

# The Littleton Examiner

A News Magazine for the People of Littleton

Volume 1 - No. 1



**City Council Candidate Brzecezk  
Presents Evidence to Council That  
Littleton Residents Were Overcharged  
on Sewer Fees.**

**City Council Candidate Clark Presents  
Evidence to Council that the Sewer  
Plant does not need to be expanded.  
The \$81 Million cost to Littleton is  
Unnecessary.**

# Council Candidate Marty Brzecezk Presents Evidence of Overcharges to City Council

At the Littleton City Council Meeting on Tuesday, September 20, Candidate Marty Brzecezk presented evidence to the council that while people who lived outside Littleton had their sewer rates raised by 12%, Littleton residents had their rates raised by 19%.

During a special council meeting on September 13, Brzecezk requested 10 minutes to address council and show them his evidence that the rates inside the city had been raised by 19% even though the staff claimed that the rates were the same inside and outside Littleton city limits.

City Manager, Jim Woods, asked Brzecezk to make the presentation right then at the special meeting. Brzecezk replied that he had to show some slides to make his point and needed the time at a regular council meeting.

Council Members Conklin and Kast asked Brzecezk to meet with the Red Oak consulting group to go over the figures before the regular council meeting. Brzecezk agreed.

The meeting with a representative of Red Oak and Charlie Blosten, Littleton's Director of Public Services and Brzecezk took place on Thursday the 15th in Blosten's office. Brzecezk presented his evidence in full at this meeting.

Brzecezk next attended the City Council Agenda session on Monday the 19th. The attendees were City Manager Jim Woods, Deputy City Manager Phil Cortese, City Attorney Larry Berkowitz, Mayor John Ostermiller, Mayor Pro Tem Ray Koernig and Council Member Rebecca Kast. Brzecezk presented his evidence in full to this group.

During the council meeting on the 20th, Brzecezk presented the same evidence to all members of council. On one chart from the city's Red Oak Study that Brzecezk showed it was clear that sewer rates for Littleton Residents were raised by 19%.

The city's position has been that all rates, both for Littleton Residents and sewer users outside the city who contracted with Littleton for sewer service, were raised by the same amount for the most recent bill. Even after three presentations of the evidence by Brzecezk to city staff, council members and representatives of the Red Oak group, no one has challenged the evidence.

Brzecezk thought that the overcharge could be corrected by giving residents and businesses a credit on next years bill for the overcharge. City Manager Jim Woods said that costs weren't exact and he would have to wait to see what the costs were at the end of the year.

# City Council Candidate, Doug Clark, Presents Evidence to Council that Sewer Plant is Not Needed

At the Littleton City Council Meeting on Tuesday, September 20, Candidate Doug Clark presented evidence to the council to the effect that the sewer plant expansion is not needed now, was never needed and will not likely be needed during our lifetimes.

Clark used Littleton's own reports and documents to show that there was no sewage flow quantity that triggered the multi-million dollar contract to increase the size of the present plant.

Clark said that he had presented, "Overwhelming evidence from the Red Oak report when he (Clark) added the actual flow figures from 2001 through 2005 showing that the plant wasn't needed."

"If construction on the plant continues, sewer tap fees must be increased." Clark said when asked how the plant costs should be paid.

Clark challenged the growth projection figures that were used by Red Oak in the study used to set the fees for all users, "The figures are out of whack, the consultants made an error in estimating Littleton's 2005 population as 47,000; it's 41,000."

Council was shown the information that follows on an overhead projector.

