



Haverhill's Future!

Jim Rurak, Former Mayor of Haverhill

My Turn to Speak on Hale Debt

Never mind that the mayor blames me for the Hale Debt, even though he was a hospital trustee when it accumulated.

Never mind that he uses it as an excuse to justify neglect of essential services (note, people not feeling safe at night downtown; note, a senior center roof that leaks badly; note, low MCAS scores and high drop-out rates; note, the policy that we have to accept any and all kinds of growth and that we have to sell everything the city owns; and many more).

Never mind that despite the "albatross" that he calls it, he seems befuddled about how to clip its wings. Give me the chance to present another

view. The Haverhill Gazette editorial put it clearly when it asked: Why did we learn first, last September, from Jim Rurak, and not until March from the mayor, that the city has a cash surplus?

The answer is: We're better off financially because we're no longer in the hospital business, and, because we still have a hospital. The mayor doesn't want you to know this, but I do. He keeps it from you so you'll be satisfied with his poor performance. I want you to know so you'll demand more for your city.

But first look at the balance sheet. When I was mayor, I managed to improve city services, but the Hale Hospital had a budget of over 40 million dollars, or, almost one third of the total city budget. At any moment it could lose money, and, when it did, the city had to cover its losses. To be mayor with the city-owned hospital was like having a financial snake by the tail. It was a great facility, but its balance sheet could bite you at any time. And it did in 1986-88. Note, I'm not talking about 2001 when I privatized the hospital. I'm talking about the years right after the new hospital building was finished.

The hospital lost over \$5 million, the city covered \$2 million of it and put the rest into the hospital's books. The city did the right thing, but the annual debt service on the hospital began to accumulate right after it was built. The 6 million dollar debt that the city now has goes back almost to day # 1 of the new Hale; it didn't start with me. The city's hope back then was that future hospital profits would amortize all its debt.

What happened on my watch was that, like in the late '80s, the hospital began losing money badly. But unlike the '80s when it was reasonable to think that the hospital could eventually dig itself out, I knew in 2001 that city-owned hospitals could not compete. So I chose not to stall, or put new debt on the hospital a-gain. That would have made matters far worse later. The city had

to accept the debt and either close or sell the hospital. The key is that the city already had the obligation to pay the debt. The issue was whether it would further risk its credit by hoping the hospital would pay it off. My answer now, as it was then, is NO!

We set a firm date to close or sell the hospital knowing full well that in either case the city was obligated to cover the 6 million dollar debt annually. The difference between closing and selling was this. If we sold, the city would still have a hospital, and, the city would have no further financial risk. The fact that we sold eliminated the risk and reduced the debt on day number one, namely, August 31, 2001.

It reduced the debt because the hospital we were once subsidizing began paying property taxes. They amount now to nearly a million dollars a year. Never mind the jobs, never mind the award winning health care!

The reason we have a surplus is that we plugged the leak in 2001. The financial snake we had by the tail is now safely under foot. The hospital which was a forty million dollar wild card, or 30 % of our budget, is now a stable 4% of our budget.

We can plan for our future and set priorities again. This is not just about me and what I did in 2001. It's about how we think about setting our goals right now. The debt is a decaying remnant of a monster that once threatened our financial stability. If we don't believe we're better off now, we never will be.

Jim Rurak is a professor at Boston College and is the former mayor of Haverhill. He is seeking to unseat Jim Fiorentini in the fall election. You can email your comments or questions to Jim Rurak at JARandKAS@comcast.net.

"We're better off financially because we're no longer in the hospital business, and, because we still have a hospital. The mayor doesn't want you to know this, but I do."



NECC'S Foreign Film Festival

Mark Palermo, Haverhill (NECC) Professor

April 7 marks the tenth anniversary of the Northern Essex Foreign Film Festival, which my wife and I started with the help of the former dean of the Lawrence campus, Kathy Rodger. The idea behind it was simple. Provide community college students a social experience that they miss because they don't live on a university campus. And do something to build community, because a community college should be more than just a vocational and educational resource, but a cultural presence as well.

Building community. What exactly does that mean? Most young people nowadays have no clue. One student asked me the following question: "Why should I attend a film festival if I can rent the DVD and watch it in the privacy of my own home?" He obviously doesn't get it. His generation has never known a time without electronic messaging, video games, email and Internet. They communicate through machines. They live mostly in standardized suburban communities, hermetically sealed off from the experiences-both good and bad- that characterized the human interactions of the old ethnic neighborhoods. In Lawrence, where I grew up in the 1950's and 60's, my generation was the last to know their old-world grandparents, most of whom were born in 19th century Europe.

