

Will Ginalski succeed where others have failed?

THE ISSUE | A process is presented to craft another plan to improve the facilities in the Corning-Painted Post school district.

OUR OPINION | Public relations is key, but a lot will have to go the district's way to garner enough voter support to pass a new spending proposal.

Corning-Painted Post Superintendent Mike Ginalski rolled out a 4-phase process last week to craft yet another plan aimed at fixing the district's aging facilities.

Four prior proposals dating back to 2001 have failed to come to fruition and the hope is the fifth time will be the charm.

The condition of the schools is only getting worse as time goes by and, until something is done to correct the situation, they'll simply continue to be substandard and deteriorate.

"Public information is the name of the game," Ginalski said Wednesday night while laying out his methodical plan before the school board.

True, public awareness and involvement is crucial to get enough district voters – at least 60 percent – to buy into a plan, whatever the newest one may be.

But, it's also a tactic used, at varying degrees, for previous proposals and none, not even Option 2, which was backed by 57 percent of the voters, garnered the super majority support a new plan will likely require.

So, what's going to make this latest attempt successful where the others have failed?

Ginalski and his staff, for starters.

Their public relations strategy that involved numerous public meetings and appearances was key to getting this year's budget passed after the district was forced to adopt a contingency plan the previous year. They were successful in renewing public confidence lost by the policies of the previous administration.

They'll need to turn it up a notch or two to get a capital plan approved with their target date of late next year.

Also, the school board has to present a united front. Board members can, and should, offer differing opinions while the plan is being crafted, but once it's cast, need to get behind it 100 percent. Previously, mixed messages from some prior board members helped fuel public dissent.

Public relations aside, whatever plan is presented must be attainable. The board was right to scrap a proposal earlier this year that had a \$199 million price tag and the promise of a large tax increase.

Given these tough economic times and the strain property owners already have to endure, any plan that spikes taxes will have a tough time passing. Residents simply have very limited financial ability to take on much more cost.

And that's the real challenge Ginalski, his staff and the school board face with getting a new facilities plan passed. Most everyone agrees something needs to be done, but paying for it is another matter. The impact on taxpayers has to be cushioned.

Ginalski and the rest of the district officials realize it'll be an uphill climb to get the public support needed for any spending plan to pass. A lot will have to go their way for the district's most pressing need to finally be put to rest.

NATIONAL VIEW | CHICAGO TRIBUNE

The Olympic muzzle

And now, a quick update on the Chinese pledge to allow greater free speech during the Olympics. As of Monday, the score: 77 applications received by Chinese authorities from 149 people demanding to stage a demonstration. Number of permits issued: 0. Number of would-be Chinese protesters detained because they applied for a permit: at least four.

And this just in: Two Chinese women, aged 77 and 79, were sentenced to a year of "re-education through labor" after they made five visits to the police this month in an attempt to get permission to protest. *The New York Times* reported. The sentences were meted out for the "crime" of "disturbing the public order."

What a sad spectacle the Chinese are showing the world. The saddest thing is, many of those who pressed their case, like the elderly women, played by the rules. They believed – hoped – that the government's declaration to allow protests at three sites, with the proper application, would be honored. One protester, Gao Chuancai, mailed in his application and came to Beijing as required, for a face-to-face follow-up, the *Times* reported. He wanted to "remind the world that China still has problems that need to be solved."

The result? He was grilled by cops for an hour. And now he's being detained.

Is that what Chinese officials mean when they say that most prospective protesters dropped their plans after

their problems were "properly addressed"?