## Project Costs

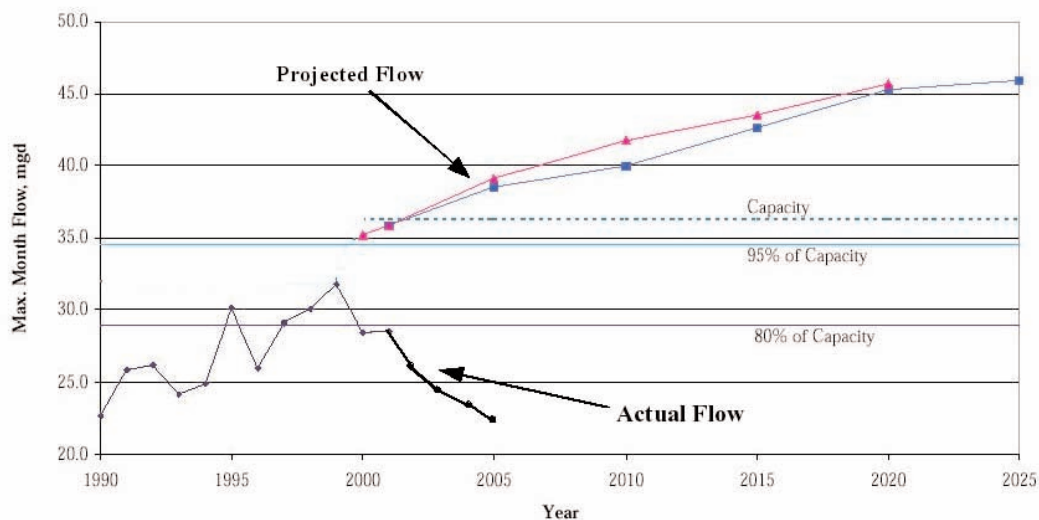
- **Total project without financing costs = \$114 Million. Littleton's Share: \$57M**
- **Littleton borrows \$51M, repayment cost of \$75M (page 34 of 2004 CAFR)**
- **Total project cost for Littleton: \$75M + \$6M cash from sewer fund = \$81M**
- **Expansion part = \$58.5M or 51% of project**
- **Therefore Littleton's expansion costs = \$41M (.513 x \$81M = \$41.553M)**

## Tap Fees

- Red Oak March 2005 study shows \$13M collected in next 10 years (2005-2014)
- This includes ~\$6M payment in 2006 for Roxborough/Martin
- Even if you assume next 10 years = first 10 years, only \$26M collected in 20 years
- More realistic projection is ~\$20M (\$13M + \$13M - \$6M Roxborough)

**Taps Fees collected in next 20 years are \$20M less than City's expansion costs!**

Maximum Month Flows - Chart taken from Brown and Caldwell, page 4-19. 2002-2005 flows added thru Aug



## **Why Do the Project?**

- **Contrary to the Littleton Report - Sewer Plant is NOT at capacity**
- **Sewer Plant has not reached CO State 95% threshold for starting construction**
- **Current flows are about at the level they were in 1990**

## **Conclusion**

- **City is building an expansion that is not needed**
- **To serve growth outside of the city**
- **That Littleton residents are paying for**

## **This is an \$81 Million Screw-up**

Clark believes that the current council members will continue with the project even though the financing numbers are wrong and Littleton Residents will have to pay a major portion of the cost. This will result in Littleton Residents subsidizing developers outside Littleton.

# The Littleton Examiner

Publication information

Publisher – Jack Randall

Email: [info@littletonexaminer.com](mailto:info@littletonexaminer.com)

Mailing address – Littleton Examiner PO Box 777 Littleton, Colorado 80160-0777

*The Littleton Examiner is being introduced to the residents of Littleton by a direct mailing of the first issue. It will also be published and archived on the web.*

*The Littleton Examiner will cover interesting or peculiar things in Littleton including the Littleton Government.*

The government of the City of Littleton has done and is doing most of their jobs in an excellent manner. I refer you to the city's own newspaper The Littleton Report. It is published every other month, mailed to every resident of the city and available in many locations around the city. There is no charge for the paper and there is no outside advertising. The taxpayers pay all the cost.

When the city does something right, they will tell you about in the above described Littleton Report. They will also issue press releases to other newspapers to trumpet a success.

Understandably, they won't rush to publish or broadcast any error or mistake. The Littleton Examiner will let you know about policy and general management decisions.

We are not interested in personality problems between an individual city employee and a citizen. If one arises, tell the City Manager and your 3 City Council members. We will not publish it.

We will have a section of Letters to the Community. This area is to publish letters from readers to the other members of the community. Personal attacks will not be published, but a healthy debate will be highlighted.

