

The Burton Bulletin

“The Best Kept Secret in Texas”

February 2026



HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!

The Burton Bulletin is a monthly publication
For the Burton Texas area.

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Life and Times of Pete Horn Part 3

Water Filters

In support of David's thought that some folks might find my life's journey of interest, I'm writing another episode. I hope you find it worth the read.

In 1992, I was in Tatarstan, rebuilding of some old power plants that were clearly reverse-engineered Westinghouse units from the mid-20th century. The contract would ultimately bankrupt me personally, yet in 1992 we were trying to do what good we could to help the Tatars develop simple technologies to improve conditions after 75 years of dictatorship and Soviet rule. I was fortunate to be reporting to the Deputy Prime Minister and doubly fortunate that he and the Prime Minister were both technically minded and open to affordable solutions to infrastructure and quality-of-life issues. Had they not been, I suspect I would not be writing this today.

I noticed the water quality at the hotel I stayed at was not good by U.S. standards. Generally, it was brown in color, sometimes murky, and sometimes had a strong odor. While I was told not to take samples or test them, some of the attributes were easy to see and smell. So, one of my many meals with my Tatar client, I told him I thought I could design a water filter that could be manufactured in Tatarstan to improve the delivered water quality. The technical aspects seemed easy enough; some of the political aspects were a bit hairy. The biggest political issue was that if the government endorsed or participated in the production and distribution of water filters, it would be admitting that there was something wrong with the existing system. This was the biggest issue with moving forward. Fortunately I received approval to build two prototypes, one for the Tatar Engineers to test and inspect, and one to return with me to the USA so I could continue development from my home in Maine.

I sat with my assigned Tatar partner, and from my sketches we determined the functional parameters and proposed design details that would allow local manufacture. We spent time reviewing manufacturing facilities near Kazan and ultimately chose the Sukoi Factory for its available materials and machining capacity. I modified the design to enable fabrication from existing tubing stock, "O" rings, and valves (from a then still Sukoi 29 manufacturing line, and no, I wasn't allowed access to the planes), with a local engineer designing an interface between our filter and the local water system. We created a company, "TATUSA," and obtained permission to do a "sample run." After working with the local machinists, the design was finalized. My Tatar partner had boxes, instructions, and the device's "Passport" approved by the government, and an initial 100 (which became 500) were ordered to be produced. Prior to my next trip to Kazan, I shipped a case of filter elements, manufactured in New Hampshire, to the specification I interpreted as necessary (no water samples allowed).

Some weeks later, I returned to Kazan to assess progress and assist with installing units in government-designated locations. Interestingly, the first unit was installed in the lunch kitchen at the Sukoi factory, and the next dozen or so were installed in the homes of high government officials. While the filters were being manufactured, I went back to working on power plant restoration. A week or so later, I was told to attend a meeting at the Sukoi factory to discuss the results of the first installed

units. Since everyone around me was in good spirit, and I knew that the system would work if properly installed, I was expecting a good meeting and a nice meal as well. We arrived at the factory and I was taken to the General Director's big ornate office on the mezzanine level. There I saw a few filters, some units in boxes, and a number of obviously used filter elements along with locally made counterparts.

The first thing the General Director said (through translators) was that we had to have some tea (a tradition). Some ladies brought us the usual samovar, with plates of dried apricots, five-star cognac, caviar, crackers, and some finger food. The General Director poured my cup of tea, adding a few apricots and some cognac, while one of the ladies fixed his cup. We sat and drank tea while a dozen or so folks were our audience, and when directed, gave some aspect of their findings using the filters. It was all very upbeat, as a few issues were raised, which were easily resolved. This meeting lasted an hour or so, then the ladies set out a simple meal of soup, fruit, bread, and meat platters (I learned long ago to just eat, without knowing for sure what was being served).

Discussions continued over the meal, and a wheeled cart was brought in with what appeared to be duplicate dishes of soup and sauces. At this point, I was asked how I liked the flavor of the tea, the soup, and the sauces. The questions had a very serious tone, and I was very cautious in my answer. The tea tasted good, as did the soup and sauces, but there was something distinctly different between the servings. That was when the General Director poured two glasses of water, one clear and the other a traditional taint of brown. He explained that since the filters were installed, everyone had been complimenting the kitchen on the flavors produced using the filtered water. When the bypass valve was turned to discharge unfiltered water, there were many complaints. Based on the politics, I expected my next journey was likely to be falling off the mezzanine. However, much to my surprise, the General Director shook my hand and hugged me, kissing me on both cheeks (a good thing in their culture). He then motioned to the big double doors leading to the mezzanine overlooking the manufacturing area to be opened, and the entire entourage stepped out onto the balcony.

What happened next stunned me and nearly brought tears to my eyes. As I stepped forward to the railing, with the General Director on one side and the Deputy Prime Minister on the other, I saw folks turn off their machines and rise in a standing ovation... nearly 3000 people, I'm told. As this was happening, I saw a group of people with cameras and ladies with flowers walking toward us. Soon folks were cheering. I was trying to hold dozens of flowers (my translator and security guy helping a lot) and standing there, this Public School Graduate, trying to answer reporters' questions (in English). It was a moment I won't forget, though the details may fade. I was so humbled, so honored, and so surprised that I was at a loss for words, but I answered what I could and, in my best Tatar and Russian, thanked the workers for this amazing reception.

