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Instead of increasing room sales tax, county should tax newspapers

The editorial in the Lancaster *New Era* headed “**Martin’s plan doesn’t add up**” is so self-serving, so divisive, so insulting to the reader’s intelligence, and so self-destructive as to defy excerpting and require almost line by line refutation.

“Lancaster County Commissioner Scott Martin’s plan to stabilize the finances of the downtown convention center is admirable, but it starts with the wrong premise.”...

“Martin would ask stakeholders — the city, Wells Fargo Bank, Penn Square Partners (of which this newspaper is a part), visitors bureau and the convention center authority — to shore up the center’s finances over five years.

In other words, stakeholders in this project foisted upon the public by a mendacious, manipulative and at times ruthless Lancaster Newspapers, Inc. (LNP) are not to be asked to sacrifice their ill-gotten

benefits but rather those who actually lost out by the construction of the Convention Center and the adjoining LNP half owned Marriott Hotel are to be further burdened with the cost of the folly...

Here’s a better idea. Let’s place a nickel tax on Lancaster newspapers. Assuming an average daily circulation of 90,000, that would raise a \$1,642,500 a year, just enough to cover the anticipate Convention Center annual losses. Since LNP believes that the purchaser pays the taxes, not the seller, it should have no objection.

One more point, and a very serious one: If the LNP through its monkey’s paw the *New Era* continues to obstruct Commissioner Martin’s efforts to salvage the Convention Center (as well as its dependent Marriott Hotel), then it is so abusing the remaining public trust as to encourage a boycott which would accelerate the trend to the Internet. And that Internet service might be provided by others.

Harrisburg incinerator: How taxpayers got saddled with the debt

HARRISBURG PATRIOT-NEWS: July 20, 2011... For better or worse, the city, the Harrisburg Authority and Barlow were about to become partners in what would become one of the most expensive, controversial and troubled projects in city history. The fallout includes multimillion-dollar city budget deficits, city staff layoffs and a 17 percent tax increase for Harrisburg property owners.

And nearly two years after the retrofit was supposed to be finished, the plant – once billed as a

convenient, reliable and economical waste-disposal solution for Dauphin, Cumberland and Perry counties – still isn’t fully functional. It has been hemorrhaging an estimated \$1 million a month since June 2006...

EDITOR: *Given the date of the above article, July 20, 2011, it is difficult to reconcile Jim Warner, CEO of LCSWMA, assuring NewsLanc that the Harrisburg incinerator has been operating without problems for two years.*

Does Harrisburg's incinerator have a hazardous waste problem?

HARRISBURG PATRIOT-NEWS: August 01, 2012 ... According to [Eric] Epstein, ash put into two of the pits — which later became mountains — on the site was characterized both by DEP and independent analysts at the time as hazardous. The city did not dispose of the ash in a hazardous waste landfill, citing a special exemption in the law. That exemption, Epstein claimed, was declared invalid by a U.S. Supreme Court ruling in 1994.

Epstein cited Department of Environmental Protection violations at the facility's ash pits dating

back to the mid-1980s and highlighted what may be a new, uglier wrinkle in the incinerator saga.

EDITOR: *A purchaser of an existing toxic waste site is responsible for cleaning up the site. Has the Lancaster County Solid Waste Material Authority obtained engineering and legal assurances from experts pertaining to its exposure and costs? Jim Warner, CEO of LCSWMA, belittled the charge and pointed out that Epstein is not an expert but a citizen expressing his view.*

LETTER re Harrisburg Incinerator:

"The Harrisburg incinerator ash stored on site was called Mt. Ashmore back in the 80's. It was an environmental issue back then. But then for some reason the story on the ash went cold ... like everything else surrounding that project – the truth is fuzzy. But I would be very careful about buying into that mess."

Inquirer Poll finds wide backing for privatizing liquor sales

PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER: ...So found the latest Inquirer Pennsylvania Poll, in which likely voters, by a ratio of nearly 2-1, said they favored doing away with state control over the sale of wine and liquor.

And 61 percent of respondents in the bipartisan survey said they supported allowing grocery stores to sell beer and wine.

Even so, privatizing the Liquor Control Board remains an elusive goal in Harrisburg despite some big names behind the effort, including Gov. Corbett, who campaigned on the issue and often cites privatization's popularity with the public...

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