

The BANNER of TRUTH

The LORD is my BANNER - Exodus 17:15

25 ¢

"Pursuing TRUTH
in Blount County"



Volume 1 - Issue No. 11
August 2011

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The articles herein are by concerned Blount County residents, who have brought these issues to the public's attention by speaking at Commission or School Board meetings, and reflect the opinions of the writers.

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FROM THE TRENCHES

by Comissioner Jim Folts

The GOOD

One good thing happened at the Commission meeting this month. The proposed ban on citizens applauding at Commission meetings was defeated. Many citizens spoke against the ban at the beginning of the meeting. Their presentations were often eloquent and emotional in defense of their Constitutional right of freedom of expression. Chairman Melton made sure that the ban was the last item on the agenda. Thankfully, reporters and cameras from all three TV stations stayed for the entire meeting.

The applause ban was included in the same resolution with three other good changes to the Commission rules. The first allowed Commissioners to yield additional time to citizens speaking at a meeting. This used to be common practice until Chairman Melton decided he would no longer permit it. The second positive change to the rules was a requirement for a summary of the background of a proposed appointee be made available to the Commissioners before a vote on the appointment. This seems like common sense, but several appointments have been put before the Commission with nothing more than a name. The last of the good rule changes would have permitted any Commissioner to add information to the packet for a meeting. This used to be done routinely, but Chairman Melton has recently been dictating what will be made available in the Commission packet.

The political machine immediately tried to ram the resolution through in its entirety. Commissioner Hasty made a motion to consider each rule change separately. Commissioners Burchfield, Burkhalter, Kirby, Lail, Melton and Helton voted AGAINST this common sense approach. Commissioner Moon, a former editor of the Daily Times, who might be expected to be a forceful defender of citizens' free speech, boldly abstained, and Farmer joined him. Fortunately, the other 12 Commissioners voted YES (Caylor was absent) and the motion passed.

Commissioner Samples then made a motion to approve the three positive changes to the rules. Unfortunately, Commissioners Burkhalter, Kirby, Lail, Melton, Helton, Farmer, Harrison and Hasty voted AGAINST these common sense rule changes, preventing the two-thirds vote needed for their adoption. Moon again boldly abstained.

When it came time to vote for the applause ban, with the cameras from all three TV stations rolling, no Commissioner was even willing to make the motion. Helton and Melton, who pushed it through the Rules Committee, stayed silent. Carver and Hasty, who sponsored the resolution, stayed silent. Common sense prevailed. The audience applauded.

The BAD

The Blount County Public Building Authority (PBA) held several meetings in June. It was discovered that

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documents covering hundreds of Millions of dollars of bond offerings are missing. To emphasize the continuing incompetence of the PBA, the members of the PBA board proceeded to sign the signature pages of documents covering hundreds of millions of dollars of bond related transactions, without even reading the documents.

It appears that Commission meetings will no longer be broadcast on Charter and Comcast cable channels. It seems Chairman Melton quietly deleted the funding for videoing the meetings from the Commission budget. He seems to be much happier operating in the shadows, than in the inconvenient sunshine of public scrutiny.

The UGLY

The Mayor decided several months ago to combine the vacant Human Resources position with another and save the taxpayers \$100,000 per year. This did not suit the HR Committee where 8 of the 10 members are employees or close relatives of employees. They insisted the \$100,000 remain in the budget.

This month the HR Committee voted to take the HR Director position from the Mayor and put it directly under the control of the HR Committee. This means a Committee, where 8 of 10 members are county employees or have close relatives who are, will be setting benefits, benefit costs, personnel policies, time-off policies and

salary policies. There was much discussion in the HR Committee about how this would be good for the county employees. It probably would. Any group of employees, given the opportunity to set their salaries and benefits, would undoubtedly make sure they had the best, regardless of the cost. There was no discussion about who represents the poor taxpayers in this scheme. In fact the taxpayers were never mentioned in the discussion. In checking, I was unable to find any other County or large private organization who has this kind of wacky organization. Several organizational experts I talked to suggested this is equivalent to putting the inmates in charge of the asylum. None of this seemed to bother the members of the Committee. Sheriff Berrong, Highway Superintendent Dunlap, Registrar Crisp, David Murrell and Commissioners Farmer, Lail and Lewis voted for this nonsense. Commissioner French was absent and Mayor Mitchell abstained.