One of my grandmothers, for example, was a Lithuanian babushka, and I still remember the delicious black peasant bread she would bake in her kitchen. And from the Italian side of my family, I remember my grandfather making his own wine in the basement of his three-decker. Looking back on experiences like these, which I took for granted at the time, I feel enriched to have had these connections to people. But kids nowadays are confused about what a community is, who they are. Too often unconnected to others, their time and energy are displaced by Internet and television where nothing has context. Some actually believe the Internet is their community.

Something is isolating about modern life in America- and perhaps all industrialized countries. Unless people actively seek and build relationships, they can easily become isolated. So welcome to the era of private entertainment, where people are more adept at communicating with and being entertained by machines than with other people. Even the ultimate human contact of real sex is being displaced by the pornography industry, whose worldwide revenues hit 97 billion dollars last year, most of it made on the Internet.

A bestseller came out a few years ago called "Bowling Alone," by Robert Putnam.

Bowling was always a fun sport, which few people took too seriously, and practiced to have a fun night out with others. But an unprecedented trend has emerged in recent years in the bowling industry in which people have started coming to bowling alleys alone. The author uses this phenomenon as a metaphor for disengagement with community, the inhibition of collective participation in society or what he calls "the erosion of social capital."

I was reminded what social capital is when my mother-in-law was staying with us a couple of summers ago. My wife is Latin American, as is her mother. And when her mother got sick, a continuing parade of her friends came to our door to bring food, flowers, to visit, to inquire if they could help her. It continued every day until she was well again. Latin Americans so often have a finely developed sense of community, possibly because their governments do so little for them, except by default to leave them alone. So people must form associations and build relationships to resolve problems. We Americans used to do that here, but we don't anymore.

For most of human history, there was the family circle, and its extensions of kinship and the larger social group- all reinforced by codes, obligations and rituals. People of yesteryear had no choice but to form communities or find themselves abandoned to nature. That's the way it was, but buried within the complexities of today's mass society, one of our deepest needs is still for community and connection with others.

So where does the film festival come in? We won't change the world anytime soon by holding film festivals. But to build community where there was none, means to start where you are. A cultural renaissance has been emerging in Lawrence for the past dozen or so years. The Taoist sage, Lao-tse, said, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

The NECC Foreign Film Festival takes place on Saturday nights (April 7, 14 and 21) at the Amesbury St. campus in Lawrence, across from the John Buckley Parking Garage. Screenings start at 8 o'clock. All films subtitled. Admission is free. Parking is free with security on site. The event is open to the public. For information on films, go to the website. <http://neccfilmfest.tripod.com>

Mark Palermo is a professor at Northern Essex Community College in Haverhill. You can email him at markpalermo@lycos.com.

Exchange Club of Haverhill Awards Two Local Youths

Each year the Exchange Club of Haverhill offers the Youth of the Year and ACE Award Scholarships to students who will be graduating from Haverhill High School, Pentucket Regional High School and Whittier Vocational Technical School. This year the awards banquet was held at the Pentucket Bank Community Room in Haverhill.

The Youth of the Year Scholarship awards a high school senior \$1,000. Points are given for several different criteria (activities, grades, community service, etc.) and an essay is considered. This year's essay topic is "Lighting the Fire Within." The ACE Award is a different award designed to recognize a student who has overcome a significant challenge during his high school years. This award is also \$1,000. Each of the runner-ups receives \$250.

"Each year we have a number of very accomplished candidates. Our club is happy to recognize them for their hard work and dedication during their high school years," said Susan Ellery Daneau, president of the Exchange Club of Haverhill.

