

CARROLL COUNTY COMET

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Memberships include:

A look at court reform

The Indiana University Center for Urban Policy and the Environment, part of Indiana University's Public Policy Institute, announced this week a plan to study court reform as recommended by the Kernan-Shepard Report issued last December.

Many township trustees already do not appreciate some of the recommendations by the Indiana Commission on Local Government Reform. However, there are 27 recommendations to streamline local government, including the court system.

The IU group will study ways to make the state's system of trial courts more equitable and efficient. According to the announcement the study will pay particular attention to governing, budgetary and personnel issues, which should be of particular interest to Carroll County taxpayers and residents because those issues have been addressed at least three times in this county in recent history.

The issue of judicial mandates was widely felt two years ago when Superior Court Judge Jeffrey Smith issued a mandate, or court order, to the county council to pay salary and benefits for personnel in a position which was already held by another staff person who was on disability leave, yet receiving county taxpayer-provided benefits. The judge said he needed the help but the council said the county could afford the expense. The judge was able to relieve his own situation with a court order - and it stuck. County taxpayers paid.

The council faced a similar situation last year at budget adoption time. They reduced the courts' budgets and the judges threatened to mandate to force the council to appropriate taxpayer money they believed they needed to operate their courts efficiently. The matter was resolved when a local attorney, at no cost to the county, brokered a compromise between the two sides.

The Kernan-Shepard Report recommends shifting Indiana's trial courts to a state funding model thereby alleviating counties from the threat of severe financial complications in the event of a judicial mandate.

The director of the IU group said the study would take a critical look at how other states have approached managing and paying for their local courts. He said their goal is to identify ways Hoosiers can be assured equal access to services from the courts and that courts are funded in the most cost-effective way.

That sounds like a good plan.

Web poll

Tell us starting Wednesday at our web site, carrollcountycomet.com

Each week the *Comet* polls its readers on a different topic. Vote online at carrollcountycomet.com starting each Thursday, and then click the *Comments* link to send us an email voicing your opinion. The best responses will be printed the following week.

What is your favorite part of Thanksgiving?

- Turkey
- Pumpkin pie
- Being with family and friends
- Football
- Day off

Last Week's results

Should the government bailout the big three automakers?

30% Yes, we must not let the industry collapse
64% No, we would be better off if they go into bankruptcy
05% Have no opinion
Total responses: 149
Reader's comments:

The worst-case scenario to the bankruptcy is the thousands of labor force reductions by the various suppliers to GM, Ford and Chrysler. The "bailout" should be in the form of low interest loans using the auto companies' stocks as collateral. This would keep the speculators at bay while the industry attempts to recover from the current situation.

Carl Picman
Monticello, Carroll County

This calls for very careful thought and navigation through these times. Nothing is just a simple yes and no, especially when so many people not directly working for the automakers will be affected. It's like the jinga block game, as you move one piece several others are affected.

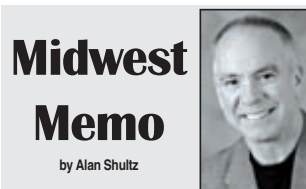
It is going to cost Americans just as much if the Big 3 are allowed to go bankrupt. Can you imagine how many people would be on unemployment, county assistance, and how will the food pantries keep up? But yes, they need restrictions on how to use the money. It is too bad that the government did not give restrictions to the big banks that they bailed out. What did they do with their money?

The night air was cold, make that freezing cold, and I could see my breath proceed me as I made my way towards the lobby entrance. The two-story structure absolutely beamed with light from an enormous gold chandelier and that light spilled out the wide entry doors, guiding my path on the circle drive at my feet. My mission on this particular evening was to deliver a quart of orange juice to my friend Dorothy Powers. Dorothy lives in a retirement home. She's a cheerful trooper in her nineties and never asks a favor. That's why, earlier in the day, when she mentioned her orange juice need it was my pleasure to fulfill.

Out on the driveway I walked past a petite lady walking her big dog. The woman and her dog made for an interesting pair. The woman wore an enormous full-length, brown fur coat with matching hat. The coat looked warm and toasty while at the same time incredibly weighty. The dog was a big French poodle, a distinguished looking dark gray animal with the distinctive poodle hair cut. The lady stroked the top of the dog's head as the two walked slowly towards the building.

