



The

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF NEWS, COMMENTARY AND OPINIONS, SERVING THE MERRIMACK VALLEY

Valley Patriot

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"Congress shall make no law..."

*Free

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36 Pages

Former Lawrence Comptroller:

Council President Drove Me Out of My Job

Tom Duggan

When Lawrence resident David Camasso was being interrogated by members of the Lawrence City Council last month, one issue was repeatedly brought up for Camasso to address: If hired as comptroller, would Camasso bow down to political pressure when it came to approving expenditures he believed were excessive, illegal or inappropriate?

Over and over, Councilors Gosselin and Blanchette questioned Camasso, implying that previous comptrollers had received political pressure from the mayor to approve spending that was illegal, excessive or not properly authorized.

But Methuen resident and former City Comptroller Jim Limperis says he was shocked to hear such questioning, given the circumstance surrounding his departure from the city's employment.

"After driving me out of my job for questioning excessive spending, Councilor Blanchette had the nerve to sit there and pretended to be the watchdog against excessive spending," the former comptroller said. "But it was the City Council, in particular Council President Patrick Blanchette who is most responsible for me leaving as the city's comptroller because I wouldn't go along with giving raises to his friends in City Hall."

Limperis says that on several occasions he refused to sign off on city expenditures that he found contained "very suspicious

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Captain Tom Hudner will be the guest speaker at the North Andover Memorial Day Service, Monday, May 28th, Ridgewood Cemetery, at approximately 10:30 a.m. All are welcome to come by and meet this true American hero.

Essex Street to Become a Two Way Street



Lawrence Mayor Mike Sullivan's plan to change the traffic flow on Essex Street from one way to two ways was approved by the city council last month. Construction will begin in June.

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Valley Patriot of the Month - Heroes In Our Midst

Captain Thomas J. Hudner, Jr.
U.S. Navy - Korean War, Medal of Honor

Ted Tripp

CONCORD/ANDOVER - Tom Hudner was sitting in the commons area after lunch at Phillips Academy in Andover when word spread that the Japanese had just bombed Pearl Harbor. As with most young people of the era, he had no idea where Pearl Harbor was but he knew it meant the U.S. was at war. And like many of the students in the Class of '43, Tom expected to become part of the war effort after graduation. But fate would take him to the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis where he would not graduate until 1946, well after the conclusion of World War II.



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Valley Patriot

* Editorial *

Come Join The Circus in North Andover

We are looking forward to the circus that will take place at this year's May 14th North Andover Town Meeting.

On the town warrant to be decided by North Andover voters is a Proposition 2 ½ Override. A memo of agreement signed on by the Board of Selectman, the School Committee and the Finance Committee calls for the approval of a \$1.65 million tax override.

A warrant article by petitioner Sandy Gleed (Article 13) calls for a \$3.5 million override. Gleed's article seeks the amount of additional money required to fully fund the schools' restoration budget. The memo of understanding is a compromise, seeking less than the full amount, but more than the original Town Manager's recommendation based upon expected '08 revenues.

Voters at town meeting can vote on Article 13 as is, or amend the article to the \$1.65 million ... or somewhere in between. If an override article is approved, then a special election may be called for voters to go to the polls to accept or reject the override.

Town Meeting will be entertaining. There will be the usual hysterical, pro-override advocates like Cindy Jalbert and Diane Huster and the typical "no-override, no matter what" activists like NATA President Ted Tripp and Selectman Jim Xenakis.

Hopefully, the rest of the voters are somewhere in the middle, willing to listen to the budget presentations, consider the merits of each argument and ask relevant questions before deciding how they will vote on the override.

If you come to the circus, before you make a decision be sure our officials answer the necessary questions about the town budget. Questions like: is the money for the override needed because we have to pay a new superintendent \$180,000, plus \$186,000 for the Harry Harutunian settlement? Make sure the school officials fully provide an itemization of where the override money will go. And do not accept such platitudes like: it's "for the children" or "for the police," or it's to keep Cindy Jalbert employed at central office. Answers that are not specific such as these are unacceptable.

Be an informed voter and come to the circus at Town Meeting on May 14th. Bring your cotton candy and enjoy the Greatest Show on Earth.

Celebrating Mothers

Mother's Day is May 13th. It's a day to celebrate mothers all across the country. It is a day to spend time with the woman who protected you, who raised you, who guided you, loved you, sacrificed for you and tried to point you in the right direction whether or not you actually listened to her advice.

But you'll notice we didn't describe a mother as the woman who gave birth to you. That's because being a mother entails a lot more than just the physical act of giving birth. With all of the broken families today, many people will be celebrating Mother's Day, not with the woman who gave birth to them, but with the woman who chose to step in and fill the role of Mother: loving, caring, raising, and making personal sacrifices for someone else's birth child. That is a special mother.

To all the mothers out there who have raised their own biological child or someone else's child, we say "Happy Mother's Day." And thank you to all the women out there who have so thanklessly done the work for someone else.

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See page 13 for our new political cartoon from David Sullivan of Dracut

A Thank You from the Thomson School PTO

Our parent volunteers make great things happen and without them, many programs would be not be run. Every day you have enriched the life of a child by sharing of your time and talent. Thank you!

A truly dedicated parent volunteer who has spent countless hours working to benefit students all over town is Sandy Gleed. Sandy started many of the Thomson-based programs such as Chess Club, Sunshine Math and Building Structures. She also made sure programs like Destination Imagination and the school paper were funded and staffed by dedicated parent volunteers.