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## **City Council Spends \$16,000 To Find Out What “No” Means**

Jack Randall

When we voted down Littleton City Council’s attempt to make us pay \$15 Million plus interest for a 54,000 square foot police building with underground parking, we thought that we had sent a simple message – NO!

Apparently not. In December 2004, the city council spent \$5,000 for a consultant to call some randomly chosen voters and ask them what NO! meant. The consultant reported to council during a special meeting.

Time went on and nothing changed. Not the police department needs, not the building plans, not the cost to build, not the location and certainly not their minds.

So in July, the city council signed an agreement to pay \$11,000 PLUS EXPENSES to a different consultant to find out what NO! means.

### **The Background Of The Recent \$11,000 Spending City Council Meeting on July 5th**

On Tuesday the 5th of July the Director of Communications for the City of Littleton, Kelli Narde, recommended to the Littleton City Council that they approve a consulting contract.

#### **City Council Discussion**

The contract was placed before the Council Members for approval as a Consent Agenda Item. The Consent Agenda is for non-controversial items that won’t require discussion. Any Council Member can remove an item from the Consent Agenda for discussion.

Continued on page 4

Mayor John Ostermiller proceeded to ask for the Consent Agenda approval.

Council Member Tom Mulvey requested discussion of the consulting agreement. The Mayor complied.

Mulvey called for Narde to answer some questions. He said that the agreement as described to the council in a study session was only for \$10,000. Narde agreed but said that the final contract had been increased to \$11,000 to pay for analysis.

Mulvey then pointed out that Section 3.03 of the agreement included the phrase “fees and expenses” and that focus group sessions usually had expenses connected. Narde said that the contract was for \$11,000 and that was all that would be paid.

No more questions were asked of her and the other two references in Article 5 of the agreement to the phrase “fees and expenses” weren’t discussed – nor were they taken out of the contract during council discussion.

Mulvey moved to table the agreement but the motion died for lack of a second.

Koernig then moved that the council approve the agreement and it passed by a 5 – 1 vote. Mulvey voted No and Council Member Pat Cronenberger was not present for the meeting.

Presumably, the agreement was then signed by Ostermiller and Maria Garcia Berry, CEO of CRL Associates, Inc.

### **The Council Communication Examined**

A Council Communication is always given to council when a motion needs approval. This one was presented by Kelli Narde stating:

“Council is asked to consider approval of a contract with CRL Associates, Inc. to conduct citizen focus groups to learn more about the reasons voters turned down the ballot question to construct a new police administration building November, 2004.” and

### **“HISTORY AND FACTS”**

“In December, 2004, a telephone poll of 400 registered voters was conducted by the Public Information Corporation. Among the poll findings were that “less expensive alternatives exist” was the number one negative campaign statement that was important to poll participants. At a study session on May, 10, 2005, council directed staff to meet with CRL Associates, Inc. to determine alternatives for learning more about what that statement meant to those who voted against the project. Sean Walsh, CRL Account Executive and Todd Vitale, from Vitale & Associates, recommended focus group research as an effective method to gain a better understanding of voter sentiment. They explained that telephone polling provides good quantitative information but focus groups provide better qualitative information. At a study session on June 14, 2005, Walsh and Vitale explained to council the mechanics of focus group research and got feedback from council on the focus group goals.”

## **“CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS”**

“The focus group research will give council better information in order to make decisions on how to proceed with construction of a new police building. Staff recommends approval of the contract.”

### **The Contract Examined**

(Narde calls it a “contract” but it is titled “CONSULTING AGREEMENT”)

The Consulting Agreement between the City of Littleton and CRL Associates, Inc. includes: “Section 2.01 SPECIFIC SERVICES. Consultant has been retained by Client to conduct on behalf of the City of Littleton qualitative research in the form of focus groups; provide results and analysis of same; provide strategic and tactical direction for the timing and execution of an outreach plan based on research results.” and

“Section 3.01. FEES. For general management and supervision services provided by Consultant, Client agrees to pay consultant in accordance with the following terms and conditions:

1) Client will pay a fee of \$11,000 for focus groups including strategic meetings and phone calls, outreach planning and updating of select staff.” and

“Section 3.03. TIME FOR PAYMENT. Client agrees to pay invoices for approved fees and expenses upon execution of contract.”