"Good girl," the woman said reassuringly to the silent dog. The dog seemed oblivious to my presence and never even looked my way.

I signed in with the desk clerk and headed for the elevator. The long wait for an elevator in this building is legendary and tonight was no exception. Just as the elevator arrived I was joined



Still with thanks

by the woman with the dog.

"I've got the door," I said as the two got in.

Apparently thinking that she recognized me, the woman turned her head away from the dog and instead in my direction. "Oh Sam, thanks," she said.

"I'm Alan," I said.

"Sorry," the lady replied, as she explained that I sounded a lot like Sam, one of the employees at the home.

I asked her for her floor, then pushed our respective destinations - and off we went. As we made the slow ascent the lady and I exchanged small talk. The dog ignored me and sat quietly close alongside the woman.

Mine was the lower of the floors and when we arrived I bid my elevator companions both a good evening.

"Nice to meet you, Alan," the woman said as the elevator doors clamored shut.

Down at the end of the hall and inside her door I found my friend Dorothy in her tiny galley kitchen making an evening tea. While I put the orange juice in her refrigerator I explained that I had met Dorothy's neighbor with the big poodle.

"She's good with names," I

offered. I mentioned this because I am not good with names and admire those who work at it. The lady with the poodle clearly worked at it.

"Oh that's Betty," my friend explained. "She recognizes everyone by their voice. Some folks don't even realize she is blind."

Despite the warmth of Dorothy's little kitchen, a slight chill washed over me as I appreciated the fact laid before me. How could that possibly be? And then, despite the feeling of awe that had gripped over me, I blurted it out:

"A seeing eye... poodle?"

And we two shared a chuckle. Thanksgiving Day is once again upon us, and it couldn't have come at a better time. We live in a time when the daily news is of lack and loss. The drum beat is focused on what we have lost, what we don't have.

Perhaps a reminder to be grateful is precisely what the national psyche needs. Less emphasis on what's not and more gratitude for what is - that's what I'm thinking.

A warm coat on a frigid night, a toasty home to return to, a trusted companion at one's side, such simple sounding blessings. We can be blind to what is there before us, or we can reach out and see, truly see the blessings all about. Gratitude is the magnifying lense our nation needs just now.

Happy Thanksgiving to all our readers.

Circuit Court

Judge Donald Currie

New filings are from public records available in the Carroll County Clerk's office on the second floor of the courthouse, Delphi. Other information regarding judgments and marriage dissolutions is gathered from public records found in the clerk's office.

Phillip Reynolds and Heather Reynolds filed complaint for damages against United Farm Mutual Co. d/b/a Indiana Farm Bureau Insurance Co., Donald B. Villwock; First Financial Bank, Michael M. Moore; Donald Laughner; Gretchen Walker.

For Superior Court see page 6A

Because the public has a right to know...

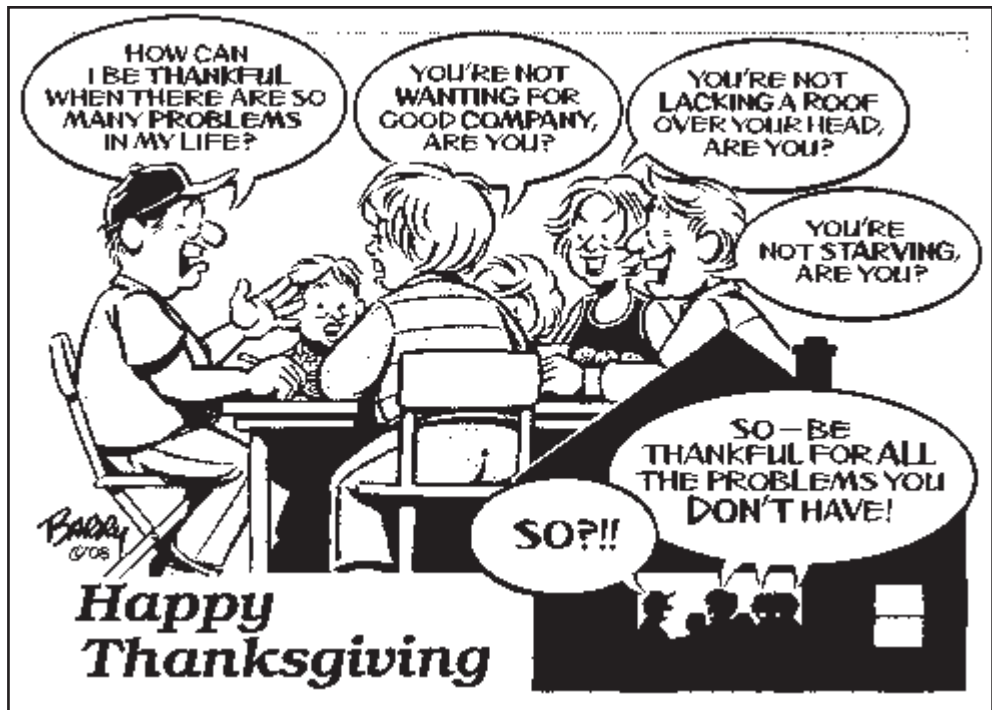
In an effort to help our readers understand what government meetings are happening when and where, the Comet will now print upcoming meetings on a weekly basis.

