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Kick Mick (upstairs)

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The following story took place in Aspen in the 1980s and was one of the year's more entertaining political incidents. I'm relying on memory so a former Aspen City Council member will go unnamed, but here's basically what happened.

During a meeting, City Council was dutifully listening to the public comment on something or other, when one City Council member passed a note to another. Council member No. 2 (the note receiver) took the note, opened it, chuckled, glanced over at council member No. 1 with a conspiratorial grin, then crumpled up the piece of paper and tossed it in the trash.

After the meeting a curious newspaper reporter rummaged through the trash can and extracted the note (along with, probably, any leftover pizza that might also have been deposited there). The note said something like, "Did you ever notice John Smith [a made up name here] has the biggest ears in town?" I don't remember whether the resulting letters to the editor stuck to speculation that John Smith did in fact have the biggest ears in town, but some of them took the note-passing City Council member to task for making fun of a member of the public.

Why bring up this incident? Blame it on Aspen Daily News reporter Andrew Travers. Young Mr. Travers covered the March 18 Elected Officials Transportation Commission (EOTC) meeting and wrapped up his report by informing readers that Aspen Mayor Mick Ireland "... apparently expressed his boredom throughout the proceeding by pointing his finger at his head and pantomiming shooting himself and feigning choking himself while other board members spoke."

Like the 1980s reporter who retrieved the note from the trash can, Travers took the initiative to mention the most revealing aspect of the EOTC meeting — Ireland's apparent boredom.

Why is Ireland's alleged boredom so important? For one thing, it means if he's this bored with local politics, maybe it's time for voters to kick him upstairs, where discussions are more stimulating. We're talking the Colorado statehouse, where a former Democrat (Kathleen Curry) has become an Independent, so Democrats will need a candidate next time around.

Think of it. Mick in Denver where his knowledge about transportation, the environment, the evils of the free-market system and more can be put to better use. Besides, there's no really no need for Ireland to limit himself to Aspen anymore. The free market has finally accomplished what Ireland and other no-growthers couldn't do — halt development. Aspen is already slipping back into the beloved "Quiet Years" all by itself, so the city doesn't need Ireland to help shove it in that direction.

Meanwhile, down in Basalt, a Town Council candidate's quote has come back to bite her.

If you'll remember, candidate Anne Freedman is also a Colorado Mountain College board member. During

last summer's CMC budget hearing, she defended the board latching on to a property tax windfall by saying the college "needs the money."

A letter to the editor writer recently reminded Basalt residents of Freedman's stand on taxes (paraphrased: CMC needs the money more than the people who earned it in the first place). The letter writer failed, however, to point out what CMC is using these windfall tax dollars for. For example, CMC is running ads in local newspapers, urging people to enroll in such classes as ballroom dancing, spring shape up and my personal fave "Facebook, MySpace, You Tube: Social Networking Basics."

Now, there's nothing wrong with CMC offering continuing education classes in such things as ballroom dancing and such, but aren't there other ways potential students can find out about the classes? Such as the college catalog, the Internet, press releases, posters and word of mouth? It looks like CMC would rather spend taxpayer money on advertising than return the money to its rightful owners.

One final note on Freedman: During CMC's budget hearing she also favored limiting public input to five minutes. She commented that when the public gets more than five minutes, things can get "out of control." Good luck, Basalt. If Freedman wins a spot on Town Council, you'd better bring your watches to those public hearings because stem-winders will be a thing of the past.

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