

Local tax asks too much of struggling community



Andrew Kindiger

During a recession, public and private institutions are forced to consolidate their budgets to account for losses and anticipate future financial misfortunes. Truman is facing this situation as options are proposed to save money while trying not to sacrifice educational opportunities. Similarly, Kirksville citizens are in no way ignorant of the "tighten your belt" mentality as groceries continue to get more expensive and many

families struggle to adjust to surviving with less.

In the midst of this economic upheaval, the City Council has decided to issue a proposal on the April 7 ballot to raise the sales tax from 7.85 percent to 8.1 percent. The main goal of the proposal is to deter firefighters and other public service employees from seeking employment opportunities outside Kirksville by giving these individuals a raise. This would provide an incentive for current employees to stay in Kirksville and hopefully attract new recruits into the public service industry from other areas around Missouri.

Councilmember Aaron Rodgerson was quoted in the Kirksville Daily Express Jan. 28 as saying that city employees aren't compensated for the quality of work they provide and that

he hopes the citizens will recognize this for the upcoming vote. Rodgerson's statement convolutes the issue when considering what the proposal is trying to accomplish in relation to the community. Rodgerson is making it sound like public service employees are being mistreated, when in reality, the entire community of Kirksville has fallen on hard financial times.

I do not believe that anyone would readily dispute the importance of the public service industry or doubt their appreciation for individuals devoted to making life safer, and it is a concern that firefighters as well as police officers might find a better paying job in another community if such jobs are available. However, it also is important to keep in mind that more than 70,000 jobs already have been lost because of the economic shift. With

so many people in the same position, it doesn't seem fair that city employees would get a raise while the entire community is struggling under the same financial pressures.

The idea behind the proposal is not a bad one, yet it is not the appropriate time to ask the Kirksville community to spend more money in order to give a raise to public service employees. Even though these employees work hard for the livelihood of the community, the entire community still is in a financial position in which sacrifices need to be made. Small businesses already are struggling to predict a shaky economic future, and asking customers to pay more in taxes is only going to limit business.

The proposal is meant to help the future of the public service industry in Kirksville, but we need to make sure

not to damage small businesses any further and create an even more grim economic future for Kirksville. The City Council has said that raising the wage for public service employees is a major concern, but it seems that this concern, no matter how long it has been an issue, is being addressed at a time when many voters are not going to believe it to be financially feasible.

Having the proposal on the ballot will remind citizens that this issue should be addressed again in the future and should in no way be ignored, but the tax should not be raised until the community has the means to adjust to the increase.

Andrew Kindiger is a sophomore English major from Liberty, Mo.

Students can go green on campus the lazy, tasty way



Zach Vicars

The next time you chomp into a crispy chicken sandwich at Mainstreet Market, you should pat yourself on the back — not for making the right dietary choice, but for helping maintain a sustainable campus.

In the same way, the next time you have a helping of fries at Manhattan Café, you should feel good about helping keep the University's fuel cost low. The next time you're enjoying a tenderloin at the Dukum Inn, you can rest assured knowing that you have helped stop global warming.

Those who think I've made a serious logical mistake, allow me to explain. You see, thanks to a student-led initiative called Bulldog Biodiesel, the leftover vegetable oil that went into your delicious fried foods

The next time you eat Mainstreet Market, pat yourself on the back.

in restaurants around Kirksville is being converted into a form of diesel fuel. The conversion process is rather complicated — check out bulldogbiodiesel.truman.edu to learn more — but the basic formula can be summed up like this: in goes leftover oil, out comes biodiesel fuel. This diesel is being used to power the University Farm and the Physical Plant vehicles at a lower cost and with a lower environmental price.

Now I don't lose any sleep over the so-called climate crisis. I watch movies like "An Inconvenient Truth" (and its kid-friendly counterpart "Happy Feet") when I need a good laugh, but I'm excited by the work that's being done by the people at Bulldog Biodiesel. I'm not sure if collecting oil that would otherwise be thrown away is going to help the environment, but it sure can't hurt. I don't know if Bulldog Biodiesel is going to reverse the warming trend, but what I do know is that it's a step

in the right direction.

I also find the productivity of Bulldog Biodiesel encouraging in a day when meaningless organizations are popping up in every spare classroom. Instead of designing T-shirts and eating pizza, this organization is doing work that is both academically enriching and rewarding for those who participate. Campus organizations that have resigned themselves to twice-monthly meetings and bake sales would do well to emulate the people at Bulldog Biodiesel.

It's high time college students start solving problems rather than creating them. Getting a good education is not enough. In fact, if education isn't applied to something productive then that education is a selfish waste.

Most students are willing to wait on the challenges ahead while they get a good education, but the problem is that the challenges don't wait for them. Hunger, poverty and AIDS aren't waiting for students to get out of college. The time to act is now. If the people working at Bulldog Biodiesel are doing their part

to build a more sustainable campus, why can't the rest of us do our part to benefit a cause that matters to us? Why can't we do something meaningful with our money instead of buying T-shirts and paying dues? Why can't we take a step in the right direction?

I'm not talking about big steps. I'd say when viewed in the scope of the entire atmosphere, the greenhouse gas Bulldog Biodiesel is reducing is negligible. But it's a start. Students can get started on the big challenges in life now. Whether that's eating a chicken sandwich or taking a relief trip to Africa, I'll let you decide. All I'm asking is that you do something meaningful as a student and take a step in the right direction.

Zach Vicars is a freshman English and history major from St. Louis, Mo.

AROUND THE QUAD

What was your favorite part of the Super Bowl telecast?



"Bruce Springsteen's crotch camera slam — I rewound it a lot."

