State pulls the upset, our Bracket Battle champion will be The Landmark's own columnist Russ Purvis.

There's the bottom line, but quickly here's a couple of housecleaning items. Number 1, the initial posting of the standings had an error in my own score--my correct score is now found in its right spot in the listing below. A double check of all brackets dropped my score by eight points. Bad news for me, but good news for more of you hoping to claim some free Landmark time. Remember, everyone scoring higher than yours truly wins two years worth of Landmark subscriptions.

The other housecleaning item is this: Later this week on this site we will post the

final standings from top to bottom. If your score is higher than mine, you will then need to contact The Landmark at 816-858-2313 to claim your free two years of Landmark subscriptions, or claim your winnings via email to [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com)

Thanks for playing.

---

## BRACKET BATTLE STANDINGS WITH ONE WEEKEND TO GO

Posted 4/3/09

After four rounds, here are your complete standings in *The Landmark's* Bracket Battle.

Remember, correct picks in the Final Four round will be worth 15 points each and if you pick the national champion that will be worth another 30 points. Winner gets \$100, anyone scoring a higher point total than *Landmark* publisher Ivan Foley gets two years worth of *Landmark* subscriptions.

Brian Atkinson 168  
Stan Pomeroy 164  
Daryl Grame 162  
Bobby Hensley 162  
Michael Kincaid 162  
Dorothy Anderson 160  
Kathy McKay 156  
Stan Palmer 156  
Dr. Ann Riggs 154  
Eddie Highlander 152  
Aaron Black 152  
Shannon Thomas 150  
Adam McGinness 150  
Helen Steffel 150  
Steve Sampsell 148  
Anna Nutt 148  
Greg Hall 148  
Ron Nelson 148  
Taylor Sampsell 148  
Jeremy White 148  
Bill Williams 148  
CK Rairden 146  
James Thomas 146  
Lawrence Anderson 146  
Melissa Hill 146  
Brett Anderson 146  
David Richey 144  
Kurt Foley 142  
Bill Hankins 142  
Linda Foley 142  
Corbin Smith 140  
Mark Harpst 140

Tom Sellmeyer 140  
Randy Meers 140  
Deana Anderson 140  
Cacy Williams 140  
Sue Shultz 140  
Sherry King 140  
Brian Kubicki 138  
Brad Taulbee 138  
Steve Kincaid 138  
Brianna Steffel 138  
Jenny Steffel 138  
Lori Meyer 138  
Andy Hyland 138  
Irvin Reineke 138  
Kenneth Miller 138  
Steve Manville 138  
John L. Steffel 136  
Derek Shultz 136  
Robert Schultz 136  
Randy West 136  
Brad Babcock 136  
Sue Palm 136  
Earl Shultz 136  
Rick Porter 134  
Matt Demarco 134  
Kenna Sampsell 134  
Jerry Grame 134  
Melvin Grame 134  
Russ Purvis 134  
Duane Eckhart 134  
David Lowry 132  
Mark Jackson 132

Ivan Foley 130  
Anne Thomas 130  
Clayton Freeman 130  
Larry VanFosson 130  
John Steffel 130  
Lew Meyer 130  
Georgie Anderson 130  
Judy Williams 130  
Sally Jackson 130  
Joy Pepper 130  
Steve Heuton 130  
Johnny Shultz 130  
Alyssa Foley 130  
Nick Palmer 128  
Craig Fisher 128  
Laura Petty 128  
Judy Grame 126  
Judy Eckhart 126  
Linda Whitmore 126  
Andy Kules 126  
Beth Taulbee 124  
Whitney Meers 124  
Kinsey Barton 122  
Heather Ryan 122

Randy Knox 120  
Travis Steffel 120  
Cameron Kincaid 120  
Mitch Lindstrom 116  
Tom Taulbee 114  
David Pypes 110  
Connie Knox 106  
Blaire Sampsell 104  
Frank Thurman 100  
Donna Van Fosson 100  
Sydney Meers 98  
Graham Sampsell 88

---

## THIS WEEK, THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY

Posted 3/26/09

Welcome back to *The Landmark*, where you can rest assured we work for our readers, not our leaders.

\*\*\*\*\*

How about the first weekend of March Madness, my annual spring fetish? Several close games, a couple upsets, and best of all three Big 12 teams advancing to the Sweet Sixteen. Not bad for a conference that was taking some shots from the national pundits most of the season. Oklahoma, Kansas and Missouri (*what a job coach Mike Anderson is doing there this season--I thought he showed a composed and steady hand during the late stages of a tight win over Marquette on Sunday*) all stayed alive on the hardwood through the first weekend. All three will face considerable challenges in the next round.

If you're tuning in here to view the early standings in our bigger than ever bracket contest (*this can be verified by the red-eyed folks who take on the task of grading more than 100 entries*), stay put. It's coming.

\*\*\*\*\*

Now I know how Dr. Phil stays so busy.

For the second time in the past several months, a public official has walked a psychological tight rope after reading something in *The Landmark*. First it was ex-Parkville mayor/then county commissioner candidate Kathy Dusenbery losing control of all her faculties in a phone conversation with me. It was a meltdown of epic proportions. I put out a call to Kathy's friends to give her a hug. It seems to have worked. No charge for that service, it's what we do here in Between the Lines.

A similar emotional outburst happened again last week, this time via email and this time with Platte County R-3 School Board member Mary Temperelli. Mary missed the point of last week's editorial cartoon on this page. First thing Friday morning, she emailed to me the letter to the editor you can read by clicking [here](#). In fact, take

a moment right now to read her letter. Go ahead, I'll talk to myself till you get back.

OK, welcome back to *Between the Lines*. Anyway, I politely acknowledged receiving her letter, thanked her for reading, told her I would be glad to address her accusations, and encouraged her to attend an upcoming Sunshine Law forum this newspaper will be co-hosting later this year. This wasn't good enough for Mary, who proceeded to email me an additional three or four times throughout that day. Yes, Mary was quite contrary. By her third email, I was considering calling Mary's fellow board members and asking them to conduct an intervention in the now-famous Temperelli kitchen, where several students apparently gather every Thursday afternoon to read *The Landmark*.

Last week's editorial cartoon, the work of our talented artist Matthew Silber, followed two weeks worth of commentary about the fact the Platte City Chamber of Commerce strangely awarded the school district as the "Business of the Year." Matthew's work rolled with the thought that if a school district is considered a business, is a "manufactured student" its business product? Mary--and she has been the Lone Ranger on this one, as no other *Landmark* reader has indicated this opinion to me--said the cartoon was an "attack upon our students."

Actually, the "attack" was on the idea that the school district was considered a business by the Chamber.

Frankly, until she emailed, I hadn't devoted much time to thinking about Mary. But I have always been under the impression she is an extremely intelligent person. Sometimes extremely intelligent people don't have an open mind or a sense of humor. I'm not saying Mary lacks one or the other or both, but I am saying Mary completely missed the point of the cartoon. The question then becomes did she genuinely miss the point or is this a manufactured tirade? After all, her second paragraph sounds a bit contrived to me. And her letter seems to spend some time trying to convince us she is the Mother Teresa of Platte County R-3.

So was it real or was it fake? Who knows the answer to that and better yet, who cares? Either way it goes down as another memorable moment in local political lore. If you're scoring at home, I'm giving Mary an "A" in drama but an "F" in cartoon interpretation.

What Mary will eventually realize when she regains her senses is that her temper tantrum and baseless accusations paint her in a bad light, including with the very students she claims she is out to serve and protect.

\*\*\*\*\*

As for Mary's accusation that I have a "personal vendetta" against the school district, please. She sounds like an elementary kid trying to start a pillow fight. This isn't elementary school and here in *Between the Lines* we don't use pillows. After reading her letter, one can come to the conclusion there may in fact be a personal vendetta at play here, but it's pointed at me, not from me.

Perhaps in Mary's world she calls reporting on illegal locked door meetings, improperly posted closed sessions, health violations in school cafeterias, tax increases, and plasma televisions in administrators' offices a "personal vendetta." In the real world, that's called journalism. Not only does the public have a right to know these things, the public wants to know these things. Mary apparently would prefer your journalistic thirst be quenched by reading the R-3 student newspaper, the school district's newsletter, or any lame cheerleader-type publication.

Of this much Mary can be certain: If I had a personal vendetta, her name would have been listed along with other board members as defendants in at least three Sunshine lawsuits by now. I can tell you there are other public bodies hoping *The Landmark* gives them as many get- out-of-jail free cards as we have given the R-3 school board.

Sincerely though, Mary, thanks for reading.

