

Perhaps if you were to see this situation from my point of view, you would call it the same way.

If you recall, three or even four years ago, it was me who thought we needed to be 'pro-active' on the landfill issue. You even wrote an article about it. Since then I have begged, pleaded and borrowed for the county to 'get involved' and have the city explain what it is they are doing. Because Ted is my husband and a former commissioner, he tried to explain all of the agreements between the city and the county including the landfills. He, along with Paulette, explained to me how the optional sales tax was distributed and how each request was submitted as a letter usually accompanied with a 'budget' to explain how the money would be used. The BOCC requested letters from all potential providers including the two landfills. (Osage never asked until Commissioner Seeley suggested it in 2013)

Each time the city would submit their request for a 'provider of service agreement' from the optional one cent sales tax, we would inquire about how the 'health' of the landfill was. (Before I was on the commission, the BOCC gave the city \$25,000 with the assurance county residents would be allowed in.) We were promised an accounting of the enterprise account and updates on the status of the landfill. Here is the excerpt from the July 19, 2011 minutes:

"Newcastle Landfill the Commissioners requested an accounting detail for the Newcastle Landfill costs of operation from Mayor Greg James. Weston County currently participates in a provider of service agreement which allocates \$20,000.00 annually to the City of Newcastle for landfill usage. This funding comes from the 1% sales tax monies collected by the County. Mayor James agreed to provide the Newcastle Landfill accounting detail. The Commissioners asked if the City is considering any type of recycling program at the landfill. Mayor James responded that the City is currently investigating options for recycling programs, however costs are a concern. Mayor James was thanked for his time. No action was taken."

By the time the proposed budget was printed in the NLJ, the county had not yet received the accounting report and the commissioners removed the funding for the landfill. Mayor James and Bob Hartley were very upset and disappointed in our decision. After much discussion and more promises made, we put \$20,000 into the City of Newcastle landfill agreement (see July 18, 2011 Public Budget Hearing minutes.) My argument at the time was that the county was going to need that money to hire a consultant because it was, in my opinion, going to 'come down' to this being a county problem. I was outvoted and later Commissioner Seeley told me that he reversed his vote because he wanted to 'buy some time.'

As you recall, 2011 was filled with many 'emergencies': flooding and redistricting being the biggest and later in the fall, the Events Center. But one of the biggest problems the county was dealing with was the 'planner'. If you recall, the planner was fired in September of 2011. Therefore any and all issues that we had asked him to do, were now put on the back burner because the majority of the board was not interested in maintaining the position. Which set the county back in several areas of concern; one of them being the landfill issue. We, as a board, had decided that our contract engineer could handle such matters and he agreed, the most pressing at that juncture was the Events Center.

In 2012, the subject was brought up several times but unlike today's board, we didn't necessarily have in the minutes. However, when the Central Weston County Solid Waste District came in to enlarge the boundaries of the district, the topic was engaged. That vote was also split but the reason for the defeat came down to a report from the clerk considering the age of the petition submitted. She had an issue

with it when it first was submitted because of legal descriptions. The subject of a county-wide district was discussed and dropped because too many questions couldn't be answered.

Again through the board's budget process, in the spring of 2012, we did not receive a letter requesting funding for the city landfill. Therefore, we lowered the funding from \$20,000 to \$12,000. In July, after seeing the 'proposed budget', the City came in requesting the funding be put back to the original \$20,000. (See July 3, 2012 minutes.) And again, the BOCC was 'threatened' with the removal of services for county residents. On July 17, 2012, the Mayor and the engineer again requested the 'reinstatement' and again, threatened the county's residents of denial of services. (See July 17, 2012) The BOCC did give the requested funding at the public hearing that night. The City never did give us a detailed accounting and again, the minutes from the 2011 meeting were read to remind the city to what they had agreed to. They even claimed that Upton would be shut off if we didn't give them the entire request. Commissioner Shepperson was quite engaged in that dialogue. I urge you to ask him sometime. In August of that year, we again discussed the county-wide district. Several ideas were tossed around but it was a positive meeting. As you recall, 2012 was the year of the Oil Creek Fire.

