

# Meeker County EDA Special Meeting 10/27/2010

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By Ford Peterson, October 28, 2010

I'm accused of pulling some dirty election year tactics. Damn the election! I'm trying to get things done! If this is awkward for a few arrogant politicians, let me get out my violin and play them a tune. Either they do their job or lose their job!

On Monday I was informed that a special meeting notice was posted on the bulletin board at the courthouse. [Click here to view the notices.](#) This is the very same board that seems to be inducing all the stress at the Dassel Apartments. The Meeker County EDA and the Meeker County Development Corp posted a notice that they intended to change the regularly scheduled meeting of November 18, 2010 to October 27, 2010. This was a regular meeting, which must include an opportunity for public comment. In the video you will hear them contest that it was posted on Thursday so the proper meeting announcement time was apparently met. [Click here to view the law.](#) And they valiantly attempt to argue that I have no right to speak. Out of respect for their once honorable office, I held my tongue. Their goal was to effectively shut down any progress on the matter until late January of next year. Of course, the final arbiter of right and wrong in this case is the County Attorney Stephanie Beckman. Good luck getting any justice from her, who uses her ability to practice law as a weapon of mass destruction!

On Monday morning, Sue Hedtke, Director of the EDA, was refusing to hand out the agenda. According to Connie, the office staff of the Meeker HRA, who tried to obtain the agenda in person but was told it would not be available until 5 minutes before the meeting. By 3:41PM on Monday somebody at EDA must have connected their brain, come to their senses, and honored my request as I [received an agenda via fax](#) from the EDA office, which I didn't find until much later Monday evening. I am trying to run a business after all. Chasing down and cornering errant politicians is time consuming to say the least.

Although it looked like ordinary business, the County Executive Management has been behaving like cornered animals lately. Who knows the real agenda? I attended the meeting to find that the business was fairly straight forward. But no opportunity to bring recent events at the apartments to the attention of this board, which appears to be the real source of all the drama at the Dassel Apartments. There is something about the EDA wanting to merge with the HRA. The room was full of concerned citizens wanting to get to the bottom of all the fuss. Listen as I attempt to ask two simple questions. The first one I basically blurt out. The second, and most important comment, they will not allow me to speak. This is your government at work. As I write this, no one has attempted to contact me from Meeker County. County Commissioner Gabrielson, and EDA Director Hedtke, were the most vocal, arrogant, and offensive of the officials in attendance. Witness the arrogance for yourself as they lead the avoidance tactics using their version of good government...

To Youtube

With respect to the meeting agenda, there should have automatically been a public comments portion of the meeting. This was the 'regular meeting' of this board and the law requires a public comments portion. By rescheduling it, they feel they were allowed to drop the Public Comments portion as it became a special meeting, which in my opinion was the real motive behind moving the meeting. It was suspiciously moved up from November 18 to October 27 for reasons the chair explains in the video, making it a special meeting and therefore no public comments portion is "required." Damn what the law allows! The difference between 'prudent' and 'required' also defines the line that separates 'fascism' from 'good government.' There are innocent elderly bystanders being hurt badly by the arrogance of this board staffed by these county officials. I attempted to shame them into doing the right thing. They refused and unanimously voted to not hear my pleas for help. There are special compartments in hell specifically designed for those who ignore and abuse those considered vulnerable amongst us. I'll leave it to the reader to determine whether these people need a nomination to take up residence in one of them.

My first question for the board is really an observation related to MN Statute 469.004(5) [Click here.](#) In it we find that a County is specifically prohibited from owning or operating housing outside an HRA or multi-county council, yet we find Meeker county owning 76 town homes. Even though their actions appear to be illegal, the solution they seek—merging the EDA with the HRA—is not only not going to work, it would be detrimental to the current HRA and the people of Meeker County. There is a better, free market solution to these problems. My second question was to ask if such a solution has been investigated. The result would be that this EDA board would stop harassing

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the residents of the Dassel Apartments and Commissioners Wilde and Strand would lose interest in taking over the HRA board.

