

TOWN COUNCIL

A POLITICAL FARCE IN ONE ACT

By Mike Willis

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SYNOPSIS: The town council for the small town of Town, U.S.A. has been called together for a special meeting on Fat Tuesday. Problems begin when Summer Love, an aging hippie, wants it acknowledged in the meeting's minutes that today is indeed Fat Tuesday and the meeting should have been rescheduled to avoid conflicts with her annual Mardi Gras party. Council President I.B. Wishywashy and Mayor Seymour Killens, an ex-military man, try to keep the meeting on track so they can address the issue at hand, which is the condemnation of the home of one hundred year-old, Emma Starvin. The council skinflint, Titus Canby, is pushing for condemnation of her home so the town's wealthiest citizen, Richard Greenback, can build condos on the property. The over-the-top eccentricities of the council members and the town staff make for a high-spirited political spoof of insignificant proportions.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 MEN, 4 WOMEN, 5 EITHER)

- I.B. WISHYWASHY (m/f).....President of the town council. Mr. Wishywashy is a small, nerdish-looking man with horn-rimmed glasses. He is very nervous and has trouble making decisions. He is dressed in a cardigan with a white shirt and bow tie. (67 lines)
- MISS TAKES (f).....Town Clerk for the town of Town, Wisconsin. Miss Takes looks much older than she is due to her frumpy clothes and the fact that her hair is pulled back and tied into a bun. She takes her job very seriously. (43 lines)

TITUS CANBY (m).....Town council member. Titus is very old and has trouble staying awake. Having lived through the depression, he is very frugal. (82 lines)

MARY EMALL (f).....Town council member. Mary is an older lady who has been married a number of times. She likes men and is currently between husbands. (37 lines)

MAYOR SEYMOUR KILLENS (m).....Mayor of the town of Town, Wisconsin. Seymour is ex-military and runs the council as if he were its platoon sergeant. He dresses in fatigue green and wears a camouflaged baseball cap. (47 lines)

MACON SENSE (m/f).....Town council member. Macon is level headed. He is genuinely concerned about the town and those he represents. (32 lines)

SUMMER LOVE (f).....Town council member. Summer is an aging hippie. She wears her long graying hair in a ponytail and dresses the same as she did when she went to Woodstock in 1968. (44 lines)

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HERMAN “HERM” ROID (m)..... Town council member. Herm is a thorn in everyone’s side and gets great pleasure out of disagreeing about everything. He is middle-aged. (39 lines)

ABLE “AB” STAIN (m)..... Town council member. Ab is a nerd and lacks backbone. He wants everyone to like him and works very hard to keep from having to make any kind of decision. He is the youngest member of the council. (23 lines)

EMMA STARVIN (f)..... A sweet elderly citizen of Town, Wisconsin. Emma is quite poor and relies solely on her Social Security check for survival. (13 lines)

RICHARD “RICH” GREENBACK (m/f).... An obnoxiously wealthy citizen of Town, Wisconsin. Rich is used to getting his way. He is middle-aged and well dressed. (13 lines)

IDA RATHER (m/f)..... A citizen of Town, Wisconsin. Ida is educated, but lacks common sense. She can be counted on to voice an “alternative” solution for any problem facing the town and the council. (10 lines)

DEWEY CHEATUM (m/f) Greenback’s unscrupulous lawyer. (12 lines)

PRODUCTION NOTES

Town Council is a very flexible play and offers many casting options. As written, the play calls for seven men and six women, but the part of I.B. Wishywashy and the part of Macon may be played by women as they were in the original production. With minor name changes, the parts of Cheatum, Greenback, and Ida can also be played by either sex depending on the director's casting pool. The play is also easily staged and can be played on a bare stage with desks or long tables and chairs. *Town Council* is a farce and as such, the characters should be played larger than life. All the characters in this play are fictional and any resemblance to actual political figures is purely coincidental.

SCENE

The town meeting chambers in the town of Town, Wisconsin.

TIME: The present.

