

Bolivar Herald
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R-6 board makes improvements, says audit report, offers follow-up meeting

By Jessica Oliver

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Sunshine Law compliance was the main concern of the Pleasant Hope R-6 school district audit discussion on board meetings.

According to the audit report, the district did not document some discussed issues and votes taken during closed session. Meeting minutes did not always have detail of matters discussed, and the report stated there were cases in which the minutes indicated a passed motion, but lacked a record of number of votes for and against.

During the March 17, 2008, closed session meeting, the board discussed the district's budget with its bonding company. During the Sept. 10, 2008, closed session meeting, the board discussed an upcoming study session.

Meeting minutes did not appear to be accurate; during a March 17, 2008, closed session meeting,

minutes show a board member left early, but then voted to return to open session.

Meeting minutes were not prepared or retained for the sports complex advisory committee and according to the report, it is unclear how often the committee met and what decisions were made.

The report also found that district business was conducted outside of regular open meetings in study sessions held at restaurants in Springfield.

The district provided the following response in the report: "The current superintendent and board believe topics allowed during closed session are only being discussed as of the 2008-09 school year. The discussion that took place on Sept. 10, 2008, was not for a study session, but a board retreat which only discussed the goals for the superintendent, which he would be held accountable for during his evaluation later in the school

year. ... The superintendent and board are very aware of the Sunshine Law and will make every effort to discuss only allowable topics during closed session. ... The district is no longer conducting study session meetings."

Dr. Tom Allen, Pleasant Hope's current superintendent, said that the state audit has brought some things to light that the district will improve upon, if they have not already done so. He plans to offer a meeting in the next couple of weeks to allow patrons to ask questions about the current state of the district and how their money is being spent.

"I don't want anybody to walk away thinking that this is a bad school district," he said. "Patrons are going to see, by the end of this school year, that we're not doing business any way that we used to. I invite anybody to come and see what our district is doing right."

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Chapter 2

Sandy and Judy sat on the bench and waited. As the train got closer to the station, the whistle got louder. All the people in the station started getting up and moving outside.

The stationmaster walked out onto the platform to signal the engineer who would pull the train into the station. The girls worked their way through the crowd to watch the train's arrival.

Sometimes, if the engineer misjudged the station, the train would make a hard jolt as it stopped. This time, however, the train rolled into the station and made a gentle stop.

The conductor stepped off the last car and put a small stool on the platform for the passengers to use as they got off the train.

Immediately people started climbing down from the train to the platform. Friends and family met many of the people who were getting off the train. There was a lot of hugging and hand shaking as the passengers arrived.

One of the last people off the train was a young lady dressed in white. The lady was carrying a purse and a big book.

Sandy and Judy looked at each other. This lady did not look like most of the people who came to their town.

The girls watched as she approached the depot agent. The stationmaster tipped his hat and the two spoke for a moment. Then the lady pointed to a small trunk and walked away.

Still curious about the lady in white, Sandy turned her attention to a loud noise coming from one of the freight cars. She looked to see what was happening. Men were unloading large crates and setting them onto wagons.

At the same time, other people and freight were being loaded on the train. Everyone was saying goodbye and waving out the windows once they got on the train.

Soon the workmen were gone and the train was ready to leave. The engineer gave a last toot of the whistle and the conductor walked along the train calling for everyone to get aboard. Then the conductor picked up his little stool and boarded the train.

Sandy looked around for the young lady who had gotten off the train. She was sitting alone on a bench in the station looking out a window at the town and its muddy streets. Her clean white dress stuck out from the rest of the crowd in the station.

Both Sandy and Judy thought the stranger looked like a teacher. Then Sandy had a new thought. Mrs. Smyth had said there would be a surprise for them at school on Monday. Could this lady be a new teacher? Sandy loved her teacher, Mrs. Smyth, and hoped she was not leaving the school.

As the girls stood in the station and talked about the lady, Judy stopped in mid-sentence. Her eyes widened and her jaw dropped open. Sandy turned around and





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Things to Think About and Do

A. In this chapter, who were the two people who worked on the train? What did they do on the train? Do you think there were any other workers on a train in 1920?

