

# TRIBUNE- PHONOGRAPH

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We welcome letters from our readers on any subject of interest. We reserve the right to edit for length, grammar or libel. All submitted letters must be signed and include a telephone number for verification. Campaign accusations without chance of rebuttal will not be published the week before an election. Federal and state candidate endorsements will not be published.

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# Perspectives

## Towns at odds

The Towns of Colby and Green Grove spent tens of thousands of dollars on legal fees in a lawsuit that should have never happened over a bridge that borders town lines.

The Town of Green Grove sued the Town of Colby which turned into a two-year legal battle that isn't over yet.

This dispute is one that both sides agreed shouldn't have been a problem. So why was it?

Let's start with the two townships' 2010 agreement. This arrangement was made to clear the air with the state to make sure each party knew who would be taking each section of the bordering road. However, it has obviously sparked more controversy than the previous agreement that had been in place.

Larry Oehmichen, chairman of the Town of Colby, said he and former Green Grove Chairman Mark Klein had a meeting in which they had decided to reverse 80-plus years of precedent in order to align their books with the state's. Although it might be good practice, that agreement should have never been made between the two entities.

There are laws in place that allow townships to change who finances sections of road. Instead, the two towns decided to make their own agreement which eventually led to the lawsuit. Might it be more paperwork to file such actions with the Wisconsin DOT? Sure. But the laws exist to avoid confusion and help with communication between neighboring towns.

The disagreement came about after Green Grove billed the Town of Colby for replacing the bridge on Meridian Avenue after work had been completed on the bridge in 2020. The lack of communication leading up to that point is alarming.

Attorney Lee D. Turonie of Dempsey Law represented Green Grove during the lawsuit. He stated that it is a disputed fact whether there was communication between the Town of Colby and Green Grove about the impending bridge project.

"Literally, Colby probably knew what Green Grove knew most of the time," Turonie said. "Green Grove asked [the contractors] to send Colby whatever updates Green Grove got sent."

Oehmichen alluded to the fact that the Town of Colby had no idea it would be billed for the work being done on the bridge until a bill arrived in their mailbox.

Clark County Judge Lindsey Boon Brunette stated in her summary judgment document that the lack of communication from Green Grove and then the sending of the bill, "Made no sense."

The Town of Colby isn't off the hook on this. They worked on the stretch of road in question up until 2010 and presumably got the bridge inspected regularly. They had to have known a bridge replacement would be in the near future and could have asked what role Green Grove expected the Town of Colby to play in financing the project.

Bottom line, there should have been ample communication from township to township about the bill that was coming down the pipeline and having no such communication had a direct impact on the towns' abilities to negotiate a resolution.

Next, we can examine the settlement that should have happened, but didn't. After Green Grove had submitted a "claim" to Colby, the Town of Colby came back with a demand letter dated Dec. 10, 2020 that gave Green Grove six months to pursue legal action or drop the claim altogether.

After nearly six months of negotiating, Green Grove lowered its asking price for the cost of the bridge from over \$27,000, to \$20,000 while the Town of Colby wrote a check out for \$17,500 to Green Grove. The check was sent back and a lawsuit was initiated.

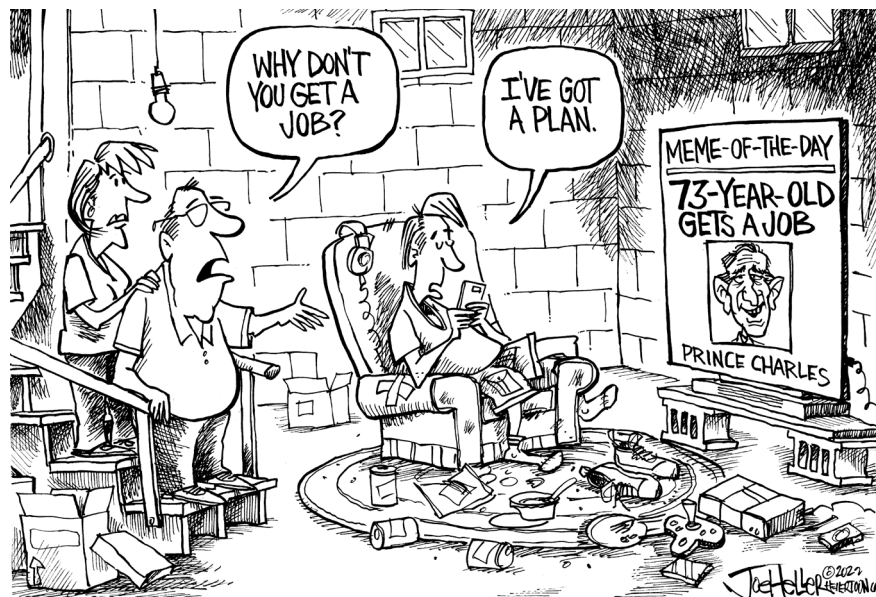
Oehmichen stated that the Town of Colby was willing to pay the full \$20,000 after the \$17,500 check was mailed back. However, he said Green Grove had already filed a lawsuit by the time the Town of Colby board could have their monthly meeting and approve the \$20,000 offer. In the Town of Colby meeting minutes from June 10, 2021, it is written, "[Green Grove] did not accept our offer of \$20,000 for the cost of the bridge on Meridian Avenue."