The HR Committee then passed another resolution authorizing a salary survey to justify employee raises.

Stay up to date on the latest developments at www.jimfolts.com

U.N. AGENDA 21 IN BLOUNT COUNTY

by Karen Miller

PlanET was discussed at the July Blount County Planning Commission by John Lamb. This is a three-year long Grant-funded project. When Knoxville became a member of the United Nations Agenda 21 International Council of Local Environmental Initiative (I.C.L.E.I), Regional Governance followed. The U.N. has ignored the federal government and through its Agenda 21 I.C.L.E.I. made deals with local governments numbering upwards of 600 cities, towns and villages. Agenda 21 promotes European Socialism that, by its nature, will infringe upon our freedoms and liberties. Most of its vague, lofty sounding phrases cause the average person's eyes to glaze over, making it easier to sneak into our communities. Besides its radical environmental agenda, the U.N. wishes to change consumption patterns, including

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ownership of property and automobile ownership, and successfully promoting social justice. Agenda 21 is a dull topic and it becomes understandable how it has been able to fly mostly under the radar since 1992, slowly working its way into our cities and counties. To understand how serious the left is about United Nations rule, look at some of the proponents of Agenda 21: billionaire George Soros has provided millions of dollars to ICLEI. Former Obama czar Van Jones' Green for All and the Tides Foundations' Apollo Alliance are also reportedly ICLEI contributors. In the United States, the Agenda 21 National Coordinating Body is the President's Council on Sustainable Development.(PCSD). The U.S. Constitution requires that consensus on public policy be hammered out in public by elected officials, not by 28 appointed individuals, carefully selected because of their known support of the principles expressed in Agenda 21. This U.N. description of the PCSD is found in a section of the report entitled "Integrated Decision-making," also known as the "consensus" process. All federal agencies have now adopted this "consensus" process to by-pass Congress and other elected bodies, to build consensus on Agenda 21 activities at the local, state, and national levels. Congress never approved the

implementation of Agenda 21 programs in education, economics, the environment and other areas. Presidents as far back as George H.W. Bush have signed Executive Orders allowing implementation of the U.N.'s Agenda 21 programs. Sustainable Development in School Curriculum is one of the 32 specific objectives of Agenda 21. Education is a key ingredient in the transformation to a sustainable society. The U.N. Commission on Sustainable Development reports that in America, "...the national strategy on education is prepared by the Department of Education and includes such programs as "Goals 2000" and "School to Work". Far too many Conservatives are failing to pay attention to the rise of global Socialism at the hands of the United Nations through its Agenda 21. Freedomadvocates.org is an excellent source to learn about Agenda 21 and how it is creeping into our local communities. It already has been reported that a department at the Blount County Courthouse has a Biometric time clock.

- This is the opinion of Karen Miller

NO MORE EXCUSES!!

by Linda King

Fluoridation needs to stop entirely, but until that time, our water districts should at least lower the maximum level to 0.7 parts per million.

If you'll recall in a recent Banner of Truth article, I quoted South Blount County Utility District's (SBCUD) Board Chairman, Virginia Morton, as saying that when a water system chooses to fluoridate, they must stay within the range outlined in the State regulations, 0.9 to 1.2 mg/L. That regulation no longer can be used as an excuse.

After having contacted the TN Division of Water Supply in

Nashville (Deputy Director, Thomas Moss) several times regarding the fact that SBCUD recorded quantities of up to 1.4 ppm in our drinking water, and that the Health and Human Services Dept. in Washington, D.C. has recommended a safe level of no more than 0.7, my concerns were finally addressed and turned over to the Director of Water Supply (Alan Schwendimann).

On July 11th, I received a letter from Mr. Schwendimann stating that they are in the process of adjusting their

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regulations to formally allow for the lessened amount. He said, "Since fluoridation is not mandated in Tennessee, we have, in the interim, communicated to public water systems that their choice to reduce their added amount of fluoride will not be viewed as a violation. He also mentioned that the subject of fluoridation, as well as the expense of fluoride, is drawing close attention across the State.