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(Continue from Page 2 – Water Filters)

What I didn't realize until later was that most of these folks had been without work since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and that building these water filters gave them jobs and revenue. It felt good to see the water quality improve over the next few years. It was nice when I was in the city to have folks approach me and thank me for working with local folks to create this industry that grew to include competitive designs from India, China, and Europe... but only TATUSA was manufactured in Kazan, Tatarstan, Russia.

I think back on those days, especially in light of the current situation, and I wonder whether they developed the design further or whether changing politics killed the effort. I'll never know because there isn't much news from Russia in the US media, and the Tatars are not on Putin's favorites list as a people (they disagree about the war, as I understand it). It was good to help folks to safer water, and it was nice to be listened to.... which rarely happens anymore?

Article by Pete Horn

If you stay calm while all around you is chaos, then you probably haven't completely understood the problem.

A positive attitude may not solve all your problems, but it will annoy enough people to make it worth the effort.

Experience is what you get when you didn't get what you wanted.

It's not how good your work is, it's how you explain it.

City Election – May 2, 2026

There will be three city council seats up for election on May 2, 2026. Councilmember Position #2, currently held by Mrs. Tommie Gilmon, Councilmember #3, currently held by Mr. Jeff Eckhardt and Councilmember #5, currently held by Mrs. Macy Tidwell.

The last day to file an application to be placed on the ballot is February 12, 2026. Hours of operation of Burton City Hall is Monday thru Thursday from 9am to 3pm.

To see if you qualify to run for a position, you can contact city hall at 979-289-3402 or email the city secretary at: burtonsecr@cityofburton-tx.gov. Burton City Hall is located at 12200 E. Mulberry St./Spur 125, Burton Texas 77835.

Burton Bridge Ministry Meals

Date	Menu	Host – Church
Feb 6	Beef Stew, Salad & Cornbread	Rheburg Lutheran
Feb 13	Lasagna, Salad & Bread	Greenvine Baptist
Feb 20	Cowboy Spaghetti Green Beans	St. John's UCC
Feb 27	Red Beans Rice, Slaw	Zionsville Lutheran

Meals Served at St John's UCC at 516 N. Colorado St. at 12pm on Fridays.

If you're 55+ and have health issues that keep you homebound, you can have your meal delivered by calling Bridge Ministry at 979-337-3370. Delivery area is limited to Burton.

**Original Bethany Church Building
McClellan Settlement
Northwest Washington County, TX
(1877-1913)**



Oral and written history tells that it was a sunny early spring day in 1876, when seven people met in a schoolhouse at the McClellan settlement northeast of Burton, Texas, to form a church. On March 26 of the same year, a few pioneer families of Washington County met for their first worship service. These families signed a covenant that they would meet regularly on Sundays for prayer, singing hymns, observing the Lord's Supper, preaching, teaching, reading scriptures and fellowship, as they read in Acts 2:42-47. The Lord added to their numbers as evidenced in written records. A list of earliest members contains names to which many local folks today can claim kinship. Many members were added to the fellowship; and by April 1877, a wood frame church building was completed on land donated to the church by the McClellan/McCausland family. Baptisms were held at nearby Kerr Creek, White Bluff, or Bauer's Falls where creeks were deep enough for immersion. In the earliest days, it is told that the Elders faithfully prepared the bread and wine for worship each Sunday morning. Many large pioneer families traveled by buggy or wagon to worship and fellowship at this country church. Records and oral history also tell us that even if they had no preacher, members still met to break bread, sing hymns and recite scripture. Often a circuit-riding preacher would come by and deliver a sermon, and if not, the Elders led the congregation with teaching from the Word of God. Families would remain for the day to share a meal and fellowship, returning home after dark in their wagons. Visiting preachers were often paid with a chicken, or a bag of flour, a dozen eggs, or just given a bed for the night. Rocks forming the foundation of the original Bethany Church on Christian Cemetery Road were left in place for many years, and are now grace cemetery grounds. A "Remembrance Stone Monument" is now in place at the end of the new chapel building, along with a monument placed on the 100th anniversary of the church founding in 1976, simultaneous to the Bicentennial Celebration of the USA.

Bethany Church is blessed to have the heritage of many strong Christian men and women, some of whom are buried nearby. Their progeny are blessed to have a strong foundation of faith handed down through the ages. Many of them gather every Good Friday, and celebrate the Lord Jesus Christ's death on

the cross, and the joy they have as believers for His unspeakable gift....UNTIL HE COMES.