PRODUCTION HISTORY/AWARDS

Town Council was conceived and presented as a staged reading by the Academy Acting Ensemble of Sinsinawa, Wisconsin. The first performance was presented by Platteville High School, Platteville, WI on October 18, 2008, as an entry in the 2008 Wisconsin High School Forensics Association's Fall Play Festival. The play was performed at district and sectional competitions before advancing to the state level of the festival held on the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse campus. At the state competition held on November 20-21, 2008, the cast and crew of *Town Council* received the All-State Award. The play was also performed by the Plum River Players of Stockton, Illinois, November 1-2, 2008.

Dedication

This play is dedicated to anyone who has ever served
on a town, city or village council.

DO NOT COPY

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

SETTING:

We are in the meeting chambers of the small town of Town, Wisconsin. There are seven desks with chairs, or a long, curved desk, arranged in a semi-circle upstage right.

Nameplates with the names of the seven COUNCIL MEMBERS are sitting on the desks, indicating each COUNCIL MEMBER'S seat. A lone desk sits downstage right. The nameplate on this desk reads, TOWN CLERK. Another lone desk sits upstage center. This is the MAYOR'S desk. There is a podium center stage. Two rows of chairs are placed stage left for the TOWN CITIZENS.

AT RISE:

MISS TAKES enters carrying a large notebook used to record the minutes of the meeting. She crosses to the clerk's desk and sits, busying herself with her notes. The mayor, SEYMOUR KILLENS, enters and begins inspecting the meeting chambers. He crosses to his desk and runs his finger along its surface checking for dust. He then crosses to the other desks and does the same. Finding some dust, he crosses to MISS TAKES and holds his finger under her nose.

MAYOR KILLENS: Look at that, Miss Takes.

MISS TAKES: *(Quite frightened.)* What, sir?

MAYOR KILLENS: *(Pointing at his finger.)* That . . . right there.

Don't tell me you don't see that?

MISS TAKES: No, I . . .

MAYOR KILLENS: *(Barking, with drill sergeant authority.)* On your feet!

MISS TAKES snaps to attention as MAYOR KILLENS again puts his finger under her nose.

MAYOR KILLEN: Right there, Miss Takes, right there! There must be at least two millimeters of dust on my finger from those desks over there. What do you make of that Miss Takes? How do you account for that, Miss Takes?

MISS TAKES: I . . . I don't know, Mr. Mayor?

MAYOR KILLENS: Mr. Mayor?!

MISS TAKES: Mr. Mayor, *sir!*

MAYOR KILLENS: You don't know, you don't know? It's your job to know Miss Takes. A strac operations center makes for a well-oiled, efficient fighting machine. And we *are* that machine, Miss Takes. We are a well-oiled, efficient, fighting machine of government. It is our obligation, no . . . our duty to keep that machine in tip-top fighting shape. A dirty machine is no good. A dirty machine makes for dirty government, and we cannot tolerate dirty government here in the town of Town. Have you got that, Corporal?

MISS TAKES: My name is, Miss Takes.

MAYOR KILLENS: Are you questioning me, son?

MISS TAKES: No! No, sir.

MAYOR KILLENS: We are blessed, Corporal Takes. We are blessed by the citizens of this town who elected us. It is our duty to look after them and to lead them into governmental battles. It is our job to walk point, and to look out for those bureaucratic trip-wires. It is our solemn duty to make sure that all citizens of Town are protected. That we have a perimeter of concertina wire and claymores protecting our city limits against all acts of aggression against our fair community . . . that we are properly entrenched so we can lay down a field of heavy suppressive fire against our aggressors. Be those aggressors, door to door solicitors, out of work trailer-trash, or the big wigs from up at the state capital. And, to do our job, Miss Takes, what do we need?

MISS TAKES: (*Quietly.*) A . . .

MAYOR KILLENS: I can't *hear* you!

MISS TAKES: A clean, well-oiled machine, sir?

MAYOR KILLENS: Exactly, soldier. Now, was that so hard?

MISS TAKES: No, sir.

MAYOR KILLENS: I didn't think so. At ease, I hear the rest of the troops coming.

General ad-libs as the members of the TOWN COUNCIL enter. After greeting each other, they move to their seats. The council members each go to the places at the table marked with their nameplates.