\*\*\*\*\*

Check out our sports guy Greg Hall this week and next week at 7:54 a.m. every weekday morning on 710 AM during Chris Stigall's show. And keep reading his entertaining Off the Couch columns at

<http://www.plattecountylandmark.com/ghall.htm>

\*\*\*\*\*

Now to that first Bracket Battle scoring update. Remember, winner gets \$100, and everybody who beats my score (currently 98) wins two years worth of *Landmark* subscriptions. At the Top Ten (or so) of the leader board in the general public category right now are: Brad Taulbee, Ron Nelson and Adam McGinness all tied with 106, followed by several people close behind with 104 points, including Shannon Thomas, Clayton Freeman, Michael Kincaid, Stan Pomeroy, Mark Harpst, Nick Palmer, and Bobby Hensley. If you don't see your name listed near the top, don't fret just yet, these battles are always won in the later rounds. For the standings among *Landmarkers*, see the column posted further down this page.

*(The feeling is always right to email your publisher. That address is [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com))*

---

## INTERNAL BRACKET BATTLE: RAIRDEN HAS EARLY LEAD

Posted 3/22/09, 8 p.m.

A 4-3-1 Sunday brought your publisher's Guaran-Dam-Teed against the spread record to 12-12-2, which is just short of, for any Deep South readers, kissing your sister. Sweet Sixteen picks posted later this week, with games firing up again on Thursday.

More importantly, standings in The Landmark's Bracket Battle among our staffers can be announced with the first two rounds of the tourney now complete. Here are the standings:

CK Rairden 108 points, Bill Hankins 106, Kurt Foley and Greg Hall 104 each, James Thomas 100, Ivan Foley 98, Brian Kubicki 92, Russ Purvis 88.

Check the printed version of your Landmark this week for the general public standings in our contest.

---



## FORMER PC PIRATE IS A MEMBER OF NCAA TOURNEY TEAM

Posted 3/18/09

It's March Madness and what could be more maddingly cool than a former Platte County Pirate involved in the Big Dance? It's happening this season.

Remember Lorenzo Riley, the post player who helped lead the Pirates into the state quarterfinals in 2005? He's now a senior for the North Dakota State Bison, who are set to do battle with none other than the defending national champion Kansas Jayhawks on Friday in the first round of this year's championship tournament.

Riley, age 22, is a 6'6" forward who checks in at 230 pounds. He has appeared in 12 games for the Bison this season. He averages 3.8 minutes on a team loaded with seniors. Riley has a shooting percentage of 33%.

Riley, affectionately known as Zo in his Pirate days, is the son of Daryl and Rebecca Riley of Platte City. His family includes brothers Cody and Ben, and sisters Jasmine and Laney. Zo is majoring in public relations at North Dakota State. I remember him fondly from the day I was invited to speak to a journalism class at Platte County High School while he was a student there. He was the most polite gentleman in the room, listened attentively and asked good questions, taking the entire session seriously. That's tough for some high school kids when they get a guest speaker, but it wasn't for Riley.

North Dakota State, by the way, is competing in NCAA Division 1 for the first time this season.

So will it be a happy dance for the Bison, or will their first-ever trip to the ball be a short one? Will Riley get in the game? We'll know the answers to these questions and more about 1:30 Friday afternoon.

*(Email the local authority on North Dakota State Bison basketball at [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com))*

## PRETENDERS COME OUT TO PLAY; BRACKET BATTLE BASICS

Posted 3/18/09

It was around 70 degrees on Monday, close to 80 on Tuesday. You wanna know why, I'll tell you why (sorry, I just fell into full Dave Brooks parody mode for a second--old habits die hard).

Anyway, the reason it was 70 degrees on Monday and close to 80 on Tuesday? It's Sunshine Week in Missouri.

\*\*\*\*\*

Sunshine Week is an initiative to create awareness about the importance of open

government and freedom of information. At *The Landmark*, we do this year-round. For one special week of the year at the urging of the Missouri Press Association, some other media outlets--who are most often clueless about the real role of their profession-- pretend to give a rat's ass about protecting the public's right to know.

It's Amateur Week.

\*\*\*\*\*

Local elected officials throughout Platte County--and the general public--will be invited to a special event in the coming months.

Later this year, the left-leaning Weston Chronicle and your right-leaning Landmark will be teaming up to host an educational evening about the Sunshine Law. Invited speakers will include the state attorney general's "new guy" assigned to educate public officials on the topic and Jean Maneke, the Missouri Press Association's legal expert on open government issues. Many of you have met Jean at *Landmark* Christmas parties. She knows her stuff on this topic.

We did this several years ago--I want to say it was 2000 or 2001--and a large crowd attended in the county commission meeting room at the Platte County Administration Building. It's a friendly opportunity for elected officials to learn the ins and outs about the open meetings/records laws so you don't have to read your name in the paper at a later date.

Watch this space for details as they get nailed down. There will be no need for a taxpayer-funded security guard and we promise not to lock you out of the meeting.

\*\*\*\*\*

Less than five months now until my speaking engagement with the Platte County Pachyderm Club at O'Dowd's in Zona Rosa. Good seats are still available.

\*\*\*\*\*

I'm still formulating topics for that August talk with my favorite elephants. Some subjects that may get touched upon: Barack Obama, socialism, why Republicans have gotten their tails kicked lately at the national level, the Sunshine Law, journalism degrees, school boards, sales taxes and golf courses, and what's left of the Falling Star.

I better narrow that down or we could be there awhile. Unlike Obama, I will not be using a teleprompter. I'm thinking the more you drink the better the speech will be.

\*\*\*\*\*

Congrats to the Lady Pirates on their state championship. High school sports rarely get a mention in this column space for good reason, but a state title is worthy of an acknowledgment. Those girls and coaches will remember that moment for the rest of their lives.

\*\*\*\*\*

Now what does merit a mention is *The Landmark's* annual Bracket Battle, because it gives readers a chance to win cash--or better yet--two years of subscriptions to Platte County's favorite newspaper.

Beat my bracket and you're a winner. I'm following a lot of chalk this year. Here's what you're up against:

**First round winners:** Louisville, Ohio State, Arizona, Wake Forest, West Virginia, Kansas, Boston College, Michigan State, Connecticut, BYU, Purdue, Washington, Utah State, Missouri, Maryland, Memphis, Pitt, Oklahoma State, Florida State, Xavier, UCLA, Villanova, Minnesota, Duke, North Carolina Butler, Western Kentucky, Gonzaga, Temple, Syracuse, Clemson, Oklahoma.

**Sweet 16:** Louisville, Wake Forest, Kansas, Michigan State, Connecticut, Purdue, Utah State, Memphis, Pitt, Xavier, Villanova, Duke, North Carolina, Gonzaga, Syracuse, Oklahoma.

**Elite Eight:** Louisville, Kansas, Connecticut, Memphis, Pitt, Duke, North Carolina, Syracuse.

**Final Four:** Louisville, Memphis, Duke, North Carolina.

**Championship game:** North Carolina 73, Louisville 65

\*\*\*\*\*

Here's what other *Landmarkers* are predicting in the way of a Final Four:

**Brian Kubicki:** Michigan State, Memphis, Duke, UNC, with Memphis beating UNC for the title; **James Thomas:** Wake Forest, Missouri, Villanova, North Carolina, with Wake over UNC; **Russ Purvis:** Michigan State, Memphis, Pitt, North Carolina, with Michigan State over UNC; **Greg Hall:** Louisville, Connecticut, Duke, Oklahoma, with Oklahoma over Connecticut; **Bill Hankins:** Louisville, Memphis, Pitt, Oklahoma, with Louisville over Pitt; **Kurt Foley:** Louisville, Memphis, Pitt, UNC, with Louisville over UNC; **CK Rairden:** Louisville, Memphis, Pitt, UNC, with Louisville over UNC.

You've got till 11 a.m. Thursday to get your bracket to us. Fax it to 816-858-2313 or email it to [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com)

\*\*\*\*\*

Check our web site at [plattecountylandmark.com](http://plattecountylandmark.com) throughout the tournament, as I'll have occasional updates in special Between the Lines postings. Landmark facilities manager Kurt Foley and I will be soaking up the first round NCAA action at the Sprint Center on Thursday, so expect a report on that, and I'll tell you which former Platte County Pirate basketball player is on a tournament roster for a team in the Big Dance. And look for some potential Guaran-dam-teed against the spread picks if the feeling is right.

*(The feeling is always right to email your publisher. That address is [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com))*

---

**GET YOUR ENTRY IN LANDMARK**

## BRACKET CONTEST NOW!

It's time for *The Landmark's* annual college basketball bracket contest. It's the original and longest-running public bracket contest in Platte County, and your chance to win \$100 or two years worth of subscriptions to *The Landmark*.