**W. Burton Street, Burton, Texas
(On a hill overlooking Indian Creek)
"First Christian Church" 1913-1957)**



By the late 1800's the railroad had come through this area and the town of Burton had developed into the area's commerce center. Many families moved to Burton, and the population near Bethany Church declined. In 1913, the Bethany church building was moved on wheels drawn by mules to a hill above Indian Creek in Burton. It was remodeled and expanded into this beautiful iconic structure. The congregation joined the "Disciples of Christ" and it was renamed "First Christian Church" To those who remember, it was a place where the sound of the old church bell, and the glorious old hymns such as "There is Power in the Blood", "Shall We Gather at the River", "Blest Be the Ties That Bind" and "The Church in the Wildwood" were sung loudly and joyfully by "the old folks" (many who had attended meetings in the little church on Christian Cemetery Road as children)! There was weekly communion, the gospel of Jesus Christ was always preached and Bible taught to everyone, sometimes by a pastor, often by an itinerant preacher. Sid Stevenson became pastor while the church was located on W. Burton Street.

The youngsters always had a Sunday School Class that met on one side of the room while the Adult Class met across the aisle. Those who can remember this building and all it stands for are blessed beyond measure. Many more details and pictures of Bethany's wonderful history are found in a scrapbook that has been added to through the years, and treasured by Bethany today.

The congregation, after moving the church to Burton, determined not to abandon the cemetery, continued the practice of meeting at the cemetery every Good Friday for cleanup and maintenance, celebrating the day with a congregational picnic afterward the cleanup was complete. This tradition has continued through the years to this day. Often, more than 300 people gather at the annual Good Friday Picnic to enjoy a sumptuous picnic lunch, a short message celebrating the Resurrection, and enjoy watching the children play games and hunt eggs! We at Bethany hope this wonderful time of fellowship will continue. **(Continue on Page 5)**

(Continue from Page 4 – History of Bethany Church)
**307 N. Brazos Street
Burton, Texas
“First Christian Church”
(1958-2004)**

Sid Stevenson served as pastor of First Christian Church for over 40 years with his wife, Mary Ruth Weeren Stevenson, hometown Burton girl. Sid was a Marine Veteran of the Pacific Front in WWII, and a graduate of Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University. He also served for many years as the Superintendent of Schools in Burton and was very active in the Burton community as well.

Stevenson began his ministry in the beautiful old church building overlooking Indian Creek. He was instrumental in the congregation joining the “Disciples of Christ” denomination, in which it remained active for many years. Sid Stevenson pastored the church when many of its regular members were elderly people who had spent their childhood worshipping at the little church on the MacClellan Settlement on Christian Cemetery Road, where it had been founded. During those years, one of the most sung hymns, beloved by these elderly folks was “The Church in the Wildwood” also known as “The Little Brown Church in the Vale”. It was so obvious in their joy and delight in singing this song that they treasured their childhood memories of day long Sunday church meetings in the oldest church building. In 1957, Stevenson led “First Christian Church’s congregation in disassembling the old church building, and completing the church building pictured here. It was built with many of the timbers taken from the old



church as well as a few remnants of Burton’s old hospital building which stood exactly where the church building is now. Burton’s Dr. Southern lived next door to 307 Brazos Street in Burton adjacent to the clinic he operated for many years, and donated 7 building lots including the hospital lot to “First Christian Church”. The church remained at that location beginning in 1958. Stevenson died in June, 1992, leaving the “First Christian Church” without a pastor, and the Elders took over leadership. These men, Adoue Foehner, Bob Dement and John Stanley were determined that this church would be found faithfully serving.

**“Bethany Church”
307 Brazos Street, Burton, TX
(Name changed in 2004)
(2004-2021)**

After Stevenson’s death in 1992 the “First Christian Church Elders met, prayed about the matter, and were unanimous in their decision to call Robert Hofmann to serve as teaching Elder/Pastor/Teacher. Bob had preached at the church most summers off and on from 1965 through Sid Stevenson’s final illness in 1992. Having moved his family here from Connecticut in 1991, and having served off and on at the church, Bob joyfully accepted the Lord’s call to this church. He began his regular teaching ministry at the church in July, 1992. One of the most important efforts engaged in under Hofmann was the formation of a ministry named “Piece Way”, which became very active in providing missing amenities in rural homes, such as running water and septic systems. It was a great blessing to share the cost of such needs with the recipients, much like the practices of “Habitat for Humanity”. As always, the church held a weekly Adult Sunday School Class and offered a class to children when they were in attendance. Hofmann represented the church in the founding of the very successful local “Bridge Ministries”, gathering support of all local churches in an outreach to the needy community with food pantry and clothes closet offerings. In January, 2004, the members of “First Christian Church” voted unanimously to withdraw membership from the “Disciples of Christ”, and revert to its original, name, “Bethany Church. Bob Hofmann has been consistent for over 30 years by continuing in the original “covenant” of celebrating Lord’s Supper each Sunday, in worship, singing of hymns, reading of Scriptures and teaching from the Word of God. As taught in the Scriptures, Hofmann holds forth that the purpose of the “local church” is to edify and encourage its members to a closer relationship with the Lord while serving one another and the community. Bethany supports many diverse local, national, and international ministries under Bob Hofmann’s leadership. In recent years Bethany has become a unique close-knit fellowship of born-again believers as a local arm of the Body of Christ in northwest Washington County, serving one another and the community.