In addition to her Thomson-based programs, Sandy has served on the North Andover Schools Enrichment Council for many years. The past two as the chair. The

volunteer work of NASEC has brought art, music, science and technology to the lives of every elementary and middle school student in our town. This enrichment has been especially important in the face of severe budget cuts to all these areas. Sandy is stepping down this year and we wish her all the best as she explores new horizons!

The Thomson School PTO also wishes to extend sincere thanks to Tom Duggan for volunteering his Tuesday afternoons with the student staff of the Thomson school newspaper, "Tigerprints."

Tom was a wonderful editor and took the students through the journalism process, start to finish.

Thomson School PTO
North Andover

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singham@detma.org by Friday May 11th to register. All attendees must pre-register.

Our Voice is Your Voice!

The Valley Patriot welcomes letters to the editor on any topic. We also welcome column/article submissions from elected officials, neighborhood associations, community organizers, average citizens, and newsmakers. Though we may not agree with the opinions expressed in submissions, our mission is to give readers the unique opportunity to receive important information from those who are driving important public issues without the "creative editing" policy employed by most newspapers. Submissions from guest columnists/writers in The Valley Patriot are published without the filtered agenda of an editorial board. If you would like to write a column, letter or article for The Valley Patriot, please email us at: ValleyPatriot@aol.com

Thanks to the Staff of the N.A. Middle School

Paula Porten

When I thought of my daughter Hanna advancing from 5th grade at the Thomson School to 6th grade at the North Andover Middle School (NAMS), the last thing I was thinking about was grade inflation.

I was more concerned about issues relating to the transition, like bullying, peer pressure and the awkwardness pre-teens face when starting a new school. Those are the issues that I remember from my own junior high experience.

Much to my relief and surprise, and to the credit of the NAMS' teachers, principal and assistant principals, Hanna transitioned into middle school without any problems at all. In fact, I watched her and her friends grow from playful, young 5th graders into proud, confident and mature young girls eager to further their educational experience. None of which I remember from my own experience at junior high. It was very impressive and very exciting to see.

What I did not see, was any bullying or peer pressure. No one has asked Hanna if she would like to try a cigarette or experiment with drugs. Hanna and her friends are also more interested in their grades than in boys. This is another credit to their teachers, the staff and the administration at NAMS because the kids are enjoying school and are eager to learn.

To her own credit, Hanna has made high honors. She is one of those students that the School Committee is concerned because her grades may be inflated. Well, I see first hand that Hanna works extremely hard, spending hours after school doing her

homework and meticulously studies for her tests. She takes her grades very seriously and thrives on achieving.

Hanna averages three tests and quizzes each week and she studies hard for each one of them. I have seen her memorize all of the African and Asian countries, their rivers, weather and social influences and the different cultures each experience. She has learned all the parts of a biological cell and I believe that she knows everything about Darwin and natural selection.

The tests Hanna takes are very challenging and difficult, yet Hanna still gets A's on all of them. She has earned those high honor grades through hard work and perseverance. She does complain, though, that math is too easy and that her Spanish class was a joke (with dancing the Marange and watching "The Land Before Time" in Spanish. Her teacher also played "Daddy Yankee" (a rapper with a reputation you would not want your 5th grader to know about) in the classroom. Unfortunately, Hanna did not learn much of the Spanish language.

Hanna transitioned amazingly well into middle school, maintaining good grades and getting involved in after-school activities. Hanna was involved in the 6th grade play and is now on the volleyball team through the North Andover Booster Club. If Hanna's friends work as hard as she does, then they have earned those "inflated" grades as well.

Thank you to Mrs. Poor and Mr. Wrigley and the rest of the middle school staff for making Hanna's 6th grade experience a positive one.



Thinking Outside the Box!

Dr. Charles Ormsby, N.A. School Committee

Just Pay Up and Shut Up ... and Don't Disturb our Celebration

Public schools are a monopoly within a monopoly. They have a monopoly on public money for education and the teachers' union has a monopoly on the labor supply that can be employed. Teachers with a few years of employment are in the catbird seat. Short of committing an illegal act, they have a good job with lifetime benefits and a guaranteed retirement.

With such ironclad job security, it is understandable that customer service and product quality may suffer. It is only because most teachers are saints that things are not worse than they are. But even teachers are human. Poorly conceived rules, incompetent administrators, aggressive parents, and unruly children, not to mention the common stresses of everyday life, wear them down.

In the real world – meaning the nasty private sector – similar stresses haunt employees, but competition and fear of job loss forces everyone to focus on product quality and customer service.

Even with competitive pressures in the private sector, and with the attendant risk of job loss, not all employees perform adequately. Nevertheless, customers are still protected. Since organizations exposed to competition are made up of many individuals — from the board of directors and senior managers down to entry-level personnel — all of whom have a stake in the company's success, they are constantly seeking ways to improve.

Occasionally that means eliminating employees that are performing poorly or who are no longer needed. But, more importantly, it means constantly re-inventing the organization to be more efficient, to provide better products, and to make the lives of its customers better. All because of competition.

An interesting social experiment would be to take a highly competitive industry that is efficiently evolving its products to meet customers' needs and take away that competition. Create a state-controlled monopoly and watch what happens.

Of course, this has been done in Eastern Europe, in Cuba, in North Korea and in other socialist/communist states. It

invariably results in poor quality, less variety, horrendous customer service, cost increases, and product shortages. Always.

The underlying problem is, of course, that employees and managers in the new, state-run, state-protected organization don't care any longer whether the customer is adequately served. Their focus shifts to something else. It could be satisfying a government bureaucrat, or focusing on protecting their positions, or lobbying for shorter hours or increased compensation. Ultimately, everything is focused on making their job less stressful, more entrenched, or more financially rewarding. The customer's interests are no longer the focus of the organization.

