

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Garfield County Commissioners Overpayment for Real Estate above Fair Market Value Shows a Lack of Good Stewardship

GLENWOOD SPRINGS, COLO. – AUGUST 9, 2016 – Garfield County’s three Republican County Commissioners, led by chair John Martin, do not know how to acquire property for the public’s benefit.

Our Republican County Commissioners have vastly overpaid for office buildings and parking spaces by well over \$1,000,000. They have wasted our money and this demonstrates a lack of skill and expertise from our 5 term, 20-year incumbent John Martin. Is this good leadership? You decide.

Garfield County, in 2012, overpaid by some \$1.4 Million dollars for the acquisition of the Worrell-Durrett Building alone, based upon the appraisal. Look for yourself at the Statement of Settlement signed by John Martin, the contract, and the appraisal - each of them, available at www.acha2016.com. There you will see the proof that the Commissioners paid over \$1000 per square foot for the usable office space. That is the price per square foot for some of Aspen’s finest new residences. Similar mismanagement has occurred with the acquisition of other properties as well.

Why would our Commissioners overpay so much for an office building and a parking lot? No matter the answer they give, does the fact that they ponied up so much of our cash without a fight show good stewardship, insightful management, and good governance? NO!

What should have been done then? The County Commissioners should have sought the power of eminent domain to insure they would not have to pay in excess of fair market value. On the surface the County justifies overpaying because it does not have the statutory power to use eminent domain to acquire office and parking space. This on its face is true, and it begs the real issues surrounding open government, insightful management, and forward looking leadership.

The law requires the legislature pass a law authorizing County Commissioners to use the power of eminent domain to acquire office space and parking spaces. If the state is unwilling to delegate that power to our County Commissioners, the state still can be called upon to use that power itself. There is to date no apparent effort at even using eminent domain even as a negotiating tactic.

John Acha and the Garfield County Democratic Party has spent, thus far, \$2,400 obtaining a large quantity and variety of county records under the Colorado Open Records Act and nowhere do we thus far find any effort to properly negotiate the price of the Worrell-Durrett building, and other buildings Garfield County acquired as well.

The County Commissioners seem to have had no apparent negotiating strategy. Never once did they tell the sellers that the County would lobby for a new law to grant them the power of eminent domain in this situation. Thus far, in reviewing the documents produced, there is no record of the Commissioners contacting the lobbyist(s) of the organizations that we pay to lobby for us. No evidence that the Commission even attempted to have its lobbyists introduce a bill on this topic to protect Garfield County's pocketbook from downtown landowners trying to squeeze as much money from us as possible. We spend tens of thousands of dollars to belong and attend these organizations each year and yet fail to use their resources to lobby for commonsense changes to the County's eminent domain power. This lack of action – both in calling on our relationships with these organizations and in dealing with the state legislature – is what John Martin calls good leadership.

So, why does it happen?

To be willing to go to the state legislature requires that our Republican County Commissioners – and their Chairman John Martin in particular – be willing to humble themselves and admit to the public the limitations of their powers. This acknowledgement flies in the face of John Martin's general attitude that we the people are but his sheep to be led. All one needs to do is read his editorial in the County Newsletter, again available at www.acha2016.com, to show how he feels about you and me. In this editorial he tells County employees in a thinly masked allegory "[F]ollowers, you too must blindly trust your leader and follow her like, well, like sheep..." Blind trust has lead us into the valley of the wolves where landowners feel free to charge the County whatever they want when the County is property shopping.

Our Republican Commissioners could have humbled themselves and asked the legislature to empower the County with condemnation powers for office space and parking when sellers insist upon excessive prices, but instead they simply paid the excessive prices demanded with no resistance. Our Republican Commissioners, by their repeated actions, display a desire to overpay downtown Glenwood Springs landowners with our money.

We simply cannot afford a sixth term of this so-called leadership. It is time for a change.

MORE TO COME: If the investment, and time, and costs, and salaries, and dues in the National Association of Counties ("NACO") and its Western Interstate Region ("WIR") and related organizations is so good, why did it not prevent us from sending an extra million dollars on the Worrell-Durrett building alone? More to come on NACO and John Martin later....

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