The TN Division of Water Supply has given amnesty to the water utility districts, and Dictator/Mayor Jerry Cunningham (who threatened the jobs of Board members to force fluoridation) was kicked out of office by a landslide. So there you go! NO MORE EXCUSES!

Not only should SBCUD lower the amount of this toxic waste chemical, they should first check to see at what level natural fluoride occurs in our water system. Let's use, for example, Fairbanks, Alaska. Before they eliminated fluoride completely on July 1st, they had lowered the level to 0.4 ppm because the naturally occurring fluoride rate was at 0.3 ppm. The Fairbanks council made sure that the safe level (if there is such a thing) would be controlled to keep daily dosage at, or below 0.7 ppm, knowing that we also ingest fluoride from so many dental products and common foods such as tea, grape juice and canned vegetables. Ideally, a pharmaceutical grade fluoride would be added but, sadly, fluosilicic acid will continue to be used.

On July 25th, important information was released in New York City. In past years before testing was required, sodium fluoride ingestion slipped into common usage without FDA approval, such as sodium fluoride drops, lozenges and "vitamins" which were, supposedly, used to reduce tooth decay. Now the FDA is immediately cracking down on unapproved drugs that are meant for ingestion. The report states that the following warning: "Note - This Drug Has Not Been Found by FDA to be Safe and Effective", is newly included on all sodium fluoride drugs.

On July 22nd an article was released in Nashville reporting that the city of Spring Hill, TN is reconsidering the use of

toxic fluoride chemicals in their public water supply. After numerous individuals asked why the city still fluoridates, Water Sup. Caryl Giles is now asking the same question to the city's Board of Mayor and Aldermen. City Administrator, Victory Lay, used to work for the Tennessee town of Waynesboro which had ended their fluoridation program years ago. Members of the Spring Hill Board and Mr. Giles acknowledge that even the CDC's adjusted level of 0.7 is questionable; fluoride chemicals at much lower levels are known to deplete iodine from the body and cause thyroid and immune problems. Mr. Giles believes there's a strong case for terminating fluoridation. He said, "there's no supplement or medication that is tolerated by everyone the same. When you put it in there, you take away that choice." Giles said, with proper deliberation, fluoride could be removed from Spring Hill's water supply as early as the beginning of 2012 and, when removed, will save the city roughly \$20,000 presently spent to purchase the industrial waste product.

I would like to quote the last paragraph from this Nashville news article:

"It is important to note that the way by which the fluoride issue even came about in Spring Hill was the direct result of concerned individuals simply asking questions and making their voices heard. It should serve as an inspirational example to thousands of other concerned citizens across the country to begin questioning their own water facilities about the legitimacy of fluoridation."

In other words, YOU can make the difference in your health and the health of your neighbors. Call your water district manager and tell him to eliminate the use of hydrofluosilicic acid in your drinking water. Tell him you don't want to be force-medicated with a product that contains mercury, lead and arsenic. If you live in the South Blount County Utility District, your contact is Mgr. Henry Durant, 982-3560. Tell him, NO MORE EXCUSES!

- Documented comments and opinion of Linda King, Citizens for Blount County's Future, 681-0662, kinglinda@aol.com

SILENCE IS GOLDEN

by Jay Polk

I want everyone reading this and every single Blount County voter to remember July 21, 2011. This is the day that the Blount County commission decided it will allow you to practice your Freedom of Speech. What a wonderful gesture! Aren't we so lucky to have a commission that is dedicated to permitting us to exercise our God-given Rights? The big issue

at July's commission meeting concerned a couple of additions to the rules concerning citizen input. The major rule change stated, "Actions which disrupt or delay the orderly transaction of business are prohibited, including but not limited to...public applause or other interruption except that applause and

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public support is appropriate during the consent calendar property tax increase? Well this month one of the items was portion of the meeting when citizens or organizations are to give the Highway Department a \$1 Million advance on the recognized...any persons violating this rule are subject to anticipated revenue generated by the Republican tax increase removal...at the sound discretion of the Chairman.” So (All voted “Yes”, Harrison abstained). They just can't WAIT to essentially if you're a good citizen, you'll do what the spend your money! And when they do get it, they just can't government says and only participate in “Government- seem to get enough because the other items involved Approved” applause. If not, out you go! Several citizens stood spending \$2,794.56/yr on more copiers for the Circuit Court and spoke in opposition to this specific rule change. And when and Highway Department (Folts voted “No”). Shouldn't these it came time to vote, all the commissioners remained silent. items have been included in the budgets that were just Therefore the rule change failed for the lack of a motion. passed?

