

# BIG TIME

FROM PAGE ONE

like the River Quay of Kansas City, minus the Mafia.

Obtaining the Bowersock property was a key in beginning the redevelopment scheme. The City knew that no private investor would ever redevelop the Bowersock property because of the le-

gal difficulties in obtaining a clear title.

Realizing also that the mills in their deteriorating condition would discourage any developer from building nearby, the City initiated negotiations last January with Stephen Hill to acquire the property.

In the agreement reached, the City acquired the buildings for \$1 with the understanding that

within a year the City would have to decide to locate the City Hall there or pay a \$25,000 penalty.

It was a clever deal. The City got a City Hall site and eliminated an "ugly" roadblock to redevelopment. The Mills were relieved of dam maintenance (the dam needs immediate repair estimated at \$375,000), and they were given a 30-year lease on eight acres of land at the eastern edge of the site that, once the City Hall is built, will be prime for profitable development.

The Bowersock deal was made before the City had any firm idea of whether it was feasible to build a City Hall on the site. After all, the site did appear

required to hold a referendum on the financing.

So it's not surprising that the City has no plans to elicit public participation in the design process.

"We think there may be involvement by the Lawrence Arts Commission; certainly the plans should be well publicized but I would doubt, if we'd zeroed in on a design, that we would want to change it because of a public meeting," Rose said.

The City is erecting a monumental structure at a great expense. They are destroying the grain elevators, some of the oldest in the state, that stand as an im-

PHOTO BY WILBUR HESS



WHERE THE OLD BOWERSOCK MILLS AND ELEVATORS HAVE STOOD FOR DECADES, SOON WILL BE A MONUMENTAL CITY HALL OVERLOOKING THE KANSAS RIVER.

The City Commission recently declared itself a Public Building Commission to finance the City Hall project. Just what is a PBC?

By state law (KS 12-1757) the government can create a corporation, a PBC, to finance public building projects. It's a radical departure from traditional financing methods. Under any other approach, if the City didn't have all the money on hand for a project, it would have to ask voters whether they wanted to go into debt by holding a referendum on the issuance of bonds.

"Mainly," Commissioner Jack Rose explained, "it allows you to build any building without the vote of the people."

In the City Hall project, the City will pay the PBC for the bonds it issues with most of the \$2.25 million in revenue sharing money that will be coming in over the next three years. While it may make financing quicker, the question, according to former state legislator Jerry Harper, is whether you should rule out voting on public building projects. Only if a petition were signed by at least 5 per cent of the electorate in opposition to the issuance of bonds by the PBC would a referendum be required.

to have some drawbacks. The 6th and Mass., intersection is already jammed at rush hours. With the new double-span bridges bringing even more traffic into the area, access for pedestrians and motorists could pose a problem. And then there were the railroad tracks that run through the site.

Public participation in every phase of the planning process has been very limited. Lawrence voters were not asked whether they wanted a City Hall building, because the City wasn't

portant reminder of the community's heritage. The City is committing a majority of revenue-sharing funds for several years to come and eliminating alternative uses (or even suggestions of alternatives since there will be no real public hearings on the their use), funds that possibly could be more beneficial in other social projects. And, the City is doing it all in a manner that attempts to by-pass the democratic process of participation.

SEE BOX ON THE BIRTH OF THE PBC

# FARKLEY BARKS



BY FARKLEY BARKS

There's been a lot of loose talk around town lately about the evils of Lawrence's new Public Building Commission (PBC) and it's about time we put these cynical comments and wrong-headed ideas out to pasture.

In all frankness, I don't think it's necessary--or proper--to answer the groundless charges that the PBC will allow my City Commission to do as it pleases in erecting our new Convention Center down there on that rundown block by the Post Office. Or building most anything else (perhaps a municipal golf course?) without voter approval. Or circumventing state indebtedness and cash-basis laws.

Granted, the new PBC might be used for such things by some future City Commission that doesn't responsibly respond to public needs like the present Commission. In fact, however, it would be patently unfair to "lock in" some future Commission to an inflexible course we happen to think proper now. After all, things change.

But what I chiefly want to point out about these PBC critics is that they don't understand the wisdom of the PBC. They don't understand it now any more than they're going to understand public projects some future Commission might be forced, by changed circumstances, to undertake.