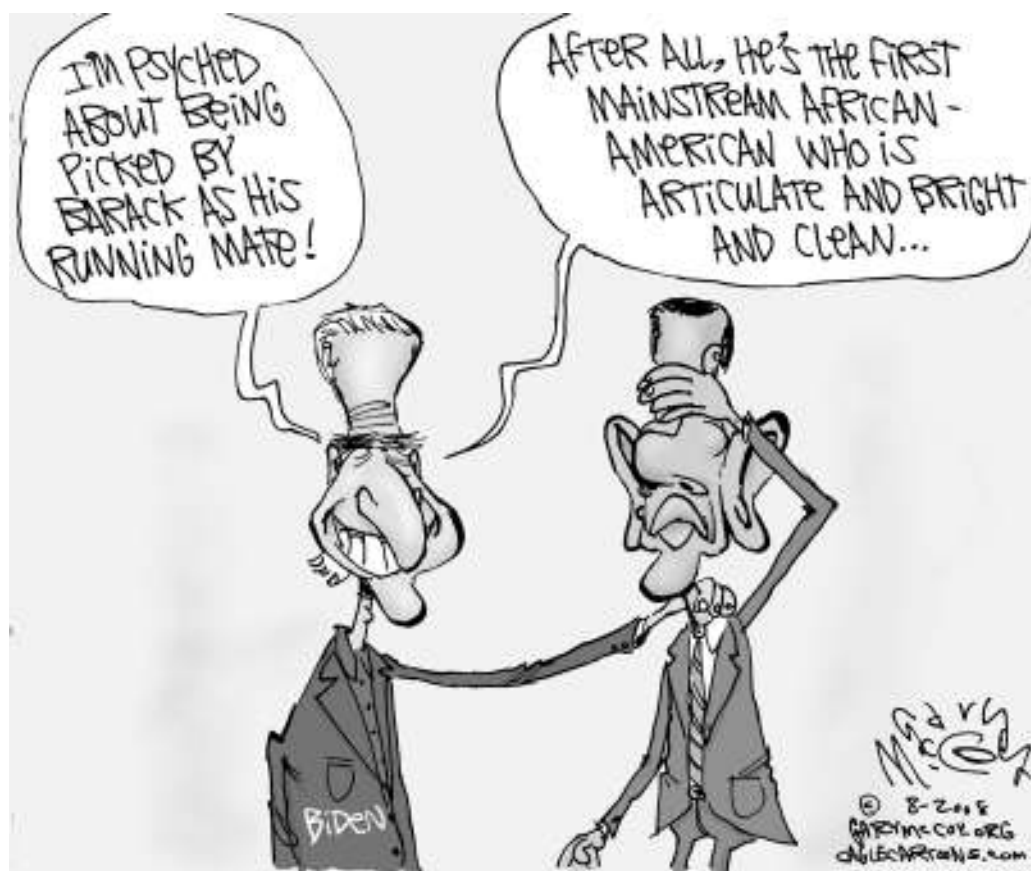
The Chinese are relatively new to some Olympic sports. They're still learning the ropes, not able to compete yet with the elite athletes from other nations. That's true, too, of the image Olympics, the multimillion-dollar effort to ensure that the image China projects to the world is flawless and flattering. That was supposed to include a loosening of censorship and ham-handed muzzling of those with a grievance.

But maybe the Chinese need a little primer on the rules of this free speech game. You can require that protesters hew to a time and place for a protest, and there are reasonable limits on the way they can voice their grievances. Some of that is for their own safety.

But arresting protesters for merely asking to protest? That is brutal. Much of the world had hoped that hosting the Olympics would teach the Chinese about the value of openness. If they had allowed some of these protests, they may have learned that protesters often have a point. Gao, for instance, wanted to protest corruption in his village in northeast China. Sounds like something worth hearing. He has been determined – he told a reporter he has survived two beatings by the police. Gao's son said his father was "chasing his dream of justice."

Too bad there's no gold medal for courage and perseverance.

ARTIST'S VIEW



GUEST EDITORIAL | TOM BLUMER

Exciting changes in Gaffer District

I want to share with you some exciting changes planned for our downtown. Over the past few years, there has been a renewed effort to strengthen the relationships between the merchants, the city, and Corning Inc. under the umbrella of Corning's Gaffer District. As a result we have been experiencing a resurgence of public and private investment. In fact, over a five year time horizon spanning 2005-2010 more than \$50 million of public and private investment has or will be spent in Corning's Gaffer District.

New businesses

Although we've had a few shops close their doors during the past year, we have also added some exciting new establishments and have several more planned. In fact, more shops are opening than closing for a net gain in the downtown area. And these new businesses along with many of the existing businesses are investing by upgrading both the interiors and exteriors of buildings.

Centerway bridge and walking trail

Renovation of the Centerway Bridge and the construction of a new walking trail are two important City projects. The Centerway Bridge is a wonderful historic asset much in need of restoration. An initial section of a new walking trail will also be built on top of the levy along the north side of the river. This will provide an additional route through the Gaffer District and provide more access to the Chemung River. Engineering work on the \$4 million bridge and trail project is

just getting started and the construction is scheduled to begin in 2009.

Transportation center

Another project benefiting from Congressional action is the Transportation Center. The new Transportation Center will be located across from the Rockwell Museum on the north side of Denison Parkway. This facility will provide a central location for local and regional bus service, museum shuttles, and taxi service. It will also allow us to tap into the stream of tour bus traffic traveling between New York City and Niagara Falls. This \$6.2 million project is in its early stages, but should be completed in 2010.

Historic preservation

The City Council also recently established a Historic Preservation Commission and adopted the New York State 444-a tax exemption to encourage investment in historic properties. This will be a great benefit not only to Corning's Gaffer District but other historic properties in the city. This action will help spark new investment in our community, expanding our tax base and protecting these historic treasures for future generations to enjoy.

The first project to take advantage of this incentive is the renovation of the Gerstell Buildings located at 91-99 E. Market St. Local developer, Chip Klugo, is investing \$1.5 million supported by \$850,000 in RestoreNY State funding. This project will result in renovations to the first floor retail space and add new upper floor apartments. This investment will restore this

beautiful old building, which is an anchor on the street, and secure the Bass Shoe store for at least another five years.

