



Thomas Paine

"These are the times that try men's souls"



Thoughts History, Taxes and City Lights

I hear a lot of things as folks walk around the beautifully lighted city park. The recent City Park lighting improvements; compliments of the City University Fund; greatly improved safety and access. A couple of history buffs were walking the trail the other night. Discussion centered on the War of 1812 and the 200th anniversary of the wars ending (Christmas Eve 1814). At that point one of the guys commented that he was very pleased with the lighting improvement because it did not involve property tax dollars. He said it is all about taxes and how the government operates. In 1775 the rally cry was **"No Taxation without Representation."** He then went on to explain:

Our fore fathers rallied and took on the super power of their time, Great Britain, not a popular cause. Many folks made their lively hood supporting the British Empire and it's far reaching taxing tentacles. The courage to stand up to that power resulted in the risk of personal lively hood and even life.

We too have reached a junction in the preverbal road in our fair community. We too, are being lorded over by elitists, special interest groups and others who are willing and too often coming to the public trough to spend my hard earned tax dollar. My life is not threatened, but the tax rate has a pretty negative impact on my lively hood. I guess I cannot cry "No Taxation without Representation" because we do have five representatives on the City Commission.

However, a good part of that representation seems to take its lead from city staff, which has a really big dog in this fight. By definition city staff works for the city manager. So the city staff supports most of the projects; but always with the caveat that interest rates are low, it will only cost you a cup of coffee a day and the debt is manageable. Not much has changed over the years. I can remember 20 years ago when a project was funded, we were told, *this will only cost you one night a month of taking your family out for pizza*. At that time I had 3 kids, a house payment, to include special taxes and a host of other bills. My thought was why is your special interest project more important than pizza time with my family? I guess my quality of life did not figure into the taxing equation. Nothing seems to have changed, we have representation, but the majority of the representatives seem to support the tyranny of the city's tax at will policies.

The last election cycle put a glimmer of hope on ending the city spending madness. Some progress was made the first year, but with 3-2 votes taxes continued to climb each year and so did the debt. I think about Thomas Paine and the American Crisis as we approach the April 2nd City Election. The citizens will be voting in times that try men's souls: looming national debt, state programs cut, state funding cut, federal funding cut, cost of services shifted to county and city government, erosion of personal retirement, loss of saving accounts, a city staff eagerly waiting on the next special interest project, city run day care, a ten year tax increase for library expansion, a field house, a new welcome center and maybe even job loss for many of our Fort Riley neighbors. I fear that four of the seven candidates are bent on rivaling the Federal



Government in amassing debt and like the British in 1775 are out of tune with the taxation issue.

I was hoping to hear some straight answers from the candidates, they have had ample opportunity in the various forums. John Ball, Bob Strawn and Daniel Hogan are the only three that are totally on point – direct with answers. “*Celeritas et Audeo*” – *Speed and Daring* that was the 1st Rifle Regiment, Regimental motto, in the War of 1812. Those three candidates have the daring, moral fabric and integrity to stand as guardians of our tax dollars.

Thomas Paine might like what is being said around the walkways of the city park. The voters may have more common sense than some of the representatives or candidates. The tax payers may be getting weary of the constant spend, spend, spend mentality, but it is not hopeless. George Washington was weary in December of 1776, but he still won the fight at Trenton. It is possible to get some better representation on how your tax dollars are spent. The voters can change the mil levy vote from a 3-2 tax increase into a 5-0 flat mil levy. That historian had a point – Speed and Daring.

Mr. K