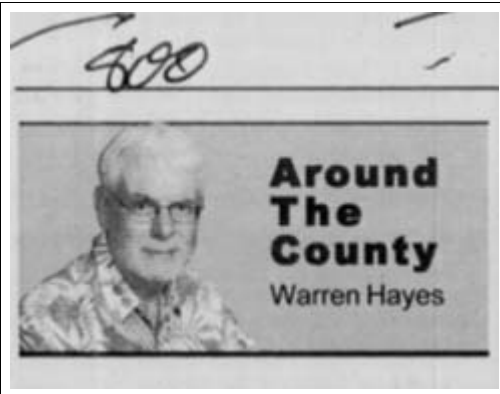
B. The train stays in the station for a short time. How do you think all the people and supplies can get off and on the train on time? Lay out a plan to do a job quickly.

C. Unloading trains required lifting heavy cargo. Look through the Classified ads in your newspaper for jobs that today still require lifting heavy cargo.

saw the lady in white stand up and approach someone who had just come into the station.

Author Kay Hively and illustrator Billie Gofourth-Stewart both live in Neosho, Mo. Author Russ Hively lives in Newtonia, Mo. Produced by the Missouri Press Foundation. Copyright 2007.

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This show will go on

I'm a firm believer that sportswriters, common run-of-the-mill Joes like me, shouldn't write about themselves. There are far more interesting topics to cover.

This week, though, I have to make an exception, even though I consider myself to be a private person. I need to explain some things, plus hand out oodles and gobs of thanks.

I have cancer.

I found out in February that I had a serious type of cancer, for which the prognosis is not real good for recovery. There is no surgery for what I have, and radiation is not an option.

I am into my sixth month of chemotherapy. That course of treatment will determine if I make it or not. Even if I do respond well – and my first two scans have indicated the cancer has been reduced – it doesn't appear I'll die of old age, as several in my family have.

Considering I think I'm in my 20s instead of my 50s – I turned 57 on Tuesday – I was a little stunned to hear I might not be around all that long. I really wanted to grow old with my beloved wife, **Ellen**. We haven't even

been married 20 years yet. It's like we're newlyweds.

I probably didn't ever intend on retiring, either. I'm having way too much fun doing what I'm doing.

Since learning of my illness, people – including my doctor – have asked me if I intended to continue to work since there are other things I might want to do while I still can.

Of course, I am going to continue writing sports. It's what I do, it's who I am. Every day that I'm able to make it into my office – and the side effects of the chemotherapy, particularly the fatigue, can make that difficult – I think I'm at Disneyland. As I type this, my hands and feet are numb as can be, something I'm sure others who have had chemo can relate to, but I'm happy as a lark.

While I may not be the matinee idol I once was and I get around as slowly as my father did when he was 90, I have nary a complaint. Every month, day, minute, second is a bonus.

(When I was out of the office in the hospital in February, I couldn't wait to get back to work so that I could be reminded how beloved I am. One of my co-workers quickly reminded me

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Hayes: Sports editor anxious to return to work, only to get earful of candor

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that everyone thinks I'm a jerk, which was absolute music to my ears.)

As long as I'm able to work, I will. When I first got sick, I said I would do a column each week even if I had to type it with my teeth. Upon further review, I think I'd probably dictate it to someone, but I am tickled that I haven't had to miss writing one yet.

Regular readers know I haven't lost my hardball, either. My columns are just as opinionated and pointed as they ever have been. I feel I owe it to my readers each week to A) inform them; B) entertain them; or C) aggravate them.

I hope everyone can tell I have been extremely positive during this entire experience. I am a strong-willed person, something I think has been serving me well. I am not bitter. I am not depressed. I am trying to lead my life like I always did. I wouldn't say that's a normal existence – my wife would be the first to tell you there is not much about me that is normal – but I believe my attitude has helped immensely.

I plan on being here a long time. It may not work out that way, but planning on an alternative outcome simply is not acceptable. And I also hope that I can send the message to those who have an illness that being as positive as possible is the best route to go. That doesn't guarantee anything, but at least it makes you feel better while you're trying to get well.