Bethany Church’s creed: The Bible Only; Only the Bible.”
In 2021, Bethany members agreed to sell the Brazos Street building to Bridge Ministries of Burton, and to embark on the exciting endeavor of moving the church back to its original location at 8955 Christian Cemetery Road,. The small body of dedicated believers began meeting in homes after selling its Burton property to Bridge Ministries of Burton, while planning to build a new chapel. The annual Good Friday celebration continued as always. The stated purpose of moving is to carry on the work of the Lord, always following the practices of the earliest Bethany congregation, to “meet regularly on Sundays for prayer, singing hymns, observing the Lord’s Supper, preaching, teaching, reading scriptures and fellowship, as we read in Acts 2:42-47.

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(Continue from Page 5 – History of Bethany Church)

8955 Christian Cemetery Road Burton, Texas

(On the site of the original Bethany Church built 1877)
Completed by the grace of God, April, 2023

Under the leadership; of Bethany’s Elders and the architectural expertise of Ray Pinkerton, this beautiful chapel was begun in early 2021, and completed in the spring of 2023. It sits on the exact location of Bethany’s first building, and the original bell will be ringing out each Sunday as it was always was so long ago, announcing that worship was beginning. The church celebrated a “Month of Sundays” to announce its completion:

Bethany met on March 26, 2023 to celebrate its 147th “birthday”. It was a commemorative service with the telling of the church’s unique history to Marley and Bailen Kocurek, children who are sixth generation progeny of John Hugh Stanley, one of Bethany’s earliest members. A plaque was given to them showing their connection to the history of Bethany.

On Easter Sunday, April 22, 2023 Bethany held its first Resurrection Day service in the new chapel building.

On Sunday, April 30, 2023, the building entrances were anointed by Elders Bob Hofmann, Ray Pinkerton and Kenneth Owen. A glorious dedication ceremony was held which included Zion Hill Baptist Church choir, featuring Tiffany Garcia and Kristen Hinze singing Holy Ground” and “Sanctuary”!

The building was dedicated to the Lord’s work with a full congregation, challenging messages by Bob Hofmann and Rev. Marcus Snowden of Zion Hill, a presentation of a

beautiful stained-glass cross from Bridge Ministries of Burton, and a sumptuous meal afterward.

Finally, on May 7, 2023, Bethany hosted a joyous celebratory service for all the workers, contractors, and everyone who had any part in the completion of the chapel, with Ray Pinkerton presenting lapel cross pins to each contractor and worker.

Bethany Church now looks to the future, hoping to be a beacon in this community, a New Testament Church as it once was long ago, becoming a place where the community northeast of Burton recognizes that the Lord’s work is carried out, and Bethany’s creed is always upheld,

**“The Bible Only; Only the Bible”....
UNTIL HE COMES**



Rooster Talk

January 1, 2026 has been a beautiful day for reflection, a bit chilly, but blossomed into a beautiful sunny day. The crops that we are wintering over outside are looking healthy, the next wave of veggies is maturing in the grow room, and we are enjoying the serenity of this first day of the new year. I feel like I'm living the pages of some of my favorite books.

Thoreau gave me imagery in Walden Pond, and The Maine Woods, while shades of Rand and Orwell grace the media and print news throughout the world. We are living through times which are challenging individual freedom and tearing at our social fabric. Regardless of the socio-political environment, we go forward every day to sustain ourselves and help those around us who are less fortunate. People do that, most do at least, without regard for what is in it for them, but rather what will serve to improve the general condition. In a very corrupt world, with very corrupt people, and a blindly corrupt government, the mass of humanity lives in the micro, taking care as best they can in their immediate world.

So, what can we do beyond our fingertips? I mean, what can we physically do? That is a tricky question, and the basis of many, many hours of discussion over delicious caffeine. I'll share some of my thoughts here, welcome you to do the same as an article, or a Letter to the Editor.

I am very concerned about the philosophies and actions of Russia, China, and the Caliphate. These three topics are existential in the effect they have on the planet and every living thing on it. I don't see Venezuela in this same light, mostly because I saw the country before Chavez took over and handed the ownership of the country to a bus driver named Maduro. The country and people will thrive, given the chance, once they have a government of the people.

My opinions are just that, my opinions, but they are based on millions of miles traveled, Continents visited, and cultures in which I lived and worked. I am not interested in being politically correct, and as the Editor can attest, at this point in my life I am not too shy. As I write this, I can hear (in my mind) my wife coaching me on the unwritten social rules I tend to bruise against from time to time. AND, she is right 99.9% of the time, maybe 100%.

RUSSIA

Honestly, Russia scares me the most. Putin is struggling to hold his country together because of the effects of the war he started when he occupied Crimea (with ZERO political resistance from the world, and nothing at all from the USA). He waltzed into another sovereign country and started changing things to his liking (sounds familiar). After Crimea went exactly as he wanted, he wanted more and started open aggression, destruction, and murder of Ukraine. This didn't go as planned. Folks will fight you to the death over their bowl of rice, and that's what happened. The world woke up and discovered that THEIR bowl of rice depended on what happens in Ukraine. Energy products, food products, and logistics were at risk and if they did nothing Russia would own them.

