

VIEWPOINTS

Whatever Happened To May Day?

By Paula Damon

May Day's here...sun shines bright...birds and butterflies are in flight, blooming flowers are such a sight. Everything feels just right. May Day's here. - "May Day Is Here" lyrics, author unknown

The May Day of my childhood seems to have disappeared.

Today, the many customs to celebrate May 1 are more of an afterthought than anything else. Sadly, this once dominant springtime festival has

fallen by the wayside along with shoe horns, wooden clothespins and prayer before meals.

Once known as "Bringing in the May," the observance originated before the time of Christ with fiery celebrations of Druids in the British Isles and later with the Romans as they worshiped Flora, the goddess of flowers.

Down through the years, it evolved into a time of renewal and rejoicing, marking the return of spring with many traditions, like crowning a May Queen.

To the best of my recollection, every May 1st of my childhood consisted of making May Baskets, filling them with flowers and secretly placing them on neighbors' doorsteps - all with Mom's ready assistance.

A-tasket, a-tasket I made a May Basket. I filled it up with flowers bright and hung it on the door just right. A-tasket, a-tasket I made a May Basket. Flowers are a sign of spring and all the joy that it can bring.

Every year on that day, we went to the trouble of turning a galvanized steel flag pole at the town park across the street into our very own May Pole.

We converted that old pole into a beautifully adorned tower draped with dozens of pastel crepe paper strands.

Taking in hand one of the strands, which were twisted in visually rhythmic twirls, we'd each fan out and hop-step in a circle about the pole.

Round and round we'd go, not stopping until our legs ached and our voices grew slack from uncontrollable giggling before collapsing on the ground into half-sung sighs.

See our May Pole filled with flowers from above, the blossoms tower, fragrance rich, and perfume rare, pretty scents that fill the air.

The ancient tradition of May Poles originated centuries ago from English villagers, who would set out at dawn to gather flowers they used to adorn a large straight branch erected in the village square.

Wholeheartedly attempting to obscure remnants of winter dull-drum, villagers commenced to ceremoniously dance and sing around the branch, summoning springtime to come in and linger. Oh, yes, maybe even chanting, "Springtime, stay with us for a long while."

Violets blue and daisies white, you are here for our delight; daffodils and roses, too, pretty flowers for me and you!

It has been more than 50 years since my hands most brightly tugged on a May Pole ribbon or excitedly constructed a May Basket.

Tell us what the flowers say, as we sing and dance and play. Tell us what the flowers say on this special day! This is what the flowers say as we sing and dance and play. This is what the flowers say: It is bright May Day!

Yet without fail, I always feel a sense of grandness - a semblance of hope and eternal happiness on May 1.

SOURCES: Lyrics from "I Made a May Basket," author unknown; "May Day Song," words and music by Clara Beeson Hubbard, adapted by Terry Kluytmans.



An Open Meeting Question

By Shauna Marlette
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In the past few years, there have been a lot of discussions about open meeting laws in the state of South Dakota. Questions about when and how agendas should be presented to the community, how the community is notified of the location and time of meetings, ample notice to media in order to share information with the community - just in general making sure that anyone who would like to participate in a community meeting is allowed the opportunity to do so.

I have to be honest, I was not completely clear on all the rulings that are in place, so when I questioned how the Monday's Clay County Planning and Zoning Board meeting was announced with *Plain Talk* publisher Gary Wood, he shared with me the state law on open meetings.

"South Dakota's open meetings law embodies the principle that the public is entitled to the greatest possible information about public affairs and is intended to encourage public participation in government. SDCL 1-25-1 requires that official meetings of public bodies must be public and notice is to be given of such meetings 24 hours in advance of the meetings. While the open meetings law does not define "official meeting," specific statutes relating to cities, townships, counties and school districts define what constitutes an official meeting. In addition, the attorney general takes the position that a meeting must be open to the public if:

- 1) A legal quorum of the public body is present at the same place at the same time; and
- 2) Public business, meaning any matter relating to the activities of the entity, is discussed."

This is a direct quote of the South Dakota's Open Meetings Law (SDOML), released July, 2013.

The reason I am quoting it, I think maybe we all need a refresher.

Again, quoting SDOML, "SDCL 1-25-1.1 requires that all public bodies prominently post a notice and copy of the proposed agenda at the public body's principal office at least 24 hours PRIOR to the meeting. At a minimum, the agenda must be visible, readable, and accessible to the public for the full 24 hours immediately preceding the meeting (i.e. posted in a window facing outward). Also, the notice must be posted on the public body's website upon dissemination of



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the notice, if the public body has its own website. For special or rescheduled meetings, public bodies must comply with the regular meeting notice requirements as much as circumstances permit. The notice must be delivered in person, by mail, by email, or by telephone to all local news media who have asked to be notified. It is good practice for local media to renew requests for notification annually to remind the entity of ongoing media interest."

The information, in the past, has always been provided to the *Plain Talk* in order to allow us time to notify the public of these meetings. Had we received a public notice, it would have been posted to our website to inform the community.

The meeting was not posted on the board's website (http://www.claycountysd.org/view.php?doc_id=315), nor was the agenda visible when I looked for it at the county building.

