

Let's empty downtown trash containers

It is gratifying to have visitors swarming to downtown Lancaster on Friday evenings and Saturdays to visit stores and take in the sights. However on Saturdays they are greeted with the blight of overflowing city trash containers along the downtown sidewalks.

It does not take genius, especially when the Mayor lives on the second block of North Prince Street, to recognize that the containers need to be emptied

first things Saturday morning, preferably before 8:00 AM. Of course this costs money and probably some over time.

But what is the use of spending two hundred million dollars to attract visitors, mostly funded or guaranteed by tax payers, if they are going to have to walk around the litter surrounding the trash receptacles and they have no place to dispose of their unwanted items?

Would you like a produce stand or families living together next door?

The *Sunday News* editorial “**Exceptions to the rules**” is sub-titled “*In Manheim Township and Millersville borough, zoning violations were handled by the book. But what was missing was a chapter on the use of common sense.*”

One issue had to do with setting up a produce stand in violation of the zoning code for a residential neighborhood. Another had to do with occupancy regulations of a zoning code.

There is a danger in “*common sense*” non-enforcement of the law. Are we to have a plebiscite before enforcing regulations? Are township managers and the police department to be fearful for their jobs if they perform their sworn duties?

On one hand, “*common sense*” is sometimes the lubricant that allows the laws to work. So the Watchdog recognizes it is a factor. But in both of these cases, a remedy, if one is needed, is available through a democratic legislative process. As the *Sunday News* observes “*Without zoning, communities devolve into chaos. We need rules to govern our neighborhoods.*”

But they continue “There are exceptions to every rule...” Yes, but should we allow exceptions to every law? And if so, who is to decide?

In these two circumstances, is it likely that the zoning codes will be revised to allow a produce stand in front of every house and multiple family occupancies? If not, then what are the townships supposed to do next year?

INTELLIGENCER NEW ERA:

“**Millersville approves fire merger**” reports “*Millersville borough acted Monday to adopt the Blue rock Fire District, which will replace four fire companies which serve the borough and Manor Township.*”

WATCHDOG: Three wags of the tail! Now let's move ahead with the concept of a regional police department.

It is unlikely that the historic borough and township plethora will be reversed, but [**Continued on back**]

we can mitigate the fractionalization and achieve savings by merging school districts, police

forces and, where appropriate, fire departments.

Let's sell Lancaster General Hospital!

Out of its average annual **earnings of \$100 million**, non-profit 'Public Charity' Lancaster General Health provides the public with an average of **\$4 million in charitable grants** each year.

It is reasonable to surmise that a sale of LGH would bring at least ten times its average annual \$100 million in earnings — that's a **billion dollars**.

Let's count the benefits:

1) The new owners would pay say **\$30 million a year in income taxes**, after some tax shelter. That beats the current annual average of \$4 million in voluntary grants.

2) The real estate would now go on the tax rolls. Since the real estate would be assessed much more in accordance with the sales price, the amount collected by city, school board and county would far exceed the amount LGH currently contributed in lieu of taxes. The **taxes might amount to \$10 million**.

3) The public could invest the billion dollars it receives from the sale in bonds and conservative mutual funds and obtain say \$25 million in additional return each year.

4) Cost for services would be likely to remain the same, since LGH is already charging all the market can bear.

5) **Thus total annual benefit to the tax payers would be an additional \$27 million in taxes over the current grants, perhaps another \$8 million in real estate taxes above the current contributions, and \$25 million in dividends and interests for a grand total of \$60 million dollars**, and that is above the average \$4 million in grants. Even half that amount in public benefits, say \$30 million, would make a huge difference in both tax payer relief and local services.

The purpose of this fantasy is to emphasize that we are paying a huge amount to LGH for health care, it is enjoying extraordinary profits in addition to extravagant pay for top executives and possible perks about which we know not, that the public's money is spent without transparency, and everything is determined behind closed doors by a self-perpetuating board of directors.

LHG is a public non-profit entity (Technically a "Public Charity". Yet it scorns transparency and a commitment to public health, education and the social safety net. Let's take it back!

LETTER: re letter "Outsourcing Public Libraries"

"It is not the rule for library employees to be unionized; this is probably only the case when the library is part of the county or city government, which is not the case for any of Lancaster County's Libraries.

"Library employees are generally underpaid (Masters Degrees earning \$25-35,000/yr?) and have skimpy benefits. Government funds only 1/2 of the budget of the Lancaster Public Library; the rest comes from donations and fee-based services."

The above have been excerpted from NewsLanc.com.
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