

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2008

Down and Out in Springdale



They did everything the local Cowbirds told them to do, but it didn't do much good. Big annual appropriations of tax dollars directly to the Cowbirds. Operating a municipal airport to serve those with private airplanes. Raising taxes to build a private ballpark. Naming schools after corporate chicken magnates. No sign ordinance. No tree ordinance. Embracing sprawl. Zoning the whole city as one big strip mall. Defending restrictive covenants. Hollering about illegal immigrants. Voting God, and always electing zealous idiots like **Jim Holt** and **Jim Bob Duggar**.

Next year's city budget projects a deficit of more than \$5 million, with revenues of only \$24.5 million but expenses of \$29.9 million. Lame duck Mayor **Jerry Van Hoose** called for transferring \$4.2 million from the city's Capital Improvement Program fund and making up the rest from general fund reserves. Alderman **Mike Overton** spoke against using CIP, and Alderman **Eric Ford** spoke against using reserves. No one had the balls to suggest raising taxes.

The City Council then started proposing ways to cut services. Alderman **Jim Reed** suggested cutting the budget of Shiloh Museum by \$300,000 and reducing the subsidy to the Chamber of Commerce from \$100,000 to \$25,000. **Jeff Watson** proposed reducing funds for Ozark Regional Transit. **Eric Ford** proposed cutting hours at the city library. **Rick Evans** was for cutting all capital improvement projects. **Kathy Jaycox** argued against cost-of-living raises for city workers, not even offering them cake to eat. "No bonuses, no nothing," she said.

In the end, the City Council abdicated their responsibility and said the unelected bureaucrats could decide among themselves how to cut \$2.2 million in expenses for people, equipment, and public services.

Meanwhile, down in Fayetteville, the City Council heard a report from **Eva Klein**, an out-of-state consultant, recommending that the city needs to create a \$100 million venture capital fund or provide matching funds for faculty research grants in sustainability. They paid her \$150,000 for that advice, with Mayor **Dan Coody** and the UA's **Phil Stafford** splitting the tab between the city and the university.

Now Klein says she wants another \$150,000 to tell the city how to do economic development. I thought that was what the FEDC hired **Steve Rust** to do. We have paid **Ray Boudreaux** far more than that for nothing, but I'd still take a pass. **Steve Clark** is coming to the Chamber, and Mayor-elect **Lionel Jordan** has promised an economic development plan. Let's give our new leadership and our local business talent a chance to do their jobs before throwing more tax money at out-of-state consultants.