



Morris a Good Chairman, But Wrong Negotiator

During Art Morris's chairmanship of the Lancaster County Convention Center Authority, he has fostered openness, competence and credibility.

However, Morris recently appointed himself along with board member R. B. Campbell to represent the Authority in negotiations with Penn Square Partners about bizarre and mysterious clauses in contracts between the parties.

***NewsLanc* estimates as much as \$10 million dollars is being diverted from the publicly-owned Authority to the private hotel**

developer, Penn Square Partners.

Morris has served as a columnist for the Lancaster Newspapers, Inc. which indirectly owns 50% of Penn Square Partners. Having such a relationship, Morris will find it difficult to be totally objective. And even if he were, the outcome of negotiations would be under a cloud.

NewsLanc urges Morris to appoint committee chair Kevin Fry to take his place. Fry and Campbell can more forcefully and credibly represent the public.

Sensible Charlotte Streetcars vs. Dumb Lancaster Plan

NewsLanc heard favorable comments about the Charlotte, NC streetcar system. To find out more, it interviewed Ron Tober, Executive Director of Charleston Street Trolley, Inc. and learned the following:

1) In Charlotte, streetcars will run in their own right-of-way, not in city streets.

2) They share rails with a high speed transit system so they only operate week days between commuter peak hours, plus all day and evenings on week ends.

3) The route is approximately 2 miles, similar to Lancaster's proposal.

4) Although the original cost estimate was \$20 million (the same as for Lancaster), it ended up costing \$40 million.

5) They operate one rebuilt vintage trolley and three replicas.

6) The fare is \$1.30.

7) The regional transit system (similar to Red Rose) operates the street cars.

8) Trolley operations are subsidized as part of the overall transit system subsidies.

9) They are popular with tourists.

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Neglected SW Lancaster: Rodney Park That Isn't

If you visit Rodney Park in the city's southwest at Rodney and Third streets, you might wonder what has happened to this almost two acres of ground which was deeded to the city in the 1920s and that once was a vibrant neighborhood park.

Today, rather than being a source of pride, it adds to the blight of one of the most densely populated neighborhoods in the city.

Here is some of what you will see: a community building; an overgrown, weedy patch of bushes next to the building; an in-ground shallow pool for children; old macadam paving that has crumbled over time; an ancient, ugly swing set with some mulch underneath; and a chain-link fence that encircles the macadam-covered grounds. A portion of the park originally was a basketball court, but the hoops and backboards are long gone.

The basketball court area's sole use now is for spill-over parking during senior citizen events at the community building.

The city is working on a comprehensive citywide parks and open space plan. *NewsLanc* applauds that. As part of that plan, there is a

resident survey on the city's Web site. The deadline for completing the survey is March 16. The city will use the information from the survey to form policies, goals and objectives for parks and open spaces, according to the Web site.

Because there is resistance to the former basketball court by some parties, an expanded tot lot and some much needed grass, a couple of trees, and a park bench or two would be much welcome in a neighborhood almost devoid of greenery and areas of repose.

With our population becoming increasingly overweight and unhealthy, everyone, including municipalities and governments, needs to get health and fitness more to the forefront.

***NewsLanc* estimates that an expenditure of \$100,000 would bring about a remarkable change and add many times that amount to the value of nearby real estate. The outlay would be offset by stabilizing the value of neighborhood homes and the revenue from real estate taxes.**

We hope the survey and the open space plan is compiled and used quickly so that it won't be a wasted effort.

LETTER: Challenges Franklin & Marshall's Promise Of No Streets Connected Through School Lane Hills

"This is a perfect example of the hedged, nuanced speech the college always uses. You will notice there is NOT an absolute guarantee. The included paragraph about local zoning etc. is the Catch-22. Our understanding is that Manheim Township requires TWO roads into/out of any development, especially cluster type dwellings.

"Our understanding is that they cannot just have one entry/exit from Harrisburg Pike only. So, when the whole Wilson Drive issue gets advanced, F&M will disingenuously respond, "We aren't pursuing it! The developer is," or

"The Township is making this a necessity. Our hands are tied!"

"Challenge the college to put in writing that should Manheim Township require a second entrance/exit from their Baker Field development, it absolutely will not be through School Lane Hills, and that if Wilson Drive's extension is an absolute necessity, they will abandon development plans.

"That, my friend, would justify your headline of an F&M promise. There is no promise in what I have read here."