This year's Youth of the Year recipient was Lila Teeters from Pentucket Regional High School. The runner-up was Krystle Brunette from Whittier Vocational High School. This year's ACE Award went to Michael T. DeMellia, Jr. from Haverhill High School. The runner-up was Jason Papandrea from Haverhill High School. "Our candidates will now go on to the district level," said

Lynn Goldstein, Exchange Club member and co-chair of the Youth of the Year/ACE Award program. "We are very excited to present these two individuals with this award and wish them a bright and successful future," she added. Lila Teeters' essay on "Lighting the Fire Within" referenced



(l. to r.) Lynn Goldstein, Exchange Club member and co-chair of the program, ACE Award runner-up Jason Papandrea (from Haverhill High School), ACE Award recipient Michael DeMellia, Jr. (from Haverhill High School), Youth of the Year recipient Lila Teeters (from Pentucket Regional High School) and Youth of the Year runner up Krystle Brunette (from Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School), Rev. Susan Ellery Daneau, President of the Exchange Club, and Bob Graham, Exchange Club member and co-chair of the program.

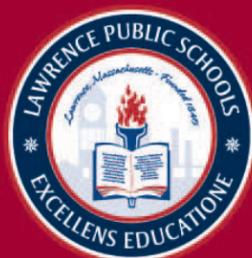
her work in the community and her dedication to promoting peace with the work she does. The entry of Michael DeMellia, Jr. for the ACE Award chronicled the challenge he faced during his senior year when it was discovered he had a brain tumor five months ago. He attributed his recovery and bright future to a positive attitude.



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Planning for Your Future

Lawrence Planning Director
Michael R. Sweeney

Over the course of the next several weeks the Planning Board and the Lawrence City Council will consider a proposal to designate Den Rock Park as an Open Space Conservation District.

The designation of an area as an Open Space Conservation District will be new for Lawrence and the addition of this definition to our zoning ordinances must be accepted by the Planning Board and the City Council.

This initiative is the result of hard work by the Chairman of the Conservation Commission Tennis Lilly. The measure has the full support of the Conservation Commission and the Planning Department. Our Land Use Planner Dan McCarthy has reviewed information related to the proposal and believes this to be an important step to preserving the very best of what Den Rock has to offer. Den Rock Park is a 120-acre wooded preserve with walking trails and a true hidden gem in Lawrence located right off of Route 114.

The purpose of the Open Space Conservation District will be to preserve natural resources and environmentally significant areas while promoting public access for passive recreation. Only infrastructure necessary to such purpose is allowed (i.e. trails, educational signage, walkways, public parking areas) subject to review and approval by the Conservation Commission.

A recently completed Botanical Resource Inventory by Mr. Bruce Patterson gives clear guidance as to the rich and diverse natural resource we have in Den Rock Park. Mr. Patterson documented a particular area of Den Rock Park referred to as 'The Marsh'

in his inventory, essentially a wetland area on the south side of the park. His report noted concerns including the possible impact from residential developments, the influx of invasive plants, and disturbances to the area from inappropriate use of the area.

From September 2005 to November 2006 Mr. Patterson conducted bi-weekly field work to complete his botanical survey. The focus of his study is a five-acre wetland located within Den Rock Park. Mr. Patterson notes that the Central Marsh area, "...has a rich diversity of plant species...a continual bloom of wildlife flowers starting with lance-leaved violet, amelanchier, and rhodora in May and ending with milkwort, goldenrod, and boneset in October."

The botanical resource inventory also notes that the pondshore within this area is a habitat for dragonflies (a personal favorite of mine) and damselflies. Additionally tadpoles and frogs are well represented in the area. Mr. Patterson notes that waterfowl visit the area as do white tail deer and reports of coyotes being seen at the pond's edge. The proposal by Tennis Lilly and the Conservation Commission is an important reminder of the rare resource we have in Den Rock Park and that proper management and respect for this area with benefit the community and wildlife for decades. Designation of the area as a Open Space Conservation District is a necessary first step.

Michael Sweeney is the planning director for the city of Lawrence, a former member of the Lawrence City Council and School Committee. You can e-mail Mr. Sweeney at Esqsweeney@aol.com.



Lawrence on the Move

Mayor Michael J. Sullivan

Good News on the Crime Front

More good news thanks to Police Chief Romero and the hard working men and women of the Lawrence Police Department. The 1st Quarter Serious Crime Numbers just came out today and Lawrencians have reason to be happy.

Felonious crime was down 14% in the first quarter of 2007 compared to the first quarter of 2006. The Crime and Disorder Analysis Unit of our Police Department reported that the most dramatic decrease was in commercial burglaries. Compared to the same time period in 2006, commercial burglaries fell 69%! Chief Romero attributed the significant decrease to having directed patrols in the downtown area beginning in December of 2006. Of course, the partnership that our neighborhood groups have developed with the police department and the cooperative spirit that the business community and residents have shown towards law enforcement all play a large role here, too. Working together, we are once again showing that the city of Lawrence is a safe place for both families and businesses.

