

## EDITORIAL

## Public deserves right to recall county officials

Voters put county officials into office and should have the right to remove them without having to wait four years between elections.

Clay County Commissioners **Luann Ridgeway** and **Gene Owen** are the billboard faces behind taking a stand to clean up the train wreck Clay County government has become on their watch.

Ridgeway is a Republican, Owen is a Democrat, but party affiliation does not matter at the county level, where issues involve professional law enforcement, building maintenance and safeguarding tax dollars, rather than national, partisan stands on immigration, tariff wars and health care funding.

Presiding Commissioner **Jerry Nolte** is the odd man out in commission activities. Ridgeway and Owen basically ignore him. They even require Nolte to pay for copies of county documents.

A few among many actions Ridgeway and Owen have taken to draw the ire of county residents are...

- Sheriff **Paul Vescovo** told commissioners how much money he needed to operate the detention center. They hugely underfunded him, by \$1 million. He said they did so as retaliation for his investigation into document tampering by a commission employee, prompting him to file an ongoing lawsuit.

- Other officeholders feel no less ill-treated, with Ridgeway and Owen agreeing to pay \$600 for a coffee machine, allowing a former administrator \$250,000 in severance pay, agreeing to use more than \$900,000 in tax funding to pay 11 outside law firms for legal help, awarding themselves tens of thousands of dollars in "back pay" and paying \$85,000 for a boat for use at Smithville Lake, but nitpicking spending by other officeholders, including withholding pay of \$14 an hour to an assistant county clerk.

- Nolte called the move "money down a rathole," and that the present building just needs maintenance, but Ridgeway and Owen voted to pay \$2 million to buy seven acres as the future location for a county annex that could cost \$20 million.

- Ridgeway and Owen have upset



so many Clay Countians that more than 9,000 petitioned – Nolte among the petition signers – to ask Missouri Auditor **Nicole Galloway** to audit the county. Galloway agreed to conduct the audit. Ridgeway and Owen then used their high-powered lawyers to prevent the release of records sought for the audit, and on two separate actions, they lost. Despite the court decisions in her favor, Galloway last week had to file a subpoena for Clay County records due to a continuing lack of commission cooperation.

The situation begs the question: Are Ridgeway and Owen hiding something? And this question: How long can stonewalling go on before a court holds Ridgeway and Owen in contempt?

And this question: How much contempt from Ridgeway and Owen can county residents take?

The situation warrants a reasonable re-

sponse to what has become an unreasonable and conflict-ridden government.

During this year's General Assembly session, Rep. **Kenneth Wilson**, R-Smithville, and Sen. **Lauren Arthur**, D-Kansas City, proposed an appropriate response. They introduced bills to give county residents the right to recall county officials, meaning to vote mid-term on whether to remove elected officials from office. The legislation made modest progress, but did not pass, as almost always occurs with first-time bills.

Given Ridgeway and Owens' ongoing shenanigans and disregard for authority, and with a new legislative session starting in January, Wilson and Arthur should try again in 2020.

Voters put Ridgeway and Owen into office. For what have become glaring and troubling reasons, voters should have the right to remove them, too – sooner, rather than later.



## AS I WAS SAYING... More than pumpkin

Pumpkin spice has had a nice run. First introduced by McCormick in 1934 as a seasoning blend to flavor pies, Starbucks took the bold step of introducing the flavor in non-pie form with the Pumpkin Spice Latte in 2003.

Since then, Starbucks has sold roughly 424 million pumpkin coffees and I haven't purchased one. This is partly because as a journalist I drink coffee that tastes like coffee (black) and partly because it's a latte and the only Italian influence I grew up with came from the fine people at Chef Boyardee.

Not to let a good thing simply be a good thing, since 2003, nearly every company that flavors products for the American public has offered pumpkin or pumpkin-spice flavored everything. Such as pecan pumpkin instant oatmeal, pumpkin-spice candy corn, pumpkin-spice bagels, organic frosted pumpkin toaster pastries, pumpkin-spice latte M&Ms, 5W-30 synthetic pumpkin-spice motor oil, and maybe the most egregious, pumpkin-spice Peeps.

If there were ever a product that didn't need to exist, it would be the Peep. Sorry, Just Born candy company, but this marshmallow chicken confection is an affront to science, nature and the church.

However, there is a fall food problem besides Peeps. With the popularity of pumpkin spice, I'm concerned other traditional fall flavors that don't include pumpkin are getting left behind. The public gradually stops talking about something and suddenly no one remembers what turkey tastes like. It happens, folks. Do you remember the flavor of Mr. T cereal? That's what I thought.

So, I propose we not only embrace pumpkin spice, we take time out of our busy snacking to honor other fall flavors like hot chocolate, apple, caramel, pecan and VapoRub before they're forgotten.

## Jason's Fall Foods That Should Exist

- Hazelnut and Pinecone Grape-Nuts
- Twinings Fall Colors Full-Leaf Tea: now with more oak
- Starbucks Hayride Frappuccino
- Maple-Pear-Pecan-Menthol Coke
- Kellogg's Cranberry Sauce and Turkey Gravy Pop Tarts
- Wet Dog and Ginger Chai
- Vicks Cold and Flu Season Grits
- Butternut Squash Rice Krispies Treats
- Armour Chili con Candy Corn
- Green Bean Casserole Jolly Ranchers
- Hershey's S'mores Stuffing
- Ozarka Rain-Flavored Water
- Ben and Jerry's Roasted Marshmallow and Frost.
- Bratwurst and Pretzel Lager: Oktoberfest in a can

And that, dear readers, is just the top of the Fall Pyramid of Yumminess. Please, do these neglected flavors a favor and buy that pint of Giblet Gravy Frozen Yogurt, sprinkle some nutmeg and cloves onto that tuna casserole and stir condensed cream of mushroom soup and french-fried onions into Jell-O. Remember, there's always room for condensed cream of mushroom soup and french-fried onion Jell-O.

It's up to us to protect our endangered tastes.

Now, who do I have to punch to get a Browned Butter Mashed Potatoes milk shake around here?

## THE WAY WE WERE

NOV. 15 TO NOV. 21

1919

- Work begins on laying an electric cable across the Missouri River.
- **Srepta Jane Narramore Settle** dies Tuesday, Nov. 18. She was born March 25, 1831, in Tennessee.

1969

- **Jeanie Lee French** celebrates her sixth birthday with games and pony rides.

• A group of concerned residents asks the Richmond School District to close Shotwell School due to age and defective construction of the building.

1994

- The Salvation Army seeks help to collect more than 200 turkeys for the annual turkey drive to benefit community members in need of support during the holiday season.

• **Sarah LaBarr** plays Fiona MacLaren in the Richmond High School production of "Brigadoon."

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