Entry, as always, is free and open to everyone. Entries are limited to one per person. This year's winner will receive a \$100 prize, as well as bragging rights and much publicity in the pages of your *Landmark* and here at [plattecountylandmark.com](http://plattecountylandmark.com)

Entries in *The Landmark's* contest are due by 11 a.m. on Thursday, March 19.

To enter, fill out a copy of the 64-team bracket, which you can clip out of the daily papers or print one by clicking [here](#). Pick a winner for every tournament game. Any games left blank are counted as a loss.

Entries can be faxed to 816-858-2313 or emailed to [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com)

Again this year, *Landmark* publisher Ivan Foley is offering rewards to those who finish with a higher score than he does. Anyone with a better score than Foley will receive two one-year subscriptions to *The Landmark*, the only countywide newspaper in Platte County. Both years can be applied to the entrant's subscription or keep one for yourself and give the other year to a friend or family member.

As a potential tiebreaker, write in how many total points you think will be scored in the national championship game.

It's your chance to go head-to-head against Foley and other *Landmark* personalities, including columnists Greg Hall, Russ Purvis, James Thomas, Brian Kubicki, CK Rairden, Hearne Christopher, intern Kurt Foley and Hall of Fame photographer Bill Hankins.

Be sure to write your name and phone number on your bracket, as well as how many total points you think will be scored in the championship game.

Scoring will be done as follows:

Two points for each correct first round pick; four points for second round winners; six points for third round winners; eight points in the fourth round; 15 points in the fifth round, and 30 points for picking the tourney champion.

---

## STRANGE 'BUSINESS OF THE YEAR' IS TALK OF THE TOWN

Posted 3/13/09

As you know from time to time I like to bring you a flavor of some of the stuff that hits the Between the Lines email inbox. Here's a taste of the incoming this week.

The topic? My remarks last week poking at the Platte City Chamber of Commerce for selecting the tax-supported Platte County R-3 School District as the 'Business of the Year.' Here's a sampling from the inbox:

*"Thanks for calling out the Platte City Chamber of Commerce. You think a Chamber, for God's sake, would know better. Talk about drinking the Kool-Aid! And I really liked your follow-up: 'Is that the new American way?' Someone should submit that Platte City Chamber of Commerce Award puzzler to Fox News. Or Rush. A city chamber giving an award for Business of the Year to a school? Man, we are in sad shape as a nation and as a people if the Platte City Chamber of Commerce is that confused. Government so big that even business owners are getting confused about the roles of private enterprises versus government. I'm tempted to ask for names of merchants who made that selection."*

\*\*\*\*\*

The Platte City Chamber's bizarre designation of the school district as the alleged Business of the Year even became a topic at the Platte City Board of Aldermen meeting Tuesday night. Alderman Tony Paolillo could be overheard questioning the puzzling selection in a conversation with city administrator Jason Metten before the meeting. And during the meeting, there were a couple of interesting exchanges on the topic, including this one:

"How is R-3 considered a business? I can't seem to get an answer to that," asked Andy Stanton, alderman.

Ron Stone, alderman, tried to defuse.

"I was told it's because they have so many employees," Stone said, repeating a weak argument that ignores the fact those "so many employees" are paid with public money.

"They are in the business of developing minds," Mayor Frank Offutt said with a very noticeable smirk on his face, clearly wanting to get away from the discussion.

Stanton wasn't done.

"They (R-3) can't fail. With the amount of revenue they get, they can't fail," he added.

\*\*\*\*\*

The paid executive director of the Platte City Chamber of Commerce is Karen Wagoner, who is also a Platte County R-3 School Board member. Just sayin'.

\*\*\*\*\*

And another comment sent to my electronic mail inbox, with the topic this time the Obama-led trend toward socialism in our country:

*"As painful as that stock market slide is, becoming a Socialist nation is only making the markets more jittery, and quite understandably. I am unimpressed by this Ivy League genius collection of advisers that Obama was supposed to bring into the top echelons of his cabinet. They don't appear to have a clue. Too much schoolin' and not enough sense."*

\*\*\*\*\*

More on socialism. This quote is historically attributed to former Britain Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher: "The trouble with socialism is that you eventually run out of other people's money."

\*\*\*\*\*

One more from the Internet world this week: The word Obama is an acronym for One Big Ass Mistake, America.

\*\*\*\*\*

Hey, it's Bracket Battle time. If you've never entered The Landmark's college basketball bracket contest, this is the year to do it. You don't need to be at the top of the class to come out a winner--anybody who scores more points than yours truly wins two years worth of free subscriptions to your Landmark, Platte County's recognized news and opinion leader. That's more than a \$50 value, folks, which means everybody should be taking their best shot at this. Doesn't matter how big of a basketball fan you are--or aren't--you have nothing to lose when you fax that bracket to 816-858-2313 or email to me at [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com)

Or, if you'd like a personal visit and a chance to shoot the breeze, drop your entry by our office in historic downtown Platte City. Take a look at our building's newly-renovated exterior in the process.

\*\*\*\*\*

One of the enticing facets of our bracket contest is you'll get to match prognosticating skills against those Landmark personalities who inform you, often entertain you, hopefully stimulate your mind, and often (tick) you off.

Republicans, think of it as your chance to get in a shot at our Democratic pundit Russ Purvis. Dems, think of it as your chance to launch an in-your-face jump shot at James Thomas, CK Rairden and Brian Kubicki. Sports junkies can use it as a sports IQ exam against our web site sports guy Greg Hall. Intellectuals can go head-to-head against smart guy Bill Hankins. Basketball players can judge their skills against our three-point specialist Kurt Foley. And all of you can view it as a chance to dish out a "take that" to the publisher who you know has gotten under your skin a time or two--or three, or more--in the past year.

This will be fun. Get your entry in. The bracket will be announced Sunday evening and you have until next Thursday at 11 a.m. to get your entry to us.

\*\*\*\*\*

There's a feud brewing in the KC sports media between Jason Whitlock and talking heads Kevin Kietzman and Jack Harry. Greg Hall has an excellent Off the Couch column about it now on our web site at <http://www.plattecountylandmark.com/ghall.htm>

\*\*\*\*\*

Son Kurt tells me a rubber band pistol was once confiscated from his algebra class because it was a weapon of math disruption.

*(He's usually in Las Vegas this week, but after busting out of town for several days at Christmas your publisher is spending his normal spring break right here. Comfort him via email to [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com))*

---

## Calling a spade a spade; And Grill's Wizards connection

Posted 3/6/09

Comedian David Spade will be appearing at the Ameristar Casino in Kansas City on April 18. Having caught his act in Las Vegas last March, I highly recommend it.

Promotional materials for the event say his show is for mature audiences only, which makes me wonder how I ever got in the first time.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Platte County R-3 School District has been named the Business of the Year by the Platte City Chamber of Commerce.

Huh?

Memo to the Chamber: A school district, by definition, is not a business. A real business cannot mandate upon its "customers" its desired level of income, which is what R-3--or any tax supported entity--does when it sends all of us those tax bills.

How can anybody in private enterprise compete against that?

\*\*\*\*\*

Who will win the Chamber's Business of the Year Award next year, the City of Platte City or the County of Platte?

\*\*\*\*\*

A tax supported institution does not--should not--exist for the purpose of making a profit and should not be taking tax money to compete against private enterprise, which in fact is what R-3 is doing by running its own preschool. And now we hear there's some consideration at R-3 about the district beginning a day care service.

There's something wrong with taking money from local businesses in the form of taxes and then using that money to compete for private dollars against some of those same local businesses.

Is that the new American way?

\*\*\*\*\*

Memo to Parkville mayor and board of aldermen: In the name of Sir Walter Raleigh, enough of this ridiculous smoking ban discussion. How many years is this going to go on? Make a decision--or better yet, leave it alone--and move on. You're starting to embarrass yourselves.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Between the Lines bat phone rang this week with a reliable tipster on the other end. Seems that the Kansas City Wizards public relations employee who fired upon me from her Wizards email account recently after my analysis of the political future of State Rep. Jason Grill has a vested interest in the topic: She and Grill have been dating for the past several months, reports this tipster, who is known to frequent some of the same nightspots as southern Platte County's state representative.

The Wizards PR gal? Erin Lawless. Erin told me in her email that my reference to Grill's "slick GQ style and past questionable behavioral incidents" was "rude." She wrote in her email: "Jason is an amazing person with a huge heart. He wants the best for his district and does everything he can to better the community, and I honestly can't say that about a lot of politicians out there."

