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## Scott Martin hits home run re Convention Center Refinance

County Commission Chair Scott Martin wasn't drafted to salvage the financial fiasco of the County Convention Center, but he volunteered for the task and at Wednesday's press conference submitted a viable plan, conditionally approved by most of the parties and at best with reservations by another, that would put the Center on a viable financial footing for years to come...

Penn Square Partners (PSP) is being asked to make annual payments to LCCCA marketing of \$100,000. PSP is asked to forgive \$700,000 of LCCCA debt to PSP. It is also asked to allow LCCCA to provide concession services at the facility for seven years, based on \$100,000 annually. (Of course many of the current contractual arrangements between PSP and the LCCCA are outrageous by any business norm. For

example, the LCCCA should have been receiving about 30% of concession revenue; instead it was only getting 5%.)...

Wells Fargo agrees to give the LCCCA a 125 basis point reduction (1.25%) in interest cost, an average annual savings of \$800,000, a total of \$4,000,000 over five years.) Also it will extend the current deadline to January 2, 2014, which includes pricing relief. Martin commented ( "I'm sure those guys are sick of me after a year but commend them for what they have done. ")

Mayor Rick Gray praised the plan on behalf of the City; Chair Kevin Fry did the same speaking for the Convention Center Authority. Others also spoke in favor of the plan... all except one, which was conspicuous for its absence: Penn Square Partners.

## Intell editorial a love letter to the Gray re-election campaign

An *Intelligencer Journal* editorial rhapsodizes about alleged great downtown progress as follows:

*"Years ago dining in downtown Lancaster was likely to conjure up images of leaden Pennsylvania Dutch food, sub shops and corner bars. The city's visionaries salivated over Harrisburg's 'Restaurant Row,' a long stretch of Second Street that was home to more than 30 eateries, bars and nightclubs."...*

There is a national resurgence of downtown restaurants. Is there evidence that conventioners patronize downtown restaurants or do most stay and eat at the Marriott?

For almost eight years the City has failed to come up with an overall solution to the center city eyesore of the derelict Lancaster Square East with its long empty Bulova Building, condemned as unsafe Brunswick Annex, and the virtually moribund Brunswick Hotel. If there are indeed "city visionaries", Gray and City Planner Randy Patterson are not among them.

We all recall that following his election, Mayor Gray did a 'right turn' and fully supported the Convention Center....

Whatever Lancaster Newspapers, Inc.'s obligations to Rick Gray, we urge that it remains neutral and allow the electorate to determine who is the better candidate.

## Thanks to Sunday News, we all know how to 'hook up'

Perhaps the front page *Sunday News* story, "Sex for sale along Rt. 30 tourist strip", is too well researched and informative.

It explains to couples romantically inclined but who do not want to be seen together that economy hotels with doors leading from the parking lot are a safer bet.

It helpfully provides a web site for the procurement of "female escorts". (Sorry, we aren't going to publish it.)

A former hotel manager recommends hotel owners get together and set higher prices, which happens to be a federal offense under the Sherman Antitrust Act...

## Intelligencer Journal New Era hits a reporting low for 2013

Article "Harrisburg incinerator sale raises environmental concerns" starts out as though it will at long last address the serious issue of whether the Lancaster County Solid Waste Management Authority (LCSWMA) is exposing Lancaster County residents to a future big jump in trash collection fees .

*"The Lancaster County Solid Waste Management Authority's pending purchase of the much-maligned Harrisburg incinerator for \$130.7 million has pushed an old environmental concern to the surface.*

*"Namely, is there dangerous hazardous waste buried in an old unlined incinerator ash dump and why won't the authority do a thorough environmental assessment to see if that's the case?"*

Instead, the article becomes the equivalent of a paid advertisement for the LCSWMA and its president, Jim Warner.

Warner response to the public request for a third party, Environmental Impact Study is:

*"We would not do this transaction had we not done due diligence on the environmental circumstance there. And we've had detailed discussions with (state Department of Environmental Protection) on whether or not they feel there is any lingering legacy liabilities there."*

And

*"If you're applying to expand a facility or build a new one, then you would have to do an environmental assessment, meaning what impact might occur."*

In other words, the county citizenry isn't entitled to third party professional, evaluations in exchange for committing approximately \$200 million.

It is the same attitude we experienced with the sponsors of the Convention Center:

*Trust us. We don't need to seek evaluations from outside authorities to justify the spending of the public's money.*

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