

Sometime in the next four hours you will adopt a 2010 Capital Improvement Program in spite of the fact that there has been NO discussion on the projects contained therein. Though Manager Cleland in his Budget Message lauded budget workshops on September 30th and October 7th of this year, a review of the tapes of these meetings shows that there was virtually no mention of the CIP. On September 30th the Board was confused by a PowerPoint presentation that didn't match the list presented to them and thus deferred the discussion to October 7th. On that date, Manager Cleland, in his opening remarks, cited a new CIP spreadsheet which he had produced for the Board, but that was as far as the topic went.

In adopting a 2010 CIP tonight you are also willfully ignoring an ordinance of Lower Merion, Chapter 34, section 8 D which states the Planning Commission "Shall review the Capital Improvement Program and submit its recommendations thereon." No recommendation has been sought, nor has a 2010 CIP been specifically provided to the Planning Commission.

Your adoption of the CIP as presented will bake into the 2011 budget just under a \$2M increase in debt service if we obtain the same favorable borrowing rates as last spring. That is the equivalent of a 9.26% tax increase on which there has been less discussion this year than on street parking regulations.

Are you aware that there is \$2,316,000 in the CIP, in addition to the \$570,000 in the General Budget, for engineering services most of which will not be bid? This doesn't even include the libraries. Did you know, for example, that there is \$35,000 in engineering services alone budgeted for a comfort station renovation, despite the fact that we presumably did the same engineering on the comfort station that was renovated in 2009? How many ways can we engineer a bathroom?

Are you aware that the 2010 Township portion of the Cynwyd Trail expenditures includes a \$250,000 match to the DCNR grant; the same \$250,000 match which you were assured last year would be virtually covered by volunteer labor and material donations from the Rock Hill project? Do you, in fact, have any idea what precisely is intended to be purchased with funds for the Cynwyd Trail and Linwood Park or are these designated for amorphous Phase I or II of plans WHICH YOU HAVE NEVER ACCEPTED? Are you aware that there is \$420,000 in the budget to expand parking at Ashbridge Memorial Park when the master plan on file specifically calls for "limited on-site parking areas with pervious surfaces" and more efficient utilization of the existing parking area?

At this time last year, there was an expectation to borrow \$10M in 2009 and another \$10M in 2010. In actuality, \$7M was borrowed in 2009, leading one to presume that \$13M would need to be borrowed in 2010. However, despite the excellent bidding climate, despite the Commissioners repeatedly pointing out that bids come in below budget, we are being told that \$15M will need to be borrowed in early 2010! \$2M MORE than contemplated a year ago. Can you explain why?

Many taxpayers are frustrated. There is clearly discretionary spending, spending which does not address infrastructure maintenance issues, which needs to be examined. The fact that the Board has abrogated its duty to perform this scrutiny, relegating responsibility to understand the details of the CIP to Commissioner McElhaney, is reprehensible.

It is easy to assure the public that the CIP is just an outline, that each project will be revisited before the actual expenditure, that there is, so to speak, “a second bite of the apple”. It is also patently false. Those aforementioned engineering costs go forward without your input, as do many other items. In the spring of 2009 there was discussion about the wisdom of new borrowing versus funding from reserves, but there was never a single word about reviewing the projects for which the bonds were being issued.

The hour is late, both figuratively and literally. The most responsible action the Board could take tonight would be to approve only those items on the CIP for which you have obligated the Town through bid award and then to have a meaningful and thorough discussion, including input from the Planning Commission, of the rest of the plan in January.

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