And my favorite part is that Erin finished her love note to me on the Wizards email account this way: "Your article is transparent. Good thing for (Grill) that he is focused and doesn't listen to little articles that make incorrect assumptions." (*Sidenote from this columnist: Hey Erin, what exactly are those 'incorrect assumptions?'*)

To be fair--and hey, that's what we do here--though Erin wasn't upfront about her vested interest in my analysis of Grill's political future, the Between the Lines tipster comes to her defense: "She's really sweet, really pretty. I think she's a really good influence on him. She could be good for (Grill). I like him. I think he's a nice kid who needs to grow up really fast and maybe now he is," the tipster remarks.

\*\*\*\*\*

Want another reason Roy Blunt wouldn't be able to successfully carry the Republican flag into battle against Robin Carnahan for U.S. Senator in 2010? Blunt was one of only 24 Congressmen who voted to protect their own pay raises. More specifically, every member of the Missouri delegation rejected the pay raise--except Blunt.

Run, Republicans, run from Blunt. He won't win in 2010. Find another candidate without the baggage. Leaders like ol' Roy are part of the problem, not part of the solution.

\*\*\*\*\*

The tell-it-like-it-is sports style of Greg Hall is back in *The Landmark* fold, on our web site at [plattecountylandmark.com](http://plattecountylandmark.com)

Hall--one of the people I most admire in this business, which is a world full of too many fanny kissers and too short on writers willing to cut through the bull--has throngs of loyal readers who will be thrilled to learn they can once again check out his work online.

Some new stuff from GH is already online and look for more to come on a weekly basis. The link is <http://www.plattecountylandmark.com/ghall.htm>

\*\*\*\*\*

New Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon and new Attorney General Chris Koster both have expressed support for strengthening the Sunshine Law. Nixon recently told a



gathering of media types at the state capitol that he backs proposed legislation allowing penalties against all government officials, and not just those who knowingly violate the open meetings law.

Nixon said he also wants to make it easier for people who successfully allege Sunshine Law violations to recoup their attorney fees. "If you put public officials and public bodies at risk for those fees, they're much more likely to err on the side of openness," Nixon told the media gathering.

Koster, meanwhile, said he has hired a staff person to focus solely on educating local government officials (*any school board presidents listening?*) about the Sunshine Law. Koster said he believed the attorney general's office previously conducted about 15 to 25 presentations a year about the law. Koster said he wants to increase that to between 150 to 170 annually.

*(Always willing to help raise awareness of the public's right to know, this columnist can knowingly be reached at [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com) or on the bat phone at 816-858-0363)*

---

## The strong get stronger; Political train wrecks coming

Posted 2/26/09

The negotiations were heavy-handed--a 15 minute conversation at *The Landmark's* Christmas party and two phone conversations last Thursday--but the deal is done.

We're pumped to have Hearne Christopher, Jr., longtime popular columnist for *The Falling Star* before it started its rapid descent, on board with us now at *The Landmark*. Check out his debut offering on page A-4.

Hearne penned the most popular column the Star had going (only Jason Whitlock could challenge him for the honor) until they cut him loose last fall. He's back in the game now with *The Landmark* and the Johnson County Sun, and is firing up his own web site at [kccconfidential.com](http://kccconfidential.com), where he'll be joined by former Landmark sports media columnist Greg Hall and others.

Hearne's weekly column with us will focus on local people of note, entertainment, nightlife, business and politics with an edge. His addition further strengthens our already strong stable of columnists. It's a team of pundits clearly unmatched by any other Platte County newspaper. We like to think it's an approach that has vaulted *The Landmark* into its status as the paper of choice for the Northland.

Our columnists strive to give readers insightful views on the news while providing hard hitting opinions on a regular basis. This is a full service operation. Ask us nicely and we may even come out and change your oil or mow your lawn.

Thanks for reading.

\*\*\*\*\*

Prior to his time at the Star, Hearne was executive editor of the Pitch. "I was the one who originally hired current Pitch editor C.J. Janovy," he told me. I couldn't

tell if he was bragging or complaining.

\*\*\*\*\*

Popular sports media sound bite columnist Greg Hall is also back in *The Landmark* lineup. Check out his most recent work by clicking here <http://plattecountylandmark.com/ghall.htm>

\*\*\*\*\*

Time to blow a whistle of warning. It appears there are two political train wrecks on the horizon. Let's take them one at a time.

1. Yes, I realize it's very, very early in his administration and it's way too soon for meaningful predictions. Or is it? What have the first five weeks of the Barack Obama administration shown to you? It has shown to me that the Republicans still have hope. This smells like a one-term deal. Signs are that Obama "The Messiah" will actually turn out to be the second coming of Jimmy Carter. The feeling here is that average Americans will be quick to sour on Obama's socialistic "change" to government. It's already happening. The mid-term elections in 2010 will be quite telling. In four years, Obama will be extremely vulnerable. The only reservation I have in making this prediction is that the Republicans' field of potential challengers isn't exactly overwhelming, though keep your eye on the next "rising star," Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal. In the end, we will be able to thank Obama for spurring the Republican base back to acting like fiscally-conservative Republicans, instead of becoming apologists for George Bush, which is what happened in W's second term. By the time the conservative-leaning pundits stopped making excuses for him and started pounding on Bush for some of his crazy fiscal decisions and questionable policy-making ideas it was too late--the majority of voters had already decided they wanted a "change" no matter what that "change" brought them. Now the country is seeing that non-specific "change" it ordered. Unless you're on the receiving end of a bailout or an entitlement, chances are you're not going to like it.

2. Roy Blunt, Republican Congressman from southwest Missouri and father of the recent one-term governor, wants to be the Republican candidate for U.S. Senate to replace good ol' boy Kit Bond. Not surprising. What is surprising is that some of the "establishment" Republicans are jumping for joy. I just don't get it. For a Republican party that needs a shot in the arm, Blunt is part of the problem, not part of the solution. While I agree the Republicans need to present one candidate to avoid a primary, the problem is Roy Blunt should not be that candidate. Did the state GOP not learn anything from the Kenny Hulshof for governor fiasco? Good grief. Roy Blunt is Kenny Hulshof with better hair. Robin Carnahan will roll ol' Roy.

\*\*\*\*\*

I chuckled at a radio interview I heard Tuesday morning. It was southern Platte County's own State Rep. Jason Grill, Democrat, being interviewed on sports radio station WHB by his Facebook friend Steven St. John.

Grill was being coddled during a soft interview (is there ever one of these that isn't soft when a sports talker gets out of his league by 'interviewing' a politician?) about a legislative proposal by Grill. Grill, who as regular readers of this column know is an avid sports fan, wants to increase penalties for anyone convicted of causing physical injury to umpires or referees at high school (or other levels, I presume) sporting events. During the radio lovemaking session, Grill at one point

said, and I'm paraphrasing here, that behavior by some fans at sporting events is a problem that is "out of control."

Now you know why there was chuckling in my presence during the interview: Grill knows a thing or two about questionable behavior at sporting events. His own alleged behavior at MU sporting events became a temporary feature in this column space that we like to call Grill Gone Wild. Read the Oct. 17 column for details. That link is [www.plattecountylandmark.com/ifoley2008.htm](http://www.plattecountylandmark.com/ifoley2008.htm)

Or for other alleged Grill behavioral incidents, surf to [www.plattecountylandmark.com/Article10434.htm](http://www.plattecountylandmark.com/Article10434.htm)

I'm guessing Grill's Facebook friend hadn't done any research on his interviewee.

\*\*\*\*\*

Jason Grill is apparently endorsed by the Kansas City Wizards soccer team--or at least their public relations department. After my recent column analyzing Grill's political future, I received an email from a fired up "community relations specialist" with the Wizards, sent from her Wizards email account. She said my analysis was "rude" and that she was offended by my reference to Grill's "slick GQ style and past questionable behavioral incidents."

Interestingly, she quickly declined my offer to run her thoughts as a letter to the editor.

If Grill gets support from every Wizards fan in Platte County he can count on at least seven votes at his next election.

*(Even Wizards PR people are encouraged to email the publisher. Lord knows they have the time. Kick that missive to [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com))*

---

## THIS JUST IN: PARKVILLE'S LEADERS MAY NOT BE ROBOTS

**Posted 2/20/09**

Wow, all this discussion of a potential smoking ban in Parkville is getting a little testy. Let's be honest, city hall at Parkville is normally a country club setting. My view of Parkville's city hall is one where the attitude is "Wink-wink, let's get this done quietly behind a closed door before we vote on it in open session, wink-wink, don't say much in front of the public and when anything bad happens let's portray Tom Hutsler as the anti-Christ."

