

NewsLanc.com

Providing Lancaster City & County with an Alternative Source for
Local News and Commentary

10/16/09 • Publisher: NewsLanc.com, LLC • Combined Circulation: 80,000 monthly • Volume II, No. 89

Council candidate criticizes leaders on loss of police contract

At the October 13 Lancaster City Council Meeting, Matt Holden, a candidate for City Council, denounced the City's loss of the police contract with Lancaster Township. Holden, who is listed on the GOP ticket for the upcoming election, set his sights squarely on the Council in discussing this "*contract fiasco*," as he called it.

Noting that the Council asked no questions of Gray after his September 22 announcement of the contract loss, Holden proceeded to ask several questions of his own.

Holden asserted that, while the City may offset the need to lay off ten officers through attrition, "*we'll still carry the pension liabilities of these extra officers but will no longer be receiving any outside contributions*" from Lancaster Township. "*How will this affect the city's budget?*," Holden asked.

Holden suggested that price of the City's offer to Lancaster Township—nearly 75% more expensive than Manheim Township's proposal—revealed that "*the management of the City's expenses is out of control*."

Regionalized police: Past precedent and present barriers

From Las Vegas to Savannah, regionalization is becoming a national trend—as Mayor Rick Gray said, "*It's the way things are going*." For the time being, however, it may not be the way things are going for small cities in the State of Pennsylvania.

Louisville Metro Police Chief Robert White told the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, "*I sincerely believe we are a better police department because of it*." In 2003, the Louisville department was merged with the surrounding Jefferson County. Since that time, the area has been able to reduce its total number of police department employees while increasing the total number of actual police officers on the street.

Mike Weiser, Chief of the Berks-Lehigh Regional Police Department, told *NewsLanc* that regionalization in his area has definitely reduced expenses. For example, before consolidating in

1991, one borough paid \$181,000 in annual police expenses; in 2010, that same borough is paying \$212,000. An inflation-adjusted equivalent to the 1991 bill would amount to over \$280,000. Weiser's department serves about 30,000 residents.

A Lancaster metropolitan police department could serve well over 100,000, according to Mayor Rick Gray. Past precedent for consolidation in Pennsylvania falls far below this figure due to State-level restrictions on police officer pension plans.

According to Ron Stern, a PA policy specialist, all regionalized police departments are required by the PA Auditor General to provide an Act 600 pension plan to their officers. The provisions allotted by Act 600 fall short of those consistent with third class city code. **[Continued...]**

Therefore, small cities would have to downgrade their officers' pension plans in order to join nearby boroughs in a regional department.

Stern has recommended that the State Legislature reevaluate the Auditor General's ruling as well as third class city code to allow for productive negotiations in the future.

EDITORIAL: 'Predators' seek out the money, not the need

Prudent individuals and governments prioritize the spending of their money in accordance with their needs.

But the predators of 'crony capitalism' take a very different approach: They scout the landscape for government and foundation funding for grandiose projects and then, regardless of need or even desirability, they seek to feast from the public trough.

In the case of the Convention Center Project, what started off as a sensible effort to provide a 40,000 square feet meeting space for regional activities at the Brunswick ended up as an over 200,000 square foot project including a hotel.

It will also be the logic behind returning streetcars to clutter downtown streets, if federal or state money can be found. (It won't matter that almost no one wants the streetcars.)

The proposal to build a new hospital in West Earl Township seems to be a classic example of fund availability generating supposed 'need'. Lancaster General Hospital earns well over a

NEW ERA: An editorial headed "**Advice for Obama: listen to general**" concludes "*The president can't go wrong by relying on the advice of his top commander in Afghanistan.*"

WATCHDOG: Three growls for the least informed editorial we have encountered so far this year! The *New Era* is endorsing the concept

\$100 million a year, largely due to its market dominance and resulting ability to extract top dollars from insurance companies.

Predators' attention turns to building a new hospital within three-miles of Ephrata Community Hospital. The project will engender huge fees for bankers, lawyers, contractors and suppliers. The lack of need won't be questioned since, unlike other states, Pennsylvania does not license hospital expansion. It doesn't matter that the new hospital will drive the perfectly adequate Ephrata hospital out of business, leaving urban decay in its wake.

Although LGH is a public foundation, the public has no say as to how it is run or spends its money. Meetings are in secret, except for an annual 'show'. Directors appoint directors.

After the hospital is built, LGH probably won't be earning over a hundred million dollars a year. They will charge the insurance companies more. Our premiums will rise even further. And our healthcare may suffer.

that national policy should be determined by generals in the field. Déjà vu Vietnam!

Haven't the editors read or listened to accounts from officers and non-commissioned officers on how futile our efforts have been? Areas contained one month must be abandoned the next, and then our friends in those villages are slaughtered!

Visit NewsLanc.com daily for news, commentary, letters, and other features.
Suggestions and letters welcome at info@NewsLanc.com.