I.B. WISHYWASHY: If everyone will take your seats, please . . .
(Everyone continues to make noise and ignore WISHYWASHY.)
As council president, I'd like to get the meeting started, please . . .

The noise continues.

MAYOR KILLENS: *(Shouting.)* IN YOUR SEATS! *(Everyone quickly takes their seats.)*

MAYOR KILLENS: They're all yours, sir.

I.B. WISHYWASHY: Thank you, mayor.

MAYOR KILLENS: No problem, General.

I.B. WISHYWASHY: *(Hitting the desk with his gavel.)* If I may, I'd like to call this special meeting of the town council to order.

The noise starts up again.

MAYOR KILLENS: *(Shouting.)* Quiet!

I.B. WISHYWASHY: Thank you, Mayor Killens. Now, let the minutes show that the special meeting of the town council to decide the future of our town park here in the town of Town was called to order by me, council president, I.B. Wishywashy at 7 p.m. on this day, Tuesday, February 28th.

SUMMER: Amendment!

I.B. WISHYWASHY: What?

SUMMER: I'd like to amend that opening statement.

I.B. WISHYWASHY: All I said was . . .

SUMMER: Today is Fat Tuesday . . . and I'd like the opening statement to reflect that.

I.B. WISHYWASHY: But, the town of Town, doesn't celebrate Fat Tuesday. Why would we . . .

SUMMER: I happen to think Fat Tuesday is an important day and I feel we should note it as so in our minutes. I also want it noted that, since it is Fat Tuesday, I will be late for my Mardi Gras party due to this special meeting, which could have been rescheduled.

HERM: I'm against that!

SUMMER: Against what, Mr.Roid?

HERM: Fat Tuesday. I'm against Fat Tuesday.

SUMMER: How can you be against Fat Tuesday? Are you against Fat Tuesday, or just against having it put in the minutes.

HERM: Both! I'm against anything that makes fun of fat people.

MARY: My last husband was fat. I made fun of him all the time.

SUMMER: Fat Tuesday, does not make fun of fat people.

MACON: Herm, Fat Tuesday, is a celebration held right before Lent. People go out and party and eat and drink . . . sometimes to excess, I might add.

TITUS: Excess?! How much is this going to cost?

SUMMER: What? How much is what going to cost?

TITUS: Putting Fat Tuesday in the minutes. How much is that going to cost, I.B.?

I.B. WISHYWASHY: Well Titus, I don't think it will cost anything, unless Miss Takes has to use an additional piece of paper in the event that the minutes run a few words too long for a page.

TITUS: And how much would that extra piece of paper cost the fair taxpayers of Town?

I.B. WISHYWASHY: I'm not sure, maybe two or three cents.

TITUS: I'm against it then. It's a waste, and too big a risk.

SUMMER: Too big a risk? For God's sakes, Titus Canby, it's a measly two cents.

TITUS: Don't you be usin' God's name when talkin' to me, you burnt-out ol' hippie.

SUMMER: Burnt-out ol' hippie? Why you cheap ol' fart . . .

MARY: My second husband was a hippie. He had hair down to his shoulders and drove a VW bus with peace signs all over it.

MAYOR KILLENS: Hippies! Peace signs!?

AB: Your second husband was a hippie?

MARY: Yeah, with gorgeous long hair . . . he went to a rock concert and never came back.

MACON: Let's get back to the issue at hand if we may. I'd like to get out of here at a reasonable time tonight. Ab, we haven't heard from you. What's your position on this issue?

AB: My position, well . . . I guess, uh . . . I'm not sure, I may . . .

SUMMER: I call for a vote.

I.B. WISHYWASHY: A vote? What kind of vote? We haven't even been able to officially open the meeting yet.

SUMMER: A vote on whether or not to include Fat Tuesday in the opening statement of tonight's meeting.

MACON: For God's sake, let's just vote.

TITUS: There's the G-word again.

I.B. WISHYWASHY: Okay, we'll have a roll-call vote. A yes vote indicates that we will add the words Fat Tuesday to the meeting date. Miss Takes, will you call the roll call vote?

MISS TAKES: All right. Alderman, Macon Sense.

MACON: Yes.

TITUS: Traitor!