It's annoying to some of us who prefer the concept of open debate and open government but apparently it doesn't bother many folks in Parkville because they keep electing leaders of the same mindset. Hutsler--never afraid to attempt to right what he sees as a wrong and a guy who gets blamed for more negative stuff than George Bush--can't get elected. Others who feel like Hutsler are quick to mention their concerns to *The Landmark* but won't put their names on the ballot.

Anyway, back to the smoking ban. Check out the letter to the editor to the right from the manager at the American Legion. Apparently campaigning to temporarily replace Hutsler as city hall's "Most Hated," Brown throws out what can be termed

some justifiable criticism. He calls Mayor Gerry Richardson's performance on this smoking ban issue "an embarrassment" and reminds the mayor that "dictatorships are easy, democracy is hard work."

Meanwhile, during Tuesday night's work session on the topic, aldermen for once weren't kissing each other's fannies and instead were throwing around words like "ridiculous" when discussing suggestions from fellow aldermen in regard to details of the proposed ban.

Hey, this is getting good. I love it. We may yet discover elected officials at Parkville are not robots.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Landmark* readers are the best. Last week we hit the streets with a story about an unconfirmed mountain lion sighting in Platte County and immediately we get emails, visits and phone calls from people with more stories. And these aren't nutbags or Star Trek fans giving us the information. As you'll see in our front page story this week information has been gathered from two highly respected Platte City businessmen and a respected Weston farmer.

Keep the information flowing. If you have an alleged mountain lion sighting--or any other unusual wildlife experience--give us a buzz and we'll keep the mini-series going.

\*\*\*\*\*

Yes, *Landmark* readers are the best. As an example, readers of this column space keep me constantly informed and entertained all at the same time. Many of you email on a daily basis with your thoughts and opinions on happenings in the world, in particular with thoughts about what's going on in our nation's capital right now. I see that President Hope /Change/Socialism isn't winning you over. Let me share some of the emails from a regular reader, who I won't identify. This guy likes to shake up our elected leaders. He has been all over the case of Sen. Claire McCaskill for weeks and in recent days has aimed his anger at the White House. Following are excerpts from emails this reader has sent to me:

**TUESDAY, FEB. 17, 9:35 a.m.:** I called McCaskill's DC office this a.m. and asked about this mouse (\$30 million in the "stimulus" package will restore a wetland in Nancy Pelosi's district to protect the salt marsh harvest mouse). They stated they were not aware of the provision. They asked that I provide the page and reference number. I asked why they wouldn't know about this if they had read the bill. I then asked if they in fact read the bill. No response. I then stated that we have just identified the underlying problem. They then ask "May I take your name and zip code?" End of call. I have such fun.

**TUESDAY, FEB. 17, 11:22 a.m.:** Well, I then called the White House. Asked them if they knew (about the \$30 million mouse). "We can only take comments." So I asked them if Obama knew about this mouse. I also asked if he supported higher taxes on poor by raising tobacco taxes and smokers include low and middle incomes. Then asked if he was flying to Denver to sign the stimulus bill. They said "yes." So I asked why, if he is telling everyone to sacrifice, is he flying to Denver to sign a bill? "I will gladly take your comments," they told me. I added that the President is a hypocrite, liar and a fraud. End of call. The phone lines are busy these days.

**TUESDAY, FEB. 17, 11:27 a.m.** Your Between the Lines columnist emails this reader to the effect of: “You are now my official White House correspondent.”

**TUESDAY, FEB. 17, 11:37 a.m.:** Reader emails back to columnist: “Well, I am just confirming what you know--the country is being run by idiots.”

\*\*\*\*\*

I’m sorry, I laugh out loud every time I go back and read that exchange. Only *Landmark* readers are passionate enough to get the White House on the phone. Great job.

\*\*\*\*\*

Here’s another email, this one from a different loyal Between the Lines reader. It was sent on Tuesday, Feb. 10 to bang on President Socialism for “the sky is falling and we’re all going to die” attitude he was showing while pressing for the pork-laden stimulus package. The subject line from this loyal reader was: “Thanks for the speech, state senator,” a reference to our new president being just a few years removed from a seat in the Illinois state senate.

**TUESDAY, FEB. 10, 11:13 a.m.:** Have you checked the stock market today? Down 280 points at this moment. All O’s hyperbole about the “catastrophe.” Not helpful at all to those of us trying to help our 88-year-old parents live on their savings. And how many times does he have to remind us he inherited this mess? Just a wee bit defensive. You’d think the well-educated man would have studied some history and have a sense of the cyclical nature of the economy. Instead, I found him using the tactic of fear-mongering. I expected some quotes from Revelations at any time. Sen. Claire McCaskill used the word “Armageddon.” All this is so very unhelpful. Do us a favor, Obama, and give fewer press conferences. The nation is already a bit fearful about the economy and you and your lackeys are making things worse. Smartest man in the room, indeed.

*(The Landmark has the smartest readers in the room. Email the publisher at [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com))*

---

## MEOW: FROM MOUNTAIN LIONS TO KITTY CATS

Posted 2/13/09

Hope you find our front page in-depth feature on mountain lions in Missouri and unconfirmed sightings in Platte County informative and educational. For the past several years we’ve heard second-hand reports of alleged mountain lion sightings in northern Platte County (and there was a confirmed sighting in Clay County, remember, in 2002 when a mountain lion was struck and killed by a vehicle). Reports that reached our ears often came from the New Market, Dearborn and Camden Point areas. Such sightings are tough to confirm without physical or photographic evidence of course, as the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) is quick to point out. In fact, the MDC often it seems goes out of its way to discount alleged sightings. However, here’s a tip: Don’t always listen to what they say but rather watch what they do. The conservation department in 1996 formed a special Mountain Lion Response Team after reports of sightings became more

prevalent.

If the MDC really feels the vast majority of sightings are bogus, why did it form the special Mountain Lion Response Team? Makes you stop and think just a bit.

\*\*\*\*\*

The latest unconfirmed sighting in Platte County--or at least the latest of which we are aware--took place in mid-January near the home of our very own office manager. Between the hours of 3-4 a.m. on an extremely cold morning, a big cat with a long tail making a distinguishable high-pitched sound paced for a couple of minutes about six feet away from the wrap-around porch at the Mark and Cindy Rinehart home located about a mile west of the Camden Point exit off of Interstate 29. Cindy believes the animal was attracted by the smell of hamburger being fried in the kitchen at the time (*unusual occasion, she says, as she claims the Rinehart kitchen isn't normally open for business at 3 a.m.*). The unconfirmed sighting was reported to the MDC.

\*\*\*\*\*

Political insiders are now confirming what was speculated in this column months ago. Insiders say Jason Grill, current 32nd District state representative serving southern Platte County, has realized he wouldn't be able to win a Democratic primary in a run to fill Charlie Shields' state senate seat when Shields is term-limited out in 2010. Two other Democrats, both of Buchanan County, have been quietly expressing an interest in the seat, which covers Buchanan and Platte Counties. State Reps. Martin Rucker and Ed Wildberger both have an interest, though speculation now is that Wildberger may end up being appointed to a post by Gov. Jay Nixon, possibly as state fire marshal. This would leave only Rucker and Grill as viable candidates, and the belief here is that lunch pail Democrats in Buchanan County would choose to vote heavily in favor of Rucker over Grill, whose slick GQ style and past questionable behavioral incidents likely wouldn't play well with Platte's neighbors to the north.

Remember, though he is a Democrat, Grill serves in a state representative district that is predominantly Republican, meaning many of his past supporters would have to cross party lines to register a vote for him in a Democratic primary. It would be a tough race for him to win and could derail what Grill has hoped would be a fast track to higher office.

At any rate, the popular belief now is that Grill--who already proclaims that he is a congressman when he is in a celebrating mood at college football games and has openly told at least one media outlet that he wants to be governor someday--will end up seeking reelection to his current state representative position in 2010. The fast track appears to contain a speed bump.

\*\*\*\*\*

So, who will Republicans have as a challenger to Rucker for Shields' open state senate seat in 2010? Jason Brown of Platte City, current state representative in the 30th district, would seem a natural fit, though Brown has previously indicated a desire to work more closely to home and may have his eyes on a county office by 2010.

