

EDITORIAL

We heard it again

Want private meeting with the School Board

The agitator's group clearly has no appreciation for the legal risk school board members would take, if the board happened to agree to meet with them privately.

The agitators, themselves, have

no legal responsibilities and would pay no legal consequences if they met privately with the Board. The Board members themselves would be subject to fines and maybe even jail time if they violated open meetings laws. The agitators surely would be delighted, perhaps even gleeful, to see such a thing happen, otherwise they would not be attempting to embroil the Board in such a legal morass. How would anyone know they conducted such a meeting? The agitators likely would brag about it, inform the press, and even tip off the Attorney General.

Agitators wanting to meet privately with the board is a mantra we seem to be hearing time and again. How would such a meeting work? Would they set down with the board on equal footing, and propose motions on which they would all vote? Vote like they had stood for election and been elected by the public? That is what these unelected outside agitators seem to want.

What is the objective of these

outsider agitators? Do they have a formula?

First and foremost, according to our reading, these outside agitators' objective is to close down as many public schools as possible.

Obviously, revealing their real agenda would be a political loser. They know it would be impossible during normal times to energize sufficient numbers to their cause for such a purpose. So piecemeal, they target small schools conducting bond projects, and there they find citizens, who, innocently enough, are open to hearing all sides of a bond issue. Then they "preach" their philosophy of... How could the editor characterize it? The reader must offer suggestions. Would it be anarchist, sophistry; vandals in the classical sense of destroying anything venerated (sacking of Rome); Epicureanism doesn't seem to fit, socialism, Sophism (philosophy for pay) might fit; racism, fascism, communism, totalitarianism, posse communitatis? Someone better founded in philosophy than the editor must decide. Regardless, it seems akin to religion, and the meetings might be compared with old southern revivalist tent meetings, but without the debauchery and rough sex.

What to watch for—methods:

Usurp—undermine, thwart the democratic process by demanding an equal place at the table with the Board members. (Entice Board members into illegal activities.)

Intimidate—teachers, Superintendent, Board members, voters, by threatening lawsuits, claims they have broken the law, etc.

Harass—demand the school Superintendent, teachers, staff, almost daily. Demand massive amounts of technical information; make threats for untimely response.

Make spurious claims for action to police, County authorities, and State authorities.

Character assassinations through planted rumors charging superintendents, coaches, teachers, others, with sexual affairs or other misconduct.

Challenge successful bond elections in court. This they do.

Do they have a formula? It looks like they do. *Editor.*

Nebraska Journal-Leader

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Regarding the editorial in the September 1, 2005 Nebraska Journal-Leader titled **“We heard it again, Want private meeting with the School Board”** the Editor surpasses his usual National Enquirer journalistic standard and reaches a new low. Where to begin? Let’s start with the heading. No one, we repeat, NO ONE has asked for a private meeting with the School Board. In a previous issue the Editor claimed the Chairman of the ABCs Committee demanded a private meeting with the School Board at the August school board meeting. The Editor was videotaping that meeting so should be able to produce the Chairman’s ‘demand for a private meeting’ with the School Board. The fact is, it didn’t happen and the Editor well knows this. Other than this accusation from the August school board meeting, the Editor sites no authority for his claim that the so called “agitator’s group” is demanding to meet privately with the School Board. The Editor is well aware the ABCs committee simply wants to impress on the Board the need to radically change the cost and location of the previous school proposals before the voters of this district will overwhelmingly support such a measure. Whether that is done in a public setting or in a less volatile forum involving less than a quorum of the Board, makes no difference to the ABCs.

Apparently for the dual purpose of branding as maniacs those whom the Editor feels have the audacity to oppose his world view and to impress his readers with his dazzling vocabulary, the Editor throws out some big words: anarchist, sophistry (philosophic rhetoric characterized by specious reasoning, not “philosophy for pay” as stated by the Editor), vandals, Epicureanism, socialism, racism, fascism, communism, totalitarianism and posse committatis (it strains the imagination to envision one who could be a fascist or communist who adore a centralized government and at the same time be posse committatis who abhor a centralized government). About the only “ism” he didn’t associate the so called “outside agitators” with is terrorism. Given his track record, however, we will probably see that in the issues to come.

Perhaps the Editor should update his word processor and examine a few tried and tested words:

Integrity – The Editor’s refusal to display even the most basic of journalistic standards--fair coverage, equal treatment and accurate reporting—have blemished the reputation of Ponca’s only paper and alienated many of its citizens.