MISS TAKES: Alderwoman, Mary Email.

MARY: Yes.

TITUS: Peace lover!

MARY: What?!

MISS TAKES: Alderman, Herman Roid.

HERM: No.

TITUS: That-a-boy, Herm.

MISS TAKES: Alderwoman, Summer Love.

SUMMER: Yes.

TITUS: Hippie burn-out!

MISS TAKES: Alderman, Titus Canby.

TITUS: No, too expensive.

MISS TAKES: Alderman, Able Stain.

TITUS: It's up to you, Ab. A no vote and it's a tie.

AB: Well, I . . .

TITUS: C'mon, Ab.

AB: Well, I think I need to disqualify myself from the vote.

TITUS: Disqualify yourself? What for?

MACON: On what grounds do you wish to disqualify yourself Ab?

AB: Well, I feel I cannot vote fairly due to a conflict of interest.

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TITUS: Conflict of interest!? What kind of conflict of interest?

AB: Well . . . well, I once went to Mardi Gras.

TITUS: So?

AB: And I also ate too much on Fat Tuesday one time.

TITUS: Who cares?

AB: And I like hippies, and I had long hair one time, uh . . . but my mom made me get it cut.

MACON: What's that got to do with anything?

MARY: *(To Ab.)* You had long hair? That's kinda sexy, Ab.

AB: Well I don't think I can vote fairly given the fact that I like Mardi Gras, Fat Tuesday, and hippies like Summer.

MARY: You forgot long hair.

AB: Oh yeah, and long hair. I liked that, too.

MARY: You devil, you. You want to come over to my place later?

I.B. WISHYWASHY: Are you saying that you want to abstain from voting, Ab?

AB: Yeah, I guess I want to abstain.

TITUS: Why, you spineless, Mardi Gras-partying, long-haired hippie lover. You . . .

MACON: Now Titus, calm down before you pop a blood vessel. Think about how much that will cost you if we have to take you to the hospital.

I.B. WISHYWASHY: Well it looks like the yes votes have it then, with a vote of three to two and one abstention, that being Alderman Stain.

SUMMER: Thank you, Ab.

TITUS: Wait a minute. What about you, Wishywashy? What is your vote?

I.B. WISHYWASHY: I don't have to vote. The council president only votes in the case of a tie.

TITUS: Convenient for you, isn't it?

I.B. WISHYWASHY: Let the minutes show that . . .

TITUS: Not so fast! What about Mayor Killens?

HERM: Yeah, how do you vote, Seymour?

I.B. WISHYWASHY: He's the mayor, he can't vote.

TITUS: Sure he can. How do you vote, Mayor?

MAYOR KILLENS: No! I vote no.

TITUS: Ha! It's a tie.

SUMMER: Not so fast, if the mayor can vote, so can Miss Takes.

I.B. WISHYWASHY: She can't vote, she's the city clerk.

MARY: Sure she can, if the mayor has a vote, so does the city clerk.

SUMMER: How do you vote, Miss Takes?

MISS TAKES: Well, I . . . I . . .

MAYOR KILLENS: This ain't the Navy, Takes!

MISS TAKES: Yes! I vote yes.

MACON: Finally! The yeses have it four to three, so let's get on with the meeting.

I.B. WISHYWASHY: Let the minutes show that the special council meeting for the town of Town was called to order by council president, I.B. Wishywashy at (*Checking his watch.*) 7:10 p.m. on Fat Tuesday, February 28th, 2006. Those in attendance included Alderman Titus Canby, Alderman Macon Sense, Alderwoman Mary Emall, Alderman Herman Roid, Alderwoman Summer Love, Alderman Able Stain and Mayor Seymour Killens. Now, everyone should have had a chance to read the minutes of our January meeting, if there are no objections, I will ask for a motion to approve the minutes of our January meeting as presented.

HERM: I object.

I.B. WISHYWASHY: We have an objection to the minutes as printed. All right, Herm, what is your objection?

HERM: Right here, under item thirteen, let's see . . . A motion was made by Alderwoman Mary Emall and seconded by Alderwoman Summer Love that all monies retrieved by city staff when draining and cleaning the city swimming pool, should be kept in a special fund, with said monies going to provide area needy children with toys at Christmas time.

