“WHAT’S PAST IS PROLOGUE”
Three Small Towns & Their Common Bond--City Manager Rebecca Davidson

JOHN DAVIES

NOTE: In preparing this article about Moab's city manager Rebecca Davidson, the Moab City Council's actions re: Ms. Davidson and the subsequent "restructuring" of Moab government, The Zephyr sought information from a variety of sources. We filed Freedom of Information Act requests, via the Wyoming Sunshine Laws, with the City of Kemmerer, Wyoming and the Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigation. We filed a Government Records Access request (GRAMA) with the City of Moab, and we conducted interviews with numerous people personally involved in the issues raised here. We also contacted reporter Trevor Hughes, now of USA Today, who wrote a comprehensive article about the current Moab City manager's tenure as city manager in Tinnuth, Colorado.

On January 11, we sent 15 questions to city manager Rebecca Davidson, in an effort to "clarify and resolve" issues raised in this article. She did not respond (Those questions are available to the reader elsewhere in this issue). Finally, we contacted the Moab City Attorney, Chris McAnany, to seek clarification on the process used to fulfill our GRAMA request with Moab City. His January 24 response, which we noted was, "in lieu of any further response from Ms. Davidson," is included elsewhere in this issue, and excerpted later in this article. Finally, we offer the City of Moab the opportunity to reply. But please note that all correspondence with this publication will be regarded as 'on the record'...JS

SEPTEMBER 23, 2015

Autumn had arrived earlier in the week, but it still promised to be another hot day in Moab, Utah on the morning of September 23, 2015. The Weather Channel called for a high near 90 degrees, and lots of sunshine, as longtime Moabite Ken Davey made his way to the city offices on Center Street.

Davey was a familiar face at City Hall and throughout Moab; he and his wife Julie Fox came to Moab in the late 1980s, not long after the Atlas Mill closed and Moab's economy approached near-collapse. A quarter of Moab's homes sat vacant in those days, as many locals wondered if the town would just dry up and blow away.

Ken and Julie were, in many ways, some of the first 'New Moabites' to arrive in town. Julie worked for AMTRAk and kept that job for years, until she and Ken had a child in the early '90s. Later Julie started the Ellectica Cafe' in Moab which still flourishes among the bigger chains restaurants and eateries.

In the beginning, Ken found work where he could get it; he became known for his talents as a writer, and eventually did reporting stints for all of the local media (including The Z) and later became the news director for Channel 6 television. In the 1990s Ken Davey was one of the town's most familiar faces.

Davey was known for his intelligence and his self-deprecating wit, though even he acknowledged it could be a tad acerbic at times. For better or worse, Ken especially gained a reputation for his candor—he could be more 'frank and earnest' than some people preferred—and could easily play the role of Devil's Advocate from time to time.

But please note that all correspondence with this publication will be regarded as 'on the record'...JS

On her desk was a document which she pushed across the table for him to examine. She explained that if he refused to sign it, he'd be eligible for what amounted to a pitance in severance pay; if he agreed to its terms, he'd receive an amount slightly more, enough perhaps to sustain him and his family for a couple months. Davidson said she'd give him some time to decide and suggested he talk to a lawyer. The conversation was over.

Stenta then escorted Davey back to his office, where he called Julie to give her the news. Stenta stood outside the door while he made the call, then re-entered his office while Davey cleared out his desk of personal items and turned over his city cell phone, keys, and computer password. It took about 15 minutes.

Stenta then escorted him to the back door. Less than half an hour after he learned he was about to become unemployed, Ken Davey walked out of Moab City Hall for the last time.

When he got home, Davey showed the document to Julie and explained the severance options. The paper also included what Davidson called a, 'non-disparagement agreement.' It stated:

"Employee and City hereby mutually agree not to make disparaging or defamatory comments or statements about one another, or any person or entity associated or affiliated with City, following the execution of this agreement."

Ken Davey, at 62 years of age and unemployed, in a community already struggling with high unemployment and shockingly low wages, realized that he was in no position financially to hire a lawyer and contest the terms of the agreement. He signed the document and returned it to the City of Moab.

Unknown to Ken at the time, the same fate was falling on fellow city employee, 'community development director' David Olsen. Olsen had been with the City of Moab for 25 years. Like Davey, Olsen was called from his desk, advised of the 'restructuring' and told to vacate his office and the building. He was shown a document, including the 'non-disparagement' clause. If he signed the document, the city would pay Olsen 10 weeks severance; if he refused to sign, a small fraction of that amount. An attorney on Olsen's behalf later sent a letter to the city, asking for an increase, based on Olsen's quarter century of service to the City of Moab, but the request was flatly denied.

Just months earlier, Olsen had bought a new home for his family and put his old home up for sale. A bank loan for a balloon payment on the new home was approved, based on his income with the city, on the same day he was dismissed. The loan was canceled. Through the decades, Olsen rarely dabbled in politics, but showed a passion and loyalty to his work and to the citizens of Moab that was unmatched. Not everyone agreed with Olsen's vision for Moab's future, but no one could question his integrity, his decency, or his commitment to the community. One co-worker called Olsen the most dedicated worker he'd ever met.

Other than a couple of unavoidable surgeries, Olsen never once called in sick in 25 1/2 years. That's dedication.

And yet, when Olsen first came to Moab, his real claim to fame was via his dog. "Bai-

lery" was a remarkable black lab who possessed the unique ability (for a canine) to climb trees. It was a common sight in the early 90s to see Davey and Bailey at the city park with his pooch precariously clinging to a tree limb, high above. Bailey's legend reached an end immediately when Olsen announced that he was called to Richfield, Utah to take over as the city manager for the city of Richfield.
all the way to the East Coast and New York City, to the Ed Sullivan Theater where Bailey displayed his special talents on a special edition of "Stupid Pet Tricks" on "Late Night, with David Letterman." The two Daves stood by a very tall fence, created just for the display. His special talents were on show again on "Late Night, with David Letterman." The two Daves stood by a very tall fence, created just for the display. Bailey's special talents were on show again on "Late Night, with David Letterman." The two Daves stood by a very tall fence, created just for the display. Bailey's special talents were on show again on "Late Night, with David Letterman." The two Daves stood by a very tall fence, created just for the display. Bailey's special talents were on show again on "Late Night, with David Letterman." The two Daves stood by a very tall fence, created just for the display. Bailey's special talents were on show again on "Late Night, with David Letterman." The two Daves stood by a very tall fence, created just for the display. Bailey's special talents were on show again on "Late Night, with David Letterman." The two Daves stood by a very tall fence, created just for the display. Bailey's special talents were on show again on "Late Night, with David Letterman." The two Daves stood by a very tall fence, created just for the display. Bailey's special talents were on show again on "Late Night, with David Letterman." The two Daves stood by a very tall fence, created just for the display. Bailey's special talents were on show again on "Late Night, with David Letterman." The two Daves stood by a very tall fence, created just for the display. Bailey's special talents were on show again on "Late Night, with David Letterman." The two Daves stood by a very tall fence, created just for the display. Bailey's special talents were on show again on "Late Night, with David Letterman." The two Daves stood by a very tall fence, created just for the display. Bailey's special talents were on show again on "Late Night, with David Letterman." The two Daves stood by a very tall fence, created just for the display. Bailey's special talents were on show again on "Late Night, with David Letterman." The two Daves stood By a very tall fence, created just for the display. Bailey's special talents were on show again on "Late Night, with David Letterman."