- Monday, Dec. 1**
 ✓ Carroll County Drainage Board: 8:30 a.m.
 ✓ Flora Town Council: 6 p.m.
 ✓ Carroll County Commissioners: 9 a.m.
 ✓ Delphi Board of Works: 6:30 p.m.
 ✓ Delphi City Council: 7 p.m.
 ✓ Carroll School Board: 7:30 p.m.

Public Notices appearing in this issue of the Comet:

- Sheriff Sale-Spray6B
- Serv. by Pub.-McLeland .6B
- Hwy. Dept.-Bids6B
- Butcher Estate6B
- Sheriff's Sale-Edwards . .6B
- Sheriff's Sale-Baker . . .5B
- Sheriff's Sale-Macaluso .5B
- NOI-Killian6B
- NOI-Walton6B
- Camden-Addl. Approp . .6B
- Sheriff's Sale-Delk5B
- Comcast6B
- Sheriff's Sale-Ellars . . .5B
- Landes Estate6B
- Sheriff's Sale-Short . . .6B
- Hwy Claims6B
- County Claims5B
- Dan's Body Shop-Lien . .6B
- Co. Council-Hearing . . .5B
- DCSC-Prelim. Determ . . .5B
- DCSC-Addl Approp6B
- DCSC-Proposal6B

Questions concerning Indiana's Open Door and Public Access Laws may be directed to the state's public access office, at 1-800-228-6013.



Letters to the Editor

The Comet welcomes letters to the editor responding to articles and events in the news. They must include the author's name, address and telephone number. The letter writer's name and city/town will appear in the paper - no exceptions. Letters must be 400 words or less in length. Please send your letters to: editor@carrollcountycomet.com; Letters to the Editor, Comet, P.O. Box 26, Flora, IN 46929 or P.O. Box 179, Delphi, IN 46923; or fax 574-967-3384 or 765-564-2010. By submitting a letter or opinion article, the author grants the Comet the right to publish, distribute, archive or use the work in print, electronic, on-line or other format.

Clerk-treasurer, not a team player

I read with interest, the story in the *Comet* on Nov. 17 entitled "Time to Dig In - and Dig Out." Having been Delphi mayor from 2000 through 2007, prior to Randy Strasser, I feel like a response is proper.

The City of Delphi had undergone audits prior to the one reported in the newspaper. In the years prior to the 2007 audit, the same discrepancies had been noted and Janice Roe had been counseled about what her job entailed and how to correct these at the State Board of Accounts Exit Conference which is conducted with the mayor and the president of the City Council.

Interestingly enough, the 2006 Exit Conference, which was conducted in 2007, Ms. Roe originally did the Exit Conference with just herself and the auditors and did not notify the mayor and the Council president until after the Exit Conference. When Ms. Roe was asked about the audit, she reported "everything went well."

When a complaint was lodged with the State Board of Accounts about the Exit Conference not including the mayor and Council president, another Exit Conference was scheduled. At this conference it was learned that "everything was not well."