That fall, Commissioner Seeley began to pursue the idea of having the old power plant in Osage become a solution for the county concerning the landfill problem. The board again was faced with the Central Weston County Solid Waste District wanting to enlarge the district. Problems again were raised with the legal descriptions and a confusion over two different districts.

In 2013, Commissioner Seeley and I went to a DEQ meeting and both of us were quite taken aback when we learned that the city was part of the "Northeast Wyoming Regional Solid Waste Management Plan" study of which the final report was dated November of 1996. For whatever reasons (and I am sure they had several), they chose not to follow the recommendations the study suggested. The reason for the meeting in 2013 was apparently to chastise the city and the county.

In April of 2013, we learned that the CWCSWD was not allowed to expand its boundaries due to ground water issues. Again, the board talked about a county-wide district and the topic went to funding the district. Quite a discussion was held concerning the mill levy and taxing landowners for something they weren't going to use.

In May of 2013, the City Engineer came to a meeting and explained the new scale at the landfill. We, the BOCC, commended the City on moving in a positive direction. It was extremely pleasant and positive. No mention was made that the City was shutting the county residents out or of the county eventually needing to form a district. All was well with the Newcastle Landfill #2.

In June, we toured the Osage Power Plant and Commissioner Seeley did extensive research into retrofitting the building into a type of working facility.

The budget of FY 2014 went smoothly concerning the 1% sales tax and the request of the City. A letter was submitted along with a financial report. The BOCC was left with the impression that the City of Newcastle was going to be okay. We only had to deal with Upton's closure and the problems with the CWCSWD.

Continuing through 2014, the BOCC biggest landfill concern was the Osage dump. We also were considering helping Upton with a transfer station. But again, we discussed that perhaps the county should use the money to open one in Osage because of its central location.

But then things changed. Our chairman, Commissioner Seeley was summoned to a meeting with the city. A newspaper article was written where our chairman was made to look pretty bad and Commissioner Seeley informed our board that he wasn't going to be treated like that ever again. From that point on, I went to the meetings with our chairman. (It was at that time that BOCC asked Jerry Hunt to proceed with a feasibility study.) I went to three of the four meetings held with the city. While our chairman explained that the county was going ahead with a feasibility study, the city kept insisting on what we, the county, were going to do about the city's landfill. It was stated several times that a landfill district needed to be formed but as our chairman would state, "We are having Jerry look into that also." I believe there was a reporter at each of the meetings but at least one of the meetings received no mention in the paper. We questioned the city on enterprise funds and the equipment purchased from the monies and was told that equipment was the property of the city. When we stated that we thought that wasn't how it worked, we were emphatically informed that it most certainly was. We asked how much a pit liner would cost and we were no 'under no circumstances' was a liner going to be put in the Newcastle Landfill. When the city didn't get the answers they desired, they set an ultimatum. And that is when our chairman stated, "Do what you have to do."

I rarely spoke in these meetings and for one meeting, Commissioner Seeley was not able to attend. As our county engineer also did not attend, I did not feel I had the right to speak for the county and the paper reported it as such. I was there to listen as a second set of ears for Chairman Seeley. He stood his ground because on several occasions it would get personal.

I realize this is a long history but I needed you to understand where I am coming from. The county did a study with great discoveries but when we asked our engineer to have his consultant pursue it further, she ran into a roadblock with a lack of answers from both entities (Upton and Newcastle). I have the letter that Jerry Hunt presented to us. But here is where my confusion starts. With the seating of the two new commissioners, not one word was said about the study. The paper never mentioned it nor was it ever discussed again. Instead our board is informed of a meeting being called concerning the landfill issue. But according to our current chairman, only he and Commissioner Barton could go because he might not have 'noticed' it to the public correctly. Next meeting of the BOCC, instead of getting minutes from that meeting, we get a 'report' with a recommendation to form a landfill district. No discussion of how they came to that conclusion nor a decision of what to do with the existing district. Then I read an email penned by Chairman Lambert (which was not written and agreed to by the entire board) sent to the state inferring that the county is going to dissolve the existing district. Our board, the commissioners as a whole, did not decide to do that. I questioned that 'decision' and requested other answers which are important to know before we go to a county-wide district.