Truth – The examples given above are just a fraction of the untruths printed on a weekly basis in the Nebraska Journal-Leader. It matters not whether it is a purposeful attempt to deceive or simply a failure to check sources before printing. This lack of adherence to accuracy is a disservice to the community served by the Nebraska Journal-Leader. We deserve better.

Temperance – The August school board meeting seemed to be a positive step in the right direction with School Board members who had previously passionately supported both failed bond measures exhibiting restraint. They demonstrably attempted to heal some of the wounds that have been inflicted on this community over the past two years. Unfortunately, no such restraint is seen in the Nebraska Journal-Leader. The volatile editorials and unsubstantiated claims only serve to further divide this community and anger the majority of voters who voted against the last two bond proposals.

We don't think it is too much to ask that the Journal-Leader serve ALL its citizens with fair, honest and accurate reporting.

Dear Editor:

The last school board meeting I attended the opposition leaders handed out a flyer, on who they are and their mission statement was. It started with this paragraph.

"Despite what you may have heard, we are not the opposition to the new school. We are "yes" voters waiting for the right bond issue and site. We are friends, neighbors, relatives, co-workers, taxpayers, landowners and voters who have strong reservations about the location and the cost of previous bond proposals" (Continued on next page.)

Letters to the Editor Cont.

(Letter continued from previous page.)

One concerned citizen after the meeting said to me, there was one extremely important word missing from their opening statement and that word is "PARENTS" when considering were working on a school bond and it's the most important factor in anyone's decision making. They did not use parents because they are not looking at this project through parent eyes, if they were the bond would of passed the first time when interest rates were at a all time low.

It shouldn't matter if we have children in school now or not, when making this type of decision you must look through parent eyes if you are truly concerned about children in our community. *Sincerely, Bob Lux*

August 31, 2005, Bob Lux Letter on the Editorial Page of the Nebraska Journal-Leader:

Paragraph three:

“...one extremely important word missing from their opening statement and that word is “PARENTS”...”

Don't forget grandparents, aunts, uncles, sisters, brothers, and third cousins once removed. Were we expected to spell out an all-encompassing and exhaustive list?

We heard this same statement from a board member's wife about parents being missing from the list of concerned citizens. Her direct question was “Where are the parents in your group?” The implication being that if our children are not in school RIGHT NOW, we are incapable of looking out for their futures. She missed the point that all of our group are parents already or are parents-in-waiting.

The letter goes on to say:

Paragraph four:

“...when making this type of decision you must look through parent eyes if you are truly concerned about children in our community.”

We couldn't agree more. This statement cancels out the negative implications of the board member's wife. We are asking the board to look at all of the consequences of upgrading the school facilities; the positives and the negatives. We need to ensure that this area will be conducive to our children staying here after graduation. We cannot saddle future generations with an insurmountable debt that reaches well beyond our needs.

Some high jinks, adventure, and a private meeting in Martinsburg August 24, 2005

Last Wednesday night, outside the VFW Hall, I had a nice visit with the Treasurer of the school bond opposition group, Mr. Kastning. He was attending a school bond opposition group meeting at that Hall. He reported the group was conducting a private meeting. Apparently non-members weren't permitted to observe the meeting, nor the press. Which was strange because word of the meeting had been spread all around that anyone who wanted to come was invited. When asked how many School Board members were attending the meeting, he said, "less than a quorum."

One agitated fellow appeared at the door, sort of winding up, or wringing his hands, I couldn't tell which, poked his finger in my chest and threatened to throw me out, which seemed a bit over the top, because I hadn't been permitted inside. I had been intercepted while still on the sidewalk. Mr. Kastning restrained the fellow and sent him back inside, apparently satisfied I didn't represent much of a threat, given I was holding a forty pound camera, flash, and a smile. At any rate, it seems this public meeting was for a select few only. There were 12-15 cars parked around. Slim meeting.

I did confirm there were four board members who weren't in the

meeting, which leaves a remainder of two to follow up on, if ever gotten around to.

I told Mr. Kastning that I had heard there were some in his group who wouldn't vote for a school bond at any price. Mr. Kastning rejoined that there was a twenty percent margin on each side of the issue. He said there were twenty percent on the "pro" side "who would vote for anything, and likely the same amount on his side, which wouldn't vote for anything. He explained it was an eighty percent middle both sides were working with, which I think he meant sixty percent middle.