What would happen if someone from another planet, someone who only cared about improving performance and serving the organization's customers, were dropped down into the management structure of such a monopoly organization?

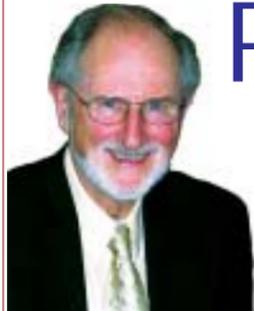
Well, of course, he would be recognized immediately as a threat to nearly everyone in the organization. Since the organization had consistently made decisions to only serve its internal interests and had not based them on the best interests of its customers, nearly every process, procedure, and organizational value would be ass-backwards.

This interloper would immediately question all of these decisions. Every time he suggested improvements – in many cases significant changes – someone's comfortable situation would be threatened. The organization would unite to isolate and marginalize him. He would be considered an intruder.

Eventually, he might even realize the futility of trying to reform an organization without the motivating force of external competition. If he suggested that competition be introduced — and after the ghastly screams died down — he would be branded Public Enemy Number One.

Of course, I am describing my own situation in the midst of the North Andover public school system. While some

Continued on Page 8



Roger Twomey
Lawrence City Council
At-Large

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Moving Haverhill Forward

Haverhill Mayor James Fiorentini

New Business and Downtown Growth

As we read the papers of The Valley Patriot and other papers throughout the state, we see that cities and towns throughout the state are struggling with their budgets. In this area alone, North Andover, Merrimac, Newburyport and Topsfield are all considering overrides. Andover has said it will have to do an override next year. Waltham just tried, and failed at a \$4 million override. Throughout the state, 100 communities attempted overrides last year, most of which failed. By last count, over 50 had already requested overrides this year, with many more to come. None of those cities have to face what we face every year — a \$6.5 million a year Hale debt for a hospital we no longer own.

Despite this, this year, for the 4th year in a row, Haverhill will not be requesting an override.

Our goal is to examine every possible alternative before requesting an override. We've consolidated our health care plans, reorganized government, put in energy efficient light bulbs, and we've made a real effort to expand our tax base with more retail stores and more downtown development.

Retail expansion

We've made a concentrated effort to bring in new retail stores to our city. New businesses mean new jobs for our people, new places to shop and an increased tax base to help overcome the burden of the Hale debt left to us by a prior administration.

We began by asking ourselves why there had been no influx of retail to Haverhill in decades? The standard answer was the sales tax. The sales tax explains why Salem, New Hampshire has more retail than Haverhill or Lawrence, but the sales tax does not explain why Methuen has the loop and Haverhill does not.

When we looked at our zoning laws, we found that our zoning laws put up a number of regulatory barriers that made it difficult for large retail stores to locate in Haverhill.

To bring in more retail, we started by reforming our zoning laws. We removed red tape and regulatory barriers, rezoned selected areas near the highways to allow for retail, and eliminated the special permit requirement for large retail stores.

The result was the largest influx of new retail stores in our city's history. After decades of hearing that we could not bring in retail because of the sales tax, this year, Target, Lowe's, and BJ's Wholesale Club will all open in our city—the three largest retailers in our city's history. Starbucks had a grand opening on May 4. It is the largest retail expansion in our history.

This past month, we have two more new national retailers coming to our city—Fed/Ex Kinkos and Aspen Dental. The fact that national retailers are coming to Haverhill shows that Haverhill's progress is being recognized by national chains. Other national chains that have come to Haverhill are Magellan Aerospace and Adamson Industries, both providing about 100 new manufacturing jobs.

Downtown Growth

For decades, our abandoned factory buildings in the downtown area were symbols of a lost shoe shop era. These abandoned eyesores added no jobs, no places to live and little to the tax rolls. Our second area of expanding the tax base was to try to bring those abandoned factory buildings back to life and put them back onto the tax rolls.

We reformed our zoning laws, and brought in new investors to restore



Here is what the Cabot Furniture building looked like before.



And this is what it looks like today!

these abandoned buildings. Today, the Beacon Company has restored the old Cabot Furniture building on Cabot Street to modern, upscale housing, bringing in about \$200,000 in new tax revenue.

This month, the redevelopment arm of the Archdiocese of Boston announced it was taking another abandoned factory building and restoring that to the tax rolls. Expanding our tax base is one reason why Haverhill is on the move, and one reason we are not requesting an override this year.

If you are from outside the city, pay us a visit. You'll find 16 restaurants in our downtown area, old shoe factories being remade into upscale housing, and you'll find that Haverhill is on the move.

Jim Fiorentini is the mayor of Haverhill and is in his second term. He is seeking a third term in November. You can email him at jimfior2@aol.com

Mayor Announces that Saturday Night is Movie Night for the City of Haverhill!

The Recreation Department of the city of Haverhill has teamed up with England's MicroCreamery to co-sponsor a series of movie nights for the general public at Columbus Park, located at 109 Washington Street in downtown Haverhill. The films will be projected onto a temporary screen in the park, admission is free and the general public is encouraged to lounge on the lawn and enjoy the show. England's MicroCreamery intends to present various films on Saturday evenings at 8:30 PM throughout the summer months.

