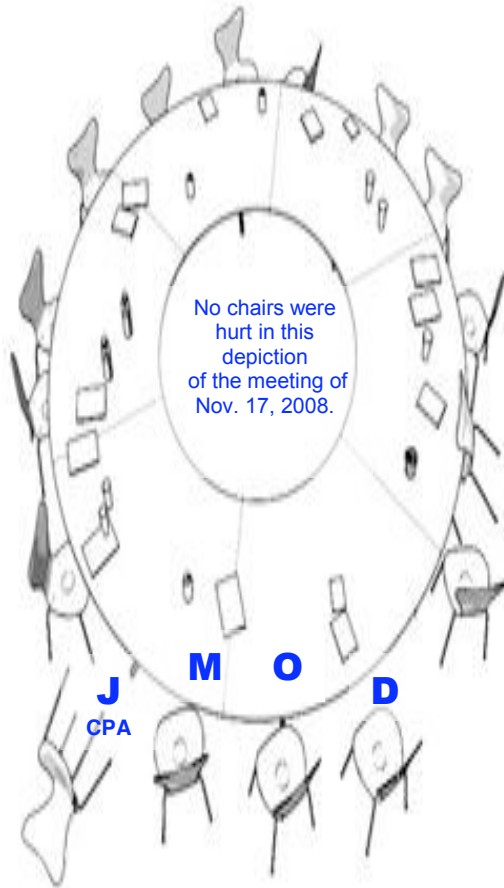


Chapter 6

It's All About Staffing

It was Monday, November 17, 2008. Management called a special senior staff meeting in the Twin Cities. There were a number of items on the agenda, but the last item was addressing the timeliness of the audits issued by the Office of the State Auditor (OSA). State Auditor Rebecca Otto was going to lead the discussion on the timeliness agenda item.



The meeting format was a roundtable discussion. I was sitting at the bottom left corner (JCPA). To my right was the Audit Manager (M). On the right side of the Audit Manager was State Auditor Otto (O), and on State Auditor Otto's right was the Deputy State Auditor (D).

As the matter of timely audit reports rose to the top of the agenda, Rebecca stood up and asked the senior auditors for ideas on how to get the audits done in a timely manner. The clock hands seemed to stop for a while. Everyone stared in amazement. There may even have been some choked-back smiles.

I was shocked. I had never seen or heard an elected official or upper management ask such a question of senior auditors before. We all, including upper management, knew the answer. It was *staffing*.

Please, let me digress. Shortly after Rebecca Otto took office as State Auditor, she traveled to each of the rural office locations of the OSA. At that time, I was working on the Mankato Crew. Each individual had the opportunity to meet with Ms. Otto privately. During *my* meeting with her, I told her that the Office had two main problems that had to be addressed. These were timeliness of the audit reports and the escalating audit costs. I used the opportunity to tell Rebecca of my Plan to create a program that ensures timely governmental audits at the lowest price. The Plan involves empowering CPA firms to audit all first class cities and counties through a well-regulated peer review process administered by the State Auditor's Office. This free-market approach allows governmental entities to make a request for proposal (RFP), which is an invitation for competitive bids from CPA firms, instead of the unfunded OSA mandate. This would result in considerable savings in auditing costs and smaller government.

Now, back to our story and the senior staff meeting already in progress where the clock hands had again begun to move. There were about 20 to 25 auditors from all parts of the state sitting around the tables. The request for recommendations started at the bottom right corner and proceeded counterclockwise. I watched with amazement as each auditor tried to give a recommendation. No one was eager to address the problem so long as beating around the bureaucratic bush felt so right, even though everyone knew the specific cause for untimely reporting. The proverbial truth appeared to be stranger than fiction.

Finally, it was my turn. Everyone else had spoken. There was no one left. All eyes were on me. I spit it right out in a run-on sentence. "If all of our counties and first class cities got all of their accounting records to us by the end of February, or at the latest, by the end of March, and if we hired enough auditors to get all of the audits issued before June 30, what would we do with the surplus auditors (OSA employees) during the second half of the year?"