New High School Update

Significant progress on the construction of the new high school has occurred over the winter months. After receiving a formal notice of contract default from Eastern Contractors on August 8, 2006, the city had to go through months of legal and contract issues. Working with the surety company, St. Paul Travelers, we have jointly selected Fontaine Brothers, Inc. to complete the project. As of this date, subcontractors

under Fontaine Brothers' direction have been mobilized and the remaining work on the new Lawrence High School is moving forward rapidly. Based on numerous discussions, the project completion date is prior to the beginning of the upcoming school year.

New Police Station

During the fall of 2006, the old Registry of Deeds - Essex North Division here in Lawrence was relocated from 381 Common Street. For decades the building had also served as the courthouse. Working together with Chief Romero, Planning Director Michael Sweeney and Chief Economic Development Director Thomas Schiavone, the city has been attempting to obtain this property from the state's Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAM). Our state delegation of Senator Tucker, Representative Lantigua, Representative Torrisi and Representative Finegold has been very supportive in this endeavor.

The current police station is undersized, outdated and prevents our fine police force from operating with maximum efficiency. Additionally, it really does not have the space necessary to enable our police force to interact with the public is a good way. As Chief Romero has relayed to me, a new police station will allow us to adapt to the modern needs of policing. During the course of the year my office will do everything possible to make this happen.

Michael Sullivan is the mayor of Lawrence and is in his second four-year term. You can email him at Sull33@aol.com or call his office at 978-794-5858 and ask for Nora.

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Footnotes from

TOM DUGGAN'S NOTEBOOK

Bill Kelly Takes Stipend, Breaks Campaign Promise

Two years ago when Bill Kelly was just a candidate for the North Andover School Committee, he ran his campaign on a theme of fiscal responsibility. And to get your vote back then, he made a promise to you - the voters - that he would not take the \$2,000 stipend given to School Committee members for their service. He repeatedly stated his position at debates, "I will not take the stipend," and he printed it in his campaign literature where he touted his zeal for "Fiscal Responsibility." He boldly wrote for all to see - or falsely believe - that he "Will not accept the \$2,000 annual stipend paid to each board member." Though you've never read about it in the Trib or the NA Citizen, last August Bill Kelly decided to go back on that promise and started accepting the \$2,000. And now that Bill Kelly is the new School Committee chairman, his pay has been bumped up to \$2,500. Not bad for a guy who promised not to take a dime, huh? I wonder how he is going to explain this embarrassment when he comes up for reelection next year? Maybe he should be running for office in Lawrence instead of North Andover.

Sounding Off on Sound Off

It's bad enough that the Eagle-Tribune can't get the facts right when it comes to reporting legitimate news stories, but last month it printed a Sound Off from some disgruntled North Andover resident who attacked Ted Tripp and myself calling us the "premier bullies of North Andover" and congratulating liberal Selectman Rosemary Smedile for "standing up to Tommy Duggan and Ted Tripp from the North Andover Taxpayers Association and refusing to sign their taxpayers pledge." Of course, not being a member of the North Andover Taxpayers Association and having NOTHING whatsoever to do with the taxpayers pledge, I sent off my own sound off to the Trib correcting the record - still shocked that they would even allow my name to be published in their paper these days. Anyone want to guess whether or not the Eagle-Tribune printed the corrected sound off which informed their readers that I am not even a MEMBER of NATA? Of course not. So, I guess we've all learned something here. Not only does the Trib steal material from our website, copy articles out of our newspaper and misrepresent facts in general news stories, but now you can't even believe what you read in their Sound Off column.

Fielding Offended

Former Lawrence City Councilor Michael Fielding says he was very "offended" by a notebook item last month which stated that he and State Representative Willie Lantigua were on the outs and that Lantigua was not behind



his campaign to unseat Marie Gosselin on the City Council.

"I was very offended by that; I want to say on the record that Willie Lantigua is my friend and he IS behind my campaign," Fielding said angrily. "I don't know where you got that," he continued, "but it just isn't true." So, for the record (and unlike the Tribune) I want to apologize to Mike Fielding and Willie Lantigua (as well as Siglo 21) for getting this one wrong. For the record, everyone, Willie Lantigua is running Michael Fielding's campaign to challenge Marie Gosselin in the District "F" City Council race this November. Lantigua is also running a slate of candidates as he unsuccessfully tried to do two years ago and we suspect he will be just as successful this year when the voters find out who he is backing.



