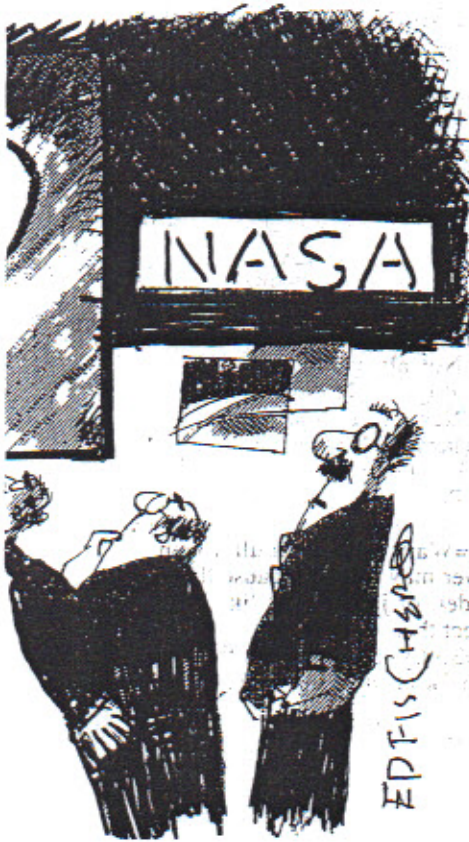


## Editorial staff opinion

## County needs to draw the line on meal costs



We understand and appreciate the value of attending professional training seminars and conferences. In this day and age of rapid technological change, there is real value to be gained for professionals in most fields to gather with their peers, network, share ideas and learn about the latest changes or advances in their fields.

For public sector employees, training seminars and conferences can be especially useful. For example, it's important for police to be well versed on the latest crime trends, while firefighter/paramedic need to be aware of the latest lifesaving techniques at motor vehicle accident, fires and other emergency scenes.

But we are concerned with what appears to be a lack of oversight on spending at seminars and conferences by the Kendall County Coroner's Office. For example, in July of 2011 Jacqueline Purcell, a county deputy coroner, attended a four day training conference at the Hyatt Regency Riverfront Hotel in St. Louis. The conference featured training seminars on advanced death investigations—certainly an important topic for coroners and their deputies. The total cost for Purcell's lodging at the conference—plus incidental expenses—was \$1,009.04, according to information obtained from the county treasurer's office.

We don't object to the county paying for Purcell's registration fee, lodging and fuel for the conference. We also don't take exception to the county giving her a daily stipend for meals. But we do have a concern with the incidental expenses charged to county taxpayers during her stay at the conference. Those incidental charges included five room service meals costing \$38.62; \$48.55; \$55; \$20; and \$20, respectively. Also charged to the county was a \$45 meal at a St. Louis restaurant; \$17.77 to a McDonald's in downstate McLean and multiple snack purchases (Reese's Pieces, an ice cream sandwich, trail mix, crackers and string cheese) from the St. Louis University Medical Center Bookstore.

This is not to pick on Purcell, but we believe this is emblematic of a lack of oversight on conference spending by the coroner's office. As we reported last spring, Purcell's boss, long-time Kendall County Coroner Ken Toftoy told us his department has a budget of \$8,000 for conferences and training seminars for the current fiscal year. He admitted to our reporter, Matt Schury, he has used some of that money to purchase high-priced meals for himself—including filet mignon—while attending conferences and seminars.

To eliminate these expenses, the county board needs to put in place a uniform policy for all county employees in all offices that spells out exactly what the county will pay for at conferences and training seminars. All elected officials and all of their employees should follow similar regulations on spending—regardless of the total amount budgeted for a given line item, such as conferences.

Such a policy wouldn't keep elected officials from running their offices as they see fit. It would simply be fair to all county employees and to taxpayers as well.

Reasonable meal allowances should be the same regardless of who is eating. Anything beyond that should be paid by the employee—not the taxpayers.

## amusement park

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the park site, and on Tuesday, Nov. 7, the first trolley cars began operating. According to press reports, Montgomery was decorated with flags to greet people who showed up for the dedication ceremony. The park cost \$104,403.03 to build, plus \$1,200 for premium seats.

Though it closed each winter, the park opened for summer, and fall activities each year. In 1900, about 2,000 persons rode the trolley on the park's layout.

In the early summer of 1900, the completion of the Geneva Railway provided the missing interurban between Aurora and Elgin, drawing even more riders to Riverview from upriver.

Now they like