Rebecca stared straight forward and opened her arms with one hand pointing left towards the Audit Manager and the other hand to the right towards the Deputy State Auditor.

Again the silence was piled up high;
And every soul there knew just why.
A simple question from some guy,
Had stated clearly probably why,
The timeliness thing won't likely fly.

The Deputy State Auditor broke the silence and the meeting was over; no resolution of the problem followed. Perhaps to the others, it was just another meeting. To me, it was a benchmark proceeding that epitomized the nature of politics in the State Auditor's Office.

As of the meeting date of November 17, 2008, there were thirty-one county audits subjected to the unfunded OSA mandate that were uncompleted for audit year ending December 31, 2007. As of September 30, 2009, there were forty county audits subjected to the unfunded OSA mandate that were uncompleted for audit year ending December 31, 2008. The problems of timeliness have not, and will not, go away without thinking outside the OSA box. The current administration, as well as all prior administrations, have only considered their own political future and have not, and will not, do what is in the best interest of taxpayers and the municipalities that are burdened with the unfunded mandate.

Ask Jeff A Question

This chapter's selected question is from Pam in Burnsville.
Pam asks, "Could you tell us your involvement with the GOP?"

Jeff's Answer: I got involved with the GOP in 1994. At that time, my Basic Political Organization Unit (BPOU) was Senate District (SD) 19. I lived in Elk River, and BPOU SD 19 had no representative from Elk River. I was asked and accepted a position to represent Elk River for SD 19. I helped Representative Bruce Anderson defeat the incumbent Democrat, Representative Stephanie Klinzing, by winning three of the four wards in Elk River. Stephanie won only the Elk River ward in which she lived. At that time, the Chair of BPOU SD 19 was Mary Kiffmeyer. Mary asked, and I accepted, the position of Treasurer in her successful election to Secretary of State in 1998. I was a delegate to the State GOP Convention in 1998. In 2001, Sandy and I moved our family to Minnetonka, which has a very active BPOU.



Stop National Health Care Bill Rally

I took a siesta from local involvement with the GOP, but not conservative causes. I attended Jason Lewis' first "Tax Cut Rally" and subsequent rallies before "Tea Parties" became vogue. I even presented an opposing position on Anthropogenic Global Warming (AGW) through the Minnetonka Community Education Center where I showed 30 minutes of Al Gore's movie, *The Inconvenient Truth*, and 30 minutes of Martin Durkin's movie *The Great Global Warming Swindle*. Don't ask me how I pulled that off because that is a story in itself.

After the GOP election defeats of 2006, I became very concerned about the direction of our country and began my re-engagement with organized conservative politics. I had attended BPOU SD 42 caucuses before, but did not seek a position as a delegate. In 2008, I was elected as an alternate and I was seated as a delegate at the 2009 GOP Convention. My latest rally was the "Stop the National Health Care Bill" at the State Capitol on November 5, 2009. In the photo above are Candace Oathout and I. Candace is the Chair of BPOU SD 45.

Address all your questions directly to me at [Contact Jeff](#). Please include name and town, name and town, if you wish to opine.

Blog Spot Links related story on my campaign by

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Family



On October 8, 1983, Sandy and I were married. Yes, that is true. I met Sandy on New Year's Eve of 1983, and after knowing her for nine months and 8 days, we were married and have been married ever since. Our first child was born eight short years later on March 26, 1991.

1983 was a very busy year for both of us. The economy was still struggling from the Jimmy Carter recession. Sandy was a baker and cake decorator, and she could not find work in the Twin Cities Area. We solved the problem in the traditional all-American way; we started our own bakery in Coon Rapids. Eventually, we hired two employees. I would bake cakes before going to work and clean the bakery, pots and pans, when I got home from work.

In 1987, we built our first home in Elk River with a lot of help from my dad and brother-in-law. My mom drove my dad down from Duluth for many weekends. I have been called, "a Jack of all trades."

The time for government accountability has come.

Sincerely,

Jeff Wiita, CPA

Prepared and paid for by Jeff Wiita, CPA for State Auditor
http://www.jeffforstateauditor.com/Home_Page.html

Contact Jeff