So, here we are. The world sees Putin as a contemporary version of Hitler, taking land and resources as he pleases. But the Ukrainians held on to their rice bowl and started taking the same from Russia. Putin started threatening nuclear war, but the world sees the quality of Russia's equipment and strategy,

and the threat of nuclear war seems less dangerous. Bad approach. Putin is like a cornered 300-pound feral boar who knows he's cornered and isn't too pleased about it. Ukraine's retaliation has taken out energy stations (both thermal and electrical), fuel production and transportation, and has ended nearly all the revenue from these sources that the government uses to pad its pockets and fund the "military-industrial complex". The world, in general, has woken up, and even his old buddies are treating him like a 3-day-old fish. This is a huge problem, nearly as large as Putin's ego, and he is playing a zero-sum game. This all could go very, very wrong for human existence.

CHINA

There are so many levels of Chinese activity that I ponder. Nixon "opened China," and, like pulling the stopper out of an old clawfoot tub, all production, intellectual property, and the majority of supplies of medicine and manufactured goods went to China. The USA gave up its independence in the name of trade deals and cheap jeans. SMH. Massive trade into the USA, which no longer tied its money to physical gold (Nixon again), cost more than just jobs; it cost us our ability to produce all we needed, turned our money into "Fiat Currency", and largely eviscerated our strength and independence in the world.

The "One China" policy, which has been both supported and denied by multiple political entities worldwide, would erase Taiwan from the map. This is the Ukraine scenario all over again, with the added feature that Taiwan produces 90% of the world's computer chips. Yes, this could be an issue. Perhaps a greater issue is that the world believes Chinese propaganda about their strength and economy more than the folks who live in China and see the cracks in the façade. And this internal struggle is where the weakness lies. The Chinese expression for the products of this is "Tofu Dreg". Evidence includes bridges that collapse two months after being opened, multistory buildings that collapse or fall over, and cars and homes that are built by the tens of thousands only to be abandoned to rot. This is totally unlike Taiwan where quality is first rate in everything they do. The ethics and accomplishments of the island are philosophically those of old China, not the China warped by central control and rampant corruption.

Although China has nuclear capacity, destroying Taiwan is not in its best interest. The preferred option is a Hong Kong-style takeover, although military action is not ruled out. What concerns me most is that the people (who I completely support) of the island will not give up, and because Xi cannot afford to "lose face" he may make his move under the assumption that the world is watching Russia/Ukraine and he can get away with a (likely bloody) takeover. Scary.

CALIPHATE

This is a tough one for me on many levels, but let me try to stay objective. I have a very difficult time being supportive in any way of any group that sees acquiescence or death as the only required acceptable solutions.

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I have been friends with Muslims in my travels, in my work, and in my general relationships, but have never had a discussion about the absoluteness of the Islamic Caliphate, or the methodology of their actions. I know this gets framed as a religious discussion, but if there is a group of people, and part of that group decides that you must believe as they do, or die, I see this as a problem. I'm still coming to grips with the existential nature of this, but I feel that the McCarran-Walter Act should not have ended as it did in 1990; In my opinion, politics overrode actual conditions.

AI: The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, commonly known as the McCarran-Walter Act, was a significant piece of legislation that reformed U.S. immigration laws. It was enacted on June 27, 1952, and aimed to consolidate various immigration laws into a single framework.

Key Provisions

Quota System

National Origins Quota:

The Act maintained a quota system based on national origins, allowing 85% of visas to be allocated to individuals from northern and western Europe.

Minimum Quota: *Each country was assigned a minimum quota of 100 visas annually, including Asian nations, which had previously faced severe restrictions.*

Immigration Preferences

Preference System: *The Act introduced a preference system prioritizing immigrants with special skills and those with family ties to U.S. citizens.*

Family Reunification: *Spouses, minor children, and parents of U.S. citizens were exempt from numerical limits, promoting family reunification.*

Legislative History

Veto and Override: *President Harry Truman vetoed the Act, citing its discriminatory nature, but Congress overrode his veto with a two-thirds majority.*

Cold War Context: *The legislation was influenced by Cold War fears, with a focus on national security and the potential for communist infiltration.*

Impact

The McCarran-Walter Act marked a shift in U.S. immigration policy by ending racial restrictions on citizenship while still maintaining a quota system that favored certain nationalities. It laid the groundwork for future immigration reforms, although it faced criticism for its continued discrimination against specific groups.

There you have three things we occasionally discuss during our morning sessions, in one way or another (with my opinions). These are difficult topics beyond our control, yet they affect nearly everything. For most of us, the existential nature of war, of any source, is troubling, but the fact that it is out of our hands is particularly troubling. We all want the chance to defend our family, God, and country... to defend our rice bowl... But that ability may be so far beyond us that all we can do is live our best life and pray that sanity returns to the Earth.

I'm sure folks who haven't visited with us find it hard to believe we discuss such lofty subjects, but that's what happens when you get intelligent people in a room with caffeine.

