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Commissioners address PAM financial crisis

At the Tuesday, October 20 County Commissioners Work Session, a *NewsLanc* reporter asked how the County might be able to help the Pennsylvania Academy of Music (PAM) continue providing its public services in the midst of a present financial crisis. The Commissioners indicated that the County would not be financially assisting the struggling institution.

The October 17 *Intelligencer New Era* reported that Union National Community Bank, PAM's lender, has requested immediate payment of \$11.1 million, citing a failure to make debt service payments.

Commissioner Dennis Stuckey said that the

County has, in the past, contributed \$1 million to PAM. *"I think that's a nice cap,"* Stuckey said, based on the precedent of an earlier \$1 million contribution to the Fulton Opera House. *"I don't see the County in any position do anything with the Pennsylvania Academy of Music,"* Stuckey concluded.

Commissioner Scott Martin noted that difficult economic times have brought a number of budget-strapped human service providers and nonprofits to request County aid. *"And, unfortunately,"* Martin said, *"the County does not have the resources to be everything to all people."* He added, *"We do wish them the best of luck."*

COMMENTARY: The suit against Art Morris

Former mayor Art Morris is much admired and beloved by the public and his many friends. Having come from a youth of utter poverty in England, he is passionately devoted to the wellbeing of the poor and neglected.

Even his friends may have been objects of his 'Irish Temper' that momentarily, and perhaps longer on the issue of Conestoga View, can overcome his generally warm demeanor and good judgment.

Morris was beside himself over the sale by the County of the Conestoga View nursing home. He felt, despite the assurance of ongoing County funding to provide care for the poor, that it would cease to properly serve those unable to provide for themselves. As things turned out, he was wrong.

But he honorably believed it. (He also believed it was sold for too cheap a price.)

According to the suit brought by former commissioner Molly Henderson, the Lancaster Newspapers, Inc. knowingly, repeatedly, and with malice reported incorrect accusations about her in order to discredit her. Morris went unrestrained (and perhaps was egged on) by the Lancaster Newspapers. And thus he became drawn into the larger suit.

We do not presume to act as either judge or jury as to whether Morris libeled Henderson. But in recognition of the many services Morris has provided to the community and our warm feelings towards him, we will be sending a modest donation to his legal defense fund.

Halifax to have \$55 million for library; Lancaster, nothing!

NewsLanc received the following ‘heads up’ from a reader: “*Canadians think that libraries are important for many reasons, as discussed in this news release. So they fund them and build new ones.*”

The Greater Halifax areas have a population in 2006 of 372,679. The estimated population of Lancaster County in 2008 was 502,370, so Greater Lancaster is approximately the same size as Greater Halifax.

The Nova Scotia News Release describes how 55 million Canadian dollars are being provided by

the federal, state and local governments to construct a 109,000-square-foot facility.

The Lancaster Public Library was deprived at the last minute of a promised \$3 million dollars in State money to renovate and expand its facility to a third of the size of the proposed new Halifax library. (The state funds likely went to cover cost overruns at the Convention Center.)

What does it tell us about a difference in values and priorities between the respective governments and civic leaders?

LETTER: Do surveillance camera results justify cost?

“On the Oct 14 letters page in Lancaster Newspapers was a letter headed ‘Cameras won’t solve Lancaster city’s problems’ by Charles Lane, who wrote that ‘some people’ believe that the cameras installed by Lancaster Community Safety Coalition ‘makes them more secure and prevents crime.’

“Comparing the location of reported crimes in the city with an LCSC camera map indicates that the cameras are giving citizens a false sense of security. The most recent burglaries or burglary

attempts and robberies, some with weapons, were committed no more than one block away from a camera...

“Since 2008, a total of \$600,000 has been given by the City to the LCSC for the operation of its surveillance program. The burden of proof should be on the LCSC and City officials as to whether this surveillance program is worth what it costs, or if this money would be more effectively used for neighborhood policing and other proven crime-reduction programs.”

NEW ERA: An editorial, “**A piece of Heart**” opens “*When Lancaster Regional Medical Center announced two months ago that it would sell a stake in the hospital to some doctors, the innovative though controversial move was believed to be a first for Pennsylvania....Critics say doctors who are part of such ventures have an incentive to send more patients merely to gain more professional fees. This also helps to protect their investment, critics say.*”

WATCHDOG: Under normal circumstances we would agree with the critics. However, given the dominant market position of Lancaster General Hospital which enables it to extract higher payments from insurers which in turn leads to higher premiums for the insured, and given the irresponsible and secretive manner in which LGH employs its vast profits, we believe revitalizing Regional and Heart of Lancaster hospitals is in the public’s interest.

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