If you look at the copy of the letter that was written in response to the 2006 audit, you can see these discrepancies have been discussed on many occasions with Ms. Roe. Visit www.in.gov/sboa/resources/reports/audit/Default.aspx to see a copy of the report.

In addition, Ms. Roe had informed the State Board of Accounts in 2006 that department heads had not pre-

pared the GASB34 reports involving inventory of city property. She had been shown these reports and instructed on how to access them prior to the Audit.

It should also be noted that Ms. Roe had not been filing liens for all the additional cleaning of yards and weeds that property owners were not taking care of and had to be cleaned by city employees. The statements were being prepared and submitted to her office as required, with no action being taken by her as required by law.

She had been personally instructed by me and other employees on what forms to use and how to fill them out in relationship to filing liens.

Ms. Roe lightly infers in her statements that since she was not doing any postings herself that possibly her office staff was to blame.

During my eight years as mayor I found the office staff in the clerk's office to be well versed, professional, and courteous to everyone they came in contact with.

I think it is interesting that since the *Comet* has published the report about the last audit that Ms. Roe is going to "take this job very seriously." I question why she never took it serious in the past when so many people tried to help her.

It's my opinion that since Ms. Roe has been city clerk/treasurer she has never worked as part of the "city team," but rather against it creating problems for employees that were unnecessary. That was my experience with her and I wonder if the current mayor may not be experiencing the same.

Lee W. Hoard,
Former Delphi Mayor
Former Carroll Co. sheriff

Township government is needed

I am writing in regard to the article on the Kernan-Shepard report, and comments attributed to Senator Brandt Hershman. I believe that Senator Hershman in general has done a good job, but this is just another example as to how out of touch with the real world

our representatives are.

Senator Hershman states that if township government was abolished that services would remain intact. As township trustee I get many calls for township assistance after normal office hours and on weekends. If those needing help are working, they may not be available to contact the trustee, or to meet during normal office hours without losing even more precious income. What happens to the lady who calls crying on Saturday afternoon saying that she is behind on her rent, and her landlord was just there telling her if she doesn't have some money by Monday she must be out by Monday morning? I doubt that anyone else is available after hours to see her.

I also get referrals from the other assistance offices who can't give help due to some technicality. Where do they go?

He also states that township funds are used to support libraries. That may be true in some cases, but if Jefferson Township residents would check their recent tax statements they will see a township tax rate of .000308 and a separate library tax rate of .001108.

When have you ever seen a larger more remote government be more responsible for using your tax dollars or providing better common sense services?

Harold Erdmann
Jefferson Township Trustee

Concerned about Kernan-Shepard Report

There is a lot Carroll County residents should know and understand about the Kernan-Shepard report on Streamlining Local Government in Indiana.

The recommendations in this report may very well become law and go into effect by Jan. 1, 2011.

I feel the article in last week's *Carroll County Comet* would make you think the Kernan-Shepard report was concerning township trustees only and there is so much

more that you need to be aware of. I feel the public should try to understand what this would mean to each and every one of us.

According to the report, when the recommendations become Indiana law, there will be 11,000 less elected officials and 2,700 less government units in Indiana.

All these responsibilities will be given to one elected chief executive (per county) to be responsible and oversee. They will be able to appoint whom ever they choose to delegate different duties to, but the "power" would be to one person and an expanded county council to be accountable for EVERYTHING in the county.

All of our taxes and debt would be determined by the two entities.

With the size of Carroll County many of these changes would directly affect us.

In the Kernan-Shepard report there are 27 recommendations to change in our local government here in Indiana. A few that I feel are significant are:

- The Chief Executive Officer will replace the three county commissioners;
- The county offices of auditor, treasurer, recorder, assessor, surveyor, sheriff, and coroner will be appointed, instead of elected;
- School corporations with less than 2,000 students will be consolidated corporations within the district. (Carroll and Delphi school corporations fall into this category);
- All township trustees and advisory board responsibilities will be given to the County Chief Executive Officer. Some of the major roles of trustees include overseeing the township fire department, parks, cemeteries, and public assistance; and
- The County Chief Executive Officer will be allowed to redistrict our fire and EMS departments.
- Libraries systems will be redistricted by county.

Some or all of the recom-
Continued next page