Sidewalk improvements

Recently the City was awarded \$400,000 to repair sidewalks and improve pedestrian crossings along the Vital Link Route. This is a route that runs along Denison Parkway from RiteAid to Cedar Street, and then the length of Market Street to Wegmans. Much of this route is in the Gaffer District. The project will greatly improve sidewalk and pedestrian safety issues, benefiting people coming to and from our places of business.

None of the above projects would have been possible without the help of many people. In particular, U.S. Sen. Hillary Clinton, U.S. Congressman John R. Kuhl, New York State Sen. George Winner and Assemblyman Jim Bacalles, Corning Mayor Tom Reed's leadership, the team work of the Corning City Council, the Corning City staff, along with the Gaffer District Board of directors and staff.

Finally, there is no doubt we are all experiencing increasingly challenging inflationary times. All of us appreciate the continued support to shop and dine here in Corning's Gaffer District. Your commitment to our local businesses is critical to the economic well being of our region. Our local business owners provide great value, quality products and personal service.

So, come on down to your own downtown – Corning's Gaffer District.

■ Tom Blumer is the chairman of Corning's Gaffer District

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Post office looking for mail tubs

TO THE EDITOR | Our post office is conducting a roundup. We're looking to gather up stray mail equipment – hoping to bring them back to the barn.

We know that our flat tubs (white buckets) sometimes wander out of our post offices and find their way into business storage areas or under desks. And the critters are sneaky, getting into homes, too. Before you know it, they're storing file folders, office supplies, shoes, or stacks of firewood. One little guy was seen at the curb holding recyclables on garbage

day. Oh, the embarrassment!

But it's time for our plastic containers to come home. We miss them and are finding it more difficult to transport mail, 700 million pieces daily throughout the country, to our customers' homes and businesses. We want them back and we're willing to take them without any questions. Scout's honor!

For those that don't know what postal equipment looks like, we've branded them with our name – "Property of the United States Postal Service".

So how about helping us round up our stray equipment? Customers can give

them to a carrier or drop them off at the post office. If a whole herd of them drifted into someone's corral, they can give us a call at the post office. We'll be happy to make arrangements to get them.

We are honored and proud to serve this community. And we thank our customers kindly for helping us keep our costs down by returning our postal equipment. We're much obliged!

Thomas King
 Corning postmaster

Letters for the Sept. 9 primary must be received by Sept. 1 to be considered for publication.

No one won in Kuhl, Massatiff

Democrat Eric Massa may not have got what he wanted from that stunt he pulled Thursday morning in Corning City Hall. Likewise, U.S. Rep. Randy Kuhl didn't help his image either when

CITY BEAT



Je Dunning

he went toe-to-toe with Massa after a press conference and later with remarks he made to a local TV reporter.

The incident was both bizarre and telling. It's also likely that won't be the last time there's a flash point between these two.

Let's start with Massa. He goes to City Hall Thursday morning knowing the press will be there to cover Kuhl and plans to confront the congressman in full view of everyone. Making a public splash is a risky move in a tight campaign like this, but Massa rather enjoys being the aggressor.

When he reaches Kuhl, Massa politely but insistently tells him to stop running campaign ads that distort his position on coastal drilling and then asks Kuhl to commit to a debate schedule.

Kuhl did neither, but did Massa really think that he would?

"I'm outside the realm of predicting his behavior," Massa told me Friday morning.

I disagree, Eric. You're smarter than that. You knew exactly how Kuhl would react to an impromptu face-to-face meeting: kind of unsettled, perturbed and hurried.

We saw that uneasiness Kuhl outwardly displayed Thursday morning several times during the 2006 campaign – before, during and after public appearances and debates. Several examples are still posted on YouTube.

Thursday, Massa was hoping to add to the collection by provoking Kuhl. But in doing so, Massa himself came off as pushy and combative even though he kept his cool and even thanked the congressman after the encounter.

It was a miscue for Massa, who has admitted he needs to soften his persona. Also, why the need to push the envelope with most feeling this is a race too close to call? Kuhl said Thursday, as he has in the past, that he'll debate but his schedule limits him as to when and where.

As for Kuhl, well, he just has to learn how to be more disarming. He tried to hold it together with Massa in his face Thursday morning, but eventually got ticked and walked off, leaving his opponent at center stage to get the last words in.

Then, after emerging from a conference room where he went to cool off, Kuhl added insult to injury when he told a TV reporter: "That's not the way I was raised."

Unfortunately, there are people who didn't have the luxury of having wonderful parents like I did who taught about parental respect."

Parental respect? Does Kuhl really believe Massa should treat him like a parent rather than like an opponent? Does their age difference of nearly 20 years count for that much?

What's worse was Kuhl dragging parents into the fray. Political opponents attacking each other is one thing, but taking aim at family members is a low blow, no matter the provocation.

For the record, Massa's parents have been married for nearly 60 years. His dad went into the Navy as a non-commissioned officer and came out a captain after 30 years as a pilot. His mom was a nurse.

Neither Massa nor Kuhl helped themselves Thursday. It could mark the start of a dirty campaign.

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