

# OPINIONS

## OUR THOUGHTS

### A place for Joy

Joy is tossed into politics . . . and it sounds awfully good

The Kamala Harris/Tim Walz team is taking some guff for their embrace of the word "joy."

They seem to think their campaign for president is joyful, and not grumpy, negative or ugly.

We don't know how this election will turn out between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris. Election night usually shows a close race, and even then, there is final tabulating before it becomes official.

But joy sounds like a good plank in America's platform, and it doesn't have to attach to Democrats, because we know lots of joyful Republicans, too.

It might do both sides good to wear this merry label.

Over 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ proclaimed, "These things I have spoken to you, that my Joy may be in you, and that your Joy may be full."

Politicians may try to mess that up, but it appears that "joy" is written in Heavenly stone.

At least, we pray so.

— Rudy Taylor, publisher

### Sound figures?

Questions remain about accuracy of City of Caney treasurer's reports

The City of Caney has approved the publication of its second quarter 2024 treasurer's report, which is printed on page A9 of this week's Montgomery County Chronicle.

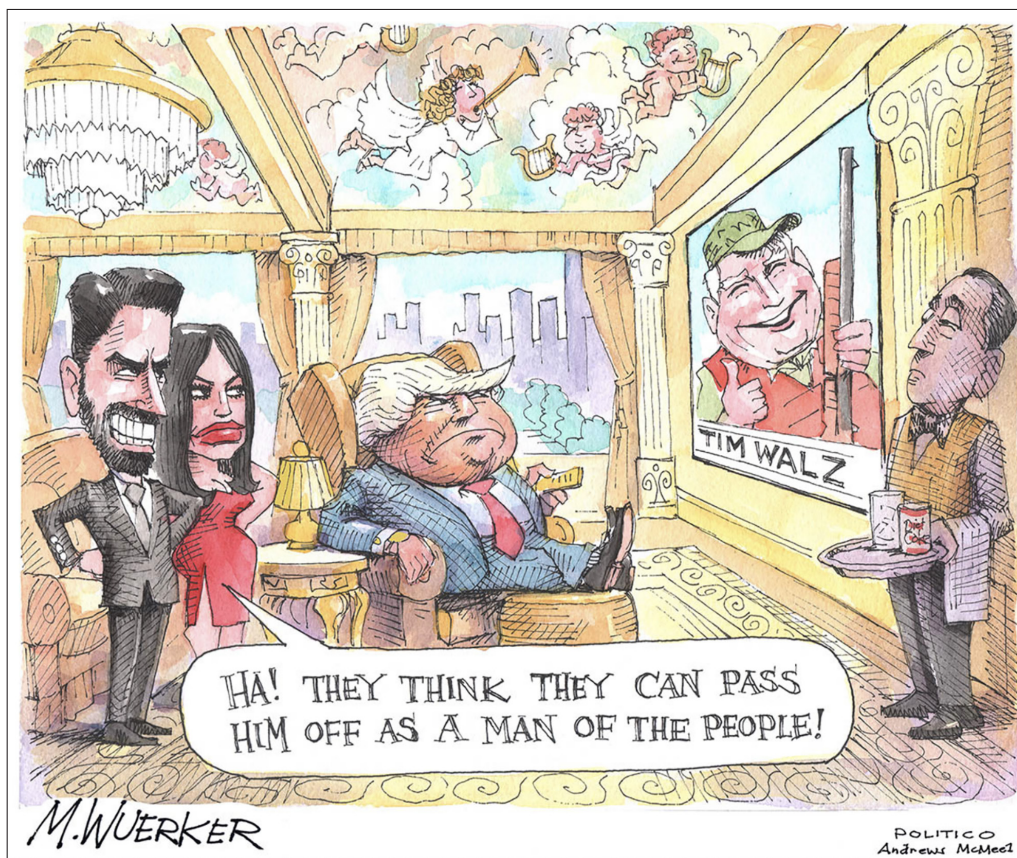
The Chronicle is the official newspaper for legal notices for the City of Caney. Pursuant to state law, that notice is printed in this newspaper for the purpose of public knowledge.

