



It's 5 O'Clock on Main Street

Just Laugh Out Loud - A True, Big, Out-Loud Belly Laugh!

I recently opened an email and read about a city clerk who was frustrated at her community. She just needed to know she wasn't alone. Every clerk needs to know that she isn't alone. Now, I probably shouldn't laugh, but I just couldn't help myself. My friends, you do have to admit, the things that some of our citizens become concerned about will either draw you to bring out your 12-gauge or sit you down to a true belly laugh. (FYI - choose the belly laugh – it feels good and you don't have to later explain the "incident" to your council – just sayin' . . .)

I sometimes imagine town folk sitting in front of their windows, pen and paper in hand, recording all the "scuddle-butt" in the neighborhood. Then they call "Hey, I don't want to cause trouble but I just thought you should know . . ." Why? Why do I need to know that fireworks were shot off after dark on the 4th of July? Loud fireworks! (Are there quiet ones? Aren't they supposed to be shot off after dark so you can see them? It is the 4th, okay? Are they calling and reporting me? I shot fireworks. Oh my!

What does the city ordinance say? Regroup, trust your gut and see the FYI note above). One day someone is going to call me claiming the neighbor looked at them, got water on their grass or didn't have their trash out by 7:30 a.m. It seems like kindergarten at times. That is okay, just as long as there is chocolate milk and naptime. (OOOOhhhh, does anyone have an ordinance for naptime?)

Well, I can't please everyone, and I can't fix everything. That is a reality

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that seems to carpet my office, paint my walls. It's not intrusive, but it's permanent. I realize I need to make a healthy adjustment to that part of being a city clerk. Soon. The acceptance of that truth makes me feel uneasy (or even wrong) at times in our small community. I don't know why I have the idea that it should be easier to keep neighbors content in close communities. Possibly, it is actually more difficult . . .! But I am a city clerk. I have a huge heart, thick skin. I will close my eyes at night knowing I am diligent and fair. (And then dream about being the village idiot!!)

It has now been over a year – A FULL YEAR— since I started at City Hall! The time has absolutely dissipated like steam from my tea kettle. I can see why clerks unexpectedly put in 20+ years in one place. You have to understand – "Clerk-time" is different than real time. No, really, it is. You open up, turn on your computer, settle in and KABOOM – it's noon – so you come back at 1 p.m., determined to get more done and BAM – it's 5 p.m.! Never have I worked at a job where time glided by

silently, smoothly – yet at such speed (okay, smoothly might not be the right adjective here). I like it! Anyway I think I do. At this time warp I will be 80 by December, be bald from all the hats I wear, have a twitch from changing tasks so often and no butt left from all the . . . oh, you know why.

All in all, I love what I do. I am a couple blocks from home and alone in the office. I have pretty good facilities, a bigger desk is on my wish list, but quite honestly, I shouldn't complain. I initially wrote, "I can't complain!" Oh, but I can, and have! I try very hard to keep everything in proper perspective but I get overwhelmed. It is my own doing. I have a need to do my job well. A blend of efficiency and effectiveness. But alas, this is city government. Progress, yes. Just at a snail's pace. That just strangles my patience. I found myself standing at the counter one day speaking to no one (the building was empty, I hope) and asking, loudly "Can't anyone just give me an answer – yes or no – not a S.A. question – this isn't about arming foreign rebels. Do we charge a fee? YES OR NO? – just answer the question, okay?"

In the aftermath, I felt a bit juvenile and was more than thankful no one heard me (I hope). But it felt good. At times, that is the destination – a moment – to feel better – even at the price of false hope – maybe the building wasn't empty and someone did hear me. Eh... I will just stick with "I hope."

Speaking of feeling better. We live in a beautiful state! We took off on our Harleys in early spring and rode through many of the little towns that I often see across the city clerks' list-serv. We managed an 800-mile trek through southeastern Kansas. I look onto each little highway oasis differently now that I am a city clerk. I notice the approach, where Main Street is, the town signage, streetlamps, the grooming of city hall – so many, many things. What did I see before? Only, the availability of a gas station and a restroom! Well, and a bag of peanuts. Many Kansas clerks should pat

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themselves on the back. You have done so well at being visually capturing, even seductive. Then you have followed that up with an unspoken "Come on in" that cannot be dismissed. Vast landscape, scenery and cattle trucks all look (and smell) different from the seat of a motorcycle. It's an essence you miss traveling in a car with air conditioning and the windows up, radio on. It cannot be explained, only experienced (kinda like being a city clerk, huh?).

I get a little melancholy and think back to when I first started. I do hope to stay in the pool and keep swimming. Fueled by the hope that our town team

will be doing more laps and fewer back flips and cannonballs. Productive, efficient processes that lead to municipal growth and fiscal stability. (Sounds like the sell-line for a mandatory corporate seminar in Cleveland) Yikes! Maybe we will just shoot for balance . . . Yah! Balance! Especially during the back-flips.

Interesting what happens when you put things to print. Since last visiting with all of you, I re-organized my keys! That's silly, but true. Not only are they in order, but in three different collections that are in turn on one key ring! Actually, I have tried to organize all the city keys – HA - enough said.

BOOM - BAM - time to crossover - it is 5 o'clock on Main Street. I am going to the doctor. I seem to have developed a twitch . . .

Rhonda Meyerhoff is city clerk in Clifton, KS. Prior to moving to Clifton, she did a variety of work including serving as a medical transcriptionist, CPA assistant, rural mail carrier, a paramedic, bookkeeper and more.



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