### **Analysis of the Consulting Agreement**

Nowhere in the agreement is the subject of the qualitative research been mentioned.

The “outreach plan” is not further defined.

The phrase “fees and expenses” is included three times. This is probably a form that contemplates expenses so the language would be standard.

If, the contract was only for the fees, the council could have approved the agreement and deleted the phrase “and expenses”. They didn’t do it after Narde told them strongly that the contract was for \$11,000. Her statement is in conflict with the written words of the contract.

During the next regular council meeting on July 19, I asked the council for the definition of an “outreach plan” and Council Member Koernig responded as follows:

“Mayor Pro Tem Koernig said the intent was to learn in a more concise manner what the voters were thinking when they voted against the police facility. Council believed there was an absolute need for a new facility and it would help Council provide information to the citizens and the best way to proceed to accomplish a new facility.

## General Comments

I cannot find any record of reduction of any kind from the Space Needs Analysis (SNA) prepared for Council in 2001.

Council discussions seem to focus around the incomprehensible election results. (Although one council member told the other members to read the newspapers).

I can find no effort of any members of council or city staff to investigate serious rethinking of the 2004 ballot attempt for a police station.

They **didn't** go back to their original architect.

They **didn't** hire a new architect.

They **didn't** reassess their needs.

They **didn't** go looking for a new site.

They **did** hire CRL Associates, the best election firm in the state whose most recent victory was the FasTracks election that had failed before.

Littleton hired CRL to do that which they do best of all:

“ . . .provide strategic and tactical direction for the timing and execution of an outreach plan based on research results.”

If that timing is for a Tuesday in November and the outreach plan includes advertising, the strategy would be an election and the tactics – selling the same police building for the same price in a new improved way.

## Best Guess

Don't bet against the staff pushing for a new campaign to convince the voters that the original plan was the best solution and that NO! really means give the voters another chance to do that which the staff wants.

## Remember

There is still land elsewhere to build a police facility that wouldn't require expensive underground parking.

The city still has a surplus in a fund that could be used to build a police facility.

The city knows of the need and has known since at least 2001.

The police *still need* a new larger upgraded facility – but the one they need is not the one that the city council asked us to buy.

## Coverage to Come

**We are examining documents to report on the following:**

**Police Facility Revisited** – what did the Council find out for their \$11,000? What was the focus of the focus groups?

**City Surplus in Water Fund** – why did the council spend more than \$2 MILLION from the Water Participation Fund and then say that the fund couldn't be touched except to build a dam?

**Council Agendas and Minutes** – why doesn't the council publish the agendas and minutes of the Special Meetings that they used to call "Study Sessions" where all the real work of council goes on?

**Channel 8** - Why, when council talks so much about public participation, outreach and community pride, won't they restore televising all council meetings?

**City Council Candidates** – now eleven candidates are vying to fill four Littleton City Council seats.

- What do they believe in?
- What do they want to accomplish?
- What do they propose?
- What do they oppose?
- Will they listen to you or just talk at you?
- Will they answer questions or just make sounds after you ask a question?
- Do they have a vision for the future and does it agree with yours?
- How much of your money do they want to spend?
- What is their opinion of the need for a Police Facility? Do they support the plan proposed in the 2004 election?
- Do they have a belief as to the optimum size of city government or do they just want it as big as possible?

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## **ALICE IN LITTLETON**

Hi. My name's Alice. Unlike my counterpart in the famous book, I am not curious or adventurous by nature. I made a resolution to change that at the beginning of this year, and since it is now August, I figure I'd best get started. Being a practical person, I decided to explore my own city first. I invite you to join me on my journey to discover Littleton, Colorado.



### **ALICE VISITS THE LITTLETON HISTORICAL MUSEUM**

I entered the Littleton Historical Museum's new building and was met by the smiling faces of two volunteers who told me there was no fee, only a request for a donation. Taking a moment to scan the brochures I picked up, I learned the museum is a part of the Smithsonian Institution's Affiliations Program and is also accredited by the American Association of Museums.