The 2007 Movie Schedule is as follows:

- (June 23) "Back to the Future" PG
- (July 14) "Shrek" PG
- (July 28) "The Producers" PG-13
- (Aug. 4) "Peter Pan – Live Action" PG
- (Aug. 18) "Grease" PG
- (Sept. 1) "Spiderman" PG-13
- (Sept. 15) Viewers Choice (TBD)

All films are licensed by the city of Haverhill through SWANK Motion Pictures. England's MicroCreamery will provide the equipment and display the movies. England's MicroCreamery will also be extending its business hours on movie nights as well. "We are proud to enter into a public private partnership with England's Micro Creamery to bring movie night back to Haverhill," said Mayor Fiorentini. "Movie night is a perfect supplement to Kid's Fest, the summer weekend concert series and other things going on downtown to show that Haverhill is a kid friendly, family friendly community. Bring your kids, come downtown, and enjoy! We are proud to be able to work with England's to bring fun to the downtown," he added. Through the assistance and encouragement of Mayor Fiorentini and Vinny Ouellette of the Recreation Department, there was a collaborative effort to bring movie nights back to downtown Haverhill.

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Haverhill's Future!

Jim Rurak, Former Mayor of Haverhill

Whittier Celebrated

Calvary Baptist Church, which is now located just east of Monument Square, started in 1872 as a prayer cottage in Bradford. This year it is celebrating 135 years of life in Haverhill. As well it should, the city as a whole honors the life and works of this wonderful African/American congregation. I remember vividly how this church accomplished nearly the impossible given its modest size and budget, namely, building affordable home-ownership units on White Street.

In this same year, the city is also celebrating the 200th anniversary of the birth of, arguably, its most famous citizen, namely, John Greenleaf Whittier. He is known foremost for his poetry, with *Snowbound* and *The Barefoot Boy*. Last week we held a barefoot boy look-alike contest and I was proud to be asked to be one of the judges. The contestants made the imagery come alive again. And, while contemporary literary critics often find Whittier's poetry elementary, I think they miss the purity of the imagery Whittier's poetry brings to life.

But there is another bit of pure power to Whittier, namely, his uncompromising stand against slavery. This power gave many slaves new hope and encouraged them to journey north on the Underground Railroad. Rev. Greg Thomas, pastor of Calvary Baptist, suggests that it very well may have been Whittier's fame as an abolitionist that led a group of freed slaves to choose Haverhill/Bradford as a place to settle, and to start their "prayer cottage."

For reasons such as those about which Rev. Thomas speaks, and for the general stand that Whittier took against slavery, the Calvary Baptist Church is honoring John Greenleaf Whittier by making his life an integral part of its own 135th anniversary

celebration during a breakfast at the Citizen Center on May 5.

It strikes me as quite unique for an African/American congregation to be honoring a white man who lived in its midst in the time immediately following the Civil War.

Calvary's celebration of Whittier is so special it should make all Haverhill residents pray for the same spirit of enlightenment...

It is so unique in fact that I think it should be something of which the city takes special note at this time in its history. Psalm 127 begins with "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain."

The welcome Whittier prepared and which the city of Haverhill extended those freed slaves in 1872 might very well mean that Haverhill is blessed with a spirit which welcomes new peoples, immigrants or emigrants, be they black, white, brown, red or yellow. There have been setbacks, as Calvary well knows, but there have been major signs of light, as the Unitarian Church displayed when it welcomed Calvary to use its sanctuary after the devastating fire.

Calvary's celebration of Whittier is so special it should make all Haverhill residents pray for the same spirit of enlightenment which guided Whittier and the same spirit of perseverance and charity which led Calvary to reach across racial lines and honor someone of another color as an integral part of its life. This is the Lord building a house if I've ever seen it. I hope for awakening of such a spirit and that it guides us, our whole city, in years to come.

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.



Another Point of View

Mark Palermo, Haverhill (NECC) Professor

Are Military Recruiters Telling the Truth?

Recently, I became aware of a grim reality when I picked up a U.S. Army recruitment brochure. It featured a generous, but carefully worded offer to potential enlistees: the military will give you (based on qualifications) up to \$50,000 plus a sign up bonus of up to \$20,000.

The key words here are "up to." I can promise you, for example, that I will pay you up to \$5000 to paint my house. If you accept the job and I pay you \$800 after you finish, I have kept my promise and you have no legal claim against me. In the real world, "up to \$5000" usually means below \$5000. It can even mean zero, and when it comes to the military's promise of money for school- it often does. Very few recruits receive the maximum college benefit of \$70,000. In fact, most recruits get no benefits at all.

To earn the \$70,000 the military advertises, you must first qualify for the Army/Navy College Fund. To do this you have to place in the top half of the military entry exams, which means of course that 50% of all applicants are eliminated right off the bat. If you do score in the top 50%, then in order to get to the \$70,000, you must be willing to enter a designated job specialty that almost nobody else wants, usually because it is extremely dangerous or because it offers zero transferable job skills.

If you don't make the cut for the Army/Navy College Fund, there is still the Montgomery GI Bill that you may qualify for. The maximum benefit you get under the Montgomery GI Bill is around \$36,000, but the military attaches strings here too.

For example, in order to qualify for the full amount, you are required to pay a \$1200 deposit to the military. You have only one chance to apply during basic training. If you leave the military early- as 40% do for a number of reasons, or get anything less than honorable discharge, or decide later not to go to college, the military gets to keep your deposit. Incredibly, the \$36,000 they promise you includes your own deposit money, so the actual amount is around \$36,000, less your deposit.

The benefits- if after all this you finally manage to qualify for them- are paid in 36 monthly installments spread out over 4 years; You can not receive larger payments

over a shorter period of time. And you must continue college for four consecutive years without interruption, which some people are unable to do.