Another name being talked about as a potential candidate for the GOP is Merrill Eisenhower Atwater of Platte County, great-grandson of former president Dwight

David Eisenhower. Atwater worked hard to help get Kathy Dusenbery elected Platte County commissioner last fall. But Atwater has run into some problems in the vetting process. A little research has shown Atwater was a contributor to the campaign of Democrat Kay Barnes in her extremely unsuccessful race for Congress against Sam Graves. As you can imagine, this revelation has put Atwater on the outs with many of the people within the Republican ranks who will be unwilling to throw their money and organizational support behind him with that political skeleton in his closet.

\*\*\*\*\*

That proposed Sunshine Law change we talked about here a few weeks ago just got a little tougher. A Missouri lawmaker is now proposing a \$500 fine for officials who violate Missouri's open-government laws -- even if they do so unwittingly. According to the Associated Press, newly-revised legislation by Rep. Tim Jones would make it easier to assess penalties for breaking the Missouri Sunshine Law. Currently, anyone found by a judge to have "knowingly" violated Missouri's open meetings or records law can be fined up to \$1,000, while those who "purposely" violate the law can face fines up to \$5,000.

Jones says the "knowingly" standard is too vague and too hard to prove. He's right. His revised bill, presented Tuesday to the House General Laws Committee, which he chairs, would allow fines up to \$500 for Sunshine Law violations regardless of whether they are made "knowingly." Fines for purposeful violations would increase to \$8,000.

Let's keep an eye on this to see if the proposal gains passage. My money says lawmakers will act more like pussycats than mountain lions on this and won't have the stones to make the significant changes. They will likely cave under pressure from bureaucrats at places like the Missouri Municipal League, Missouri Association of Counties and Missouri School Boards Association, groups that typically fight these types of Sunshine upgrades and prefer to teach their members ways to "get around" open meetings laws rather than insist that their members adhere to the true spirit and intent of the law.

*(If he encountered a mountain lion in the wild would Ivan Foley simply put his head between his legs and kiss his butt goodbye? Ask him via email to [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com))*

---

## Hey, this isn't exactly a match made in heaven

Posted 2/6/09

Unlike aging rocker Bruce Springsteen at halftime of the Super Bowl, let's see if I can dish out a couple twists and turns while working my way through this performance without getting winded. It seemed Springsteen could have used a halftime of his own to catch his breath.

\*\*\*\*\*

Speaking of the Super Bowl, the victory by Pittsburgh resulted in a tie atop the standings in our featured Pigskin Picks season-long feature, with columnist CK

Rairden and intern/facilities manager Kurt Foley both finishing with records of 177-89.

I'm declaring Kurt the winner via tiebreaker for several reasons. First and foremost, he picked the Super Bowl winner correctly, CK did not. Secondly, he predicted a Super Bowl final score of Pittsburgh 27-21. Almost perfect, as the final score was Pittsburgh 27-23. Other factors? It was the facilities manager's first year of prognosticating, and he came way back after being 12 games down in the standings in October.

I'm also deducting points from Arizona resident CK for becoming the biggest bandwagon fan the Arizona Cardinals have ever known.

\*\*\*\*\*

Mark your calendars for six months from now.

My cell phone rang Monday night with Mike Maasen, president of the Platte County Pachyderm Club, on the other end. The fearless leader of the popular elephant group was filling out his list of guest speakers for the coming months and extended an invitation. After deciding we have a scheduling conflict for May, an offer to provide commentary at the August meeting was extended this direction. Pachyderms, I will see you on Thursday, Aug. 6, 5:30 p.m. at O'Dowd's in Zona Rosa. The verbal jam session will be open to the public, though I suggest leaving children and the faint of heart at home.

\*\*\*\*\*

As you'll see in an article in this issue, Platte County R-3 School Board President Bob "I'll use taxpayer money to hire me a security guard" Shaw declares this week he has thick skin.

In other news, Bryan Busby has declared himself skinny and Ivan Foley has declared he has the biceps of an Olympic-caliber weightlifter.

\*\*\*\*\*

Speaking of Shaw, has the county commission lost confidence in him as its county counselor after he lost the important Bateman vs. Platte County court case over whether a particular roadway was public or private? I guess we'll see. If they have, could a concerned public blame them? The expensive loss (records obtained by *The Landmark* indicate the county paid Shaw as much as \$30,000 to \$35,000 to handle matters in regard to the three-year Bateman battle) in the Bateman case is the latest in what even the most passive observers have to admit has been a trend of confidence-shaking incidents.

Let's be honest, Shaw and I don't always see eye-to-eye on issues. After initially being excited once he earned the post, I've been disappointed in his performance and critical of his time as school board president. He has responded with behind-the-scenes attempts at retribution against this newspaper. That's how life goes at a newspaper that works for its readers and protects the public's right to know. He isn't the first public official to travel that road.

But all things considered, Shaw is a nice guy, personable and likable. In fact, it could be argued that he's too nice for his role as county counselor. Some folks in the administration building have been quietly critical of the county counselor for



years for perceived soft stances on sticky legal issues. For example, a few years ago the county commission did everything but threaten Shaw with water torture to get him to provide an opinion on whether elected officials could accept a cost-of-living pay raise in the middle of their elected term.

A couple of months ago, some folks at the county were quietly cringing as they followed *The Landmark's* coverage of the locked door Platte County R-3 School Board meeting, which was a picture of a Sunshine Law violation. The significance there is that Shaw is president of the school board and also the county counselor. In his role as county counselor, he advises the county commission on open meetings issues. It didn't look real pretty for the county counselor in his "other public life" to be teetering on the brink of an open meetings violation. When questioned as to whether he believed having the building locked while a public meeting was taking place inside violated the Sunshine Law, Shaw responded to *The Landmark*: "We'll check with our legal counsel on that." Hmm. No matter which hat he is wearing at the time, the attorney for a major public entity like the county commission shouldn't have to "check" with another attorney in regard to questions of open meetings. He should know. County officials were squirming when they read it.

Less important but still noteworthy, during Shaw's time as board president R-3 has also had at least one improper posting of the reason for an executive session. Also, a board member had to be forewarned by *The Landmark* last winter that proper advance public notice of a meeting the board was about to hold had not been given. The notification from this newspaper allowed the board to go ahead with last year's candidate orientation meeting by having less than a board quorum present in the room at any given time.

In and of itself, any of the above facts would only temporarily raise an eyebrow. Combine them all, and there's cause to pause.

Frankly--and I only point this out because I know the county counselor has thick skin and will let the observation roll off his backside--the fit between Shaw and the current county commission doesn't seem like a match made in heaven: In his elected role, Shaw can quite fairly be viewed as fiscally liberal. He's working for a fiscally conservative county commission. Shaw is seen as having a soft stance on many issues. He's working for a set of county commissioners who have a firm grasp of their roles and their beliefs. Shaw tries to win arguments and cases based on technicalities. County commissioners need to win battles in the court of public opinion.

Those are some of the differences. Whether the differences are a problem remains to be seen.

*(Get a weekly cause to pause right here on page 2 of your Landmark. And email the publisher at [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com))*

---

## 'Wild' story coming soon; Sunshine Law could be toughened

Posted 1/29/09

Time to talk about the best part of Super Bowl week (*oops, is it OK for me to say Super Bowl in an editorial? Or do I need to fork over some licensing fee?*).

The best part is the chance to view highlights, and in some cases games from start to finish, of past Super Bowls on the NFL Network or ESPN Classic. This is a thrill for a lot of us who grew up die hard NFL fans. The Chiefs won a Super Bowl when I was a little less than seven years old and I can still see my dad jumping up off the couch when the Chiefs scored one of their touchdowns in that upset of the Vikings in Super Bowl IV. Shortly after that, the Chiefs went into a free fall and were terrible, so a lot of football nuts my age adopted other teams as our favorites. I adopted the Pittsburgh Steelers as my team after watching the Immaculate Reception by Franco Harris in the playoffs. That single play turned me into a Steelers fan (*well, on top of that I dug their uniform colors and loved to watch Jack Lambert smack the snot out of opposing running backs*).

My family and childhood buddies could tell you stories about how serious I was about those Steelers. I was addicted to anything Steelers. I had a Steelers stocking hat, Steelers jerseys, Steelers T-shirts, and yes, even Steelers pajamas. Arguments with rival Raiders fans--and even the occasional Chiefs fan--were commonplace at school. Ah, the good ol' days.

As I moved into my adult years--wait, have I really moved into my adult years?--I outgrew that attachment to the Steelers and of course my NFL fanhood is with the Chiefs these days, though they have severely tested my patience in the post-Marty Schottenheimer years. Let's hope they get things turned around under a new general manager and new head coach.

Anyway, where I was going with all this is that during Super Bowl Week you can often catch me watching the replays of those old Steelers Super Bowl victories. To me, it's often the best part of the annual craziness.

