

“MY TAKE”

According to the R-C, “Tiregate” is “the largest public embezzlement in Douglas County History” (12/29/17) and according to the District Attorney, the amount stolen could be nearly \$1,000,000 over the years in which the theft took place (R-C, 1/17/18).

Since this fiasco was discovered more than ten months ago, promotions, raises and retirements of County staff (both of employees who may well have been implicated and of employees charged with the responsibility of preventing this type of crime to occur) have proceeded apace as if nothing had ever occurred. The trail has gone cold due to the orchestrated inaction of our own County officials.

At the County level all is secret. At the state level all is secret. The D.A. and the Sheriff prosecute—with zeal and publicity—many theft, fraud, and embezzlement matters. But a different standard seems to apply when the theft and/or embezzlement of public funds occurs under the noses of the very same public officials and County staff charged with guarding against that very thing. Too embarrassing? Or too likely to reveal

how inept county officialdom is? Move along people. Nothing to see here, just the largest theft/embezzlement in County history.

The cover-up implications make Watergate look like child’s play.

Simply stated, “Tiregate” is a public outrage and disgrace for all County officials, who from all appearances have acted to protect themselves or the “reputation” of the County rather than look out for the taxpayers and residents. Shameful.

Investigations like this need to be performed rapidly, without delay. By now the culprits will have had plenty of time to retire, change jobs, “lose” or destroy records, and the recipients of those stolen tires (whoever they may be) will have had plenty of time to get rid of them. Because of County incompetence, there is little hope for the recovery of any of the proceeds of this embezzlement, the source of which was hard-earned tax dollars. Still, the County remains mute. No accountability for the umpteenth time.

So let me get this straight—the process works like this: 1) finally discover a

multi-year theft/embezzlement that could be seen as evidence of wide scale corruption and/or negligence in the County; 2) find a way to throw a cloak of secrecy over the whole matter so those most responsible for this incredible blunder can control what the public knows and manipulate public opinion; 3) create an investigative process that drags out bringing any of the criminals to justice despite the result being the likelihood that none of the stolen taxpayer money will be recovered; 4) diminish the significance of the whole matter by hiring consultants and establishing “hotlines,” so that the “story” will be “We’re on it. This will never happen again;” and 5) cross your fingers that the people whose hard-earned money was stolen will become tired and forget about what happened.

“My Take” on this matter is that the public officials/employees who have orchestrated this fiasco, and who have permitted it to happen in the first place, and who have participated, actively or passively, in perpetuating this apparent “cloak of secrecy” fraud on the public are not fit to hold public office.

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