



Darcus Thwarts Contest for LCCCA Chair Position

Meeting early Friday morning as a Special Nominating Committee for 2008 officials, the seven members of the Convention Center Authority Board stumbled to the nominations of Art Morris to continue for Chair, Laura Douglas for Vice Chair, Kevin Fry for Secretary and R. B. Campbell for Treasurer.

A sign that things are not as harmonious among board members as they may appear on the surface, former chair and current board member Ted Darcus objected to Committee Chair Thomas LeCrone seconding the nomination by R. B. Campbell of Laura Douglas as Board Chair. Darcus claimed, apparently erroneously, that the bylaws prevented the Committee Chair from nominating.

What was especially telling was the unwillingness of other board members, including gentlemanly Art Morris, to defuse the issue by seconding Douglas's nomination on LeCrone's behalf. This unwillingness suggests Morris supporters feared the outcome of a contested ballot.

Another sign of maneuvering was the disclosure that a selection for the opening of Executive Director will not take place until February or possibly March, contradicting what Morris told *NewsLanc* earlier in the week.

Concern was expressed about Morris continuing for so long in his dual capacities as Chair and Interim Executive Director.

In response, Morris indicated he preferred to stay on as Chair and, if requested, would relinquish his interim position as Executive Director prior to the January board meeting when the election of officers will take place.

For her part, Douglas promised Morris that, as Vice Chair, she "would try to take as much [work] off of you as possible, so that you're not trying to do two jobs."

NewsLanc president Robert Edwin Field urged that the future Chair should advocate audits of millions of dollars of questionable Authority expenditures prior to commencement of construction, and call for re-negotiation of certain one sided unconscionable contractual arrangements favoring hotel developer Penn Square Partners.

Examples given of outrages were the hotel receiving half of the millions of dollars of naming rights for the Convention Center and half of any future state grants to the convention center. Field also ridiculed provisions providing private party S. Dale High with special privileges pertaining to the naming rights.

Quote of the Year: *Intelligencer Journal* columnist Jeff Hawkes on the PKF feasibility study: "I'm confident PKF will provide an eminently reasonable and trustworthy opinion.... Why project supporters aren't cooperating with the consultant is beyond me." Feb. 28, 2006 ***Beyond us too!***

COMMENTARY: Budapest vs. Lancaster: Good Planning vs. No Planning

A decade ago, McCaskey graduate and later real estate developer Richard Field and his father visited the planning office of District 9 in Budapest, Hungary. They were shown a detailed plan comprising dozens of blocks describing precisely which buildings were to be razed, which renovated, the type of new construction to take place in designated locations, proposed pedestrian pathways, street enhancements, new green areas, and improvements to existing parks.

At the time of the visit, the neighborhood consisted of many run down buildings, dingy streets, trashed littered empty lots, and buildings teeming with squatters.

When Field examined the detailed redevelopment plans, he recognized the direction, vision, and commitment of local officials. Over time, Field and his associates acquired four sites on which they developed condominiums consisting of a couple hundred flats with indoor parking and ground level shops.

Today when Field looks out from his eighth floor balcony, he sees that plan fully realized. Consequently, the district has become one of the most fashionable and sought after sections of Budapest and is experiencing rapidly rising real estate values.

In contrast, a developer interested in building similar residential condominiums in downtown Lancaster would have a very different experience. There is no comparable plan for orderly development. A prospective builder or

apartment purchaser can only see what exists now, not know what will occur later.

Furthermore, prospective developers would be hard pressed to detect much civic interest in facilitating a downtown housing trend or appreciation of the resulting gentrification that would spread to currently-distressed nearby neighborhoods.

Grim evidence of this apparent disconnect was the choice of the Watt & Shand site for the convention center project with no apparent recognition that such a massive commercial structure would block the logical and orderly spread to the south of housing for empty nesters and young professionals. Instead of asking what can be done to trigger downtown gentrification, concentration was on what could be done with the Watt & Shand site.

Most recent downtown residential activity has concentrated on converting deserted industrial and retail buildings, wherever they might be located, into loft type residential units. This indeed is progress, but hardly sufficient in itself.

Planning requires expertise and consensus, not gimmicks such as trolley cars. And making what is planned actually happen requires education of decision makers and the public, investments in approving streets and parks, federal and state subsidies, and leadership.

To lead effectively, one must know where one is going. Planning provides direction.

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