Mr. Kastning and I continued a congenial conversation and he extended his hand, saying, "we are all still gentlemen, will you shake hands?" So we did, and I abandoned any thought of attending the meeting.

I did notice, while Mr. Kastning and I were visiting, that someone inside the VFW building battened down the windows. Then seemed to cover them with something.

The thing that keeps ringing in my ears was the insistence by the hand wringer that the group wanted to meet privately with the board, which someone corrected him to say "publicly." It seems there is a split in the thinking. *Editor.*

August 31, 2005, Editorial Page of the Nebraska Journal-Leader:

Paragraph two:

“...poked his finger in my chest and threatened to throw me out...”

Hmmm? At least one witness to the exchange can attest to the fact that no physical contact was made. Rather, the so-called “hand wringer” did not care for being called an “agitator” in that day’s issue by the editor and then expected to invite the offending party into a private meeting.

Witnesses also heard no threats being made, since like the editorial states, entrance was never granted. Perhaps the editor wants to impress his readership with his physical prowess, what with standing up to a so-called “agitated fellow” while sporting a “forty pound camera, flash, and a smile”.

You got guts ol’ chap.

Paragraph two:

“...12-15 cars parked around. Slim meeting.”

Please, oh please, underestimate our strength and numbers. Either the editor is bad at counting on his fingers or wants to discredit our group. Our guess is the latter. Either way, we are surprised he would want to waste his time on such a so-called “slim meeting,” not to mention the ample column space.

Paragraph six:

“...someone inside the VFW building battened down the window. Then seemed to cover them with something.”

Those somethings are called blinds.

Paragraph seven:

“...was the insistence by the hand wringer that the group wanted to meet privately with the board, which someone corrected him to say “publicly.” It seems there is a split in the thinking.”

Boy, “someone” has been awfully busy; battening down windows, correcting the hand wringer. Funny how “someone” never has a name. Although we are sure that the editor knows who the so-called “hand wringer” and “someone” are. If those names were published though, then the readers would have a chance to personally speak with our Chairman, Michael Brannon, aka The Hand Wringer Agitator.

And that, my friends, is why we have launched this site. Read both sides and decide for yourself!

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

I have heard that an outside agitator has been paid to come to your community in an effort to help defeat the Ponca school bond. As a person who has dealt with agitators in the past I would like to extend my sympathies. The agitators will tell you how they care about your community but then watch them tear it apart, as I have seen done in other communities.

The agitators then collect their paychecks and move on, while the people who live in the community are left picking up the pieces. Their goals are simple: they want to end public education as we know it, and get paid to accomplish it.

Having come up against such "Ringers" I would like to share with your readers some of the tactics they will use in your community. First and foremost they will try to intimidate anyone who gets in their way. One ringer sat in my office for four hours waiting for documents that he knew from a conversation I had with him over the phone the day before were not ready for him. He even called the school district attorney demanding that I turn over the documents. When I wouldn't give him the information he demanded in the timeframe he wanted, the ringer contacted the County Attorney and tried to press criminal charges against me.

The local police chief investigated and found that I did not violate any law. However, local newspapers, and radio stations, were alerted by the agitators of the investigation. Consequently, I received several calls from reporters wanting my side of the story. Looking back, it is clear the agitators knew no charges would be brought against me but they wanted the negative publicity in an effort to discredit me.

They later sent out a letter stating, *"The Police Chief and County Attorney were involved in helping get this information. We believe it was intentionally withheld so we would not have time for the public to see it in print via newspaper."* That was a lie, it was not withheld, it was public knowledge and the Police Chief and County Attorney had no involvement in getting the information.

Unfortunately I could not press defamation charges against the agitators. That law states as long as they put "paid for by" they can say what they want. The school district is obligated to only tell the truth about the bond issue. Ringers and agitators are under no such obligation.

I could go on about how the agitators will send out fliers spinning information right before the election so the district does not have time to tell the truth about what they write, or how they have people call the superintendent's office saying that "we are watching the building and we know who is in there." Also, they had a letter to the editor published in our local newspaper from a person who didn't even exist condemning the building plan, but I am sure you are getting the picture of the tactics they use.

Now, these agitators will try to discredit me after reading this editorial but I thought your community needed to know. Agitators bring an element into a community that spreads lies, innuendo, and suspicion. Once they are in your community it will never be the same. *Larry Molacek*

Editor's note: Mr. Molacek's community, Tama, Iowa, passed a school bond issue, in spite of outsider influence.