The Montgomery Bill doesn't even come close to covering college costs, even at a state school. At UMass Amherst, for instance, students pay \$7400 in fees and \$6200 for room and board. Figure at least \$2500 for books and miscellaneous expenses and you are looking at a yearly bill of over \$16,000- of which the Montgomery GI Bill covers about \$9000, a bit more if you are married.

If you go to a two year college, you will receive only half of the money you are qualified for. Remember too that military benefits are usually given instead of, not in addition to, other forms of financial aid that you might otherwise have qualified for.

With so many curves in the road and hoops to jump through, it is no wonder only about 16% of veterans ever get a four-year college diploma. The military's educational benefits are an embarrassment. Once upon a time in this country, we treated veterans with gratitude. We need a new GI Bill like the one enacted for returning World War II veterans.

"Imagine telling an entire generation they could receive a free college education at any school that would accept them — Texas A&M, Harvard University, the Sorbonne — anywhere. Throw in a monthly stipend for living expenses, plus more money for books. And when you graduate, there's a government-backed home loan waiting, no money down and no credit checks — buy a house cheaper than renting an apartment. Throw in subsidized farm loans, business loans, free job training, free medical care, free job placement, and up to a year's worth of weekly paychecks until you find work...And so it was: the post-World War II G.I. Bill. It revolutionized higher education, created suburbia, brought us the scientists, engineers, doctors, artists and teachers who built most of what is good in America today." From the publisher of "Over Here: How the GI Bill transformed the American Dream," by Edward Humes.

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

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Paying Attention!

with Tom Duggan



Last month the ACLU came to Lawrence for a meeting with citizens who had a beef with the Lawrence police. Packed in the large function room at "Casa Dominicana" on Essex St. were criminals, malcontents, racists and cop haters, all eager to take the microphone and tell their sad, sorry tales of woe at the hands of the evil, racist Lawrence police department.

One father stood up to tell everyone how his "good boy" of 17 was roughed up by the cops after being arrested for "violating his parole." This father stood at the microphone with gang tattoos up and down the insides of his arms as he told the crowd how his angel was a victim of police brutality for being a "Latino."

Real choir boys, these two.

Then there was Lawrence businessman Julio Meran. It was Meran who had invited the ACLU to Lawrence in order to whip up fear and resentment against the Lawrence police within the Latino community. He even likened the Lawrence police to Nazi "Gestapo's" when recounting his own tale of "abuse" at the hands of a Lawrence cop.

According to Meran's own account, he was given a ticket after a police officer cut *him* off on Merrimack Street, even though he was perfectly polite and treated the officer with the utmost respect. In his own words, however, Mr. Meran wasn't abused. He wasn't assaulted. He wasn't arrested. He was not called a racial epithet. No, no, Mr. Meran's tale of victimhood was simply that he was given a ticket by a police officer who cut *him* off and then demanded his license, "Gestapo style."

Not one of the six Lawrence city councilors sitting in the audience objected to Lawrence cops being likened to the German Nazis who executed millions of people in World War II. But one of them did side with the criminals.

But, Was Anyone Actually Listening?

Then there was Ramon Vargas, a stalker, intimidating looking man who weighed at least 300 pounds. Vargas started off by showing pictures of his bruised face and body. Bruises he claimed were the result of police brutality and, of course, because he was a "Latino." But as Vargas told his own story in his own words, it was pretty clear that the injuries he received took place because he was resisting arrest and being combative with the police, not the other way around. Vargas himself said that he was at a party when Lawrence police showed up and told everyone who did not live in the apartment to leave. This is standard procedure when cops break up a house party.

Vargas freely admitted to the ACLU that he argued with the cops because "I sleep there on weekends" and didn't see any reason why he should have to leave the apartment. The cops asked him *three* separate times to leave the property and when he refused the third time, a cop told him he was being placed "under arrest." Vargas then admits he resisted arrest and fought with police who sprayed him with Mace while they were "trying to put on the handcuffs."

At the end of his epic story, Vargas claims that he only tried to kick out the windows in the back of the police cruiser because he had "asthma" and he needed "fresh air" from all that Mace that he had ingested. Yet, even according to his own recounting of events, all of the other partygoers left the apartment when the police ordered them to leave. None of them were beaten. None of them were arrested. None of them were sprayed with Mace. None of them were the victims of racial slurs.

Only Ramon Vargas.

That's when, Vargas says, Lawrence police stated (in his presence, of course), "Let's hurry up, we have plenty more of *them* to get," supposedly referring to "Latinos."

The audience, including some Lawrence city councilors, gasped in horror as Vargas told his story, evidently discounting his own culpability in the situation because of their preconceived notions about the Lawrence police. City Councilor Nunzio DiMarca (who has his own personal vendetta against the police) burst out loudly, "this is why we are here, to put a stop to this kind of thing!"

Perhaps if Mr. Vargas had left the party when he was told to the first time, he wouldn't have any bruises and he wouldn't have been under arrest at all. And if Ramon Vargas had complied with police officers and put his hands behind his back, he would not have been Mace during the arrest. But the very fact that he was Mace while cops "were trying to put on the handcuffs" kind of says it all, doesn't it? I'm sure that if Mr. Vargas was white and



Photo: Tom Duggan

Ramon Vargas, the poster boy for "victims" of police abuse in Lawrence, according to the Latino media. Vargas admits he received these bruises after refusing to leave a party and resisting arrest. Just imagine being the Lawrence police officers who had to tackle and wrestle this guy to the ground in order to place him under arrest!

behaved that way towards police he would have received the same bruises at the hands of the same cops who were lawfully taking him into custody.