However, there is nothing contained within that same state law that indicates whether a treasury report has to be accurate and correct.

That's because it's assumed that it will be.

Why? Because a treasurer's report is intended to serve as a true snapshot of a city's financial condition during a particular moment of time (in this case, the second quarter months of April, May and June). That financial condition is based on reconciliation of the city's financial books — in the same way a private individual reconciles his or her checkbook, or a private business measures its monthly disbursements and deposits against the actual bank records.

Without those reconciliations (in which every red penny is accounted for), a customer would not know if there are missing dollars (perhaps through accounting errors, data errors, or actual fraud).



Here is our chief concern . . .

For the City of Caney, a treasurer's report should show the same number in its ending cash balance (look at the far right column), as it does in its existing bank accounts (at bottom left corner of the page).

Every treasurer's report has shown the same numbers (Ending Balance vs. Bank Accounts).

But . . .

For reasons that still are unclear to this newspaper, the City of Caney continues to introduce unrecognizable funds into its listing of "Bank Accounts."

For example, the first four entries in the "Bank Accounts" listing are actual accounts held in deposit at a local bank.

The problem rests with the entries below those four: Outstanding Checks, Outstanding Deposits and Adjustments.

We don't get it. Nor have we seen them in the other treasurer's reports printed by other local city governments.

In short, they shouldn't exist on any type of financial report in which reconciliation of funds is the measurement of accuracy.

So, what are they?

We don't know. But, we know that they should not be considered as "Bank Accounts."

When the owners of this newspaper asked the Caney City Council at a previous meeting for an explanation, we got lost in the mumbling explanations about the mysterious gray area of city finance . . . something to do with "hard numbers" versus "floating numbers."

We don't buy it.

Nor should the citizens of Caney.

In the world of accounting, financial numbers either are or aren't. They are absolute and real. There's no confusion about where they exist.

The continued practice of those ques-

tionable entries under "Bank Accounts" leaves us concerned. They should not be there. And, when they are, it leads us to believe that the true financial condition of the City of Caney cannot be ascertained.

The financial condition of the City of Caney is not only expected to be true but it comes at a time when the use of city dollars are coming into considerable scrutiny.

We are concerned that the months of transition in between various City Hall positions have allowed the City of Caney to paint an unclear picture as to its financial condition. The use of Outstanding Checks, Outstanding Deposits, or Adjustments only exacerbates that lack of clarity.

Our hope of the Caney City Council and city staff is to build the next city treasurer's report for July, August, and September, without the use of the three questionable "Bank Account" entries. Without those three funds, city officials will have to make sure every penny is located and accounted for.

And, if it doesn't add up, they will have to return to the ledgers and deposit books to find out where the discrepancies are hidden — just like the way a private business owner has to reconcile his checkbook in order to stay on track with existing cash.

In short, it will force accuracy . . . and accountability . . . and overall good stewardship.

But . . .

If the City of Caney and its representatives have a logical and verifiable reason for using those entries in the "Bank Accounts" portion of the quarterly treasurer's report, we would certainly invite an explanation. We will gladly provide space on this page for a letter to the editor so that the process can be explained . . . and the citizens (and this newspaper) can be better informed.

For now, we will stick with what we

know: keeping track of dollars and cents should always add up without leaving question marks in our heads.

— Andy Taylor, editor

### Trust but verify

City of Coffeyville's budget plan is ambitious but needs verification

The collective thump you may have heard Tuesday night was the sound of mouths dropping in Coffeyville upon learning of the Coffeyville City Commission's plan to lower its tax rate by almost 51 percent for 2025 (see story on page A1).

In our nearly 140 years of existence, this newspaper has never heard of any local government attempting to cut its tax rate (let's remember, it's just the tax rate, not the overall taxes paid by taxpayers) by more than half.

That's an ambitious plan, one that carries the confidence of new city manager Ben Brubaker, for whom we have complete respect for his knowledge of municipal organization and professional demeanor.

