

Heights mayor addresses water issue

Letter to the Editor:

Governor Snyder has required local units of government to explore cost saving measures through collaboration and consolidation. At face value, the concept makes sense, but it can also lead to empire building and misdirected resources. This is the case with the battle over water in Muskegon County. Our two primary water customers, Fruitport and the City of Norton Shores, have decided to break their contract for water service; apparently under the guise that Muskegon Heights was mismanaging its water fund and not properly maintaining the water system. Among other things, these communities used public resources to sue Muskegon Heights to set our wholesale water rates despite the fact that they do not own the system. The judge ruled in favor of Muskegon Heights, and as part of the process, a 10-year audit of our water system was conducted. The three communities shared the cost of that study. Nothing of consequence was found fiscally and we are in good standing with our U.S. Environmental Protection Agency licensing. Further, auditors indicated our wholesale water rates were too low. Our current wholesale rate is \$1.98 per 1,000 gallons. Fruitport Township buys our water at wholesale rates and charges its residents \$3.77 per 1,000 gallons. The City of Norton Shores charges its residents \$3.55 per 1,000 gallons. Their fees help cover the outstanding 13.5 million dollar bond, which covered the cost to upgrade our water plant to accommodate Fruitport Township and the City of Norton Shores.

These communities are still obligated to pay 70 percent of the bond (approximately \$9 million). After Muskegon Heights defended its water system, Fruitport Township and the City of Norton Shores signed a water service deal with the City of Muskegon — despite their continued obligation on bonds. Ironically, neither community has direct connections with the City of Muskegon's water system. We understand that requests for proposals have been sent to determine how many millions of dollars it will take to run the pipes and other infrastructure to connect to the City of Muskegon's water system. The agreement with the City of Muskegon has Fruitport and the City of Norton Shores paying the entire expense of system upgrades.

Put Jason Lee's name in Causeway Veterans' Park

Letter to the Editor:

It's been almost five years now since Jason T. Lee died in Iraq in November, 2007, and around two years since the war in Iraq ended. Jason Lee's name was added to the Fruitport veterans' monument in 2008. I think it's time that his name and that of others who have died from Muskegon County from the Iraq War have their names added in stone and/or bronze on the Causeway Veterans Memorial Park. The Causeway park currently recognizes those lost in World War I with bronze plaques at the south end of the park; those lost in World War II and Korea with stones at the north end of the park; and those who died in Vietnam with stones on the island in the park. I led the committee that saw to the placement of some 500 Muskegon County names of servicemen who died in one of these wars. It's time to add the names of our war dead from Iraq and Afghanistan to those already in the causeway park. It's the right thing to do. How long do we have to wait?

I first brought the idea of updating the stones and plaques in the park with a member of the causeway committee, and he was adamantly opposed to having Jason Lee's name or any other Iraq War veteran who died in service in that war added to a stone on the causeway. This was the same person and causeway committee that was adamantly opposed to having a 97 percent bronze plaque for another Fruitport native, Skip Vermillion, who organized Muskegon County veterans' VFW honor guard funeral teams for hundreds of deceased Muskegon County veterans. He and his committee also totally rejected having a bronze plaque like that in our local veterans' park honoring Muskegon County's two known Medal of Honor awardees, — all at no cost to this self-elected Muskegon County Veterans' causeway committee. I hope none of our Muskegon County veterans' property tax dollars are going to this committee. The LST was, however, happy to have the bronze plaque for Fruitport's Skip Vermillion and the two Medal of Honor recipients. Thank you, LST veterans!

David Eling is the director of the Muskegon County Department of Veterans' Affairs, which receives hundreds of thousands of our tax dollars to service veterans of Western Michigan. He also serves on the committee that oversees the causeway park. Think about giving him a call and asking him when Fruitport's Jason Lee's name and the names of others who died in Iraq and possibly Afghanistan are going to be added to the park, along with our county's previous war dead who gave their all for our Republic. Eling's phone number is (231) 724-7143. Or you can visit him in person or write him at 165 E. Apple Avenue, Suite 201, Muskegon, MI 49442.

Enough said.

Max Riekse
Commander,
Fruitport VFW Post 3734

Not surprisingly, we have been approached to join the water regionalization movement and turn over our water plant to a new provider. With the loss of two major customers (Fruitport and Norton Shores) someone is assuming that we cannot sustain our plant. We have asked ourselves, "Is this consolidation or a hostile take-over?" It is interesting to note that our city owns 20 acres of land on Lake Michigan in the City of Norton Shores. If additional service capacity is needed, we have a greater ability to accommodate an expanded facility than Muskegon's plant, which is land-locked. Another driver in this issue are studies commissioned by the county-wide Chamber of Commerce, which recommends that regional water service is the #1 opportunity for consolidation.

Of all the possible opportunities for collaboration in the county, we do not believe that water is the most pressing matter. We believe independently operated water plants in Muskegon County provide more security for customers (what if something catastrophic happens to either plant?). We further believe that more than one water provider in the county makes the region more favorable for economic development prospects. It also helps keep prices competitive. Look how much the county's single sewer treatment system has cost residents. We had a 26 percent fee increase last year and another six percent increase this year.

At this point we are taking the posture of keeping and managing our own water plant. We are hopeful that residents of Fruitport Township and the City of Norton Shores will ask their leaders why a massive public infrastructure investment is necessary to hook up to the City of Muskegon's water system when reliable and affordable water service is already available from Muskegon Heights.

Regardless, it is necessary for Muskegon Heights to increase water rates to provide more set-aside funds to maintain our system in the future. We want to build a reserve while Fruitport and Norton Shores are obligated to pay off water bonds. This means acting on the findings of the audit forced by Fruitport Township and Norton Shores to charge all customers an additional 40 cents per 1,000 gallons of water — going from the 2011 rate of \$1.98 to a new rate of \$2.38 for 2013.

