

Reservations about project may dissipate

THE ISSUE | A project to renovate an old building in downtown Hammondsport into a senior housing center.

OUR OPINION | The legal battle appears over and a worthwhile endeavor can now move forward.

Drawn out political battle in Hammondsport appears over.

The village board decided last week to end its legal battle over a proposal by the Steuben Churchpeople Against Poverty to turn the vacant municipal building into a senior housing center.

Village officials had sought oversight on the project but dropped its demands following a recent ruling by Steuben County Court Judge Marianne Furfure. She ruled the village would likely lose in its efforts to regulate the renovation since state laws hold jurisdiction over these types of urban renewal projects.

So, it appears SCAP can now move forward with its plans to turn the old municipal building, which was previously a school, into 21 apartments for senior citizens. It's a worthwhile project the nonprofit agency has been pursuing since 2003.

Some of the source of the battle over the years rested with the fact that the build-

ing is located in the village but owned by the town of Urbana. That created confusion as to which municipality actually had jurisdiction.

The project offers at least two immediate benefits to the Hammondsport community.

First, it provides a use for an aging building that otherwise may continue to sit vacant and deteriorate.

Skeptics only have to look at the former Dana Lyon school that sits vacant in downtown Bath as a reminder of what can happen to old buildings.

The SCAP project will also help meet a growing need to have affordable housing for senior citizens. Such accommodations will continue to be in great demand as the Baby Boomers reach retirement age and the miracles of modern medicine allow folks to live longer.

In the end, reservations some had about the SCAP project will likely dissipate once the building is renovated and a group of senior citizens moves in and becomes part of the community.

NATIONAL VIEW | CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Telecom interruptus

Eildoers disrupt communications by cutting undersea cables that crisscross the waters of the Earth. Suddenly, the 21st century wired world goes silent. Millions of people have no Internet connection; telephones go dead. Sounds like Hollywood, doesn't it?

Well, four undersea cables recently were cut in the space of a week. Egypt lost more than half of its Internet capacity. Qatar had just 60 percent of its telephone capacity. India - back office to the world - experienced slowdowns. U.S. troops in the Middle East had a hard time calling home.

Sabotage? It's much more likely that these communication cables were cut by fishing nets or ship anchors. Stephan Beckert, director of research for Washington-based TeleGeography, a research and consulting firm, says fishing nets cause 65 percent of cable disruptions. Anchors are responsible for 18 percent. The rest are due to earthquakes and other geological events. Who knew?

Linking the world's landmasses for communication began almost the moment it became technologically feasible to do so. The first undersea cable between England and France was laid in 1847. It allowed trans-channel telegraph communication, thanks to Samuel Morse's newfangled code, invented three years earlier. That first cable failed after just eight days. In the following decade English and French leaders were able to stay in touch with their troops battling the Russians during the Crimean War via a cable laid across the Black Sea.

After numerous failures, the first successful cable was laid across the Atlantic Ocean in 1858. The feat was celebrated with fireworks and parades across America,

although just 25 of Queen Victoria's 72-word address heralding the trans-Atlantic link actually reached President James Buchanan. That cable died after three months of spotty communication. New and better cable was laid eight years later, finally allowing uninterrupted communication between the New World and the Old. The conversation was neither cheap nor speedy. It cost \$100 in gold and took 2 1/2 minutes to send 20 words.

Today, undersea cables carry 95 percent of the world's telephone and Internet communications swiftly, cheaply and reliably. The 86-member International Cable Protection Committee works with fishing, mining, dredging and oil and gas companies to prevent damage to undersea cables. It does happen, as the four recently cut cables prove. But there are now so many cables linking countries and continents that recovery is relatively swift. Traffic is rerouted to undamaged cables. When geographic vulnerabilities are revealed by cuts, cable companies are quick to respond. Nine new cables now are in the works for Egypt, including a new, more resilient one linking Egypt and France.