Article by Pete Horn

TRY THAT IN A SMALL TOWN – A Series

Highlighting Burton Blessings

What's Great About Our Town: Representative Government Only Works When Voices Are Heard

By Ned Ross, contributing writer

What a night! On Tuesday, January 13th, Burton City Hall was filled to capacity by people wanting to voice opinions about the mayor's proposals. The total headcount is unclear because some people arrived and left due to the crowd, but at least 40 individuals attended. Why all the attention?

Mayor Buck included in the City Council agenda three major items. Two of the items were eligible, and we learned were intended, to be passed that evening. A noise ordinance and a contract for all kinds of city services provided by a remote vendor were expected to pass. The third item would be discussed in a workshop scheduled for after the council meeting to discuss another version of a "subdivision ordinance." A trifecta of ordinances was on deck that would change the town in ways that neither the mayor nor council understood before the meeting.

In short, the citizens who attended lit up the room with facts, experiences, financial realities, physics, and other information to prevent damaging city ordinances from passing.

First, a very poorly drafted noise ordinance was proposed that could have stifled and harassed local businesses and residents. Why does our quiet town need a noise ordinance at all? Seems that one resident complained to the city about a loud conversation that occurred at 2:30 am outside a business, but the resident did not request an ordinance. The mayor confirmed that this was the ONLY noise complaint she has received, but the ordinance was trotted out anyway. Thankfully, a number of people worked through the worst parts of it and made it more reasonable. Still, does our tiny, quiet town need an ordinance when a phone call will do?

Second, a unanimous city council voted to table an expensive and unnecessary contract involving a plethora of services. What services are being provided? If you build anything on your property – a shed, a carport, an addition, a new house, a chicken coop – you must request city approval and have a Fort Worth-based company review and approve your plans. Most fees for structures start at \$700 and go up with electric, water, HVAC and other items for them to look over. Oh, and the review occurs remotely; their presence in town is much more expensive. Never mind affordability.

The public can now fully review and comment on this service contract at a workshop on January 27th. To my knowledge, this was the first time two of the council members voted against the wishes of the mayor, and a LOT of people are glad they did. That's real progress in representation, and I thank them for it. The people spoke, and their representatives listened.

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A more important victory was also earned by citizens: the mayor could not ignore their demand for transparency. We ALL expect to have advance notice of changes to our local laws. And we ALL expect council to vote NO on any measure that has not been publicized and distributed to citizens weeks before a matter can be passed. Transparency is fundamental to trust in government.

I spent 25 years in governmental affairs calling on various governing bodies and understanding the processes. Prior to that quarter century I spent 8 years chairing a zoning and planning commission that was carefully guided by a city attorney. Every governmental body (federal, state, city, county) I have experience with (except Burton) requires new codes and laws to be made available in advance of public meetings. Only after proposed laws were available was a public meeting held where citizens can be heard. No measure can be passed at that meeting. A second meeting is then held to consider passage. For federal and state passage of laws, a much longer process is required involving bill readings, committee hearings, floor/chamber passage, then a repeat of that process in another chamber (in Texas, that is the House and Senate). Why can't local laws require an equal degree of transparency and opportunity for public feedback?

Without exposure to sunshine, governments have a long history of becoming corrupt. I spoke hurriedly but passionately at the council meeting about transparency. My proposal included the following:

Public distribution of ordinances, discussion at no less than 2 meetings, and 90 days of time before it can be voted out.

This was a truncated message due to time constraints. The process council should adopt is:

Distribution of ordinances no less than seven days prior to a workshop or roundtable discussion,

No less than two workshops/roundtables where the public can freely contribute to the discussion, and

At least 90 days of time from the date the public receives the ordinance until it can be called up in a council meeting and passed.

Sounds like a lot of time? Well, the city has survived for 150 years without it, so any imposition of new laws and restrictions should be fully, publicly vetted. Texas lawmaking is designed to kill proposals, not pass them. (<https://oercommons.org/courseware/lesson/108182/student/?section=10>)

Along these same lines, the mayor limits public input to 3 minutes at council meetings and only at the beginning of the meeting. See the problem? The public has not yet seen the ordinances being considered and is expected to comment on them. Providing sufficient detail for THREE ordinances in three minutes is difficult.

The process must change.

The council serves the people, not themselves and not the governmental unit. The people include those who have committed their own resources to investing in Burton. Owners of rental homes and businesses also have a voice in government. Without them, Burton is a collection of homes with no services and no "life."

I have high confidence that each of our council members have their best intentions for the city. They devote their time to the

council because they care. The public does not expect them to have expertise in every issue they face as councilmembers. They should have expert outside guidance on technical matters like the three issues discussed here. The mayor consults with outside counsel frequently and does not include council members in those discussions. That needs to happen, especially since taxpayers are footing the bill for tens of thousands of dollars for that expertise. I look forward to future workshops and meetings where open, candid, and expert feedback can be provided.

And that's what makes Burton great.

