

Sound sleeper

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

JEERS ... to Asotin County Sheriff Ken Bancroft. He's stepping down five months early to settle a score with the county commissioners, who deep-sixed his budget request.

"I'm just not willing to put up with it anymore," Bancroft told the Tribune's Kerri Sandaine. "It's that simple."

No it's not. Who is Bancroft hurting?

Not the commissioners. They may have a headache or two finding a temporary replacement. But it's the people who elected Bancroft who have to live with the instability and disruption that will come from having two or even three sheriffs in the course of six months.

Commissioners could pick one of the two men running to succeed Bancroft, Capt. Dan Hally, who has Bancroft's blessing, or John Hilderbrand. But that conveys incumbency - usually a political advantage - on one of the candidates heading into the fall election.

Or they could contract with an outside entity. Commissioner Brian Shinn wants to work out a deal with Clarkston Police Chief Joel Hastings.

People who seek elected office make a bargain with the voters: They'll complete the term, barring the usual exceptions. Health problems. Family crisis. Even an unforeseen but lucrative economic opportunity.

Handing over the office like a piece of private property to a political ally? That's selfish and manipulative.

"I'll probably get a good night's sleep for the first time in a long time," Bancroft told Sandaine.

What about everyone else?

CHEERS ... to Lewiston City Councilor Bob Blakey. Somebody needed to say it. Blakey did: Nez Perce County Commissioner Douglas Havens should leave the Urban Renewal Agency board.

Nez Perce County doesn't like the URA updating its 2005 plan into eight projects in North Lewiston, the Nez Perce Terrace and downtown. The county sued - and lost twice in 2nd District Court Judge Michael Griffin's courtroom.

Opposition is one thing.

Chronic belligerence is something else.

When the Lewiston City Council voted 5-2 for the plan last week, Havens challenged the legitimacy of at-large urban renewal board members Joe Hulett and JoAnn Cole-Hansen. He also reportedly threw a few darts at URA attorney Don Roberts.

If Commissioners Bob Tippett and Doug Zenner want political pyrotechnics, they can keep Havens at the table.

But Havens will be generating white noise.

JEERS ... to Idaho Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter. In April, to much fanfare, Otter created a public records ombudsman and assigned Cally Younger to that job.

Now Younger runs interference for Otter.

Earlier this month, the governor filled two vacancies on the State Board of Education: Debbie Critchfield of Oakley to replace Ken Edmunds of Twin Falls and David Hill of Boise to replace Milford Terrell, also of Boise.

Idaho Education News' Kevin Richert wanted to know who Otter sidestepped. So he asked Otter's office for the names and applications of the unsuccessful candidates.

Here's what he got:

- 24 people sought Edmunds' seat. Otter's office delivered papers on nine applicants, including former House Democratic Leader Wendy Jaquet of Ketchum and former State Board member Laird Stone of Twin Falls.
- 14 people applied for Terrell's post. Otter's office released six files and volunteered eight names. Among them were former state Rep. Milt Erhart, R-Boise, and former Idaho County Commissioner Jim Rehder of Cottonwood.

So what happened to the 22 files that vanished?

"We have given you all of the applications we have," Younger told Richert. "Previous submissions were destroyed because they contain sensitive personal information."

Since these are political appointments, Otter may be within his rights. But a governor who wants credit for creating a public records ombudsman might look to the spirit of Idaho's public records law. These are your documents. You have a right to them.

Evasion and shredded records carry the strong scent of chicanery.

JEERS ... to the Idaho Fish and Game Commission. The commission is opposing creating a Boulder-White Clouds National Monument.

"Without state sovereignty, you won't have hunting, fishing and trapping in any meaningful way," said Commission Chairman Fred Trevey of Lewiston.

How would he know without first consulting groups such as the Idaho Conservation League? Negotiations with monument supporters could lead toward an agreement to secure hunting and fishing rights within any national monument proclamation President Barack Obama issues.

This looks like Fish and Game extending political cover to Otter, who not only opposes the monument, but the much more flexible Boulder-White Clouds bill Congressman Mike Simpson could have passed with the governor's support.

CHEERS ... to Boise Magistrate Judge Michael Oths. In presiding over the sentencing of the "Add the 4 Words" protesters this week, Oths imposed penalties upon those who violated the law by demonstrating inside the state Capitol earlier this year. Most got community service and small fines.

But Oths also gave them something no one else in state government has been willing to share: his time and attention.

Protesters told Oths their stories of enduring the discrimination Idaho law tolerates.

They spoke of gay teenagers who yielded to despair and committed suicide.

They reminded Oths and everyone else that they acted because state lawmakers won't. For eight years, legislators have refused to even consider amending Idaho's Human Rights law to protect individuals on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

"It does take some guts to stand up in civil disobedience and take the penalty, and I respect that,"

Oths said. - M.T.