New Solomon Picture in the Trib

Methuen Police Chief Joe Solomon complained in The Valley Patriot two months ago that the Tribune was purposely running an old photo of him with a goatee to highlight his "Arab background" with every current story it ran. It was nice to see the Tribune showing a little sensitivity last week when it finally changed its standard Solomon photo to something a little more recent... without the goatee. I guess even the Tribune editors read The Valley Patriot.

Lawrence City Council Costs Taxpayers \$234,000

At a time when Lawrence city councilors are whining about not having enough money to run the city (and at least a \$2 million deficit in City Hall), you might think that the Council would be itching to sell city-owned surplus property to the highest bidder so that the taxpayers can get a little financial relief. After all, the city needs every dollar it can get, right? I mean, to hear the Council President grandstand at every meeting about how many paper clips people in City Hall should use (in order to save money) and to listen to DiMarca and Gosselin talk about the "need for fiscal accountability," you might assume these councilors would be fighting for every dollar when city-owned land is being sold off. But, once again, you would be wrong. In fact, the Lawrence City Council has cost the people of Lawrence hundreds of thousands of dollars in additional revenue, while at the same time (and sometimes at the very same meeting) these same councilors make long-winded speeches about how badly Lawrence needs money. So, let's do a little math, shall we? Former Lawrence City Councilor Israel Reyes (who is no fan of mine) offered the city of Lawrence \$55,000 for a piece of property on Market St. Being the high bidder on the land, Reyes said he was "stunned" when the City Council decided to sell it for \$11,000 to someone else, turning away \$44,000 in pure profit for the taxpayers. Reyes also bid on property on Haverhill St., offering the city \$105,000, but the council sold it to the Breen family for \$20,000, passing up a whopping \$85,000 in pure profit. But wait, I'm not done. Reyes bid \$65,000 for a piece of land on Hampshire St., only to have the council sell it to the LOW bidder, who paid the city \$15,000 (a loss of \$50,000). And then there's the Jackson St. property Reyes bid \$65,000 on, only to watch the hypocrites on the Council vote to sell the land for a mere \$10,000 (a loss to the taxpayers of \$55,000). If you are not doing the math at home, the Lawrence City Council cost the taxpayers of Lawrence **\$234,000** by selling just these four pieces of property to the *low bidder*. Now, I'm no fan of Mr. Reyes, but \$234,000 could have paid for cops, teachers, road repairs, Andrea Traficante's job to help neighborhoods or other city services. What a waste!



Get Your Own Slogan

You would think facing two credible opponents for mayor this year that Haverhill Mayor Jim Fiorentini would come up with a slogan of his own to help showcase his accomplishments over the last four years. But instead of being creative, Fiorentini is now using the slogan: *Haverhill on the Move!* Hmm. On the move... sounds familiar, doesn't it? Where have we heard that slogan before? Oh, that's right, Lawrence Mayor Mike Sullivan has been using *Lawrence on the Move* for years, at least going back to Sullivan's reelection campaign two years ago. Maybe Jim should have a contest to see what kind of slogan residents can come up with. He could post the contest and all entries on his website and ask the public to vote on it. If he takes my suggestion to have an online contest, I have a few suggestions: "*Haverhill - Our Schools are Almost as Good as Lawrence!*" Or how about: "*Haverhill - We might not be Andover but we have a Starbucks!*" And my personal favorite: "*Haverhill - Where History Meets Tomorrow.*" One thing for sure, Mayor Fiorentini needs a slogan and it's obvious that he needs YOUR HELP!

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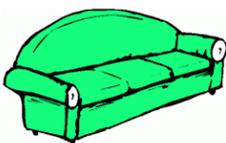
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Lawrence Mayor Michael Sullivan poses with Milly Dominguez of Fern Street, who is a candidate for the Lawrence School Committee in District "B." Dominguez is challenging School Committeeman Martina Cruz in the fall municipal elections.

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Lawrence State Rep. Willie Lantigua (left) and Andover State Rep. Barbara L'Italien (right) with the new Director of Elder Services Tony Palmisano.

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