

Sense or NONsense

**Cornfields, roadkill and straight-line highways**  
*Time is truly precious.*  
Some say time is our most precious commodity.  
I ask you: where would we be without energy?



Neil O. Nelson

Water is often a very scarce commodity.  
Rare books are a rare commodity. So is butter, land and patience, not necessarily in that order.  
What about clean air?  
Many say it is our children.  
I recognize that agriculture will continue to produce plenty of food commodities, but aside from substances or material products that can be traded, bought or sold – the true definition of commodities, I know – the intangibles in life, I believe, are the most precious of commodities.  
In my travels over the Blue Highways on my decades-old roadmap, I encountered mostly cornfields, roadkill and straight-line highways, which became mirages and illusions the longer I drove. Hardly precious commodities, cornfields, roadkill and straight-line highways, but they're out there, in every landscape. The roadways reach the horizon, unimpeded, except for the occasional roadkill.  
After living for eight decades, I should have an idea what is a precious commodity.  
There was the day when I believed beer was our most precious commodity.  
Ahhh, yes. "Beer here."  
Faraway acquaintances often inquire of the towns and people I encountered in my travels; places I lived; newspapers I worked for; back shops I worked in.  
Priceless relationships,

valuable experiences, memorable times, all, but precious commodities?  
Hard to draw a correlation there, other than in the northern James River Valley, all the men swear their fertilizer-branded caps are priceless, while all the women let their hair down on weekends, and all the above average children are high-achievers.  
In the southwest area of the state, all the men are bowlegged, all the women wear chaps, and all the children are awarded blue ribbons for riding sheep.  
Out west, all the men kick holes in their ground, hoping there's oil 'down there,' all the women are banking on it, and all the children could give a hoot.  
In the Red River Valley, all the men bank on huge machinery, all the women ride combines, and all the children have keys to the trucks.  
In the northeast, all the men curl, all the women watch over cocktails from the glassed-in viewing lounges, and all the children cheer from the sidelines.  
I'm told all the men in the northwest region of North Dakota wish their sons were basketball players, all the women count on it, and all the children would rather be hockey players.  
In the southcentral part of the state, all the men play slow-pitch softball, all the women wait downtown for the final out, and all the children cruise main street.  
A significant number of people believe we cannot be without newspapers.  
Anyway, there you have it: precious commodities, from the air we breathe to energy, water, rare books, butter, land and patience to our children, cornfields, roadkill and straight-line highways to sheep, oil, larger-than-life machinery, softball, curling, cocktails and newspapers.  
Did I mention time?  
Of course, in the beginning.  
Actually, the beginning marked the first moment of time.  
And it's still with us . . .

City needs to communicate with residents

We are writing to expand on our perspective of the issue and article regarding the Lessard Avenue special assessments. We are so disappointed by the current processes in place – especially the lack of written notice and failure to communicate with property owners at numerous levels of our project. This is becoming taxation without representation, and is un-American. It is clearly not common knowledge that our sole form of communication would be public notices and district numbers would need to be decoded. An entire neighborhood signed to appeal the special assessments that were received. We were blindsided.  
Let it be clear: this was not some coordinated effort to take advantage of the system. Elderly residents, families with newborns, working-class homeowners and business owners endured months of disruption under the assumption that the city was following its past practices of communication. They were not. The city has not been transparent in communicating that they stopped mailing letters of notice and will now only provide public notice.  
They are also inconsistent in posting notice on their own webpage. According to the city attorney, the city is no longer mailing notices because they simply don't have to. Also because the USPS is unreliable and a letter could