Burton City Hall Meeting

In a nearly 4 hour long standing room only meeting, the Burton City Council met January 13th. Citizens along with local business owners were concerned with a couple of the items on the agenda, mainly a noise ordinance and a proposed contract with AOKA Engineering, a Ft. Worth Company that offer services including, but not limited to, building plan review, building inspection, public work/civil plan and review inspection, fire protection plan review and inspection, ICC certified training services, facility assessments and code enforcement services and training.

After a very long discussion in regards to AOKA, there seem to be more questions than answers. It was unclear of what roles that this company will play in the enforcement of ordinances and how the company will enact on inspections and what fees will citizens or business owners may incur. The item was eventually tabled for further review.

The next topic on the agenda was a noise ordinance. Business owners, especially ones having music venues, were concerned about how it would affect their business. Originally the maximum decibel was to be 75 decibels after 11pm but was changed to 85 decibels from the property line. The motion passed.

The Council also passed a resolution, authorizing the closing of N. Railroad Street from Washington Street to the Post Office Drop box.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:30pm. The council reconvened a few minutes later to discuss an ordinance providing rules and regulations governing any new division of land within the city.

After an hour of discussion it was decided to have another work shop to be scheduled on January 27th at 5:30 to continue to review the proposed 35 pages subdivision ordinance and to review the proposed agreement with AOKA.

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DATA CENTER Considerations

As I write this, I have seen numerous articles and heard many discussions about data centers and their consumption of water and electrical resources. I have roughly a half-century of project management experience in the energy industry, with the last couple of decades focused on efficiency and the application of proven technologies to real-world issues. I also have a few degrees, the highest of which is a master's in analytical engineering in Systems Management from the University of Southern California. It is with this background that I write this article.

I further base my opinions on my experience in the role as a member of Project Team Management (2004-2006) at Husky Power on the University of Connecticut Storrs Campus (see below, taken from the University's website) and on other projects around the world in which I participated. To me, the key to making data centers non-parasitic is to fully integrate the electrical and thermal systems of cogeneration into the basic design of the facility. They must be co-sited, and all systems must be designed to minimize environmental impact, specifically water and electricity.

Husky Power at the University of Connecticut Storrs Campus

Electric Capacity 24.9 Megawatts/Hour, Steam Capacity 565,000 Pounds/Hour, Chilled Water Capacity 12,000 Tons/Hour

UConn's energy requirements are growing as the University continues to construct a number of new buildings as part of its CONN 2000 and 21st Century UCONN projects.

UConn's state-of-the-art Cogeneration Facility began operation March 15, 2006, replacing several oil-fired utility boilers and enabling the University to meet its own energy needs at the main campus.

Cogeneration is defined as the sequential production of both electrical or mechanical energy and useful thermal energy from a single energy source. This allows over 80% of the fuel energy to be harnessed, versus 33% from a conventional electric power plant.

The Co-Generation facility provides a two-fold reduction in emissions:

-Natural gas, a cleaner burning fuel, is used by the facility to generate electricity and steam.

-Steam production in the process removes the need to construct separate steam-production facilities that would burn their own fuel and have their own emissions.

Most power plants on the electric grid are considerably less efficient than cogeneration facilities because they do not capture and utilize the steam for heating and cooling. Also, "distributed generation", like UConn's Husky Power, prevents the efficiency loss and congestion that occurs during transmissions and distribution of electricity from the point of generation to distant electricity customers.

It is from this specific experience, and several other highly efficient projects, that I base this writing, both technically and in application. There is no reason for data centers to be parasites to the location they are in. We live in an area rich in Natural Gas (NG), with a highly developed distribution system for this fuel. From an environmental perspective, NG is one of the cleanest fuels out there and has an exemplary record for

both reliability and emissions abatement. As you can see from UCONN's 20 year experience, it just works.

Data centers have two primary consumptive issues that continue to be raised: electricity and water. While this is true in the simplest sense, proven technology can mitigate both issues here in Texas, thanks to our abundance of NG. By building an integrated cogeneration facility fueled by NG and modifying some mechanical systems to a dedicated closed-loop configuration, these centers can virtually eliminate their operating water requirements and provide electrical power as a **DER** (Distributed Energy Resource) to power themselves. If financially beneficial, they can also provide electricity to the grid from their dedicated cogeneration facility. The local infrastructure need not incur any modification or expense as long as an NG line is available.

WATER: Water is a resource in Texas that is becoming more valuable than oil. As our state grows in both population and industry water becomes a greater limiting factor. The primary use of water in a data center is for cooling because of the significant thermal load of the equipment in the data center, and it's required optimal temperature and humidity requirements. Generally this requirement is resolved by running electrically driven chillers that use water as a transfer media as well as a heat sink via external cooling towers. There is some water loss in the chiller media loop, but the greatest consumption is from atmospheric package cooling towers (Marley is a common producer of quality cooling towers).

Water consumption can be nearly eliminated by using a closed, integrated chiller loop powered by the cogeneration facility. There is some expense and complexity to this, but it can be done with existing technologies. By addressing this from the perspective of the data center's thermal balance and closing the loop on the thermal systems by using waste heat from primary generation to provide both power and chilled water, there can be significant savings. There can be even greater savings if the generators are not only producing electricity but also mechanically driving the chiller loop.