I checked out the four galleries inside the museum building and found them informative. But it wasn't until I got outside that I found the Wonderland I was looking for—two carefully preserved farms.

From this point, I felt transported back in time (a huge trash bin in one of the corrals notwithstanding). I trod dirt paths, which meandered in a pleasing way. On my left was a small apple orchard. On my right was a corral which held a large brown cow. I felt awe, just

like the small kids around me, at the sheer size of that bovine. And I laughed out loud at the two pigs in the next pen as they happily rooted in the mud.

I spent some time sitting with two mules, listening to them munch hay. It was a slow, methodical sound which I found very relaxing. I also liked inhaling their particular scent. There is just something about the mixture of dried hay, dung, and hide that I particularly enjoy (the flies seem to, also).

The next corral held sheep, which are of particular interest to me since I am a knitter. I read in the museum brochure that there is a program where you can spend time herding, shearing, dyeing, spinning, and weaving. I'm going to look into that.

From here on, all the corrals were empty, as were the fields. The mothers and grandmothers with children all turned around, and I found myself alone. I savored the quiet, broken only by the occasional rooster crowing and the breeze rustling the leaves of the many cottonwoods that surround the museum grounds.

I leaned on one of the fences and pondered the people who had lived like this. It must've a hard life—they had to grow or make everything—but I feel sure there was a special quality to living that close to nature.

Rousing myself, I checked out the 1860s-era log farmhouse and tried to imagine being a part of a family living in its two rooms--one up and one down--and cooking over the fire. Romantic, maybe, but I'll bet those frontier women welcomed the coming of modern conveniences—like a stove and indoor plumbing!

After a quick look at Ketring Lake from the beautiful gazebo, I passed into the 1890s-era farm. I was greeted by two peacocks, who followed me into the Blacksmith Shop. The fact that it was almost ninety degrees outside helped me imagine the heat from the fire the blacksmith always had going to help him bend and shape his iron.

I saw more cows, pigs, horses, and gardens—all pretty similar to the 1860s side. But then I got to the 1890s farmhouse. It had two bedrooms, a pantry, a kitchen with a large cookstove, a dining room, and a parlor with a piano and a woodstove, not to mention rugs on all the floors. This house I could've lived in!

I left the museum feeling very satisfied with my adventure into Littleton's past. I had been reminded of the beauty of a simpler life and thankful that these farms have been preserved by Littleton so they can be experienced by future generations.

The Littleton Historical Museum is located at 6028 S. Gallup Street, Littleton, CO 80120. Call 303-795-3950 for hours of operation or visit their web page at [www.littletongov.org/museum](http://www.littletongov.org/museum).

## Field Notes - KEEPING LITTLETON SAFE FROM A FOREIGN PERIL



I spotted the first tree stump 100 yards away. The dull roar of the chipper and the piercing whine of chainsaws combined with the alarm bells in my head in a symphony of dread. They were cutting down trees on my beloved Lee Gulch Trail!

How could this be? Littleton, for all its flowering crabapples, majestic cottonwoods and purple ash trees, was barren prairie a hundred years ago. We treasure our trees, lovingly planted by past generations. The South Suburban Parks and Recreation crew stopped work to let me pass, and I seized the opportunity to get to the bottom of the destruction. With what I hoped was a disarming smile, I casually asked, “What’s up?” In other cities, I would have expected a shrug of indifference and a mumbled answer. But this is the polite city of Littleton.

Crew chief Bob Anderson fielded my question. “We’re taking out the Russian olive trees because they’re a non-native species.”

Gulp! I’m a non-native species in Littleton! I wisely kept my mouth shut. “Russian olives are on the state noxious weed list and they crowd out native plants like cottonwood, chokecherry and willow. Their wood is very hard, and they don’t have many bugs, so birds don’t use them for food.”

A tough tree that resists insect infestation. What’s not to like? He went on about Russian olives hogging all the water and being so prolific that they change the ecosystem dramatically. All told, a very thorough explanation, complete with a list of bird and plant species turning their backs on our fair city because of the Russian invasion.

He had me at noxious weed.