Keep in mind, however, that even though this motion failed, During last year's campaign season I heard some candidates that at the Agenda meeting the previous week, thirteen of the refer to themselves as being fiscally responsible. It's just commissioners voted “Yes” to send this to the full unfortunate that those candidates weren't elected. commission. The commissioners who thought that the

exercise of your Free Speech should be voted on were: Here is the grading scale:

Burkhalter, Caylor, Farmer, Harrison, Hasty, Helton, Kirby, Lail,

Lambert, Lewis, Melton, Moon, and Wright. Commissioners A - Participated in the discussion and voted to uphold the French and Samples abstained (Why not vote “No”?). While libertarian values of fiscal responsibility and/or personal this vote isn't included in calculating their grades this month, liberty.

it should be noted that these commissioners are enemies of B – Did not participate, but voted to uphold libertarian values.

your Rights. C - Participated in the discussion and voted against libertarian

And, if you'll recall, in the February issue of *The Banner of* values.

Truth (Outrage! p.5) it was reported that Chairman Melton F – Did not participate and voted against libertarian values

had attempted in the January meeting to suppress citizen

applause. Back then, when all the commissioners were asked **Here are the grades for June: Folts: B; All others: F (Caylor was absent)**

if they felt citizen applause was "offensive", only

Commissioners Folts and Murrell objected. The other 19

Commissioners did not speak out in defense of the citizens'

rights.

In other business the first agenda items involved, you guessed

it, more spending! Remember last month when the

Commission approved a \$162 Million budget along with a

For a breakdown of the grading scale, an explanation of the grades, and to keep track of your commissioner, go to

www.blountcountyp.org/county-commission-grades.html

Jay Polk is Chair of the Blount County Libertarian Party

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SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT GETTING MORE AGGRESSIVE

by Tona Monroe

The School Board quit recording its meetings and playing them on the local access cable channel; therefore, I decided to record the Monday June 20th School Board meeting and was almost ejected by a Sheriff's Deputy. In the middle of the meeting, the Chairman Rob Webb took a 2 minute recess and asked if he could see me outside. I followed him outside the meeting room. He told me that there was a light shining from my camera and that I would have to turn off my video camera or leave the meeting.

My response was to inquire if this light was shining the whole time or just upon start up, but I wasn't able to

complete my question. Webb became authoritative and told me that he wasn't there to argue, that he had a meeting to run and that I could either turn my recorder off or leave. At that point a Sheriff's Deputy approached me and stood on my side telling me to do what he (Webb) says.

I told Mr. Webb that I would turn my camera off, if a light was shining in their eyes, and we went back into the meeting room. After sitting down, I placed my camera in the direction facing my purse to examine it for lights. Then I was able to record the audio of the meeting, with the visual being my

purse since it was aimed in that direction and prevented any potential complaints about lights.

After the meeting Mr. Webb approached me and thanked me for turning it off. I apologized to him and explained that it was never my intention to have any kind of light shine on the School Board and that I was not trying to argue about the light, but asking for more information so that I could correct the problem. It has been my experience that Mr. Webb is generally a nice man during normal circumstances, but that he does not handle problems well.

The police officer on the other hand, offered no apology. Sheriff Berrong himself, along with Deputies, cleared the Commission room after the special called Commission meeting to override the Mayor's budget and tax increase vetoes in June. The Sheriff is quoted in The Daily Times as saying, "Emotions were high and people got aggressive, and we're trained just to separate the parties. That's what I did." If they are "just" trained to resolve the conflict peacefully, then why clear the room or threaten to remove someone without even finding out what the problem is? Neither, I nor any of the citizens that I talked with, who were present during the over-ride meeting, saw anything that would warrant clearing the Courthouse.

