



Our Apologies to law firm of Stevens & Lee

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Starting in 2000 during the litigation and development stages, the Lancaster Convention Center Authority was paying the law firm of Stevens & Lee tens of thousands of dollars in legal bills monthly that eventually aggregated over \$7 million. The statements available to the public and Board members carried no information apart from “*For services rendered.*”

There ensued requests in 2005 and 2006 from County appointed members of the Convention Center Board, as well as vocal members of the public and *NewsLanc*, to confirm that the invoices were based upon time actually worked on LCCCA business at agreed upon rates.

Sunday News’ then columnist Art Morris also called for billing transparency.

Nevertheless, Chair Ted Darcus ruled that additional information concerning billings would not be made available so long as litigation was

on-going.

Upon the resolution of legal disputes in early 2009, *NewsLanc* made a “Right To Know” request of the LCCCA for copies of Stevens & Lees invoices. Invoices from 2005 on were received, properly detailed as to who performed the work, the date, the amount of time spent (down to ten minute intervals!), the subject and the hourly rate.

Current LCCCA Chair Art Morris confirmed that earlier invoices still held at Stevens & Lee were similar in details.

On May 3, 2009, Field wrote to express his thanks for the LCCCA’s cooperation and concluded by saying:

“I feel as though I have some egg on my face. However, in this case, my anger is not at myself but at those arrogant individuals who thwarted transparency every chance they had. I guess the habit of concealing truly devious matters just became a way of life.”

Builder and manager indicate mid-June or earlier CC opening

Thomas Smithgall of High Real Estate, representing the Construction Manager, told the LCCCA Board the target date for the twin inspections are May 21 and May 22. He listed the various “Life Safety” tests that must be successfully performed before the City Fire Marshall will issue a Certificate of Occupancy which permits training to begin.

Mark Moosic of Interstate Hotels, the manager of the convention center and hotel, then described to the Board what would occur once occupancy was permitted. He said it normally takes four to five weeks to open to the public after the issuance of a CO, but he is confident all can be accomplished in two and a half weeks thanks to staff borrowed from other Marriotts.

Uniting the Cabbage Hill neighborhood

By Cliff Lewis

NewsLanc recently interviewed Mark Herr, a resident of Poplar St in Lancaster City who is working to coordinate his South West city neighborhood into a unified association called the Cabbage Hill Neighbors.

After living in the neighborhood for 13 years, Herr became concerned by an usually rapid increase in litter and crime. So this year, after studying the work done by other neighborhood groups in Lancaster and elsewhere, Herr decided that an organized neighborhood coalition was precisely what was needed to deal with the problems facing his part of town, which Herr affectionately calls “*the Hill*:“

“This Spring I started putting those [promotional] cards everywhere, walking around the area, talking to people, trying to find out what it is that they want to change—and, of course, it’s crime, drugs, and property beautification.”

For Herr, a key challenge in this phase of the effort is to grab the attention and commitment of neighborhood residents: “*We seem to have a lot of positive interest, but you’ve got to keep at*

them, or people will just sit back and go into their old routine. So you have to keep them interested.”

As the group gets off the ground this summer, Herr plans to connect the neighbors with phone chains and contact lists, and to use this network to spread information about important City ordinances or opportunities. Other initiatives that the committee has considered include:

- A Spring litter cleanup
- A Summer “*street splash*,” where the City can close a neighborhood block and open up fire hydrant fountain for kids
- A community event hosted by all of the neighborhood churches
- A new public basketball court
- Curb and window beautification initiatives.

Finally, with the help a bilingual committee member, all Cabbage Hill Neighbors promotion and activity will be accessible to both English and Spanish speaking residents: “*I don’t want anybody to feel left out. I want it to work for everybody....That’s what this is all about.”*

SD of L to parents: Plan for possible school closings

In a letter to parents circulated to school children, School District of Lancaster Superintendent Pedro Rivera writes:

“Although the current circumstances do not warrant it, I would encourage parents to work on a contingency plan for childcare now in case of a local outbreak requiring schools to close. If this were to happen, parents and guardians would be notified immediately.

“ Please know your child’s safety is our primary concern.”

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