Honestly, I knew of Monday's meeting only because at the public hearing on April 13 it was said that the next meeting would be held in two weeks. Monday afternoon I emailed Cindy Aden to confirm that the meeting was still scheduled, and asked for a time and location.

I contacted Cindy Aden on Wednesday, to clarify if the meeting had been announced and she stated that the agenda had been posted on the bulletin board at the Court House on Friday, as well as outside the original meeting room, and the room it was moved to.

Just to be clear, the law states: "Proposed agendas for public meetings must be posted at least 24 hours in advance and must include the time, date, and place of the meeting. Typically the public body adopts the final agenda upon convening the meeting and may change the order of business or delete agenda items. Ideally, new items should not be added after the meeting starts or even within the 24 hour period beforehand. The public and media should have time to determine whether to come to the meeting. However, the state Supreme Court has upheld a decision finding that agenda items may be added during a meeting and still meet the minimum legal requirements for notice."

In talking to people who were in attendance at the meeting, it was stated that they did not

see the agenda posted. It was also noted that people showed up to the court house after the meeting was finished because the time of the meeting was not known. It was also stated that the only reason they knew of the meeting was due to the comment at the public meeting.

One copy of the agenda packet was distributed to the public at the meeting, approximately five minutes prior to the start, for those in attendance to review.

To be clear, I have received notice of all school board, city council and county commission meetings, but I did not for Monday's Monday's Clay County Planning and Zoning Board meeting.

We know public officials want to follow the spirit of the law and are making great attempts to do so.

While, I am sure it was just an oversight for this meeting, with a topic as contentious as the proposed changes to the ordinance regarding CAFOs, keeping the many people who attended the public hearing in mind, it was clear many did not know of the meeting Monday, based on a turnout of approximately 20-25 people.

I sincerely thought the discussion of agenda items, CAFOs in particular, at the meeting was very good. The board members were taking into consideration what had been heard at the public hearing, debating both sides of the issue and it seems, came to a potential compromise and a starting plan of action for review. I am just concerned that not everyone who would have chosen to attend the meeting was in attendance due to the lack of notice.

Because it appears as though the meeting was not properly announced, and it is of such concern to the county, I hope to see the county commission address this issue at its upcoming meeting, and, have an open discussion to decide if the actions made by the board on Monday should be accepted.

I would hope in the future that all public meetings are announced to the community in accordance with the stated regulations in order to allow for as many to attend who wish to.

In order to help clarify the issue of South Dakota public meeting laws, a copy of "Conducting the Public's Business In Public, A Guide To South Dakota's Open Meeting Laws" is being distributed to officials who fall under these rules. In addition, if there is anyone in the community would like a free copy of the Guide, they are available at the *Plain Talk* offices.

Pastor's Corner

We are Better than the Worst Thing We Have Ever Done

By Deacon Denny Davis
St. Agnes Parish, Vermillion

"We are better than the worst thing we have ever done."

This is a phrase used by Sr. Helen Prejean who has walked with death row inmates for many years. I believe she is right in that we as citizens of South Dakota and as people of faith have a responsibility to begin to see our part in putting a human being to death through state sponsored executions. This is not to say that the horrible crimes committed are not devastating to the victim's families as well as the fear and shock that reverberate through society. Obviously the person committing murder deserves to have severe consequences for their behavior. Is not life in prison without parole a harsh enough consequence? Pope Francis in Oct.

of 2014 said, "life in prison without parole is a hidden death penalty." He further said, "it is impossible to imagine that states today cannot make use of another means than capital punishment to defend people's lives from an unjust aggressor." (Oct. 23, 2014 meeting with representatives of the International Association of penal Law)

We have two choices here in South Dakota with regard to the death penalty. The first is revenge; kill a person who has killed. The second is healing and restoration of not only the victim's family but the person who committed the crime as well. When we act out of revenge, we lose the opportunity to restore our dignity as human beings and the ability to teach our children and grandchildren that the death penalty is wrong and by



COURTESY PHOTO

St. Agnes Church

killing a human being, we all forfeit a piece of our own humanity.

On the other hand, when we help others to heal there is a healing that also takes place in us. "Do unto others" is an ancient rule of life and aren't we a people that want life?

We are better than the death penalty here in South Dakota. Let's stop this horrible practice. All life is sacred. Are we the people who will "cast the first stone?" We really are better than the worst thing we have ever done!

Vermillion
PLAIN TALK

Since 1884 • Official County, City and School District Newspaper

201 W. Cherry, Vermillion, SD 57069 • Publication No. USPS 657-720

Publisher: Gary Wood • General Manager/Managing Editor: Shauna Marlette
Published weekly by YANKTON MEDIA, Inc. • Periodicals postage paid at Vermillion, SD 57069.

Subscription rates for the *Plain Talk* by mail are \$27.56 a year in the city of Vermillion. Subscriptions in Clay, Turner, Union and Yankton counties are \$41.34 per year. Elsewhere in South Dakota, subscriptions are \$44.52, and out-of-state subscriptions are \$42. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Plain Talk, 201 West Cherry Street, Vermillion, SD 57069.

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