Last year after citizens Linda and Joe King were removed from a public building after the Blount County School Board meeting, I wrote the Sheriff's Department to ask for their policy for removing citizens from public meetings. The

response was alarming, because James B. Long, said that the Blount County Sheriff's Department does not have a specific policy for removal of citizens from public meetings. Mr. Long said the Sheriff's Department will adhere to State law, but does State law allow removal of citizens at the pleasure and/or request of public officials like School Board members, Blount County Commissioners and/or the Sheriff James Berrong? Can a citizen be removed simply because a public official requests that removal, or does there have to be a justifiable cause for the removal? Does the Sheriff's Department automatically take the word of the public official and remove the citizen without inquiring into the problem?

There is a growing trend of local government using the Sheriff's Department to intimidate citizens at public meetings. The public should remind the Sheriff's Department, and our local government officials, that without "We the People" there is no need for a Sheriff's Department or local government.

The opinions expressed in this article are of its author Tona Monroe. Tona has recently made it a priority to record public meetings that aren't being recorded and make them available online at her blog www.bcpublicrecord.com. She needs help, recording these meetings. If you're interested in helping, please call her at (865) 856-0814 or email her at tona@bcpublicrecord.com.

ARE THE INMATES RUNNING THE ASYLUM?

by Joe King

How many companies do you know that allow their employees to set their own benefits? The answer is probably "none". In Blount County, that's exactly how it works! Our Human Resources Committee includes the Sheriff, the Highway Superintendent, the Registrar of Deeds, a Blount County Schools' representative, the Mayor, a school teacher/Commissioner, a retired school employee whose wife works for the school district, a Commissioner who had worked for the Judicial system and whose ex-husband works for the Sheriff, a Commissioner who is employed by a local bank which holds Blount County tax money, and a Commissioner. Do you really believe that they can set benefits for themselves and their staff when this Conflict of Interest exists? How would you vote if your employer asked whether or not you wanted to contribute to your benefit package?

For many months Commissioner Mike Lewis had promised

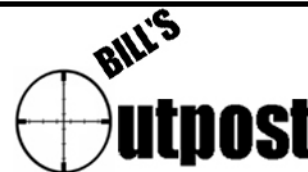
that Drew Mann from Trinity Benefits would be present at a meeting to address the issue of employee contributions in comparison to other counties and also to private industry. (At present, a Blount County worker pays NOTHING for his insurance and only \$100 for family coverage, regardless of the number in his family.) Unfortunately, or should I say due to a

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well-planned strategy, the presentation and the ensuing discussion did not happen before the budget was set for next year. Benefit entitlement contribution increases could have lowered the 11-cent tax increase we've incurred. Although Mr. Mann was in attendance at July's meeting, the Committee again avoided talking about changing employee rates, and instead asked Mr. Mann to provide new, up-to-date figures in August or September before the open enrollment period.

Does that mean that the H.R. Committee will actually decide to charge for their "Cadillac" benefit package? Not necessarily. A speaker at the last Human Resources meeting got up to chastise the public for complaining about the free benefits that the taxpayers provide. Apparently they deserve it? Mr. Hatcher, an employee from the Highway Department, gave a presentation stating that the county gets a great deal with the package they provide to the employees compared to other counties. But are the taxpayers who are paying for the county employees' health insurance, plus paying hundreds of dollars for their own personal benefits getting a great deal? I don't think so. Sounds kinda socialistic...and you know what they say: "Socialism only lasts until the other persons' money runs out."

While I'm on the subject of Mr. Hatcher's presentation, isn't it interesting that the citizens are granted a 3-minute limit to speak on Items on the Agenda and this individual was allowed a lengthy speech as well as a slide show. During his comments he repeatedly criticized Commissioner Folts' Three-County Comparison of excessive department spending and waste, while Mr. Hatcher's topic was the benefit/medical compensation of county employees. Finally, after a good deal of time had passed, H.R. Chairman Gary Farmer stopped him from continually using Jim Folts' name. (Any other citizen would have been halted immediately.) Commissioner Farmer should have told Mr. Hatcher that he was comparing apples to oranges between Mr. Folts' report and his own. Of course, how would Farmer know that since he never bothered to see Jim's presentation?