What also has helped is the overwhelming response I have received from people who knew I was sick. (Here is one quick example of a call that meant a lot to me: When De Soto boys basketball coach **Allen Davis** found out, he called to succinctly say, "Bub, you'll make it. You're a keeper." That's vintage Davis, folks.)

The calls, e-mails, letters, gifts, inquiries, etc., have been so appreciated by me and by my wife. From the *Leader* staff to all my sports acquaintances to all the people who don't even know me well but are in my corner, I can't thank all of you enough. I am almost speechless, but there again people who really know me know I'm never really out of comments.

Everyone should be so fortunate to receive support like I have. The nurses who treat me have been fantastic. My wife couldn't be more devoted in the care she gives me.

No one should ever be afraid to ask me about my illness, either – it's not a

sore subject, it's a reality that I deal with day to day.

But I do want to point out that I'm not asking anyone to feel sorry for me. So many people have illnesses far worse than mine. I have had a wonderful life, being blessed so many ways in my 57 years.

I do ask that people, in addition to those who already knew of my situation and have put me on their individual or church prayer lists, to pray for me if they are so inclined. I'm a firm believer in prayer and I'm convinced all those prayers that have been sent my way have helped. While I'm not a very emotional person, the kindness and support I have been shown the last few months really does give me what I'd have to call tears of joy. I sincerely thank all of you so much.

Now I need to explain something about my work status. I am here in the *Leader* office when I can be, but I am not able to put in the long hours I used to on the weekend. As a result, I need all the fall coaches – whether it be football, softball, volleyball, soccer or cross country – to send in their results and commentary on their teams' week activities no later than Sunday each week via e-mail or fax. (Monday is too late. Please remember this.)

As much as I would like to continue to talk with every coach as often as possible, I've reached the conclusion that it's just not possible while I battle this illness. (There is no guarantee I will even be here every Sunday, like I always was in the past.)

In the fall and spring, I used to average more than 30 calls on a Sunday. I can't do that anymore, much to my chagrin.

Still, I want all teams to be represented in our paper, but more than ever, I am going to need full cooperation from each coach. (I remind coaches this is a one-person sports department. It is no one else's responsibility to take your info, so don't impose on anyone else; they're busy doing their own jobs at the paper.)

If a coach doesn't want to take the time to share information, appoint an assistant coach, a manager – anyone – to turn in the details. Not being able to get through to speak to me will no longer be an alibi for not having your team included in this paper, not that it ever was.

I should point out that, partially due to my problematic work status, there will not be a special *Leader* football preview

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section this month. However, just like in the early days of this paper, you will find an extended sports section with previews on every area team. Ads are being sold for that Aug. 27 edition, if anyone is interested.

So there still will be football previews – it just won't be a special pullout section and it won't have the extra features we usually include. Hopefully, next year I will be up to tackle such a time-consuming project.

One more thing: Just because I'm admittedly not at full strength, no one should think they can't take pot shots at me or be angry over something I've written. As I've said countless times, no one is ever going to insult me or hurt my feel-

ings – it's just not possible. I'm not bragging but merely stating a fact – I have the perfect temperament for this job. Everyone is entitled to his or her opinion. I received a scathing letter last week and it was nice to think I had so touched a nerve. Getting people to agree or disagree with me never is a consideration; getting them to read religiously is the point. I sure hope this kid from Festus who later this month will start his 40th year of sportswriting gets to extend that string for many years to come.

I don't intend on writing another column about myself, but I will keep readers posted of news, good or bad. My many readers who have shown they care deserve to know.

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Francis A. Betz
Dec. 2, 1909 – Aug. 10, 2009

Francis A. Betz, 99, Neosho, died Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2009, at his home, following an illness.

Mr. Betz was born Dec. 2, 1909, in St. Louis to John and Antoinette Betz. Frank worked as a linotype operator at the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* for 35 years, retiring in 1974. He moved to the Boulder City area in 1990 from St. Louis and was a member of St. Canera's Catholic Church.

Frank was a devoted husband to his wife Helen of 65 years and she preceded him in death in 1999.