But don't tell that to Councilor Nunzio DiMarca. He wants the City Council to take up the matter of "police brutality" and have more public forums so that he can be the white knight in shining armor to save the poor downtrodden Latinos. Once again, Mr. DiMarca is trying to "out-Latino the Latinos." It's political pandering at it's worst.

No Lawyers, Lots of Media

Of the dozen or so people who spoke that night, not one of the cop bashers had a clear and convincing story that would stand up to the scrutiny of an objective legal challenge. Maybe that's why no lawyers have come forward to represent any of them in suing the city. Think about it. If any of the people in the room that night had a legitimate case against the Lawrence police, there would be dozens of lawyers soliciting them for representation. But that hasn't happened. If it had, these "victims" wouldn't be speaking at a public forum about their cases. The first thing any good lawyer will tell you is : DO NOT speak publicly about your case because any inconsistency in your story will be used against you later in court.

Yet, there they were. Not in a court of law where questions can be fairly asked of both sides to discern the truth. They were not in a neutral setting where the complainers could be questioned and their stories could be challenged. They were at an ACLU meeting with like-minded people who had already made up their minds that the Lawrence police were racists, corrupt and out of control. And the Latino media lapped it up like Al Gore at a Global Warming convention.

The saddest part of this whole fiasco is that the Spanish language media accepts these abuse claims as gospel. Spanish media reporters do not investigate allegations for their validity. They do not question the motives of the criminals. They only question the actions and motives of the police. Then they portray the criminals' point of view as fact. This kind of "reporting" creates more fear and mistrust by Latinos towards the Lawrence police, all the while it is the hard working Latinos in Lawrence who are most often the victims of crime that the police are trying to solve.

What's even worse is that the Latino media takes individual allegations of abuse and corruption and strings them all together to make the entire department look corrupt. The fact is, most Lawrence police officers (white, Latino, and others) are willing to take a bullet on a moment's notice to protect the lives of any one of the cop

bashers crowded into the room that night. They are hard working, honest and decent law enforcement officials who follow the law and put their own safety in jeopardy to protect all of the citizens of Lawrence, regardless of ethnicity.

What About Real Police Brutality?

So, what about the police officers in Lawrence who do abuse their authority? What about the cops who really are heavy handed and disgrace the uniform? What about the few cops who really are racist and target Latinos, or blacks or whites because of the color of their skin? What happens when a complaint is filed against a Lawrence cop and a citizen really IS abused by someone who's supposed to serve and protect?

Lawrence Police Chief John Romero's policy is to have Lawrence police officers investigate claims of abuse and misconduct within the ranks of the Lawrence police itself. Just imagine, you've been abused or mistreated by a Lawrence cop and Chief Romero expects you to go to the Lawrence Police Station (which is intimidating enough) and file your complaint with one of the abusive cops' colleagues. Then you are expected to let Lawrence cops investigate Lawrence cops and take their word for it if they say "no law was broken." How can anyone expect to take the word of the Lawrence police when your complaint is against the Lawrence police? How can anyone expect that they will investigate objectively and put one of their own under the same investigative microscope that a district attorney or state police investigation would?

It's just not realistic. Nor is it fair to the public, the complaining citizen, or the police officer who is being accused. No matter how this kind of investigation is concluded, even if the Lawrence police follow the letter of the law, the mere fact that Lawrence cops are investigating Lawrence cops takes away any credibility or legitimacy with the public. And it plays right in to the propaganda game of cop haters like Julio Meran, who use this fact to discredit the entire department, further adding credibility to their claims of corruption and cover-ups.

Of course, there are a few bad cops in the Lawrence Police Department. But each of them should be investigated individually without casting a "stereotype" on the rest of the cops in the department. Every suspected bad cop should be investigated by an outside agency (like the DA or the sheriff's department) to restore the faith and trust of the community. And, when found culpable, should be fired or put in jail for disgracing the badge and uniform.

But let's not compare the cops who pulled over Julio Meran with the cops who are truly racist or abusive. Let's not liken the police officers who rightfully arrested Ramon Vargas with those who are out there committing real crimes. That kind of moral equivalence and sinister rhetoric only serves to provide shelter for the abusive cops while the rest of the community is busy going after the cops who were only doing their jobs.

None of the evidence (if you want to call it that) presented before the ACLU last month showed any hint of systematic corruption, racism or abuse by the Lawrence Police Department. Believe me, if there was even one person who appeared to have a legitimate claim of abuse or corruption, The Valley Patriot would be the very first to investigate and publish his story.

I can tell you that there is little I despise more than a corrupt or abusive cop. Those cops disgrace the badge and uniform my father lived and died for. Renegade cops jeopardize the lives and the livelihoods of every good cop doing his job on the street. They make it so much harder for the cops who truly care and strive to gain the public's trust to make a positive difference in the community.

What's worse than a corrupt cop, however, is a loud-mouthed, racist malcontent who makes false allegations against police and cannot back it up. Or a city councilor who campaigns for office by bashing the police and pandering to criminals. And that's exactly what happened at the ACLU meeting last month. It's just shameful that the Spanish language media didn't take advantage of this opportunity to build bridges between Latinos and the police by doing a real investigation and telling the truth about who these people are. But I guess that's what happens when your mind is made up before all the facts are all in.

Tom Duggan is the president of Valley Patriot, Inc., a former Lawrence School Committeeman, and hosts the Paying Attention! Radio Program on WCAP, 980AM, every Saturday afternoon from noon-2pm. You can email your comments to Tdugjr@aol.com.