be missed by a property owner. An entire neighborhood was missed and the city clearly did not care. The city attorney also stated previously that the cost of mailing notices was an issue. To claim that the city couldn't afford postage for fewer than 30 letters – yet could issue tens of thousands of dollars in special assessments to individual households – is insulting and unacceptable.  
Not only were we blindsided by the high special assessments due to lack of notice and transparency, but the "benefit" was calculated after the assessments were appealed. We were told at the city council meeting that it is perfectly acceptable and is the city's common practice. How can you determine cost v.s benefit and whether it is reasonable or worthwhile to do a project if you don't calculate these numbers before actually doing the project?  
At two different meetings, city employees suggested property owners on Lessard be contacted and consulted due to project changes and rising costs. Yet, no one reached out, and the project continued to be escalated by city council members – on our dime. In Horace, homeowners were recently blindsided with special assessments— this time exceeding \$120,000. There is no cap on what this city can impose in special assessments. If this can happen to us, it can happen to you and the amount could

be higher. We are writing our perspective because we feel it is important to note that this issue extends beyond Lessard Avenue.  
Several business owners live on our street. It's reasonable to conclude that if their cost of living rises, so would the cost they pass on to consumers. If you own a business in town, know that the city also made it harder for your customers – our neighbors – to spend that extra dollar to shop local. The ripple effect of this decision will touch many in the community, not just those directly assessed.  
Why was Lessard Avenue, one of the newest streets in Grafton and one with no formal complaints, prioritized for major work only after the city had sold all remaining lots? Why did the city stop mailing letters after residents started showing up to meetings and voting against projects their households couldn't afford? Why were there council members who originally voted against this project being done at all, but then voted to deny our appeals? Why do some council members remain completely silent during meetings, only to cast a vote without engaging in discussion?  
At the most recent meeting, many city council members asked questions, encouraged changes, proposed solutions or compromises and represented various viewpoints that would reflect Grafton as a whole. We knew not everyone was

going to vote with us, but every single one of them needs to be engaging in the conversation. That is their duty.  
Our city council members were elected by the people, for the people. Their job is not only to cast votes, but to ask questions, advocate for fairness and ensure that every citizen is treated justly.  
Following the last city council meeting these are the concerns we are left with. We have not heard anything from the city – not a promise to review its processes going forward or an offer to look for a solution. They need to be held accountable for their poor communication and reckless use of our money. At this point the only follow-up we have received is a letter from the city telling us where to mail our checks.  
We urge Grafton residents to speak out. This situation is not just about Lessard Avenue—it's about the kind of small town we want to live in and the values we expect our leadership to uphold. If we don't demand change, who will?"  
— Kelly Desautel  
— Amy Geiger  
— Holly Keeley  
— Evan and Carissa Klug  
— Lindsay A. Presteng  
— J.R. and Stephanie Steele  
— Vonda Collette  
— Todd and Mary Morgan  
— Scott and DeeDee Vogsland  
— Chris and Marcia Olson  
Grafton residents

County Court Report

**JULY 2025 DISPOSITIONS**  
Michael J. Freyling, Park River, harassment-emergency personnel. Defendant shall pay \$500 in fees and a fine. Defendant shall serve 15 months deferred imposition, set up payment schedule, 15 months unsupervised probation and violate no criminal laws.  
Dionicio Gallard Lopez, Forest River, disorderly conduct-fighting behavior. Defendant shall pay \$250 in fees. Defendant shall set up payment schedule-\$50 per month commencing Aug. 1,

2025, one year unsupervised probation, violate no criminal laws, complete an anger management program-defendant shall obtain the information from the Walsh County state's attorney and have an evaluation within 60 days of judgment-proof of completion of the program

shall be filed with the clerk of court within 180 days and 30 days in Walsh County Correction Center with first serve six days with credit given for six days served.  
Jo Vana Elaine Martinez, Grafton, driving under suspension. Defendant shall pay \$250 in fees.

Defendant shall set up payment schedule-\$50 per month commencing Sept. 30, 2025, one year unsupervised probation, violate no criminal laws and 10 days in Walsh County Correction Center with 10 days suspended.

**Farmer Jones says . . .**  
**When you spend a lot of time out here it sure is nice to go home to relax and**  
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