

Everything you wanted to know about oil but were afraid to ask



Or

Oil for Dummies

by Doug Maurstad

Is all fair in love and politics?

This article today is probably one of the most serious articles I've ever written. Let me set the scene.

1. "Save Union County Ballot Committee" and "Citizens Opposed to Oil Pollution" have distributed several 4' x 8' signs to many individuals around Union County with a message on it saying "Vote NO Hyperion". I'm sure everyone has seen these signs. These signs are being displayed by people who are against Hyperion Resources putting an oil refinery in Union County.

2. Last week at the bi-weekly county commissioners meeting, Union County States Attorney, Jerry Miller requested that the commissioners go into executive session and that Land Use Administrator Dennis Henze be included in this session.

3. Immediately after they came out of executive session; with no discussion, Commissioner Ross Jordan made a motion that the county commissioners authorize Mr. Henze to enforce Article 6, section 602 and Article 21 section 2101 and section 2102 against "Save Union County" and "Citizens Opposed to Oil Pollution." The commissioners voted 5-0.

What they just did was highly irregular considering the situation. Article 6 (6) says that off-site signs must be less than 25 sq. ft. So what Mr. Henze did was send Mr. Ed Cable a certified letter stating that all "Save Union County" signs that are 4' x 8' are 32 sq. ft. are illegal and must either be modified or removed by the 15th of May or there will be a fine assessed of \$100 per day per sign for each day that the signs are in violation of this ordinance. These signs were illegal but this is a law that to my knowledge has never been enforced. It is common practice that political campaign signs are 4 x 8.

The zoning ordinance says that whenever a violation of this ordinance occurs, or is alleged to have occurred, any person may file a written complaint. Such complaint stating fully the causes and basis thereof may file the complaint in writing with the Zoning Enforcement Officer.

"Save Union County" is found guilty of a misdemeanor and was not even given an opportunity to defend themselves. They didn't receive a summons; they didn't even know that there was going to be action taken against them for this. And suddenly, without warning the commissioners pass a resolution stating that "Save Union County," and "Citizens Opposed to Oil Pollution" are in violation of this ordinance.

If I'm not mistaken, there is a law in the United States that says that one has the right to face his

accuser. So far, Mr. Henze and Mr. Miller won't say who this person is.

If this isn't a put up job, nothing is. This is what I call selective interpretation and selective enforcement of the law.

How many people know that if they have a complaint about a sign that they must file with the zoning enforcement officer? How many people know who the zoning enforcement officer is? Has anyone ever heard of a Zoning Enforcement Officer? How many people even know there is a provision in the zoning ordinance that even covers signs and the size of signs let alone how to file a complaint? How many people have even seen a copy of the zoning ordinance? This is one of those "Everybody does it" situations. How many political candidates display 4 x 8 signs and nothing is ever said about it?

This is a blatant attempt on the efforts of either Mr. Henze or Mr. Miller and the county commissioners to control the outcome of the election on June 3rd.

This a violation of a persons Freedom of Speech rights under the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America. This is an attempt to suppress an individual or groups right to support a cause that they believe in. This is an attempt to subvert the good name and integrity of people who happen to disagree with the opinions of others.

I spent 25 years in the United States Air Force defending that very Constitutional right. Freedom of expression; Freedom of Speech; Freedom to make decisions about issues without fear of reprisal are the core of the rights of American Citizens, and when somebody attempts to suppress that right I really get upset. This act by Mr. Henze, Mr. Miller and the County Commissioners is an affront to everyone's rights and I abhor their brazen attempt to do this to us.

This was a deliberate attempt to impede the actions of Save Union County, and Mr. Henze should be asked explain his actions. This is not some flippant political ploy on the part of people who support the opposition, but a deliberate action on their part to use tactics available to them because of their position in the political structure of the county to influence the outcome of the election in their favor. The action by this group is unconscionable and cannot be tolerated.

Mr. Henze, Mr. Miller and the County Commissioners must be held accountable for this action and I urge every citizen in Union County to demand that these individuals be admonished for their actions. This was not an accident. This was a deliberate action by people who thought they could do as they please and get away with it. We can't let this go on unanswered.