



SD of L considering alternate school delay practices

NewsLanc asked how the School District of Lancaster is handling weather delays in light of needs of working parents and the homeless. Superintendent Pedro Rivera responded:

"Opening on time has been an ongoing discussion over the past few days.

"I agree that schools must make themselves available as a service to those parents who rely

on us to maintain their work schedule, to those students and families who utilize our breakfast program and our buildings.

"Currently we do not have a system that would allow us to stagger the start of the day for select staff, BUT we are currently working on language that will allow us to do just that (we can then sit with the unions to discuss who is affected)."

LETTER: Lancaster divorce courts biased against men

"Divorce Master's are to make a decision within 30 days...some take months, years to make a decision all the while the person pays support and keeps being taken back into court for support until the decision is made.

"Lawyers not willing to make a settlement, even a reasonable one but draw it out for no reason.

"Lawyers do not provide their clients with adequate paperwork and consideration.

"Men who have been accused wrongly of some type of abuse towards their children who later are found innocent have lost their homes, jobs, etc. in effort to [pay] court costs.

"I have heard over and over again from lawyers who say the system is archaic and you would have to move a mountain to change it."

PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER: In an article titled "FBI: No evidence Fumo consultants did any work", the *Inquirer* reported:

"An FBI agent testified yesterday in former State Sen. Vincent J. Fumo's corruption trial that the state Senate was unable to turn up a single example of work done by three consultants paid a total of \$637,000 by taxpayers at Fumo's

command.

WATCHDOG: Is this an omen of things to come for Lancaster?

(Jim Sneddon's investigatory reporting on the Convention Center Authority is publishing bi-weekly at www.NewsLanc.com.)

Contrary to members' assurances, LCCCA negligent in spending

From a second in a series by James D. Sneddon

In the first article in the series, the mysterious almost a million dollars paid to Daniel Logan was described.

The various board members and the executive director of the Lancaster Convention Center Authority claimed they were keenly aware of their fiduciary responsibility in handling tax dollars. In reality, there was little justification required of consultants who were paid millions of dollars for work allegedly done for the Authority.

Chairman Ted Darcus told the audience at the Oct. 13, 2005 board meeting "our goal is to be prudent towards the taxpayers' dollars."

Executive Director David Hixson responded to questions about bills and lack of details by talking about "negative discourse" rather than providing substantive answers.

Willie Borden stated that as treasurer he reviewed the monthly billings for accuracy.

Board member Joe Morales told the public "*I trust the people we've hired to run this project and I take a lot of stock in the ... experts that do this for a living.*"

Even auditor Donald Diehm stated that he looked at a sampling of the detail of invoices and found that all invoices had sufficient detail. (Editor's note: Did he notice the almost million paid inexplicably to Dan Logan?)

Fairmount Capital Advisers signed its original contract with the Authority in June 2003. It provided a glowing reference for Thomas Beckett who had 15 years of municipal market experience.

The contracted rate for Beckett was \$150 an hour. In six months, Beckett's rate jumped to \$225 an hour. Then, in another six months, it was hiked to \$275, almost double the original contract. Fairmount was paid a total of \$409,039, almost all of it for hours billed by Beckett.

The Authority could produce no substantiating documentation for work done in 2003. Records indicate payments to Fairmount of \$121,218.51.

It isn't until April 2005 that Beckett started detailing his hourly billing. Up until this time he merely submitted the number of hours allegedly worked per day. During this period of time he was paid over \$280,000 which included about \$6,000 in unsubstantiated expenses. At no point does Beckett ever submit back-up receipts for his expenses, yet they are paid without question.

Beckett submitted bills that simply listed hours worked.

When it came time to hire a bond underwriter, Beckett recommended the George K. Baum & Company. They were paid hundreds of thousands out of the bond issuing fees and thus do not show up in the Authority bills.

There was, however, a single bill from Baum & Company. It was for June 2006 for \$25,937.50 at a rate of \$250 an hour, a month after Fairchild had completed its work.

It was for services of Baum's new vice president: Tom Beckett!

Good business acumen? Conflict of interest?

(The entire article is posted at NewsLanc.com)

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