

**KAY CO. GRAND JURY
SUBMISSION OF QUESTION**

I, Jessica Pepper, formally request the Kay Co. Grand Jury to consider the following question for review.

Did the Blackwell Industrial Authority (BIA) violate 25 O.S. § 311 A. II in failing to honor a newspapers reporters request to have the agendas sent to her when her newspaper has circulation in Kay Co.?

The North Central Reporter wrote an article about how the Blackwell Industrial Authority was going to re-write their policy for notice of special meetings. The NCR reported in an article titled Agendas too cumbersome to mess with once a month, "This issue was brought about due to media organizations that the Blackwell Industrial Authority provide via, e-mail or regular mail, agendas for upcoming meetings. BIA Executive Director Shane Frye said the request take too much..." (time? Article in full is lost)

Karina Schneider of the North Central Reporter had requested the current agendas from the BIA via e-mail or fax since she was a reporter housed in Medford, Okla., thirty (30) miles away. Her newspaper serves Grant and Kay county communities, and at the time had also been reporting news that reflected some of the difficulties the citizens of Blackwell had been facing with the local government.

Submitted this day November 28, 2008.

Requesting Party J. Pepper

► Classifieds, Pg. 23



**Hark, there
are angels in
Blackwell!**

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son, 15, of Nash was a passenger in a 1998 Ford Ranger pickup driven by 15-year-old
See WRECK, Page 4

**Christmas decorations in downtown Pond Creek. Pond Creek city employees took advantage of the sunshine and 45-degree weather to get the decorations up for the holiday season.
Photo by Amanda Ball**

Agendas too cumbersome to mess with once a month

► **BIA ups ethanol plant backing to \$150 million**

**By Amanda Ball
NCR Staff Writer**

BLACKWELL - Blackwell Industrial Authority trustees passed a motion to amend Resolution No. 824-7 bond issuance from an original amount of \$45 million to \$150 million.

The original resolution was passed Aug. 24, and the new action was taken during the regular Nov. 21 meeting. Mike Loftis, trustee, noted that the adjustment in value had no ramifications

or liability to the City of Blackwell.

Blackwell serves as a bond holder and acts as an issuer to facilitate the process.

Trustees also considered drafting a policy for notice of special meetings, pursuant to 25 OS Sec 311 (A) (1).

This issue was brought about due to media organizations who are requesting that the Blackwell Industrial Authority provide, via fax, e-mail or regular mail, agendas for upcoming meetings.

BIA Executive Director Shane Frye said the requests take too much of the

See BIA, Page 4

How do public offices deal with agenda requests?

**By Amanda Ball
and Korina Schneider**

While some public offices find it burdensome to mail, fax or e-mail agendas for upcoming public meetings, other offices in Kay and Grant counties see no problem with it.

Following a request by The North Central Reporter to begin receiving agendas for regular and special meetings from the Blackwell Industrial Authority, the issue to revise the

See AGENDAS, Page 18

**3 state semi-finalists; 2 academic champs
Way to go, boys! - See Pages 12 & 13**

► Part of the job

It's tough to walk into a room knowing a few people in that room don't think very highly of you. It's even tougher, however, to walk into a room knowing a question will be unanswered or a request will be challenged.

It's taken me almost 12 years to really grasp the concept of what it means to be a journalist. I still have a lot to learn.

When my request for a simple agenda was denied last week, the meaning of my job hit me like a ton of bricks. I spent the entire Thanksgiving holiday wondering if I should just let it go or if I should tell others about it.

I talked to several people - media friends, family members and even people who could care less about open government. They all said basically the same thing: if reporters don't stand up for citizens' rights, who will?

That's when it hit me. I work for the people. I help protect the people's right to know, and having a simple request denied chilled me right to the bone.

Following the Blackwell City Commission meeting, after I had asked the Blackwell Industrial Authority director if it would be possible to start receiving agendas and he informed me in not so many words that his office had no intentions of going out of its way to provide me with anything special, I spent the entire drive home to Medford hotter than a firecracker.

After I stopped to think about why I was mad, however, I had to ask myself a few questions.

Was I mad because someone gave me a legitimate "no" and there was nothing I could do about it? Was I pouting like an overgrown baby?

Or was I angry because someone had stifled my right to know?

At first, I was just downright mad, but after some thought, I realized I was mad for the same reason many Americans get mad: I felt like my rights as a citizen had been violated.

I felt like someone had said to me, "We don't like you, so we're going to do everything

possible to intimidate you and exclude you from being part of our group."

I watched a movie not too long ago about an African American teenager who fought for his right to be able to swim in a public swimming pool. All he wanted to do was take a dip. Of course, the movie was based on past events, but I had never really been able to connect with the feelings of that boy - or others like him - who deal with discrimination every day. It's frustrating. More than that, it hurts.

All I wanted was a simple sheet of paper that was being given freely to other entities.

I've heard a few remarks lately about "negative comments" from the media.

"Comments" classified as negative by some are categorized as factual statements by others.

I don't make it a habit of publishing "comments" in the paper, except for in this column. I do, however, make it my business to seek the truth, and when the truth is not presented, I make it my business to try and find it - not for my sake, but for the sake of the people who pay taxes and live from day to day by the laws made by others.

That's my job. I take pride in that job. I've trained long and hard to understand it and uphold its values.

No, it's not easy walking into a room full of people who don't think very highly of you. It's downright tough to print facts knowing they might cause embarrassment for people you've come to know, like and respect. But, nevertheless, it's my job.

Regular citizens who have experienced similar situations don't have the means to print what's happened to them, and often times, they are turned away by people who can.

Most people are just trying to understand where their tax dollars are going. It's not hard for public officials to inform them of those things. Public bodies do it every day, right out in the open where everyone can hear.

If the facts were lying on the table or presented in a manner easy to understand - or presented at all for that matter - I wouldn't have to go digging for information.

Likewise, neither would the citizens who just want to know the truth.

Editorial written by Karina Schneider of the
North Central Reporter