On the one hand, the citizens of Meeker could simply sue to have these arrogant officers held accountable for their despicable illegal behavior. Remove them from office, and solve the problems. Or, we could simply demand they do their jobs in accordance with state law—comply or face the penalties. So what's the solution? One alternative is a win-win-win for all involved. Simply give the current residents of those town homes the property. What? Am I as nutz as Amy Wilde seems to think? Of course not. I'm an accountant. And 5 minutes with a spreadsheet yielded the solution.

Instead of a \$690/month rent payment, pay principal, interest, taxes, insurance, and repairs.

Lease vs Buy	10/28/2010		
Meeker County Townhomes			
A discussion draft by Ford Peterson	Single	Single	4-Unit
	Buy (15yr)	Buy (30yr)	Buy (30yr)
Rent received from 3 tenants			2,100
Rent paid to self	675	522	700
Payment			-
Assoc Dues	(200)	(200)	-
Principal + Interest @ 5%	(475)	(322)	(1,288)
Monthly cash flow	-	-	1,512
Present value of contract	60,000	60,000	240,000
Available to cover costs	-	-	18,144
Annual Association Dues	2,400	2,400	-
Fire and Wind (estimate)	(250)	(250)	(900)
Taxes (estimate)	(420)	(420)	(2,190)
Allocated to maintenance / repairs	(1,500)	(1,500)	(6,000)
Annual cash flow	230	230	9,054
			potential for sweat equity
Estimated depreciation write-off			3,797
Interest write-off	3,000	3,000	12,000
Property tax write-off	420	420	2,190
Deductions	3,420	3,420	17,987
Benefit rate	20%	20%	20%
Estimate tax benefits	684	684	3,597
Monthly tax benefit	57	57	300
Equivalent monthly payment	618	465	400

Residents become homeowners and enjoy all the rights, privileges and responsibilities of property ownership. Contract for deed could be fully assumable, meaning a new owner could provide a down payment equal to the fair market equity at the time of sale.

A return to the free market economy would benefit the current residents and provide the county with a return on investment instead of overhead.

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Give residents who are currently qualified to rent the townhomes the option to purchase them on an outright sale or even a contract for deed. Use the financing of their choice. Current market rates are as low as 3.5% today. The county officers win because they get these toxic assets off the books. The residents win because they become homeowners instead of slum surfs—enjoying all the tax breaks and market equity accumulation. And Meeker County citizens win because we will not be asked to pay for the repairs or upkeep of these problem properties.

Of course, Sue Hedtke's father, the maintenance guy, may have to find other work. And her relatives might easily lose the lucrative insurance contracts she has funneled their way. We may end up with fewer maintenance workers on the County payroll as the screen doors and leaky faucets will no longer be maintained by County personnel, but by the homeowners themselves. In the end, the residents of the 76 homes will enjoy a decrease in the cost of their housing.

[Attorney General Lori Swanson's Letter](#) to me speaks volumes! See the side bar for the entire letter with attachments. In it, I was informed that as a citizen of Meeker County I am helpless to obtain relief from our State. The final arbiter of right and wrong is County Attorney Beckman, whose foolish judgment once again proves that she uses her ability to practice law as a weapon of mass destruction. And if we don't like it, the voters of Meeker County should take care of this at the next available election opportunity. Did you see how arrogant Gabrielson acted? Complete disregard for our community's most vulnerable and was unwilling to even listen. Not one of them expressed one iota of interest in even hearing me during or after the meeting. They argued about not hearing me longer than it would have taken to hear me. The hubris is reminiscent of a fascist pre-war Germany, not my formerly peaceful community on the prairie.

In the end, they voted unanimously that they simply do not care about the elderly living at the Dassel Apartments.

Vote wisely on November 2, 2010... The entire courthouse needs an enema.

If we are to have Beckman removed from office, do NOT vote for her on November 2. Leave the check box blank. This will make it easier to get the names on a petition for a removal election, which requires 25% of the number who voted for her. Not voting for her reduces the number of petitions needed.

Do not vote for Wilde, vote for TIM BENOIT

Do not vote for Strand, write in SCOTT KLATT

Do not vote for Gabrielson, vote for CHUCK FENTON

Do not vote for Norlin, vote for BEN AHO

Stephanie Beckman may practice law like it's a weapon of mass destruction, but Mildred Hendrickson has a Smith Corona. Behold the power of the pen!