All that redundancy makes cutting undersea cables an unlikely target for terrorists aiming to disrupt the modern world.

As for the prospect that undersea cable communication between Europe and the U.S. could be completely disrupted, that's highly unlikely. "If there's ever a trans-Atlantic outage, I'm not going to be worrying about my Internet connection," Beckert said. "I'm going to be heading for the hills because a meteor just hit the ocean."

A massive meteor strike. Now that has Hollywood blockbuster potential.

LETTERS POLICY | THE LEADER

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- Letters must be kept to a maximum of 250 words. Letters longer than that will not be considered.
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- Letters may be edited for space considerations.



GUEST EDITORIAL | WILLIAM CARLSON

From the school board

You're no doubt aware that your board of education has hired a new superintendent of schools, Michael Ginalski.

Ginalski served as interim superintendent and continued the role of his previous position as assistant superintendent for instruction.

This now-vacant position will be filled this spring, which will allow Ginalski to spend more time on some very important topics in our district. They include: contract negotiations, future facility needs, enrollment and class size and keeping the district on task as outlined in the master plan.

The school board has the responsibility to provide a curriculum that meets all student needs while keeping within a budget that meets the approval of our residents. We've begun the process to prepare a budget for 2008-09. In we invite you to follow this process closely as we present different portions of the budget at our board meetings.

The board of education meeting schedule and budget preparation calendar are both published on our district homepage -

www.corningareaschools.com.

Early indications from Albany were that state aid projected last year would again be approved this year, but recent figures from the governor indicate reductions are taking place in their planning process that will once again affect our district.

The theory that wealthy districts get less is still on the books, and Corning-Painted Post, according to the formulas used, is a wealthy district. There are 57 small city school districts in New York. We are with those that are in the top group when comparing wealth and size.

We operate more buildings than other districts yet have a free and reduced lunch program which approaches 40 percent.

It is a fact that our district is unique in structure, which places more burden on the taxpayer. When we picture a wealthy district, one could point to Long Island and other areas where some receive hardly any state aid because of their wealth. But our wealth certainly does not compare to communities such as Rye, Saratoga Springs and others.

However, in the process of receiving aid from the state, we do.

This will always present a challenge to the district administration and the board of education as they create and approve operating expenses for the budget. The only way to help keep the budget reasonable is to try and use what money we have in more effective ways. Adding large sums to the budget year after year and hoping the state will provide enough to cover it will not work down the road. We have to begin to ask some difficult questions which must include buildings, redistricting, enrollments, transportation and hopefully last - programs.

Our school board is most concerned over a quality education for all students, regardless of ability. As we begin to look at current decisions regarding the budget, it is our wish to involve the community by listening and sharing information. Our "partners" are important to us not only on a daily basis, but as we plan for the future.

■ William Carlson is president of the Corning-Painted Post School Board.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

It's time to step down from seat

TO THE EDITOR | In response to the letter recently by Mr. and Mrs. Domras about the previous town supervisor and the two councilmen who were voted out by a landslide in the town of Urbana, I have to state that they obviously didn't do such a great job or they would not have been voted out by such a large majority of the taxpayers.

As far as being proud of the job they did, are you kidding? The lakefront was voted down twice, yet they chose to go against the majority and sneak it through anyway. Does anyone realize that was a dumping ground years ago and could be toxic? Who is going to pay for the cleanup if that land is disturbed and the surrounding land and lake is polluted? The taxpayers, of course, thanks to the previous board.

I can just imagine what Glenn Curtiss would think if he knew a dump was named after him? The previous board also had no plan for this so-called gift, they didn't set any money aside for maintenance or development, so there might never be a park there. That's admirable of them.

I'm sorry, but I don't admire someone like that. They never listened to us right up to the end. They didn't retire, or step down,

they were voted out, there's a difference. As far as stepping down, it appears that one of them hasn't yet. It's time to hit the road, "Jack."