"A Campaign for Proficiency for ALL"



Lawrence Public Schools

Embraces

The "7" Essential Elements of School Transformation

"A Campaign for Proficiency for ALL"



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Dr. Wilfredo T. Laboy- Superintendent

Greater Lawrence Tech's Kim Deschenes Named Outstanding Technical Student in Massachusetts

Kimberly Deschenes, a senior at Greater Lawrence Technical School, was honored as an "Outstanding Vocational Technical Student in Massachusetts," along with 44 others, at an awards banquet in Mechanics Hall in Worcester on April 30. A resident of Lawrence, she is the daughter of Clifford and Jayne Deschenes.

More than 600 people, including honored students, their parents, teachers, other educators and state education officials, were on hand to watch students come up on stage after dinner to receive plaques and certificates for their accomplishments as their biographies were read and giant slides of them were projected on a screen behind them. Participating in the ceremonies were members of the Massachusetts Board of Education and representatives of the sponsoring organizations, MAVA (Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators) and MVA (Massachusetts Vocational Association).

An autobody major from Lawrence, Kim is a straight-A student, ranked number one in her class, and a member and secretary of the National Honor Society. A participant in the Cooperative Education Program, she works for Adamson Industries, an installer of equipment in police vehicles.

Kim is a member of SkillsUSA, Tech Prep, and the nontraditional student group. Kim writes for the student newspaper, *GLT Vibes*, and has been a Student of the Month. She is a recipient of a John & Abigail Adams scholarship, the Daughters of the American Revolution Good Citizen Award, and was selected twice for the Lawrence Youth Leadership Award.

Outside school, Kim volunteers at her church, teaching religion classes to third graders and serving as a lector. She enjoys both reading and writing poems and stories.

Following graduation, Kim will attend Merrimack College to major in communications, using her autobody skills to pay for college expenses. Kim says that Greater Lawrence gave her the opportunity to do "something interesting and different, and learn in a diverse environment, where you can not only be book smart but also learn hands-on skills."



Kimberly Deschenes, a senior at Greater Lawrence Technical School, was honored as an "Outstanding Vocational Technical Student in Massachusetts."

Ormsby: Pay up and Shut up - From Page 3

improvements have resulted from or been prompted by my reform suggestions (e.g., a doubling of AP enrollment at our high school and a replacement of a failed math program in our elementary schools), the system has dug its heels in on most suggested changes.

Recent attempts to address two concerns provide a good example of resistance to change that only monopoly institutions can engage in with impunity.

Over the last several months I have tried to address our middle school's rampant grade/honor roll inflation. Also, I have suggested we review our policy that has our teachers, who are paid to teach five classes a day, only teach four classes a day.

The grade inflation issue has two aspects. First is the tendency to give out nearly all A's and B's – in our case, 85% A's and B's resulting in two-thirds of our students on the honor roll! **But the second aspect really presents a more important issue. By giving out nearly all A's and B's, parents and students are lulled into a false sense of accomplishment. The end result is that the motivation of students to work harder is lost, students achieve less, and their lives are diminished.**

While I would prefer to fix both problems, I would be happy to ignore grade statistics and put 100 percent of our students on the honor roll if we could just ensure that parents get an accurate picture of where their students really stand academically. A simple listing of grade statistics

placed in each report card would suffice. It is an easy fix. It merely tells parents the truth about their student's accomplishments. It shouldn't be controversial ... but it is!

At a recent School Committee meeting to discuss these two issues, middle school administrators dismissed grade and honor roll inflation with one, nearly content-free, chart. Their one relevant claim was that communication with parents was already strong. If this were true, revealing grade statistics in a report card should not be a problem.

The second issue is remarkable when you consider the financial strains caused by the collision of our rapidly rising labor costs – due to an overly generous union contract and escalating healthcare costs – and budget constraints imposed by Proposition 2 1/2. With years of cutbacks that have resulted in crowded classrooms and loss of services (e.g., art and music classes), how is it possible that our middle school has organized its schedule to have teachers teach only four classes per day when we are paying them to teach five?

At the very same meeting described earlier, this reduction in class load was justified by the school's "team teaching" concept. With team teaching, students are shared by a team of four teachers, and the extra period – the one not taught – is used "to discuss our shared students and also plan together during our team planning period."

Now, I don't know anyone in his right mind that thinks the value of this discussion could possibly outweigh a 25 percent increase – from 4 to 5 classes a day – in academic instruction to our students. The extra 25 percent could be used for additional instruction in subjects that a student is struggling with, or used to cover more advanced topics for high-achieving students, or directed to art, music, foreign language, and physical education.

Note that this increase in instruction is worth the equivalent of nine teachers. At \$50,000 per teacher, this amounts to \$450,000.

When I asked the middle school administration whether such a tradeoff could be investigated, the fireworks erupted. Answer: "No, we weren't asked to do that."

Well, could you? "No, we can't pursue that option."

Well, can we meet to look into this ... "No, we won't meet with you to discuss it."

But, I think we should ... "By the way, people with your views are not welcome here."

But that doesn't seem right ... "Why are you asking these questions? Didn't you know that tonight's meeting was a celebration of the Middle School?"

No, I thought it was a School Committee meeting. When was it changed to a celebration? ... Why don't you ever have anything nice to say about our monopoly?

But I do. Would you like to see the tape? ...

