

Opinions

Garbage solution

By Leo Chappelle

Given the mysteriously inconvenient hour chosen for the meeting, it was no great surprise that outside of the Catahoula News Booster only one concerned citizen reported for civic duty at 10:00 A.M., Monday, March 21, 2022. The occasion was the hearing to approve a new 5-year contract for sanitation service in Catahoula Parish. That one citizen was Mr. Howard Hardie who runs the Sandy Lake Water System, which in my humble opinion is easily the best in the parish for being safe, reliable, and cheap. Ah, well, "Lonely are the brave." So, kudos to Mr. Hardie for being there and asking questions.

Many people have and will watch the meeting on the Booster's Facebook page, though unfortunately, they will not have the opportunity to ask the questions that they might have wanted answered were they at the actual meeting. Then again, it's hard to blame people who have to make a living that doesn't permit their wandering off the job to go to Police Jury meetings.

The real purpose of the gathering was item #6 on the agenda, "Discuss and approve a 5-year contract with Hometown Waste of Concordia Parish, LLC for residential garbage pick-up and disposal beginning (sic) July 1, 2022."

I had two principal questions of my own. The first was "Why was the contract not put out for

bids?" The reason, it was said, is that the parish is not required to solicit bids for services. Nonetheless, the Police Jury was diligent to inquire of three different potential service providers to know for what price they would offer which particular benefits. Those candidates were Metro, Waste Management, and contract winner Mr. Doug Atkins' organization, Hometown Waste.

Catahoula will cooperate with LaSalle in buying our large (96 gallons, I'm told), dedicated garbage cans and Hometown Waste will pick up as many as six extra trash bags at a time as well. They will also provide a dumpster for such as mattresses and white goods to be located at the Police Jury barn at the intersection of Highway 124 ("Harrisonburg highway") and Highway 126 ("Sandy Lake highway").

Now what about you scofflaws and deadbeats who are refusing to pay the \$12 garbage tax ("fee")? You may want to ask why, since your sales taxes are paying over 80% of the sanitation budget, will your garbage not be picked up just because you disagree with paying the \$12 sanitation surcharge?

The best answer I got was from Ward 9 Juror, Johnnie Adams. Mr. Adams helpfully explained that non-payment of the extra \$12 was analogous to a "partial payment" as opposed to "ser-

vices paid in full".

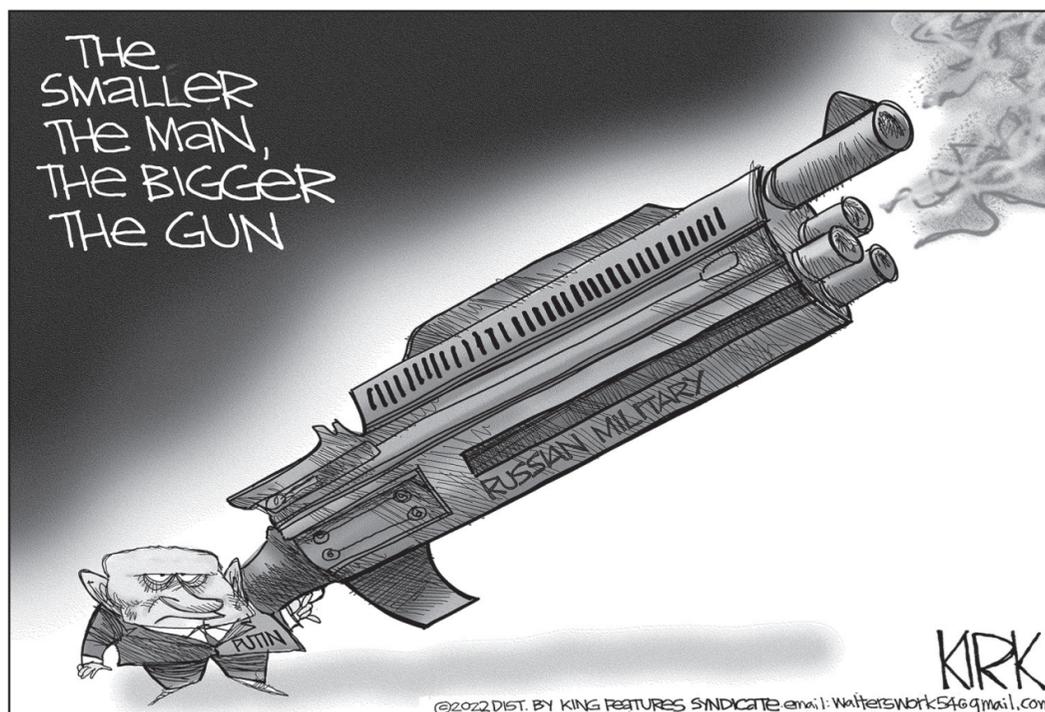
In my view, Harold Sones and the Police Jury were conscientious to obtain the best service for the money that they could and they appear to have done well in that regard.

