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Providing Lancaster City & County with an Alternative Source for
Local News and Commentary

1/29/09 • Publisher: NewsLanc.com, LLC • Combined Circulation: 80,000 monthly • Volume II, No. 104

Gray: Streetcars could be subsidized

After the January 26 meeting of Lancaster City Council, *NewsLanc* asked Mayor Rick Gray to explain why the City is engaging a \$40,000 streetcar engineering study while similar systems in other cities are known to depend on considerable taxpayer subsidies.

“There’s no public transportation that isn’t subsidized,” Gray responded, *“There’s no private transportation that isn’t subsidized—we*

subsidize your car,” he said, referring to public roads.

Gray was responding primarily to the findings of a recent *NewsLanc* report, which observed that only 6% of the Portland streetcar system’s operating budget is supported through fare revenues while the rest comes from public funding.

Library court decision stalled by charges against judge

In an unexpected turn of events, a legal dispute regarding a \$1.25 million bequest to the Lancaster Public Library was put on hold this week after assault charges were filed against presiding Judge Joseph Rehkamp.

A state Supreme Court ruling has rescinded all of Rehkamp’s current judicial assignments—which places the entire Bucher hearing *“in limbo”* for the time being, according to attorney Robert Hallinger of Appel and Yost, the firm representing the library.

Before this week’s setback, both parties were slated to turn their briefings and findings of fact into Rehkamp by February 1. A decision was anticipated by early spring.

The Bucher family is contesting a 2003 draft of Thomas Bucher’s will, which disinherited all relatives and left the entirety of his estate to the Lancaster Public Library. According to Bucher’s father, former judge Wilson Bucher, the deceased was suffering from an *“insane delusion”* at the time of the will’s composition.

Should taxpayers have to pay twice as much?

An *Intelligencer New Era* article **“From shoes to homes, Work begins to transform city factory into apartments”** reports that 24 *“low-income”* apartments will result at a cost of \$5,100,000.

That amounts to \$212,500 per unit, perhaps twice the cost of tearing down the building and

constructing afresh under conventional circumstances. Furthermore, existing apartment buildings could be acquired within or in proximity to the city for \$60,000-\$80,000 per unit and refurbished for \$10,000 a unit.

This has long been the case with public subsidized housing construction. [Continued...]

It is meant to help the poor but, at least initially, benefits the rich and well-off at unnecessary cost

to the taxpayers who support grants and subsidize financing.

EDITORIAL: City meter parking

From the *Intelligencer New Era's*, "Saturday meters: To pay or not?":

"Matt Kim sees it every Saturday. His customers drive slowly past his dry cleaning shop at West Orange and North Prince streets, looking for parking spaces. They drive around the block. Then they shake their heads and drive away."

The problem that Kim's Dry Cleaning is experiencing is simple to correct: Take out the meters and put up a sign stating, "10 minute limit, Monday thru Saturday."

Originally, the purpose of parking meters was to discourage all-day parking that made it difficult

for customers to find spaces. But over the years the City decided that the meters should be revenue-producing.

The latest increase from four to five quarters per hour has become expensive and, worse yet, inconvenient. In Wilkes-Barre, a quarter purchases 30 minutes, as compared to 12 minutes in Lancaster.

We urge the City to reduce costs to a quarter for half an hour and return to charging for Saturday. The stores would be better off paying some sort of special tax to make up for any revenue loss than having their customers run off.

NewsLanc joins with CapitolWire to provide statewide news

NewsLanc has subscribed to *CapitolWire.com*. The private service provides daily links to scores of important news articles and editorials from throughout Pennsylvania.

For local news, *NewsLanc* will continue to supplement the Lancaster Newspapers. But for statewide matters, *NewsLanc* will likely exceed the local media in breadth of coverage and promptness in reporting.

Brunswick free to re-open but...

Hamid Zahedi, managing partner of the downtown Brunswick Hotel, advised *NewsLanc* by e-mail mid-week that the Brunswick Hotel has obtained an Occupancy Permit from the City of Lancaster.

Zahedi did not respond to a follow-up inquiry as to whether there are plans for the re-opening of the Brunswick. Furthermore, the website has been replaced with the notice "*Website Disabled.*"

NewsLanc had hoped that in the Pennsylvania Music Academy and the Brunswick Hotel would become linked, providing dormitories and practice facilities, and a downtown campus, which would revive Lancaster Square, provide economic vitality, and create a significant tourist draw.

Only time will tell.

**The above have been excerpted from NewsLanc.com.
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