



EDITORIAL: Has TRRAAC derailed F&M scheme?

On June 19, in an article "F&M wows with freight yard relocation program", NewsLanc reported: *"The upshot was that even most of the members of TRRAAC, an organization consisting largely of those most impacted, seemed to acquiesce to the relocation of a portion of the freight yard. Most people went away feeling better informed and favorably impressed."*

If the TRAAC organization was caught unprepared, out-maneuvered, and unrepresented by counsel at the June 18th meeting, on Tuesday evening it made up for its lapse with impressive presentations by an environmental consultant, veteran neighbors as eye witnesses, and legal counsel. They made a strong case for reviews by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

Franklin & Marshall, the owner of the former Lancaster Brickyard which had been a long term dump for Armstrong, has spent over \$1.5 million of federal funds in developing its case for relocation of the Norfolk & Southern rail yard to the location.

Nevertheless, TRRAAC provided sufficient information during its presentation to raise very serious concerns and to necessitate well funded and impartial governmental evaluations of F & M representations.

A member summed up the mood of the audience when he said *"We have been consistently given half-truths, misinformation, incomplete information, and, in some cases it seems to me, outright false information."*

TRRAAC has done its job by presenting sufficient information to justify careful government reviews before over \$30 million in taxpayers money is spent on the project and the public health of the community is possibly jeopardized.

Hopefully, others will now join with the School Lane Hills community by insisting on full investigations and a conscientious evaluation of possible alternative sites.

New Era Panics

The Sept. 30 editorial "Redouble efforts on rescue plan" is one of the scariest in memory emanating from the *New Era*, and that is saying quite a bit.

Keeping in mind that some of the greatest experts in economics and government have serious reservation that the \$700 billion "Bail Out" as currently constituted is the best approach, we question on what basis other than the hysteria of the moment that this provincial newspaper should twice describe the delay in passage as "despicable."

"By refusing to act; that is, refusing to take responsibility; the House missed an opportunity to

stabilize the nation's financial markets and put them on a path of recovery; or at least to buy time before deciding what sterner, additional actions must be taken."

From whence comes such certainty?

Whenever local newspapers join the public panic (often stirred on by Administration propaganda) by emotionally calling for government action, we can expect that our civil rights are going to be reduced, our wallet is about to be picked, or we will soon be going to war. Instead, what we need from what is supposed to be our conservative newspaper (as well as the liberal) is sober and learned analysis.

Survey: SDL middle school students feel less safe

Franklin & Marshall College's Center for Opinion Research recently completed a survey of students in the School District of Lancaster.

The survey is intended to gauge student opinions about school safety, prevalence of drug use among students, and the effect of both upon academic performance.

Among other things, the survey finds that *"Most students feel safe in school, but fewer middle school students felt safe in May 2008 than felt safe in November 2006. In fact, when it comes to safety perceptions, middle school students are the least likely to feel safe compared to elementary and high school students."*

In spring 2008, 71% of a sample of 1,700 middle school students responded, *"I feel safe at this school"* compared to 82% in fall 2006.

There were also noticeable declines in the percentage of middle school students who rated the relationship between students and teachers positively. For example, in 2006, 53% of the middle school sample said that *"Students get along well with teachers."* By spring 2008, that number had dropped to 39%.

Changes at the elementary school and high school levels were less dramatic, although there was a small drop in the percentage of students at all levels who described their school as "clean."

The number of actual physical attacks at school, however, has not significantly changed in the past two years, according to the report. In spring 2008, 17% of middle school students and 14% of high school students said they had *"been attacked and hit by someone, or beaten up, on school."*

The survey summary goes on to note that *"students*

who were attacked or assaulted had more unexcused absences, less frequent school attendance, and lower PSSA performance."

Alcohol and marijuana use among students has increased, according to the survey.

In fall 2006, 12% of middle school students reported having *"had beer, wine, or hard liquor during the past 30 days."* In spring 2008, the number was 19%.

For high school students, that percentage was 23% in 2006 and 34% in 2008.

In fall 2006, 6% of middle school students reported having *"used marijuana during the past 30 days."* In spring 2008, that number had risen to 10 %.

For high school students, 19% reported having used marijuana in 2008 as opposed to 10% in 2006.

The survey notes that students who reported having used *both* alcohol and marijuana had slightly lower attendance rates and lower PSSA scores in math and reading than those who had used neither.

The survey does not gauge the effect of alcohol use alone or marijuana use alone on these factors.

SDL Superintendent Pedro Rivera said he takes the findings very seriously. *"This has to lend itself to changing what we're doing in the schools,"* he said.

He went on to note that the District is going to be implementing a bully education/awareness program at all middle schools later this school year.

The survey can be read in its entirety at www.NewsLanc.com

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