Janne George
Hammondsport

Two issues remain in 2008 election

TO THE EDITOR | We are soon to elect a president and a congressional representative. How should we make our choice? Many will base their vote on a particular issue or a gut feeling. I say there are only two issues: war and peace.

We are at war in two countries. As long as our sons and daughters are dying in war, that is the primary, non-negotiable issue. Pollsters may cite the economy, health care and the environment as the issues. I say we cannot deal with any of those issues until we end these wars. Then we must pledge never to go to war again without a clearly defined mission. We must pledge never to attack another country that has not attacked our country.

The second issue is peace. We must wage peace. We must demand it - for our children and all the children of the world. Don't just pray for it. Demand it. Vote for it. Eric Massa is the peace candidate for the 29th congressional district. Barack Obama is the peace

candidate for U.S. president. Pray for it. Dream of it. Demand it. Vote for it.

Jeni Paquette
Corning

Massa on track with health care

TO THE EDITOR | I once shared Michael Morrongiello's views (Jan. 29, "Government shouldn't control health care choices") on health care. Then I learned how poorly we rank compared with other industrialized countries: The World Health Organization ranks us 26th in infant mortality and 24th in life expectancy. And yet we spend twice as much as the median, roughly \$9,000 per capita versus a median of \$4,500.

Morrongiello laments waiting times in Canada. Perhaps he hasn't tried lately to see a specialist. I recently waited months for an appointment with an orthopedist.

In spite of our grossly excessive spending, millions of us are left without health care, including millions of children. This is a system so badly broken that it leaves no room for doubt. Eric Massa is right in calling for us to follow the lead of other countries and adopt a single-payer health care system.

Mike Reynolds
Pittsford

Locals should decide school mergers

Of all the forms of government, school districts in New York state might be the most democratic.

Along with electing representatives to a school board, residents vote on an annual budget and decide spending proposals. Also, residents determine whether school districts can merge or consolidate.

No other government entity allows constituents to directly make those kinds of fiscal decisions and play such a large role in its overall operation. That may be a

good thing since school taxes make up about two-thirds of all property taxes levied.

To a degree, Stan Lundine would like to limit that type of public control.

The former lieutenant governor and Southern Tier congressman believes the state should have the authority to force school districts to merge. Specifically, he's proposing the state education commissioner be empowered to consolidate districts with the approval of the Board of Regents. As a result, the public's role in the consolidation process would be reduced to making comments at public hearings.

Lundine offered this idea last week at a Pipeline 4 Progress conference in Corning.

It's significant because Lundine now serves as chairman of the state Commission on Local Government Efficiency and Competitiveness, a body formed by Gov. Eliot Spitzer to find ways to stabilize and reduce taxes without cutting back on services.

His intentions are good. Why not try to find ways to save money? Consolidation is the buzz word these days and needs to be practiced more in a state that has far too many taxing jurisdictions and layers of government. But Lundine needs to focus elsewhere. Transferring the authority to merge school districts from the public to the commissioner's office simply gives one person far too much power, even though a decision would also have to be OK'd by the Regents.

Also, I view the commissioner as an Albany bureaucrat with a big office high atop a building that overlooks the Hudson River who is far removed from local issues that individual school districts face. The commissioner, now Richard Mills, tends to make decisions based heavily on bottom line facts and figures and administration policies.

My question is: Would a stiff-collared commissioner know what's best for a local school district or the folks who live there and pay taxes to support it?

Without a doubt, it's the local folks.

As far as the commissioner's office goes, its record speaks for itself.

Mills has been commissioner since 1995 and has made some monumental decisions that have affected local school districts.

In 2003, he invalidated the Option 2 school plan to consolidate Corning-Painted Post's two high schools into a single facility in Gang Mills. Even though 60 percent of district resident voted for the plan, Mills sided with opponents who said the convoluted proposal that involved a \$60 million gift from

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