Turonie stated that Green Grove was up against the six-month time limit in which they could file a lawsuit and thus, had no other choice but to file a suit after receiving and sending back the \$17,500 check.

At their Sept. 13 meeting, the Town of Colby stated they had \$30,896 in legal fees. It is safe to assume Green Grove has a similar or equal amount invested in this case. Between the towns, around \$60,000 has been poured into a lawsuit that could have been avoided had the two towns communicated better.

All this miscommunication, back-, side-, or front-door agreements and legal action only truly hurts one group of people. The taxpayers. The representatives of those taxpayers must do better.

*The Tribune-Phonograph editorial board consists of publisher Kris O'Leary, editor Neal Hogden and reporter Nathaniel Underwood.*



## PAGING THROUGH HISTORY: A Treasury of Weekly Newspapers

ABBOTSFORD TRIBUNE  
PUBLISHED IN ABBOTSFORD  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 1952

THE TRIBUNE-PHONOGRAPH  
PUBLISHED IN COLBY  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1972

### Sheep Sale will be held in Abbotsford

Farmers who are in the sheep business, or who are interested in getting in the sheep business, will have a good opportunity to do so Wednesday, September 24, as that is the date for the Wisconsin Sheep sale which will be held at Abbotsford. There will be a good supply of Western ewes to sell in lots from one to as many as any buyer is interested in. There will also be a number of purebred rams which will be consigned by Wisconsin breeders.

The program will start promptly at 9:30 a.m. at the Stockyards at Abbotsford and will include discussions by Arthur L. Pope sheep specialist at the College of Agriculture, Madison, and others, on the sheep outlook, managements, breeding problems and market demands.

Mr. Pope says that the ewes will be sound in every way and will sell for considerably less than last year. The sheep day at Abbotsford has been successful for the past number of years and it is expected that a large turnout will again be on hand on the 24th.

### Bernice and Lloyd Kalepp Win Bow Championships

The Wisconsin Bow Hunters held their archery tournament at Necedah Sunday. Clarence Kalepp and his children, Bernice and Lloyd, were among the 600 persons who competed.

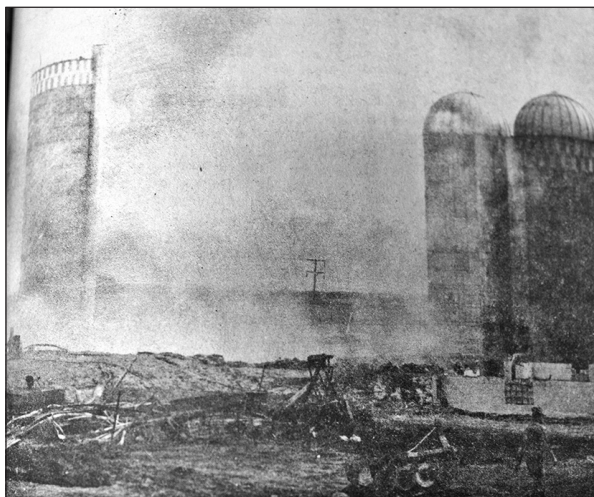
Miss Kalepp won the state championship in the girls' division and Lloyd is the boys' champion.

### CCC is reactivated

The Colby Chamber of Commerce at a recent meeting unanimously agreed to reactivate the local fund raising organization known as the Colby Community Chest. The Board of Directors of the Colby Chamber of Commerce will assume the responsibility for accountability and distribution of the funds collected. Micahel Streiber has been appointed General Chairman of the Colby Community Chest.

Many opinions were expressed as to the feasibility for such action. However, the most predominant reason for such action was the elimination of numerous independent campaigns for funds throughout the year. One fund drive a year that would provide the necessary money for sustaining the needs of local groups as well as state and nation organizations with local representatives, would be much more desirable.

One united effort, with the cooperation of the entire community, will eliminate the necessity of many people ringing door bells nearly every month of the year. Another point of importance was the fact that during the past several years when no community drive was made there were worthy organizations that failed to receive any contributions for the Colby area. The failure to be able to recruit local solicitors was the cause for such oversight. At this time, the need for solicitors is apparent.



SMOKE HANGS OVER THE REMAINS OF THE ROD COOK BARN WHICH WAS DESTROYED BY A SEPTEMBER 9, 1972 FIRE.