

LETTER: Historic Preservation Museum now largely gone

“Many people do care quite a bit about historic preservation, especially about the home of a [Thaddeus Stevens] who had such an influence on our society.

“What remains at the corner of S. Queen and Vine has little to do with historic preservation. Only a small amount of the original Stevens’ home remains (most of it is newer construction), and that has been fully integrated into the concrete monstrosity of the convention center.

“The museum simply does not exist. What you see there is nothing more than a placeholder, something that was supposed to be temporary for a few months until the museum project could get underway.

“The whole idea behind the “Stevens-Smith Historic Site” was to partially placate preservationists and project opponents, while forcing the Historic Preservation Trust to pay for a significant portion of the convention center project. As a result, the HPT is for all intents and purposes bankrupt, with a \$741,255 payment to the LCCCA more than a year overdue. There is simply NO money to even start construction of the museum, and little hope that there ever will be.

“The LCCCA itself is so strapped for cash (thanks to the agreements which were rubber-stamped by previous LCCCA boards) that it cannot even consider taking on any additional projects. You can expect the Stevens/Kleiss/Smith buildings, and the Swan hotel, to remain undeveloped and unoccupied indefinitely.

LETTER: Increase in hotel sales tax likely

“The LCCCA hasn’t officially loaned money or extended credit to the Historic Preservation Trust, which simply doesn’t have the cash to pay the obligations which were forced upon them years ago by public officials who were trying to close an ever-widening funding gap.

“The Convention Center Authority simply does not have the ability to force the Heritage Preservation Trust to pay up; the LCCCA is left with so little cash (because of the agreements which were rubber-stamped by previous LCCCA boards) that it cannot afford to pay the lawyers which would be needed to pursue any legal action against the HPT. (Note that LCCCA operational funds are completely separate from convention center operational funds, which are managed by Interstate Hotels and Resorts – NOT by the LCCCA.)

“The PDCVB (tourist bureau) knows that the County Commissioners would increase the “hotel tax” to 7% (the maximum allowed by State law) in order to restore any funding lost when Wachovia/Wells Fargo (via M&T Bank) claims the PDCVB’s portion to pay for convention center operational losses (they can do this because Wachovia/Wells Fargo holds a lien against the “hotel tax”).

“The County Commissioners can get away with this because they promised to not provide any additional funds to the convention center, but made NO promises about additional funding for the PDCVB – which would be justified in the name of supporting the tourism industry in Lancaster County.”

Don't count on streetcar scheme being dead

A *Sunday News* article "**Trolley put on side track**" contends: "Nearly a decade after the idea was first raised, three years after it appeared federal funding for a 2.6-mile loop was imminent, the proposal to bring streetcars back to Lancaster has foundered. Backers, including Gray, continue to assert that a streetcar line would benefit the city, fostering economic development and improving transportation in the heart of downtown."

In reality, the street car concept was presented with the same spin and dissembling associated with the Convention Center Project, the relocation of the freight yard, and the opaque and self

serving conduct of Lancaster General Hospital's top executives.

Every example given of successful street car operations in other cities and the receptivity of Lancaster residents was misleading or simply false. NewsLanc researched and gave the lie to one after another in a series of articles.

But let us be careful. The Lancaster Newspapers twice published self serving virtual obituaries for the Convention Center Project when their executives knew otherwise. The trolley car scheme won't be dead until a stake is put through its heart.

LETTER: Consolidation of municipal services lowers taxes

"It has often been said that government would be much more efficient if it were run like a business. What businessman in their right mind would tolerate 76 different divisions in an area the size of Lancaster County (60 municipalities plus 16 school districts)? This is the height of inefficiency.

"Imagine the millions of taxpayer dollars that could be saved every year simply by eliminating duplicate management and facilities in Lancaster County!"

SUNDAY NEWS: In "**The perils of personalization**", columnist Gil Smart points out "[Pat] Toomey appears to both love and hate Social Security. He has vowed to defend it But he has also expressed hostility to the underlying premise that taxpayers, government, even society itself have an obligation to provide for the neediest of citizens, in this case the elderly."

expense of younger generations. We forget that before Social Security responsibility for support of parents fell squarely on their children, which meant they often had to suffer the crowding of elderly parents living with them.

WATCHDOG: We tend to think of Social Security as being a benefit for the elderly at the

As much as Social Security brought independence and dignity to oldsters, it brought privacy and removed a huge responsibility for their children.

The above have been excerpted from NewsLanc.com.
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