

## Negativity is not the issue on Cabela's

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By Mike Sanborn

Former mayor Jim Shaw's "Just Had To Ask" column on Cabela's in Wednesday's Journal was yet another demonstration of why voters showed him the door.

Shaw claims those trying to refer to a vote an action the city council took — and he supported — shows their insistence that all Rapid City must "stay in this bucket and be miserable like the rest of us." Like most of the rest of his column, his assertion that all critics of anything he supports are "in the grip of negativity" is pure flapdoodle. Many of the citizens circulating petitions to

stop the transfer of 30 acres of prime real estate and the Visitor Information Center (VIC) building to Cabela's, simply want a better, and true explanation, of why it would be a good deal. Nobody will argue that Cabela's coming to town will be a good thing — including Cabela's. The company closed on the land on which it intends to build its store.

Shaw claims Cabela's can demand unreasonable incentives because they bring huge benefits. They're a very nice outdoor sporting goods store. They are not Mount Rushmore or the Black Hills or Disneyland.

But, some people will come here to shop at Cabela's.

Shaw says "estimates show that Cabela's and all of the other new stores that'll be built nearby will produce nearly 84 million in new city sales tax each year." Estimates don't "show" anything. They're guesses. Shaw doesn't say where his guesses come from. His ability to predict sales-tax revenue will become evident in the city's upcoming budget cycle, but that's another column.

The idea that a Cabela's retail complex similar to the one in Mitchell will generate the necessary \$200 million in sales needed annually to generate \$4 million in sales tax is hooey. Two million people would have to spend \$100 annually to generate that. That means every man, woman and child in the state and most who come to visit will have to spend money in the Cabela's complex of stores to make Shaw's math work.

Shaw also says Cabela's will bring new jobs, higher wages and increase our quality of life. I've run out of words for fertilizer. They'll be low-paying retail and service jobs.

Then, there's the appearance of deception. According to Shaw, Cabela's first wanted to build on the 30 acres now in question, then later about 67 acres from Bill Gikling and his partners. Ken Lipp and James Meier (GLM) and they still want the VIC land — well, just because. But a company named Boulder Ventures had already made a deal to buy GLM's land way back in October of 2006.

Guess what? Boulder Ventures was working for Cabela's. Gikling was not only the land owner but also the president of Rapid City's Economic Development Partnership. He says he didn't know at the time of the Boulder Ventures sale they were working for Cabela's. Okay.

But somebody (at least Cabela's) knew. And, so at least some on the city council didn't get the whole story when they were told Cabela's wanted to build on the VIC ground and then later changed their mind and bought the GLM land. Now, Shaw and the others involved are bewildered that "negative" people here just want the truth.

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