The motion passed on a vote of four to two with Alderman Titus Canby and Alderman Herm Roid opposed. That right there, I'd like that stricken from the minutes.

MACON: What would you like stricken from the minutes? That's what happened.

HERM: The part that says Alderman Herm Roid voted opposed. When you say it like that, it sounds like I don't like kids.

I.B. WISHYWASHY: But, you did vote opposed, and you don't like kids.

HERM: I know that! But, I don't want it written down so the whole town knows it.

TITUS: Me neither! I want my name stricken also.

MARY: But you voted opposed and you don't like kids either.

TITUS: I do so like kids, I just don't want to give them any money.

MACON: I make a motion that the minutes stand approved as printed.

SUMMER: I, second.

I.B. WISHYWASHY: A motion has been made and seconded that the minutes of the January meeting of the town of Town, be approved as presented. All of those in favor signify by saying aye.

MACON/SUMMER/MARY/AB: Aye.

I.B. WISHYWASHY: Opposed, same sign.

HERM/TITUS: Aye.

I.B. WISHYWASHY: Motion, carries. Let the minutes reflect that the January meeting minutes were approved as printed.

HERM: Great. Now everyone in town will know I don't like kids.

MARY: Cheer up, they already knew.

TITUS: Needy kids! What a waste of money.

I.B. WISHYWASHY: *(Looking at a piece of paper.)* Well, we have a very important item on the agenda tonight, so I guess we best get started. We have some town citizens waiting outside to speak on tonight's issue, but I thought it best if we as a council talked it over first.

SUMMER: Get on with it, I.B., I have a party to go to.

I.B. WISHYWASHY: The town has received a proposal from Mr. Richard Greenback to purchase the town property along the river that currently serves as a community park. Mr. Greenback is proposing to buy the property from the town for the purpose of building condos on the land fronting the river.

TITUS: Townhouses.

I.B. WISHYWASHY: What?

TITUS: They're called townhouses, not condos.

I.B. WISHYWASHY: What's the difference?

MACON: None really, it's all semantics.

TITUS: Sure there is. Townhouses are houses built in town and condos . . . well, they're built somewhere else. This being the town of Town, townhouse is perfect.

SUMMER: That's just stupid.

TITUS: Are you calling me stupid?

SUMMER: If the shoe fits.

TITUS: Why you old hippie, we're not talking about shoes, we're talking about townhouses and . . .

I.B. WISHYWASHY: (*Banging his gavel on his desk.*) If we can get back to the issue at hand, please . . .

MAYOR KILLENS: (*Shouting.*) QUIET! (*EVERYONE quiets down.*) They're all yours, General.

I.B. WISHYWASHY: Thank you, Mayor.

MISS TAKES: Excuse me, Mr. President, do you want me to include: (*Reading from her notes.*) "Are you calling me stupid and if the shoe fits," in the minutes?

I.B. WISHYWASHY: No, don't put old hippie, you calling me stupid, or anything about a shoe in the minutes.

TITUS: Why not? She is an old hippie.

SUMMER: And you're stupid.

I.B. WISHYWASHY: That's okay. I really don't think the whole town needs to know that.

MACON: They already know.

MAYOR KILLENS: I demand that everything that is said be put in the minutes. It is SOP . . . (*Explaining.*) that's standard operating procedure.

I.B. WISHYWASHY: All right. Miss Takes, let the minutes show that Alderwoman Summer Love called Alderman Titus Canby, stupid and that Alderman Titus Canby called Alderwoman Summer Love an old hippie and that in both cases, the shoe fits.

MISS TAKES: Are you sure?

MAYOR KILLENS: What's that Corporal? Are you questioning a direct order?

MISS TAKES: No, I . . .

MAYOR KILLENS: I *what*, Corporal Takes!?

MISS TAKES: (*Frightened.*) I, aye . . . sir.

MAYOR KILLENS: This ain't the Navy, Takes!

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MISS TAKES: No, sir! I'll put it all in the minutes, sir.

MAYOR KILLENS: That's more like it, soldier.

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