\*\*\*\*\*

An encounter that *Landmark* office manager Cindy Rinehart recently had with a creature from the wild has prompted a feature story that will be coming soon to the front page of your *Landmark*. Reporter Alan McArthur has been busy compiling information from a variety of sources locally and through the Missouri Department of Conservation.

His creature feature will be interesting, to say the least.

Check it out in next week's paper. It will be like an issue of National Geographic without the uncomfortable pictures. Or an episode of Wild Kingdom without the commentary from Marlin Perkins.

\*\*\*\*\*

Everybody under the age of 35 right now is asking themselves "Who the heck is Marlin Perkins?"

\*\*\*\*\*

This week I told County Collector Donna Nash that as a public service I would volunteer to help her tighten up the employee screening process for her office. She laughed.

At least she still has her sanity after what has been a rough past few months with a couple of staff issues making front page headlines.

\*\*\*\*\*

Suggested posting for the collector's office: "Gambling problem? Don't take our cash. Instead, take down this number: 1-888-BETS-OFF."

\*\*\*\*\*

What is shocking to me about the alleged stolen tax payments situation is that so many people are paying their tax bills with cash. It's not something I would even consider, but obviously many people are doing it. A confirmed \$16,000 is missing and sources are telling me the actual dollar amount involved could end up being more than \$35,000.

Never woulda thunk it.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Missouri Sunshine Law--my favorite piece of legislation, and as a taxpayer it should be yours as well--has the potential to be strengthened under a proposal in the legislature this year. All the ideas seem extremely reasonable. Rep. Tim Jones of Eureka has filed a bill that would, among other things:

1. Require most records and meetings of the Missouri Ethics Commission to be open.
2. Specify that an association is covered by the Sunshine Law if it receives public funding through dues paid by a public governmental body or its members.
3. Defines 'public meeting' to include any gathering of newly-elected members of a public governmental body who have not formally taken office, but are meeting to discuss public business, with or without current members of the body, when a quorum is present.
4. Require a notice to the public of a meeting to be extended from 24 hours advance notice to five days advance notice when the public governmental body would be considering or voting on a fee or tax increase, eminent domain, zoning, transportation development district or tax increment financing issue.
5. Define the term 'cause of action' in an exemption to the law as when "a lawsuit has been filed, regardless of whether service of process has been completed, or correspondence from a party to the body stating that litigation shall be filed unless certain demands are met."
6. Limit persons attending closed meetings of a public governmental body to members, their attorneys, staff members and any necessary witnesses.

All reasonable proposals, don't you think?

*(The new prez got nothin' on us. . . you've been able to get a weekly dose of love, hope and change right here in Between the Lines for years. Now fist bump the publisher. Or email him at [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com))*

---

## Flubbing the oath; And why no debate on

## 'stimulus?'

Posted 1/22/09

Did you catch the reported fact that former KC mayor Kay Barnes was present at the recent Kansas City news conference of Sen. Kit Bond, right after Bond announced his "retirement?"

One has to wonder if Barnes was on hand to thank Bond for that implied endorsement in her recent battle against Sam Graves. And by the way, that sure paid huge dividends for her, didn't it?

\*\*\*\*\*

When Kit Bond is finally out of public light--and here's hoping the next couple of years go by quickly--who will assume his role of mispronouncing the name of this state?

\*\*\*\*\*

If you're into reading sports-related books, I've got a recommendation for you: Bets, Drugs, and Rock & Roll by Steve Budin, with assistance from author Bob Schaller and a foreword by Brandon Lang (the man about whom the movie Two For The Money was made, starring Matthew McConaughey). The book is about the rise and fall of the world's first offshore sports gambling empire. I have no idea why this topic intrigued me, but it did.

Budin, the son of a legendary New York bookie, learned the ins and outs of taking bets at an early age. By the time he was 16 he was taking action from his schoolmates, their parents, even his teachers. He then moved on to running high roller excursions to Las Vegas. Later he moved to Central America and began accepting bets over the telephone, wresting bettors from the clutches of the neighborhood bookmaker and laying the foundation for the internet gambling revolution that was to come.

Budin's time in Central America--in Panama and then in Costa Rica-- was interesting and eventful. It featured corrupt government officials, shady businessmen and technological difficulties, but in the end he was able to emerge, he says, as the "father of modern offshore sports gambling."

It is absorbing reading. I got into it on New Year's Day and couldn't put the book down. I would imagine the hard cover is available at all the major book stores, or simply give me a call and I'll let you borrow my copy. Entertaining and informative stuff.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Iraqi journalist who has been jailed since throwing his shoes at President Bush got a visit from his brother Friday and a birthday party from his guards as he turned 30. Though he has been denied access to his lawyer, reports indicate the shoe-icide bomber is in good shape. Though let it be known he throws like a girl.

This guy may be sneaky enough to have fired off a couple of loafers at the president but I'd like to see him try to get into a locked door Platte County R-3 School Board meeting. Without being accused of causing a commotion, of course.

\*\*\*\*\*

During the Feb. 1 pro football championship game (there's a more common name for it, but some ridiculous licensing deal is supposed to prevent us from referring to it by that more common name without potentially landing our journalistic backsides in a super-sized bowl of trouble), some lucky person will win ownership rights to a 26" LCD high definition television from Hooters. I like to think of it as winning a boob tube from Hooters.

Customers have had the chance to register during the playoff games, and the winning name will be drawn during the Feb. 1 title match. Every Hooters in the country, including the one (that's weird, I thought they came in pairs) on Barry Road in Platte County, is giving away a TV to a lucky guest on that special Sunday.

I only know this because the people at Hooters sent me a press release on it. I have not obtained visual evidence.

\*\*\*\*\*

I like this observation--forwarded to me by a loyal reader--about the proposed 'economic stimulus' package going on in our nation's capital. These words are from Robert Marcin, a contributor to RealMoney.com

"Why is there no public debate about the multi-trillion dollar stimulus and direct market intervention? Why should the implosion of the biggest bubble in all of history, the US debt bubble, require another bubble in government debt/intervention? Why should we buy the "any means necessary" attitude promoted by the free market hypocrites?

"Did any talking head, politician or regulator attempt to stop the debt bubble? If they never saw the problem in the first place, why should we buy their solution?

"I don't have answers. But I am dismayed by the lack of legitimate public debate as the feds continue to propose flinging the biggest pile of crap at the wall in history."

Excellent. Preach on.

\*\*\*\*\*

What did you make of the flubbed oath of office during the inauguration of President Obama on Tuesday?

I was not an Obama supporter and would love to tell you it was Obama's fault, but in truth I think Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts screwed it up from the start and Obama's pause was actually intentional, meant to give the justice a chance to repeat the beginning of the oath the correct way. The chief justice then screwed it up again and Obama simply repeated the judge's confused version of the oath. At least that's the way I'm interpreting it, though I would imagine many members of the GOP will differ with me.

No matter whose fault, such a misstep with the eyes of the world upon them was a bit uncomfortable to watch.

***(Dismayed by the lack of legitimate public debate about the way Kit Bond pronounces the word 'Missouri,' Ivan Foley can be reached via email to [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com))***

---

## Hold the door open and let's load the moving van

Posted 1/16/09

Some of our area's movers and shakers will be moving and shaking their way out the door fairly soon. And frankly, I'm not all that torn up about it.

The hiring of Scott Pioli and putting him in charge of all football operations ensures suffering Chiefs' fans they will not have to suffer through days of Herm Edwards serving as head coach much longer (in fact he may be out the door by the time the ink is dry on this issue).

I'm sure Herm is a good guy, but this NFL head coaching gig is too much for him. What he and Carl Peterson did to this franchise over the past couple of years is inexcusable. In these days of free agency, it isn't necessary to completely destroy the on-the-field product in order to "rebuild." Edwards took the Chiefs to the lowest of lows. He made them one of the youngest teams in the NFL, which isn't necessarily a bad thing. What is a bad thing is that their young talent isn't any good, which made the Chiefs one of the youngest and least talented teams in the NFL. Combine this with Herm's clueless gameday coaching strategies and terrible clock management and you know the result? Back-to-back embarrassing seasons, with this year's record of 2-14 capping the disastrous reign of Edwards as head coach.

I predicted here months ago that if/when Edwards is relieved of his duties in KC, he will never serve as a head coach in the NFL again. That's a pretty bold forecast, because he has some things working in his favor at getting another shot, but I'm sticking with the prediction. You can't help run a franchise this far into the ground and realistically expect to get another shot at piloting the plane somewhere else. To reference a name from the Chiefs past, he has become a modern day version of Frank Gansz. Good luck to you, Herm, but it's time to go.