ELECTRICITY: As stated above, integrating a cogeneration facility into the data center can largely resolve the water consumption issue. The electrical issue is an easier issue to resolve, since the use of inexpensive NG, fueling a combustion turbine or reciprocal engine (depending on the thermal load optimization), would provide all the electrical power for the facility. It would be completely self-sufficient. Additionally, if a financially acceptable PPA (Power Purchase Agreement) can be put in place, the data center could export power into the grid to help offset the other electrical demands of Texas as it continues to grow.

What does this all mean? In the simplest terms, it means that data centers can be a very positive element in any community with NG availability. These facilities need not be noisy. In fact, you can lean against the outside wall of the UCONN CoGen and not even be aware it's running. There are air emissions from the facility, but equipment to reduce SOX and NOX is proven and effective, using technology like SCR (which was developed in power plants and is used in diesel vehicles) to ensure the cleanest possible exhaust.

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So, electricity, water, and noise aren't impossible problems; they just require the facility to be designed and built as an integrated system in which the support mechanisms for the computers, servers, and so forth are planned as part of the integrated whole labeled DATA CENTER.

To me, there are jobs to be had, and a place in the 21st-Century world infrastructure for a community that becomes home to a data center done right.

Article by Pete Horn

City of Burton Workshop

The Burton City Council met on January 27 for a workshop to discuss the proposed subdivision ordinance and the proposed agreement with AOKA..

Once again some business owners and citizens showed up to voice their concerns and opinions of these two items. Despite their opinions, the city council decided to place the AOKA agreement back on the agenda for the second time and the proposed subdivision ordinance for the THIRD time.

It should prove interesting if the subdivision ordinance is defeated, how long will it be before the fourth try. Time will tell.

**Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 18th
and ends on Holy Thursday, April 2nd**

I'll be starting group meetings at my house for Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Not because I have it, but surely someone will get the urge to start cleaning.

One day the 1st grade teacher was reading the story of Chicken Little to her class and came to the part where Chicken Little tried to warn the farmer. "...and so Chicken Little went up to the farmer and said, "The sky is falling, the sky is falling!" The teacher asked the class, "And do you know what the farmer said?" A little girl raised her hand and shouted, "I think he said: Holy Crap! A talking chicken!"

I find it ironic that the colors red, white and blue stand for freedom until they are flashing behind you.

A group of Americans were traveling by bus tour through Switzerland. As they stopped at a cheese farm, a young guide led them through the process of cheese making, explaining that goat's milk was used. She showed the group a lovely hillside where many goats were grazing. She explained, "These are the older goats put out to pasture when they no longer produce. She then asked, "What do you do with your old goats in America?" A spry old gentleman answered, "They send us on bus tours."

Anything that is not nailed down is a cat toy.

Burton Bridge Ministry

Volunteer Opportunities

Thrift Store Cash Register: If you enjoy working in a fast-paced environment, and you're always cool under pressure, then consider operating the cash register at The Corner Shoppe on Thursdays, Fridays or Saturdays. This is a fun volunteer activity for folks who like to stay busy. Contact Linda Knipstein at 979-289-2223.

Translation Help at Thrift Store: Si eres amable y extrovertido, y hablas inglés y español, considera ser voluntario en The Corner Shoppe los jueves, viernes o sábados. Ayuda a responder las preguntas de los compradores, informándoles dónde se encuentran los artículos y qué hay en oferta esa semana. Llama a Linda Knipstein al 979-289-2223.

Posting Furniture Photos on Facebook Marketplace: We're looking for a volunteer to take photographs of our furniture inventory to post on Facebook Marketplace. If you understand that a white backdrop and good lighting will make for a great product shot that will appeal to interior designers and savvy shoppers, then please contact Barbara Donnelly at barbarajodonnely@gmail.com or 281 686-4822. The schedule for this opportunity is flexible.

Relief Drivers: We have a regular team of drivers who deliver hot meals to homebound senior citizens most Fridays. But sometimes "life happens" and we need a substitute driver. If you would like to help as a relief driver for our Senior Meals program, then please call Lois Mooney at 979-421-0617.

Errand Runners: Within the City of Burton we have neighbors who are homebound due to age, infirmity or lack of transportation. If you can pick up a prescription from Norman's Pharmacy in Brenham, deliver groceries or water from our food pantry, or collect their mail from the post office, then please contact our office at 979-337 3370 or burtonbridgeministry@gmail.com.

Home Improvements: Everybody wants to have a well-maintained property, but sometimes a homeowner just doesn't have the right equipment or physical health to get the job done. If you are able to bring your zero-turn lawn mower or weed-eater over to tackle an overgrown lot, or spend a Saturday adding skirting to a mobile home, then please contact our office at 979-337-3370 or burtonbridgeministry@gmail.com.

Build Handicap Ramps: In partnership with Texas Ramp Project, we have been building wheelchair ramps for elderly and disabled neighbors almost every weekend. This is a wonderful activity for teenagers, Scouts and anybody who is handy with a hammer and cordless drill. Let us know if you would like to be notified about the next build date. We'll add you to the email chain that shares worksite addresses and start times.

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