I understand how unchecked non-native species can wreak havoc on the environment. Tamarisk has displaced native willows along western rivers and kudzu has all but the south. But these are live, healthy, beautiful trees.

I jogged with troubled thoughts, and ached for each doomed Russian olive I passed. I ran into an acquaintance and her beagle, Octavio. Brenda knew all about the Russian olive purge. “Can’t they find something better to spend my tax dollars on?” she sneered. “Notice that they’re not replanting anything.” I took Octavio’s quiet panting for confirmation of that disturbing fact.

I was on to something big. I called my city council representative, Rebecca Kast, City Council liaison to the Tree Committee in Littleton. She happily explained that the city is committed to Russian olive control, and said that South Suburban Parks and Recreation, the agency that manages much of Littleton’s open space, had worked with City Council from the planning stages of the project.

“Why all the trees?” I asked. “Why not take them out selectively?”

“That was my first question,” she replied thoughtfully. For a moment, I envisioned Councilwoman Kast storming the barricades, leading Littleton tree lovers on a mission to save the Russian olives. My revolutionary thoughts fizzled with her rational explanation. It’s more cost effective to send the tree removal crews in once. And selective removal defeats the purpose, because Russian olives spread rapidly. Then, she told me about how her sons had climbed the Russian olives in Lee Gulch when they were growing up.

My next call was to Littleton City Arborist David Flaig. Russian olive abatement in Littleton started in the 1990s when the Mary Carter Greenway was being developed along the South Platte River. “The Russian olives were so thick you couldn’t even see the river in spots,” he said. They were removed, freeing the riverbank for willows and wildflowers. Still, nearly \$10,000 a year is spent on removing Russian olive saplings along the Platte. “You can’t take proper care of the Platte unless you clear the tributaries because the Russian olive seeds establish themselves quickly.”

I’ve ridden my bike along the Mary Carter Greenway for years, and never noticed any denuded areas. “If you aggressively manage Russian olives, native species will quickly fill in,” Flaig said.

The buck stopped with Scott Grimes, Forestry Horticulture Supervisor for South Suburban Parks and Recreation District. “We’re working our way down each drainage clearing out the Russian olives. This summer, we did the stretch of Lee Gulch from Broadway to the Platte River,” he said. “Took out 967 trees.” I winced at the body count.

By now I knew enough about the perils of Russian olives to pass a forestry exam, so I concentrated on the human aspect of the project. Grimes and South Suburban initiated a communications program several weeks before the cutting started. Letters were sent to homeowners whose property abutted Lee Gulch. “We wanted to make sure property owners knew we were coming, what we were going to do and that they could trust us to put it back together,” Grimes said. The letters included his phone number. “I got calls from about 15 or 20 people. Some positive, some not, especially people whose property is screened from the trail by the Russian olives,” he said. “We met with everyone who was concerned at their homes.”

An outraged citizenry! Never mind that Grimes had included his direct line in his letter and had personal meetings with anyone who asked. I was finally getting to the seamy underbelly of the scandal. I threw down my trump card. “What about replanting?” I asked, echoing Brenda and Octavio’s accusation.

“Removing a tree is the first step in replanting a tree. We’re spending \$10,000 on replanting this fall,” Grimes said. “That’s two-thirds of the tree budget.” I made a mental note never to trust Octavio as a source again. “We’re planting cottonwoods, hackberry, golden current, plum and other native species. We’re also planting evergreens in some of the areas most affected. They’ll provide cover for wildlife and better screening than the Russian olives.”

I noticed on my next jog that recent rain had sparked a growth spurt in the damaged grass around the stumps. Lee Gulch was repairing itself. I cut across the field to where an older gentleman was watering a tiny cottonwood, its trunk staked and wrapped to protect it from beavers. “I’m glad they’re getting rid of the Russian olives,” he said. “They don’t belong here.” He set the hose down and crossed his arms. “Lee Gulch is going to be around for a long time. We’ve got to take care of it.”

Walking home, I knew that I would miss the Russian olives, with their silvery gray foliage and soft perfume on June mornings. Good stewardship of open space can be bittersweet.

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PO Box 777  
Littleton, CO 801160