\*\*\*\*\*

Another mover and shaker soon to be leaving the scene is longtime Sen. Kit Bond, who announced last week he will hang it up in 2010 rather than face another re-election effort. Thank you, Kit Bond, for your many years of public service. Thank you more, Kit Bond, for realizing it's time for you to move on.

The Republican party needs an infusion of new blood and new ideas. Bond, an acknowledged leader in earmarks and good ol' boy politics, certainly wouldn't represent a brand new day for Republicans in the state.

Bond would have faced some dissension from within his own party in 2010. In his closet are items such as the controversy surrounding his staff's political involvement in the ousting of Todd Graves as U.S. Attorney in 2006, which was first reported in detail in the Washington Post last fall. Bond's staff was involved in a petty dispute with Congressman Sam Graves' office staff, and Bond's people (and are we to believe Bond didn't know it was going on?) turned it into a childhood game. Bond's people unsuccessfully tried to get Todd Graves to intervene in the dispute on Bond's behalf, encouraging Todd Graves to get his brother to fire Jeff Roe, who was at the time Congressman Sam Graves' chief of staff. Todd Graves told a Bond staffer "I'm not playing in your reindeer games" and the full court

press that eventually resulted in Todd Graves' removal was on.

The actions by Bond's staff prompted this comment from Melanie Sloan, executive director of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington: "What adults act like this? Senators are not spoiled children who can lash out on the playground when they don't get their way. U. S. Attorneys are not toadies for their Senate sponsors, they are federal law enforcement officials," she told the Washington Post in October. Bond eventually issued a public apology to "the people of Missouri" and to Todd Graves.

In another move that would have cost him some support, Bond intervened in the GOP primary for governor last year. His endorsement of Kenny Hulshof in the gubernatorial race over Sarah Steelman was the wrong move for the state and for the party. In a year voters were clamoring for change and a fresh approach, Bond's endorsement of Hulshof helped guide the GOP down a path of the same ol' same ol' that was overwhelmingly rejected by voters and created internal friction.

Not only are the above items in Bond's closet, but he has also voted the wrong way on this rainstorm of bailouts going on in Washington. His position on bailouts would have come back to haunt him with a vast majority of voters.

And, often when an elected official announces he is hanging it up, an as-of-yet unknown point of controversy looms. We don't know yet whether that is the case with Bond, but keep your eyes and ears peeled and don't be shocked if something new comes to light.

In either case, Bond's decision to opt out in 2010 is the right call. For all of us.

\*\*\*\*\*

This is why you read and trust *The Landmark*. While other outlets last week focused on the alleged "positive, unqualified, glowing" audit that had just been completed on the City of Parkville, *The Landmark* was busy exclusively reporting the city collector had been fired and quoted the assistant city administrator talking about the need for new "checks and balances." This week, *The Landmark* backs it up with a detailed look at the audit--and you'll notice it wasn't quite as positive as some folks built it up to be. You may even come to the conclusion that the audit report is the reason the city collector is no longer on the job.

Proof there's still only one watchdog in the Platte County media.

Thanks for reading.

\*\*\*\*\*

A few highlights from the talk given by Jason Klindt, Congressman Sam Graves' campaign manager in the easy win over big city mayor Kay Barnes, to Platte County Pachyderms last week:

- Klindt said the implosion of the Kansas City Star came at a great time for the Graves campaign. What he means by that is the staff reductions in the Falling Star's newsroom disrupted what would have been the liberal rag's attempt to push Barnes' agenda on a daily basis.

- Sixth District voters identify with Sam Graves' values. "We didn't run from our values, we ran to them. The Barnes campaign never figured out what to say about values," Klindt commented.

•Barnes “didn’t invest time to go to meet voters. The reason she didn’t do that is because the people disagreed with her. She never actually met voters. She got caught in an echo chamber of liberals telling her she was going to win,” Klindt said.

*(Get caught in the Between the Lines echo chamber by emailing the publisher at [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com))*

---

## Some quiet time with the elected; Propaganda exposed

Posted 1/9/09

OK, it’s well past deadline, I’ve had a crazier than normal Wednesday morning and I haven’t yet written a column. So I will fight off the urge to enjoy a hearty breakfast at the local Waffle House and get down to business by cranking out a column of the top-of-the-head variety.

\*\*\*\*\*

Why is it that’s the first time I can remember a recent reference to Waffle House in the newspaper without it being in the police blotter?

Don’t get me wrong, a lot of really nice folks work there and dine there. And I’ve heard their juke box rocks like nobody’s business. Maybe there are just semi-frequent disagreements over whether those waffles taste great or are less filling.

\*\*\*\*\*

As is usually the case, I enjoyed the heck out of the every-two-year-occurrence known as the county officeholder swearing-in ceremony, which went down on New Year’s Eve in the county commission meeting room at the administration building. It’s always nice to enjoy some relaxed conversation with newsmakers. For example, for the first time ever, Captain Frank Hunter of the sheriff’s department and I were able to have a face-to-face, low-key conversation about nothing in particular, which was enjoyable. Normally when we communicate it’s over the phone as a a new story is breaking and I’m pushing Frank for information he either doesn’t have yet or information he has and can’t release just yet.

And let me say I put a hurtin’ on the cookie table that was worked by one of my favorite Democrats, the sweet and charming 79-year-old Mary Anne Baier. Mary Anne said providing the cookie table was a topic that had been overlooked until the night before the swearing-in. I’m glad somebody remembered. Even though Mary Anne said the cookies were of the store-bought variety, they served as a pretty tasty breakfast treat for me that morning. And the punch, which Mary Anne said was not spiked in any way, hit the spot as well.

\*\*\*\*\*

For an array of photographs from last week’s county officeholder swearing-in ceremony, go to our web site at [plattecountylandmark.com](http://plattecountylandmark.com) later this week and click on the Faces ‘n’ Places tab.



\*\*\*\*\*

Landmark office manager Cindy Rinehart had laryngitis last week, which means for the first time in 16 years I was able to get in the last word during one of our many “differences of opinion.”

\*\*\*\*\*

One of my favorite county organizations, the fun and productive Platte County Pachyderms, will play host to one of my favorite people in the political world Thursday night when it meets at the Hereford House in Zona Rosa. Special guest speaker will be the sharp-minded Jason Klindt, campaign manager for Congressman Sam Graves. Klindt directed a campaign that stitched Kay Barnes in an oversized clown suit in November.

He gets a lot of hate from the Democrats for the damage he has inflicted upon their candidates, but make no mistake--Klindt is one of the sharpest minds working behind the scenes in Missouri politics.

\*\*\*\*\*

Lee Roy Van Lew has filed against Ron Stone. Ron Porter is seeking the post currently held by Andy Stanton. The Sunshine Boys are attempting a Reunion Tour on the Platte City Board of Aldermen.

This has the potential to be an entertaining spring.

\*\*\*\*\*

Ignore the propaganda spewed recently about the closing days in the search for the Platte County R-3 superintendent. Please, enough of the school kid naivete, the public isn't stupid. Just because an elected official tells us something, that doesn't mean it's true. All those meetings in the final days were not held because the school board was undecided between Mike Reik and another candidate. Reik was the choice from the start. Most of those late night, attempted CIA-level secret, security-guard present, locked door, allegedly commotion-filled meetings--some of which you'll remember included a human resources representative sitting in--were to hammer out the finer details of Reik's contract in regard to car allowance, certain benefits and other perks. The perk system in Reik's contract, sources in the field of education are telling me, is significantly different in some areas than it was in current superintendent Mark Harpst's pact.

There's the true story behind the reason for all those meetings late in the “search” process. Anything else is just hogwash.

\*\*\*\*\*

This might come as a surprise to some, but truck drivers have voted Missouri roads as the fifth best in the nation. That ranking comes from a recent survey conducted by Overdrive magazine, a publication serving the commercial motor carrier industry. The truckers, according to the magazine, also voted Interstate 44 in Missouri as the fourth most improved highway segment.

Here are the rankings of states with the best roads from Overdrive magazine.

1. Texas

2. Florida
3. Georgia, Tennessee (tie)
4. Ohio
5. Missouri

On a personal note, I did notice while scurrying about in a rental car during my recent time in Florida the fine condition of that state's highways. I also noticed many of them were toll roads. A connection between the two?

*(You'll never have to pay a toll to email this publisher. Fire your missive to [ivan@plattecountylandmark.com](mailto:ivan@plattecountylandmark.com))*

---

*[For more columns from 2008](#)*

Web Design by [Slice of Creativity, Inc.](#)

1,008,991

---