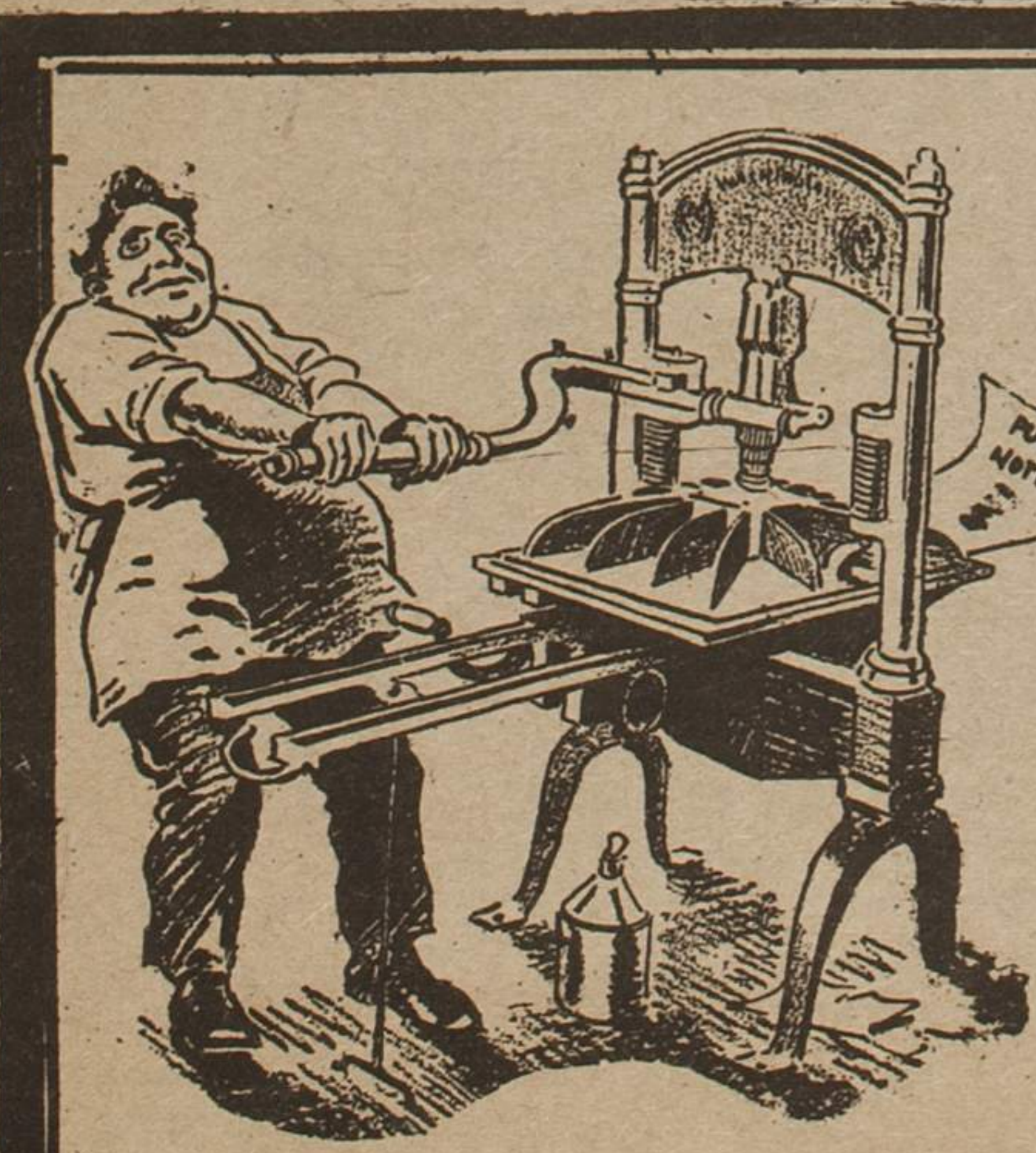
To put these fearful critics and their charges in perspective, just remember they're the same disgruntled elements we've heard from in the past. They wanted to change our form of government last year just to get rid of Buford Watson, one of the finest public servants it's been my privilege to know. They're the same people who refuse to see the benefit of stimulating economic development to insure our fair city's population reaches 75,000 in five years (so we can retain our position as one of the 25 fastest growing towns in this great country.) In all candor, I want you to know I've never seen any of these people at our Chamber of Commerce meetings. In a word, they're the "Aginnners" who have tried to raise anti-progress roadblocks in the past.

I ask you, what's wrong with our fine development on 23rd Street or along my "Miracle Mile" on south Iowa Street or out in Santa Fe Industrial Park? The formula is simple: Development means Jobs which means People which means Dollars which means Civic Happiness. And who can really quarrel with Happiness?

Well, enough of that. (See how these critics' negativism can be infectious?) Let's look at some of the PBC's advantages that the anti-growth radicals haven't told you about. In the first place, look at all the thousands of taxpayers' dollars Lawrence wasted on pointless referendums on the airport issue (which has finally been properly resolved.) If we'd had the PBC a decade ago, we could have saved all that time and trouble--and your dollars--just by having the PBC build a new airport and not bothering all you folks. For another thing, the PBC doesn't mean the people will have less voice in what goes on in Lawrence. (It will mean substantially more.) Even though citizens can't vote on specific projects, I have an iron-clad commitment from our publisher (the one who owns a little property across the road from the new City Hall) that he will commit all the pages needed to print letters-to-the-editor about future buildings projects. So public debate on the issue will be assured--and at no cost to taxpayers.

Even more to the point, just think of all the people who will get involved in local affairs because they think the PBC is building too much or too little.. Voter apathy is a cancer on many small-town governments, but with the PBC, we'll have a virtual guarantee that the disease won't infect our affairs here in "River City."

In closing, I reaffirm my solid, unequivocal commitment to "urge" the dismantling of the PBC after it's served its "limited function" for the community. I want to make it perfectly clear, however, that I have but one vote on the City Commission, despite reports my vote counts for five.



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