



Public Objects to County Administrator's Severance 'Bribe'

The Commissioners faced heavy criticism at their weekly meeting over the unexpected departure of former County Administrator Mark Esterbrook and former Deputy Administrator Frank Koerber and their severance agreement.

Esterbrook and Koerber have agreed, in exchange for three months of severance pay with full benefits, not to "disparage any former or current county employee or official."

NewsLanc editorialized and publicly

expressed concern about the implications for free speech and democratic government.

"To pay in excess of \$70,000 in salary and benefits in order to stifle criticism amounts to little less than bribery at taxpayers' expense," said *NewsLanc* reporter Matt Henderson.

Audience member Bonnie Miller of Manor Township expressed the views of others: "Something happened behind the scenes here, and I don't like it one bit."

Rotary Bans Coverage of Rabbi's Address

For reasons perhaps only comprehensible to Lancaster Rotary Club President Alexandra Weisensale, Rotary banned media from covering the address on Wednesday by Rabbi Jack Paskoff about the Jewish community. (When contacted, Paskoff said he was unaware of the media ban.)

A week earlier, again according to Weisensale, Rotary forgot to invite the media to cover the State Senate Candidates Forum, although Jeff Hawkes of the *Intelligencer*

Journal attended the forum and wrote a column on the subject.

At the same time she announced the ban on Paskoff's address, Weisensale invited the media to cover Dr. Terry Madonna's address next week concerning the presidential race.

Weisensale's muzzling of the media is a radical departure from the local Rotary Club's tradition of openness to the media and the policies of Rotary International that encourage media coverage.

WATCHDOG

The *Intelligencer Journal* of April 10 gave a byline to P. J. Reilly for allegedly reporting on the Commissioners' meeting but, if he was there, he must have been asleep most of the time.

Compare the *Intell* article devoted to a Board of Elections hand out with *NewsLanc's* report

under News & Commentary headed "Regulars at Commissioners' Meetings Question Esterbrook Departure."

Bylines used to be a reward for an excellent report. Now the reporter doesn't even have to show up!

Intell's Jeff Hawkes One for Two for the Week

It is good to see a sign that Jeff Hawkes is again finding his voice with his superlative April 10 column "Thibault misguided on transit spending."

The last paragraph sums up the view of many: "[Paul] Thibault's mailer calls his style 'conservative leadership.' I call it pandering."

However, in his April 8th column "Commission's charter worthy of 'we the people'," Hawkes inadvertently raises concerns about the proposed Home Rule Charter.

Hawkes states: "The charter writers anticipated the potential for commissioners meddling in the executive branch. They addressed it by requiring the commissioners to deal 'exclusively' with the county executive."

At both federal and state levels of government, legislative committees have the

right to communicate with or call before them any government official for inquiries and to obtain reports. If Hawkes is correct, then the county executive would be tantamount to the county czar and that is hardly desirable.

Hawkes goes on to say "Citizens, through the power of initiative, may propose an ordinance or resolution. If they can gather the signature of 1,000 county adults within 60 days, the commissioners must vote on it. If they fail to vote, the proposal goes into effect."

Normally, an initiative places a matter on the ballot for voters to decide after first obtaining a requisite number of signatures from registered voters (not just adults.) There seems to be little benefit to go to the trouble of obtaining a thousand signatures just so that the commissioners can say yea or nay, just as they can even without an initiative.

LETTER: F&M "Public Forums" Biased

I have attended enough F&M "public forums" to know first hand how these "forums" are conducted. What they really are, are well-planned professionally-run presentations of the current project that F&M wants the public to accept unconditionally.

They are strictly controlled meetings in which the administrator in charge (usually Keith Orris) knows in advance of the meeting who is in favor and who is not; the former are allowed to

speak, the latter are not. Any ideas that do not conform to F&M's ideas are stifled. Other views or ideas are not solicited or permitted to be aired at the meeting...

F&M tries to equate their "public meetings" with "open hearings." They are public meetings in that the public may attend. "Open hearings," that is, meetings in which various viewpoints may be presented, they are not.

LETTER: Questions ACLU Statistics

ACLU representative cites 428 violent crimes in Hazleton – only four "committed" by illegal immigrants.

Are we to assume that ALL of the 428 violent crimes were solved, the offenders

convicted, and only 4 were illegals?

Or do we believe that only 4 illegals were arrested, tried and convicted and weighed against an unknown number of domestic villains, also tried and convicted?

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