"We got this," was Brubaker's advice to city commissioners at Tuesday's meeting after hearing some reservations from commissioners about a historic drop in the city's tax rate.

City commissioners and city staff should be commended for undertaking a gutsy decision: to cut the tax rate in half while attempting to hold the line on city expenses with cash reserves and other revenue streams.

However, we still adhere to an ancient principle: trust but verify.

We trust that city leaders are telling us the truth about this anticipated tax rate reduction.

But, citizens deserve to have that information verified.

So, when city commissioners undertake a vote to publish the 2025 budget plan at their Aug. 28 meeting, we hope they will undertake a carefully crafted explanation.

Show the citizens how much property tax revenue is being reduced.

Show the citizens what other dollars will be used to make the gap in the reduction of property taxes.

Show how the City of Coffeyville's plan for addressing a multitude of concerns, such as road repairs, will not be impacted by this tax rate reduction.

Show how future city commissioners will not be in an unfortunate position of having to raise the tax rate because the 2025 projected tax rate cut was too costly.

Those explanations are reasonable . . . and expected.

And, should the verification process prove convincing and true, then citizens have every reason to endorse this historic budget plan.

Stay tuned, Coffeyville.

— Andy Taylor, editor

## 'Love Without End, Amen' could become a second anthem

Remember "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid" From 1969?

The song, "Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head" became a classic after that movie.

On Monday and Tuesday, most of us got to sing that song, even though it might have been nice to have a second and third stanza.

We got almost two inches

of rain at our place, over two days.

Praise the Lord!

\*\*\*

We're going through evening entertainment shock this week — we miss our Olympics!

Plus, we fell in love with Paris, which is a given. The beautiful city's 2,000-year history was given a good

showing for the world over the past three weeks, and it made us appreciate its history, landmarks, culture and character.

Viva la Paris!

\*\*\*

Someone posted on Facebook, "Hey, there's a beautiful rainbow in the sky! Praise the Lord!"

So, I did.

Then he reposted . . .

"Scratch that . . . it was a nasty smear on my truck's windshield."

But I kept the Lord's praise right where it landed.

\*\*\*

With school beginning, there is a whole different attitude in local life.

I like the hope of autumn air, knowing it's getting close.

I love football talk that exists every place cokes are sipped, coffee is consumed and corner conversations are held.

There's just something about the ringing of class bells that jolts us back to happiness.

\*\*\*

We bought two mole traps last weekend, and planted them in our front yard. So, now we walk by our front window 40 times a day and peer outside to see if the trap has sprung . . . if that's what they do.

I just want dead moles.

Lots of them.

Please work, mole traps.

\*\*\*

RUDY TAYLOR



OFF the Cuff

Democrats and Republicans are at it again . . . fighting over silliness.

About 50 years ago, someone organized The American Party. It never went anywhere. Too simple.

I rather like the idea of "just" being Americans, and thumbing my nose at the elephants and donkeys.

If such a movement does start, I'd like to nominate a ticket of George Strait and Reba McEntire — in either order.

Anything would beat the tickets we're seeing today.

And, I think we might do well with, "Love Without End, Amen."

Take advantage of the Dog Days of Summer subscription offer • See page A7

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### Life's Little Lifesavers

. . . being thankful for much needed rain . . . watching a 3-year-old eat an ice cream cone . . . the anxious feelings a kid has on the first day of school . . . being grateful for neighbors who keep their lawns mowed, trash picked up and no junk in the yard . . . listening to "dreamy" music . . . in a world of hurt and sorrow, being the shoulder someone can cry on . . . attending a live music theater performance with glorious songs, costumes and lighting . . . the bittersweet parting of your son or daughter when they leave for college . . . getting in one more weekend trip to the lake for boating and swimming during the Labor Day holiday . . . "Let us remember: One book, one pen, one child and one teacher can change the world." (Malala Yousafzai)

KATHY TAYLOR



#### Word of the Week

Take time to contemplate this word, use in your conversations, discuss the word with your children or grandchildren and exercise its meaning either internally or externally. The word this week is: BITTERSWEET: Pleasure tinged with sadness or pain.