Mayor Paige
City of Muskegon Heights

RU-486

(Courtesy, Muskegon Right to Life Newsletter)

Twelve years ago, the Clinton Administration pushed through approval of RU-486, the so-called "abortion pill." They rushed it through using a procedure intended to speed approval of new medicines for terminally ill patients.

But instead of saving lives, abortifacient drugs like RU-486 are by intent poisonous to the unborn. It should come as no surprise that it is also dangerous to the mother.

According to the Food and Drug Administration's own report released last April, there have been more than 2,207 casualties since RU-486's approval in 2000 including deaths and hospitalizations with life threatening complications, complications that include massive hemorrhaging and rampant, life threatening infections.

This is not emergency contraception. It's regularly being prescribed to women who are as late as nine weeks pregnant. At nearly \$500 per prescription, RU-486 is a real moneymaker for the abortion industry.

It's now estimated that currently nearly one fourth of all abortions are chemically induced using toxic drugs. •

Corn for fuel?

By Jack Van Wingerden

The recent spike in corn prices is driving inflation not only here in the U.S. but worldwide. That mandate has been justified by premises that are false.

The justification for using ethanol in gasoline has been based on this stream of faulty claims and reasoning. Since it actually takes more energy to create the ethanol than it contains, we suffer a net loss for each gallon made. We are producing or importing more oil and coal energy than we get from the alcohol. Total pollution is much higher than it would be using straight gasoline, and car fuel economy and reliability goes down when alcohol is mixed in.

Corn futures are now over \$8 a bushel, up from \$4 two years ago. The U. S. provides about 40% of global corn production, so world food prices are inflating drastically based on this stupidity. The corn used in ethanol production could instead be exported to reduce our borrowing of Chinese money and reduce inflation.

Politicians love this set up because they get bigger donations from corn growers and ethanol producers. Regulators love it because they can hire more people, thereby get promoted, and get more control of our lives. They could care less that our costs for food and fuel are being driven up by this hypocrisy.

In case you missed it, Al Gore recently made a public

Ben Stein's comments from CBS Sunday morning

Submitted by R.A. Shackles

"I only hope we find God again before it is too late.

"My confession:

I don't like getting pushed around for being a Jew, and I don't think Christians like getting pushed around for being Christians. I think people who believe in God are sick and tired of getting pushed around, period. I have no idea where the concept came from, that America is an explicitly atheist country. I can't find it in the Constitution and I don't like it being shoved down my throat...

"Or maybe I can put it another way: Where did the idea come from that we should worship celebrities and we aren't allowed to worship God as we understand Him? I guess that's a sign that I'm getting old, too. But there are a lot of us who are wondering where these celebrities come from and where the America we knew went to,

"In light of the many jokes we send to one another for a laugh, this is a little different: This is not intended to be a joke; it's not funny, it's intended to get you thinking. In light of recent events...terrorists attack, school shootings, etc. ... I think it started when Madeleine Murray O'Hare (she was murdered, her body found a few years ago) complained she didn't want prayer in our schools, and we said OK.

"Then someone said you better not read the Bible in school...The Bible says thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal, and love your neighbor as yourself. And we said OK.

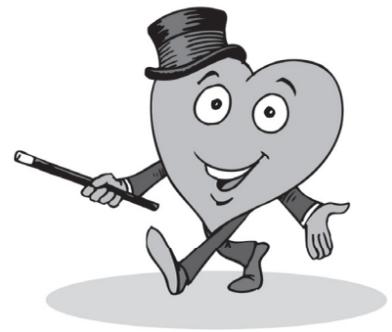
"Then Dr. Benjamin Spock said we shouldn't spank our children when they misbehave, because their little personalities would be warped and we might damage their self-esteem. (Dr. Spock's son committed suicide.) We said an expert should know what he's talking about. And we said okay.

"Now we're asking ourselves why our children have no conscience, why they don't know right from wrong, and why it doesn't bother them to kill strangers, their classmates, and themselves.

"Probably, if we think about it long and hard enough, we can figure it out. I think it has a great deal to do with 'We reap what we sow.'"

Funny how simple it is for people to trash God and then wonder why the world's going to hell. Funny how we believe what the newspapers say, but question what the Bible says. Funny how you can send 'jokes' through email and they spread like wildfire, but when you start sending messages regarding the Lord, people think twice about sharing. Funny how lewd, crude, vulgar and obscene articles pass freely through cyberspace, but public discussion of God is suppressed in the school and workplace.

"Are you laughing yet?"



statement that his support for ethanol mandates was predicated on the need to win his first several presidential primary elections in corn producing states. He now admits that the use of ethanol as an alternate fuel is useless and uneconomical. Way to go, Al! Pander for that vote regardless of the consequences! Further idiocy is the federal mandate to also use wood alcohol. The law was passed several years ago, forcing its use, but no one can produce it. The gasoline companies are paying millions in fines for not using this substitute, further raising the price of gas in another hidden tax.

Why is the government forcing us to use alcohol in our cars? Because federal politicians have created the perfect system to increase their power while receiving kickbacks for their reelection campaigns, vacations and retirement accounts. They are using our tax money to support the big businesses that grow the corn and make alcohol from it while the whole world pays higher prices for food and we pay more for fuel. Want this fixed? Approve the pipeline from Canada and remove the mandates for alcohol in our gas. Both are just the stroke of a pen based on the will of "We the People." Have a short talk with the people who are supposed to work for you. Replace those who don't. •

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