I did attend the second meeting in Osage. I hesitated because while there had been an invitation from our chairman, I did not see any notice of the meeting so I was unsure who called it. The meeting was attended by several and was very cordial. The only time voices were raised in anger was when our county attorney insinuated the city might give the county (or the district) the money back that the county gave it over the past few years. Hence, the mayor stated that the city would be out of the 'dump business' and the district would not get 'one dime'. I wrote that in my statement stating as such because it wasn't the first time I had heard it.

If the city engineer is considering retiring, they will be without a resident expert on landfills. That mixed with the demands of the DEQ has put the city and the county between a rock and a hard place. Instead

of owning up to the poor decisions that were made long ago, the city would rather get rid of the problem through a district. The Town of Upton should be commended because they refused to play the City of Newcastle's game and found a solution for their landfill. In fact, I am not sure they want to be in the district if they find out it is cheaper to go somewhere else to dispose their trash so why would those citizens want to vote to pay 3 mills. Because they 'ponied-up', they do have the favored hand. This is what the county more or less was asking the City of Newcastle to do. "Do what you have to do," as Commissioner Seeley put it because our board was not going to force something that would cost the taxpayers a bundle without knowing all the facts first. Our idea was to 'have our ducks in a row' before we went the 'landfill district' route. And that is what we asked Jerry Hunt and his consultant to do. We, the board, at one time even asked the City of Newcastle to charge more for county residents to insure their ability to use their landfill.

At this time, the estimate for closure of the CWCSWD is approximately \$800,000. The cost of monitoring the wells has been quoted at approximately \$4600 a month for thirty years (according to TryHydro). If the countywide landfill district absorbs that district or it is dissolved, they are instantly responsible for those costs. The CWCSWD was rejected last year for grants because of their accounting practices. The law changed this year so hopefully they will now qualify. But what if they don't? No one knows until the request is made yet again and where that district falls on the state's list of candidates. That means the 'newly' formed district is already 'in the hole.' And will have to ask the taxpayers to pay up 3 mills. If Upton and Osage say 'no' in the election, the district loses. That is why the prior BOCC with Lenard at the helm, was trying to avoid that scenario. We wanted the tipping fee to be enough to pay for the expenses and go towards closing costs. But we were not given key information by the two entities and it died.

So imagine my surprise when everything is turned upside down. Nobody is willing to give answers but seem to want to throw everything onto this new landfill district. Which the board will consist of everyday people just like you and me. The open house at the landfill attracted two citizens that were not directly connected to the issue. Considering the county's constant problems seating any board, how do you propose we get people to want to be on this one especially with these problems? It has been suggested that we have someone from each entity but I am not sure if that is legal but I don't know. Since the BOCC appoints this board and it is not elected, it may be possible. We have asked our County Attorney to find out.

Therefore, if you say I am unfounded in my claim a lack of transparency then you are also unfounded in your claim that I am doing a disservice to the citizens of Weston County. I was elected to protect the interests of all of the citizens. I have listened to the entities and discovered they were elected to protect their constituents. I questioned them endlessly prior to this issue to see if they were being responsible to their constituents. I've been yelled at and accused of being obstinate. I have watched a story change one hundred and eighty degrees because that is what they think I want to hear.

And if I have heard once, I have heard it a hundred times: "The County has done nothing to fix this." We did what we thought was right by getting the City of Newcastle (and the Town of Upton) to assure our board that the county residents would have a place for their garbage.

Some of this could be put on your shoulders too. Why didn't you report on our study? I think the citizens should know of our efforts.

I support the idea of a centralized landfill. It has been said that it is not a good idea to disagree with someone who buys ink by the barrel but all I have ever wanted for the board of Weston County Commissioners and the residents of our county are answers so that we could make an informed decision that was fair for everyone in the county without additional taxation, unreasonable user fees and/or 'hidden' costs we couldn't afford.