At this point, discussion was gaveled to a close. I asked when we might meet to actually discuss these vital issues – we never had a chance to discuss grade inflation – and an audience member protested that these issues were already dealt with and we should go on to more important matters. Presumably, this means what we love doing the most, discussing how to get more money from the taxpayers.

You see, monopolies don't want their boards to discuss how to reform their operations or improve service. Why bother? They have no competition.

The school monopoly only wants to discuss how to generate more money, a lot more money. For public schools, it is always time for another tax increase.

So, citizens of North Andover: Just pay up and shut up. **Don't ask for reforms or higher standards. Don't ask for improved service for the children. Don't bother them at all ... they're busy celebrating!**

They know that the children will still show up next September no matter what.

What else can the children do? They have no other choice!

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Have You Seen Bill Kelly?

Valley Patriot Staff

Anybody seen Bill Kelly? You know, the Bill Kelly that ran for School Committee back in 2004 and 2005? He's been missing for two years now and his family and friends in the community are very concerned. The picture on the nearby card is the last known likeness we have of him. Keep in mind, though, that the picture shown is two years old and must be age adjusted.

Bill Kelly is approximately six feet tall, grayish hair, speaks in long, drawn-out sentences and was last seen living on Rea Street. Just before his disappearance on Election Day 2005, he was running for North Andover School Committee as an agent of change. He was concerned that the School Committee was focusing too much on money and not enough on academics. He wanted to change that with some fresh ideas and creative thinking.

He portrayed himself as a fiscal conservative with traditional values and high standards. His campaign literature clearly stated: **"If elected to the School Committee, I will pursue these goals: Fiscal Responsibility - Budget realistically to known available funds."** The impression he gave voters was that he would not support school budgets beyond the town's ability to pay for them. Pretty clear and straightforward, don't you think?

Bill Kelly also promised unequivocally that he **"Will not accept the \$2000 annual stipend paid each board member."** Most people would read that to mean, "I ain't taking the money if you elect me." Any question in anybody's mind what this means?

The name Bill Kelly was synonymous with "Fiscal Responsibility."

Just weeks before Election Day, Bill Kelly actually changed his political registration from unenrolled to Republican. One would gather from this that he enshrined the traditional Republican principles of low taxes and limited government. At least that was what many voters were led to believe. They went to the polls with this in mind.

Now the case of the missing Bill Kelly becomes really bizarre. The day after that Election Day when Bill Kelly vanished, an imposter and charlatan suddenly appeared. His physical features resembled those of the missing Kelly, but he had none of the defining attributes of the original. Although he had the same gray hair and was of similar height, this imitator was missing all of the other characteristics touted by the lost Bill Kelly. Amazingly, this phony also went by the name of Kelly. That's how incredibly weird this case has become.

Last known photo of the missing Bill Kelly - 2005

William KELLY
School Committee



*Traditional Values
High Standards
Fiscal Responsibility*

*If elected to the School Committee,
I will pursue these goals:*

Raise Academic standards

- ✓ All Curricula will contain traditional educational basics.
- ✓ Hold administration accountable for meeting higher standards.
- ✓ Equity throughout all elementary schools.
- ✓ All students should reach their maximum potential.

Improve Special Education

- ✓ Identify at risk learners early through testing and use proven scientifically based methods to assist them.

Fiscal Responsibility

- ✓ Budget realistically to known available funds
- ✓ Aggressively seek out grants and collaborations to supplement programs
- ✓ Maximize funds to direct student services
- ✓ Will not accept \$2000 annual stipend paid to each board member

**Vote Kelly for School Committee
March 29th, 2005**

And it gets even stranger. Kelly's imposter ended up being elected to the School Committee. His very first act of any consequence was to cast the deciding vote in favor of a teachers contract that was well beyond what the town could afford ... even after being warned in advance of the dire consequences. The missing Bill Kelly would never have considered such a thing. The millions more the contract would eventually cost the district led to dozens of teachers losing their jobs and put the entire school system in a financial bind that it still struggles to overcome today.

Was this guy a fraud? Webster's Dictionary, in-part, defines fraud: "a person who deceives or is not what he pretends to be..." Should we call this guy Fraud Kelly? Whatever we call him, he has directly caused the disappearance of much of the arts and music in our schools.

But the Kelly fake wasn't finished. In 2006 he went on to support the disastrous "To Be Balanced Budget" with the infamous Trash Tax that would have cost the town's citizens millions more in taxes/fees. Do you remember the Town Meeting last summer where 3000 angry voters turned out to say "No Way"? We were lucky we didn't have any medical emergencies with the elderly who were forced to come out on that oppressively hot July night to protect their retirement money. The Kelly imposter backed the whole futile effort behind that Trash Tax.

More recently, this fake Kelly has endorsed a new school budget that is - not surprisingly - millions more than the town can afford. And the charlatan Kelly has also come out as the lead proponent of a multi-million-dollar Proposition 2 1/2 Tax Override to pay for it all! Incredible, just incredible!

Oh, did we mention that in 2006 the Kelly imposter took the \$2,000 stipend that the missing Kelly refused to accept? This year the charlatan Kelly is taking in \$2300 as chair of the committee. We don't know what will happen in the future, but we do hope that the Bill Kelly of 2005 we all respected and voted for will be located soon and found to be of sound mind and body. At this point we have no clues as to his whereabouts, other than that he was last seen in North Andover on Election Day 2005, waving the flag of fiscal responsibility.

If you have any information regarding the missing Bill Kelly, please call either the America's Most Wanted hotline or the North Andover Police Department. In the meantime, for updates on the status of the investigation, check out the back of the milk cartons in your local grocery store when shopping.



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Andover High School
Field House**

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