



LCCCA asking State for \$6 Million, 1/2 for Penn Square Partners

At the Lancaster County Convention Center Authority meeting held on Nov. 27, Chairman and Acting Director Art Morris reported that the Authority plans to ask for an additional \$5.97 million in taxpayer dollars from the State of Pennsylvania. (State taxpayers have already contributed over \$58 million!)

Without additional State money the Authority would be forced to ask Lancaster County for a substantial increase in the "hotel tax."

The March 2007 budget included inadequate funding or no funding for certain items, such as construction legal fees.

Furthermore, the anticipated much vaunted "value-engineering" cost savings failed to materialize in the amounts projected. And

change orders, partially due to rock removal and unanticipated architectural issues, began rolling in immediately. (*Editor's note: By definition, Contingency Fund is supposed to anticipate such changes.*)

\$2.7 million of the \$5.9 million is to complete the hotel and "shared space." Left unsaid was that the Penn Square Partners, consisting of subsidiaries of the Lancaster Newspapers, Inc. and the High Group, are apparently refusing to invest any additional money of their own into the "private" hotel and "shared space."

Complicating all of this is a passage from the "Joint Development Agreement," as amended, which states that half of all future additional funding for the LCCCA must be shared with Penn Square Partners.

Physician Praises New Addiction Treatment

At the annual year-end dinner of the Lancaster County Drug and Alcohol Commission, Dr. Samuel Rice spoke about heroin and opioid addictions and the need to reduce addicts' dependence on these substances in a humane and responsible way, including permitting them the use of synthetic opioid treatments such as Methadone. The patient consumes the substance once a day and it assists in breaking the chemical addiction.

"Before we had a Methadone clinic in Lancaster, addicts were driving daily to Coatesville to get their medicine," Dr. Rice

said, arguing that it is inhumane to essentially force people to do this.

The bulk of Dr. Rice's speech, however, was devoted to talking about the success of a newer drug, similar to methadone, called Suboxone or buprenorphine.

"In one study, 75% of those who received buprenorphine versus a placebo were retained at one year. No one in the placebo group was retained." "In another study, 80% of those with counseling and buprenorphine were retained."

Red Rose Transit Takes No Position on Trolleys

In response to a question from a *NewsLanc* reporter regarding the board's position on the issue of trolley cars for downtown Lancaster, Executive Director David Kilmer said, "That effort is not being led by this authority" and "I think it's too early to make any judgment about that and I don't think we should be narrow-minded about things."

Kilmer and Board Treasurer Jon Farrell repeatedly stressed that further study is needed to determine the needs and concerns of the Authority's client base.

Information previously supplied by Red Rose indicated that ridership on the current trolley busses only averages eight passengers per hour.

Will Lancaster Be Like Atlanta or Philadelphia?

Atlanta, Georgia is an example of a city that has developed a downtown strictly based on office buildings, hotels and some retail trade. After 7:00 pm, visitors are apprehensive about walking downtown after dark.

Philadelphia also has office buildings, hotels and stores; but downtown contains active neighborhoods, restaurants, theaters and shops and thus pulsates until late in the evening.

Forty-some years ago, Philadelphia removed a railroad embankment linking 30th Street Station with downtown. John F. Kennedy Boulevard replaced the railroad tracks and it was lined for blocks with apartment condominiums. About that time, former Mayor Richard Dilworth bought and renovated a row home in the then-dilapidated but historic Society Hill area and sparked the residential revitalization which soon spread to the Delaware River water front.

Downtown Philadelphia's rebirth was largely due to "gentrification," an influx of young people and "empty nesters" whose children had grown and moved on. Year by year, downtown grew east, south, west and later north, not so much by tearing down existing homes but through renovations and sale to affluent purchasers. Further from downtown, slums were replaced with attractive subsidized housing.

Unfortunately, downtown Lancaster is evolving along the pattern of Atlanta. Lancaster Square retards residential growth of the downtown area to the north and the Convention Center will block the spread of upscale residential to the south. Had the Watt & Shand site been developed as condominiums as originally proposed, downtown would now have a few hundred more middle and upper middle class residents. And their friends would likely follow as downtown housing spread to the south.

Even if the Convention Center is a success, the streets will be deserted at least 200 days a year and downtown will attract far less upscale residents. Thus, Lancaster seems to be going the route of Atlanta, not Philadelphia. Our leaders look to commercial buildings and trolleys for revitalization when they should be focused on making center city attractive for upscale residents.

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