There are still serious issues to resolve however. The first question centers around what in my view is the unpopular method by which the \$12 supplementary tax was imposed and the subsequent issue of a selective denial of service to those who don't pay it.

Just because the Police Jury can impose a tax does not mean they should. And apparently a lot of people don't think the Police Jury should have done that before submitting the question to voters in a referendum because those people aren't paying it.

Second, denying service to people for the sake of \$12 extra per month may turn out to create a litter problem almost as bad as if we didn't have garbage collection at all. Until and unless we have a more popular way to finance the Sanitation Fund, it might be better just to provide the service to everyone and let the unpaid tax accumulate as a "privilege" (a lien or debt) on their property as it is now doing anyway.

Nonetheless, I give Mr. Sones an "A" for effort. Only time, however, will give the final grade.



Trump Didn't Cause the Ukraine War

Durham's Righteous Investigation

More than a year into the Biden presidency, Vladimir Putin has invaded a sovereign neighboring country and, of course, everyone knows who's to blame -- Biden's predecessor.

In an instance of misdirection for the ages, a spate of commentary has pointed the finger at Donald Trump for supposedly creating the predicate for Putin's brutalizing of Ukraine.

There's no doubt that Trump has long had an apparently uncontrollable reflex to say warm things about Vladimir Putin. He foolishly mused about pulling out of NATO. And his withholding of aid to Ukraine for a partisan political purpose -- to pressure the Ukrainian government to uncover dirt related to the Bidens -- was a tawdry abuse of power (and led to his first impeachment).

No one should hold Trump up as a paragon, but to blame him for sparking a delayed-fuse geopolitical cataclysm that just happened to explode on Biden's watch is wholly ridiculous.

Trump critic retired Lt. Col Alexander Vindman, who had a star turn as a witness at Trump's first impeachment, says Trump emboldened Putin and left Ukraine unprepared to defend itself. Former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch says Trump sent the world the message that Ukraine was a mere pawn. A piece in The New York Review of Books says Trump "paved Putin's way."

There is no support for this argument in a world where facts and logic -- or basic chronology -- mean something.

First of all, Russia had grabbed Crimea and started a long-running war in Eastern Ukraine in 2014, long before anyone had any idea that Donald Trump would run for president, let alone win. It clearly didn't take Trump to give Putin the idea that he could get away with invading Ukraine -- he invaded Ukraine and got away with it under the administration of Barack Obama,

when, by the way, Joe Biden was vice president.

It is now widely acknowledged that the sanctions back then were too timid, a concession that Obama officials let Putin off too lightly. Surely, that must have figured into the Russian leader's calculation whether to invade yet again.

Then, there's the fact that Barack Obama steadfastly resisted providing Ukraine lethal aid -- after it had already been invaded. Bipartisan opposition to Obama didn't move him. He believed deeply in the appeaser's logic that it would be too "provocative" to give Ukraine weapons simply to defend itself.

Again, Trump had nothing to do with this misbegotten decision; indeed, he criticized it.

Trump's offense in 2019 was to delay military aid -- including Javelin missiles -- that Congress had approved for Ukraine, in a reversal of Obama's policy. If Trump never should have engaged in this self-interested gamesmanship, he released the assistance by September 2019.

Another line of argument is that Putin didn't invade Ukraine during the Trump administration because the Russian leader was already getting everything he wanted from Trump, including the destabilization of NATO. The outward expression of Trump's doubts about the alliance, though, largely took the form of loud complaints about European countries skimping on defense spending, which were completely justified.

Indeed, it's perverse that Angela Merkel was made into a great heroine of Western statesmanship at the same time she maintained a pathetic level of defense spending and deepened Germany's energy dependence on Russia in a way that was more dangerous than anything Trump said or tweeted.

And it wasn't Trump who told Biden to execute a humiliating withdrawal from Afghan-

istan, to give Putin the gift of a summit after he menaced Ukraine the first time, to remove sanctions on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, to speak forthrightly about Western divisions at a pre-invasion press conference, or to forgo preemptive sanctions.

All of that is on Biden, and all of it -- especially the Afghan fiasco -- had to make an impression on Putin. Now, it may well have been that Putin was undeterrable, but that makes it all the more outlandish and dumb to blame a former U.S. president for his depredations.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.
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