

July 2015

Vol 13

THE TRUTH A PARTY

Let's Make a Deal!

The Price is Right! Or Let's Make a Deal. Whichever your game show, Wednesday's Governing Body meeting descended into similar comical chaos shortly into discussion of one of the proposed changes by the Charter Review Committee, which would give all Governing Body members substantial pay raises.

Behind Curtain #1 – As proposed by the committee, the Governing Body's pay would be based on a percentage of the average department head's pay. Many Governing Body members were praising this as a way to remove the "politics" from pay raises; until Councilor Wilkins burst their bubble by reminding them that the Governing Body approves the City Manager and department heads' pay, and it should be perceived as a conflict of interest; giving them indirect control over future pay increases through manipulation of department head pay.

Behind Curtain #2- Avoid the appearance of conflict of interest through an independent pay study. The City Manager affirmed that a study could be done at a cost of about \$1-2k. While the committee gave their own analysis and pay comparisons, they are ultimately appointees picked by Governing Body members. The Charter Review Committee is a direct extension of the Governing Body. In

fact, one committee member received texts from a Governing Body member giving direction during a meeting. Other committee members may be contemplating running for future office. While we commend them all for serving, clearly this process is not unbiased, and it is disingenuous to suggest so. An Independent study would offer an outside viewpoint and should remove any overtones of self-interest. It may even justify the amounts and/or procedures proposed.

Behind Curtain #3- Leave it the way it is. Councilor Clayton took serious issue with any significant pay raise and said it should be a privilege to serve. Others voiced concerns that not offering good pay excludes many citizens who could not otherwise afford to run for office. Both of these opinions are true, however, we are skeptical of the idea that getting more highly educated individuals through higher pay equates to more knowledgeable Governing Body members. We all know that common sense and higher education can sometimes be strangers.

Voters May Decide on Governing Body Pay Raises *Article by Renee Wilkins*

If they elect to continue as-is with the city ordinance-mandated annual 3% pay raise, they would have to tweak it into compliance with state law by making the raises future-effective, so that none of the current members benefit from it.

It was repeatedly declared that pay changes would not affect the current Governing Body members' pay, taking effect in 2018. What was not mentioned was whether any of them are running for re-election...or Mayor. With the prospect of the Council's pay doubling and the Mayor's pay tripling right out of the gate, it would be nice to hear them all publicly pledge they are not running for Governing Body positions again.

We'll be watching to see how lucky this item is on the ballot. There may be up to 12 proposed changes to our city's constitution requiring voter approval next spring, and deciphering the ballot language could seem like a game of Password.

Painting by Numbers *Article by Renee Wilkins and Steve VanHorn*

"Numbers aren't facts." - at least according to City Councilor Cheryl Everett. The Councilor recently argued that numbers don't really

mean anything, in an attempt to discredit the data supporting a reduction of the city water reconnection fees. At the same meeting she

referenced numbers used in the water rate study to justify leaving the reconnect fee higher.

Painting by Numbers (continued)

Everett is known for making cryptic remarks (e.g., citizens should “connect the dots”), but we have to challenge this statement – if only to limit the spread of the bad thinking it encourages. Perhaps the Governing Body needs to spend more time painting, and even making decisions, by numbers.

Numbers paint a picture. In an age of statistical analysis and data-driven decisions, numbers are relied upon to approve contracts, validate the need for water line replacements and public safety equipment, and most recently to support or dispute the reasoning behind civil asset forfeiture for DWI. While it’s true that numbers can be manipulated, the same

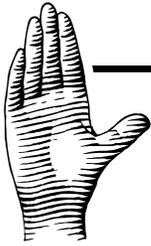
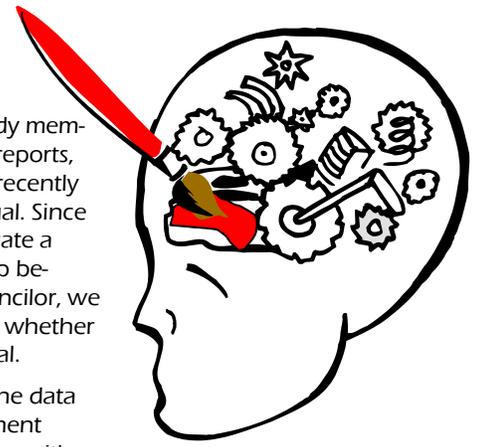
can be said for words. All the more reason we need elected officials asking intelligent questions and challenging the status quo.

We’ll concede that understanding the numbers can get a bit tricky, especially if they have been massaged. Some reports are so laden with hundreds of pages of numerical data that Governing Body members become intimidated or lose patience. Electing those who have the fortitude and brain mass to analyze these reports and conduct detailed follow-up research is the key to maintaining accountability of our city government.

Councilor Everett has routinely lauded city staff’s efforts to produce data laden reports and

chastised Governing Body members who scrutinize the reports, defending the data she recently declared to be non-factual. Since this behavior could indicate a questionable relationship between staff and the Councilor, we hope she will ask herself whether it’s behavior that is ethical.

Elected officials rely on the data provided by city department heads who often disagree with the direction of the Governing Body. It behooves our Governing Body to remain vigilant. Numbers drive the Governing Body’s decisions, for better or worse, and should always be verified. Most often the story written between the lines of data emerges when the numbers don’t jive.



Core Values

Our commitment to seeking truth and accountability is the hallmark of the Rio Rancho Tea Party.

We are dedicated to constitutional freedoms, free markets, limited government and fiscal responsibility.

RRTP Executive Board

The RRTP is non-partisan & takes no official stand on social issues. We unite on our core values.

Sunday is Funday Event
August 16th - Noon to 4pm
Haines Park

Check out the RRTP Booth!
Games and Prizes for Adults and Kids!
Look for our Gadsden flags flying high!

Come have some fun with us!
As usual, we’ll be poking a little fun at politics!