He is survived by two sons and daughter's-in-law, Dr. Richard and Christine Betz and Dr. Robert and Diana Betz all of Neosho; five grandchildren, Dr. Steven Betz, Mason City, Iowa, Dr. David Betz, Modesto, Calif., Dian Jones, Joplin, Karen Betz, South Beach, Fla., and Maria Franklin, Neosho; and nine great-grandchildren.

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We're looking for educators interested in learning how the newspaper can be used as a classroom tool to raise standardized test scores, improve reading skills, enhance studies across the curriculum and foster lifetime reading habits.

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This training is a condensed version of the popular graduate-level, 16-hour course offered each summer at the University of Missouri.

The workshop will address standards-based competency across the curriculum at all grade levels. Participants will each receive a notebook filled with resources.

"I am so excited to get back into my classroom and try these lessons and activities. I have never been to a seminar as wonderful, educational, or inspiring as The Living Textbook" -Participant

The fee for this workshop is \$25 and pre-registration is required.

To register, contact Sarah West, Bolivar Herald-Free Press,
sarahw@bolivarmonews.com or (417)777-9725.


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800 Name reflects our goal

To reflect changes at the 98-year-old Branson Daily News that began in January, the publication's name has been changed to Branson Tri-Lakes News effective this edition.

In January, we returned to our roots with all local stories from front to back. Gone were wire stories from across the state, the country and the world. Instead, we began focusing strictly on Branson and the surrounding areas, which include both Taney and Stone counties, along with our three lakes, Taneycomo, Table Rock and Bull Shoals.

Our mission is to continue giving readers what they've asked for — local news from throughout the Tri-Lakes Area.

As always, we look to our readers for feedback. What do you want more of? What do you want less of? What features catch your eye?

Let us know.

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Taney



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800-241
**Sunshine Law workshop
scheduled at Benton**

A free workshop pertaining to the Missouri Sunshine Law will be held at 12:30 p.m. Tuesday Aug. 18 in the Commissioner's Room at the Scott County Courthouse located at 131 Winchester in Benton. The one-hour class will be conducted by Tom Durkin, public education director for the Missouri Attorney General's Office. The public is invited to attend, along with all interested elected officials and members of boards and commissions.

The workshop is part of an on-going effort by Attorney General Chris Koster to provide government officials with the support they need to be well informed in conducting their business in a way that brings transparency and fairness to all aspects of government. Topics covered in the presentation will include:

Who does the Sunshine

- Law apply to?
- What is a public meeting?
- What is a public record?
- Liberal construction of the law;
- Procedures and limitations for closing meetings and records;
- Appointing a custodian of records; and
- Fees for copying public records.

For additional information regarding Tuesday's meeting contact Tom Durkin at the Missouri Attorney General's Office (573)751-8844.

The Attorney General's Office also offers a free booklet containing a summary of the Sunshine Law, frequently asked questions, interpretations of the law and sample forms for public governmental bodies. To order publications, call 573-751-8844 or submit your request online at ago.mo.gov.

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800-241 Attorney General's Office offering Sunshine Law Workshop

Jefferson City -- A free workshop pertaining to the Missouri Sunshine Law will be held on Monday, Aug. 17, at 10:30 a.m. in Room 200 at the Dunklin County Courthouse in Kennett. The one-hour class will be conducted by Tom Durkin, public education director for the Missouri Attorney General's Office. The public is invited to attend, along with all interested elected officials and members of boards and commissions.

The workshop is part of an on-going effort by Attorney General Chris Koster to provide government officials with the sup-

port they need to be well informed in conducting their business in a way that brings transparency and fairness to all aspects of government. Topics covered in the presentation will include:

- Who does the Sunshine Law apply to?
- What is a public meeting?
- What is a public record?
- Liberal construction of the law;
- Procedures and limitations for closing meetings and records;
- Appointing a custodian of records; and
- Fees for copying public

records.

For additional information regarding Monday's meeting, contact the Dunklin County Commission at (573) 888-1374 or Tom Durkin at the Missouri Attorney General's Office, (573) 751-8844.

The Attorney General's Office also offers a free booklet containing a summary of the Sunshine Law, frequently asked questions, interpretations of the law and sample forms for public governmental bodies. To order publications, call 573-751-8844 or submit your request online at ago.mo.gov.