Back to the H.R. Committee Meeting: Several questions were asked of Mr. Mann and he is, supposedly, going to present answers. What would it cost to charge employees on a 3 or 4-tier basis? This means charging for individual coverage, with spouse, with spouse and children, or individual and children only. Also, can tobacco users be charged differently? Is there a savings having the free clinic for employees? Will Mr. Mann's answers encourage Committee members to recommend a change in the benefit/retirement package? We'll see.

Also, the H.R. Committee has decided that they want to choose the H.R. Director and keep that position under their

total control, and yet, they have no budget to pay this person. This job has always been under the Mayor's authority and is paid from his budget. However this H.R. group is attempting to erode power from a Mayor who was elected by the majority of the voting public. Mr. Dunlap stated that they have done a poll and the respondents feel that the H.R. Director should be separate so that everyone will be represented fairly. Who was polled? The employees? Is the Mayor not playing their game and not falling in line with the political machine? Our Mayor had already filled the Director's position by combining jobs and saving the county \$100,000. This Committee wants this move negated, even though the employee is qualified and fully capable of doing the job.

Another interesting motion passed at the H.R. Committee meeting: Mr. Dunlap wants to have a salary study made of the county jobs compared to other cities, counties, and the private sector. When Finance Director Jennings said he didn't have money appropriated for such an endeavor, Mr. Dunlap asked him to give them a figure and they would decide how the officeholders could come up with the money. Although it might be helpful and enlightening to see why a Blount County employee in one office is doing a similar job to a person in another Blount County office while being paid vastly different wages, isn't it strange that Mr. Dunlap can discuss the officeholders contributing to a comparison study when these same officeholders were unwilling to cut their budgets to keep from having a tax increase this year?

Start attending county meetings. You'll never cease to be amazed!

- This is based on the opinion and observations of Joe King, 681-0662



THE TEST OF STATESMANSHIP

by Richard Hutchens

Over the years of being a political observer, I have developed a 6-point test to distinguish between a politician and a statesman. The last test is the most important because it reveals how they view themselves as a "public servant" and even more important their attitude toward their constituents. This final test asks whether our elected representatives are the more common small minded and big ego politician, or whether they are a Humble Servant Leader with a large mind and a small ego.

It is easy to judge which category our elected representatives fall in by whether they put government policy as more important than the grand principles of our individual freedom and liberty. When politicians are faced with two conflicting values of protecting government's admirable (but often misguided goals) at the expense of the larger values of our God Given Rights to life, liberty and property; politicians will always choose protecting government power. This is how you can tell that our elected representatives have small minds and big egos.

A classic example is the recent effort by several county commissioners who worked tireless behind the scenes to ban the applause of citizens who spoke out critically of the failures of the board. The guise they tried to hide behind was that this "rule" was to help maintain decorum in the Commissioner meetings. These commissioners exposed their small mind and big egos when they clearly placed a higher value of government's goal for decorum over the much larger "principles" of our right to free speech and to peacefully petition our government for a redress of grievances.

At this time I would like to give special recognition to our county commissioners who on this particular issue rose to statesmanship when they placed a higher value on the

eternal principles of our God Given rights of freedom and liberty over government policy. Kudos goes to Commissioners Burchfield, Carver, Folts, French, Gamble, Greene, Lambert, Lewis, Murrell, Samples and Wright who voted in favor of granting citizens more latitude in addressing their elected representatives. (Unfortunately this rule changed failed to pass for falling short of a 3/4th majority). I should make it clear that "one act" of statesmanship does not make a politician a statesman. To become a true Statesman is a lifelong desire and pursuit. It is very unfortunate that it appears that 10 of our 21 County Commissioners demonstrate such contempt, not only for these divine principles upon which our great nation is founded, but equal contempt for the citizens whom they were elected to serve. I sincerely hope the voters remember this contempt these commissioner apparently hold, when it comes election time and they want us to re-elect them.

“ The spirit of resistance to government is so valuable on certain occasions, that I wish it always to be kept alive. -
Thomas Jefferson ”



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NEXT MEETING AUGUST 16th
Meetings are held the Tuesday before the Commission meeting
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SPOKESPERSON: Linda King ph. 681-0662 email: Kinglinda@aol.com