Ashley Howard sophomore



"I only got to watch ten minutes of it — just Bruce Springsteen."

Stephanie Scott freshman



"I was studying so I didn't get to watch at all."

Sarah Naji sophomore



"I watched bits and pieces — just a little bit of the game."

Audrey Zimelman junior

Public architecture needs facelift



Megan Klco

I glimpsed historical France before I set foot off the plane. From my tiny airline window I saw chateaus and cathedrals on stony hilltops with countless red-roofed houses tucked into their crooks. On the way to my new flat, my host parent and I wove through curvy, narrow streets while she explained that the French protest widening and straightening their roads — they prefer the meandering paths of their ancestors. "We like the history," she explained. "And we don't mind taking the long way around."

Each feature of Aix is a fusion of old and new. In the center of the once-walled city, the ancient, winding roads are narrower than U.S. alleys. Trains speed past the town on century-old arched bridges. Graffiti climbs the walls of traditional stone cottages. The university itself is housed in a weathered church on a square that was part of the original Roman settlement. France's past is a living part of its present.

I watched all this history go by my window and thought, "Why don't we have anything like that?" One answer is simple: as a nation, we are young. We are not home to ancient aqueducts or medieval castles. We

are a nation of immigrants, and our lineage is mismatched. Unlike the owners of one castle I visited, where the same line of direct descendants has lived for more than 1,000 years, we Americans trace our ancestry across oceans — if we bother to consider it at all. Unlike the French, we lack litters of historic leftovers and a shared sense of ancestral pride, so we tend to focus more on the present.

But our youth only is half of the equation. On a recent trip to Chicago (to acquire my French visa), I was sitting in a Subway restaurant when I looked up past the faux-stucco formica walls to discover beautiful art deco-era moldings wrapped around the ceiling. I had wandered into a building more than 100 years old, but if I hadn't happened to look upward, I never would have known it. The Subway franchise had slapped fake, removable wall panels over the building's pre-existing decor. But why? Why fake the vintage bistro feel in a building that had already aged elegantly? Why spoil our decorative history with something so obviously cheap and disposable?

The answer is a tough one to swallow: because disposability is our culture.

We Americans hide our art in galleries and our history in museums. In our high-quantity, low-cost frenzy, we build for the present. Our cheap, suburban housing

complexes are the residential equivalents of paper plates and plastic sporks. This here-today, gone-tomorrow architecture includes restaurants, businesses and homes across the country that bear no mark of history or culture and stand no chance against the test of time.

We've gotten lazy in our public architecture. When faced with a question of time or cost, we choose what's easy — we choose what's cheap. We cut corners. We genericize. We pepper endless cul-de-sacs with artless, stucco clones. At the risk of sounding like your grandmother, they just don't make things like they used to anymore.

This leads me to wonder: For a generation in which shortcuts and penny-pinching have upstaged quality, how will history remember this age in art and architecture? What will remain in 100 years as

We Americans hide our art in galleries and our history in museums.

proof of our nation's rich and varied culture? Individually, we can commit ourselves to contributing to our society things that, if not lasting, are at least unique. We can flavor the American melting pot with our own ideas, writing, actions and art. But I have to wonder, in this age of disposability, when our brimming landfills rise higher than our monuments, will the legacy of my generation be one of waste?

Megan Klco is a senior painting major from Liberty, Mo.

Super Bowl sets pop culture tone



Brenna McDermott

Super Bowl Sunday is not a sporting event — it is a pop culture phenomenon.

I am not a football fan, and — given Truman students' football game attendance records — you probably aren't either. However, there is one football game that I never miss: a game that seems to be about more than just the turf and the players and the fans. There is just something irresistible about the Super Bowl.

The Super Bowl isn't just a sporting event or another day of TV, and it definitely isn't just another football game. I wouldn't call it any of those things actually, because it has become so much more in American culture. It is the most watched TV event of the year. The Oscars? Only for snobby film watchers. The World Series? Too many games. The Super Bowl is the perfect mix of so many different elements.

The Super Bowl has something for everyone. Those who love football get to watch the two best teams in the country compete against each other. Those who love pop culture get to see the "best" commercials of 2009. Those who love music get to see great live performances during halftime. Those who love gossip and tabloid news get to see Janet Jackson's chest or whatever crazy thing inevitably happens at the Super Bowl. Those who love to go to a good party and eat good food get to gorge themselves every Super Bowl Sunday.

This is an iconic event. Who could forget about Nipplegate in 2004? That event changed the way the world and the Federal Communications Commission viewed television. One woman's "wardrobe malfunction" forced the FCC to increase the punishment for indecency on television. It might have been the most controversial television event during the entire year of 2004.

The commercials during the Super Bowl set the standard for commercials for the rest of the year. Major publications do extensive studies on reactions to commercials. Trying to make audiences laugh has never been such a serious business.

Like so many things in popular culture, the Super Bowl started out as a fairly simple event. "American Idol" was just a show, and now it is a cultural phenomenon. The Super Bowl can do what no other sporting event, television show or reason to party can do. It helps define our collective popular culture. The Super Bowl is the epitome of a water cooler topic. I mean, what other event in popular culture has a day reserved for it? Grammy Sunday? I don't think so. "American Idol" Results Show Wednesday? Nope. That honor is reserved only for Super Bowl Sunday.

The Super Bowl is a cornucopia of entertainment and stupidity, and it's a reason to get drunk on a Sunday afternoon. The Super Bowl would hold no interest for me — or anyone else who doesn't really care about football — if it were just a game, but it is the perfect combination of all the things that this country loves. It is one event that nearly all Americans can enjoy, for whatever reason. I never thought I'd say it, but damn, I am lovin' me some football.

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