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*We invite you to see for yourself why so many North Andover residents support the Osgood Landing project at 1600 Osgood Street...*

North Andover town officials are working with the landowner at **1600 Osgood Street** to host **two public information sessions** prior to Town Meeting. You're invited to join us at 1600 Osgood Street (former Lucent site), and we'll answer any questions you may have about 40R Smart Growth Zoning, the proposed Articles 27 & 28 on the Town Meeting Warrant, and the Osgood Landing Master Plan.

PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSIONS HELD ON  
**Thursday, May 10 at 7:30pm**  
**Saturday, May 12 at 10:00am**  
Former Lucent Site 1600 Osgood Street North Andover

*"The Osgood Landing Project represents a significant economic opportunity for the Town, and most importantly, an important source of funding for our schools. Both the short-term payments funded by the state, as well as the steady source of tax revenues provided by the project over the next 20 years, are much needed resources for the continued restoration of our schools as well as all of our town services."*

*- Christine Allen Member, North Andover School Committee*

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# Overrides? Underrides? Give the People a Choice!



Ted Tripp

Just as certain as the crocuses and daffodils come up in the spring, this time of year also brings talk of a Proposition 2 ½ override. It is, after all, budget season and every town department pushes for the maximum amount of money available. The schools in particular always seem to want more than the town can afford and are the underlying cause

behind many of our override attempts.

Not surprisingly, spring also brings us those annoying radio and TV spots from the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA). You know, the ones that have a child saying, "We the children of Massachusetts in order to create a more perfect education need everyone's help...." Then it goes on to imply how the children will suffer if they don't get the proper instruction in reading, writing, math, science, art, music and physical education. It ends by saying, "A message from the children of Massachusetts. And the Massachusetts Teachers Association."

Ever wonder why you don't hear these messages in the fall? Or winter? You go to the head of the class if you figured out that the MTA is *only* interested in separating you from the money in your wallet during the override season. The MTA "union" mindset is simply to employ as many teachers and aides as possible – at the highest salaries achievable. This is no surprise; it is after all what unions do. The unseemly part is that the MTA uses our kids as pawns to promote its employment and compensation goals.

## Let the voters decide: Override or Underride?

Yes  No Question 1. Shall the town of North Andover be allowed to assess an additional \$3.5 million in real estate and personal property taxes for the purposes of funding the town's operating budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2007?

Yes  No Question 2. Shall the town of North Andover be required to reduce the amount of real estate and personal property taxes to be assessed for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2007 by an amount equal to \$200,000?

Override season is in high gear here in North Andover. It all started several months ago when the School Committee voted to approve a "restoration budget" that was millions more than the town could afford. Except for Dr. Ormsby, who voted against the unrealistic budget, the other School Committee members have decided to play "chicken" with the Board of Selectmen. They are saying: *Give us the millions more we want for the schools. We don't care how you get it. If it takes a tax override, you better vote in favor of one and put it before the voters. One way or another, we will get our money.*

This tactic has been used in the past. In 2002 the schools put pressure on the board to put a \$4 million override on the ballot. The vote was unanimous, 5-0. Even some of the selectmen who were opposed to the override voted to put it on the ballot. Their rationalization was "Let the voters decide." This is the easy way out for elected officials. They avoid making the tough decisions and still look like the "Community Leader."

There is a certain amount of arrogance and inherent unfairness about a \$70 million government entity that forces taxpayers year after year to protect their wallets against shelling out even more money. Why should this be an annual battle? Why shouldn't the residents of a town expect to live in peace without fear of their incomes being confiscated at higher and higher amounts?

Perhaps Francis Scott Key should rewrite the ending of our national anthem from "Land of the free..." to "Land of the tax weary..."

But I digress. Let's return to the possibility of a tax override in the next several months. To our selectmen who really believe in the axiom "Let the people decide," I agree that we should let the people decide. But to be honest in this approach, they should give the voters a real choice. Give them the opportunity to vote for an underride on the same ballot as an override. Why not let voters have the choice to cut taxes as well as raise them?

Here's how it would work. The ballot would have two questions on it. One would be the override for whatever amount the town says it needs, say \$3.5 million. The second would be an underride for a smaller amount, say \$200,000. Voters could cast a yes vote for Question 1 or Question 2. The question with the highest number of yes votes wins. A majority no vote on both questions would mean no change in taxes.

The smaller amount of the underride is calculated to send a strong message about tax relief to town leaders while at the same time not decimating town services.

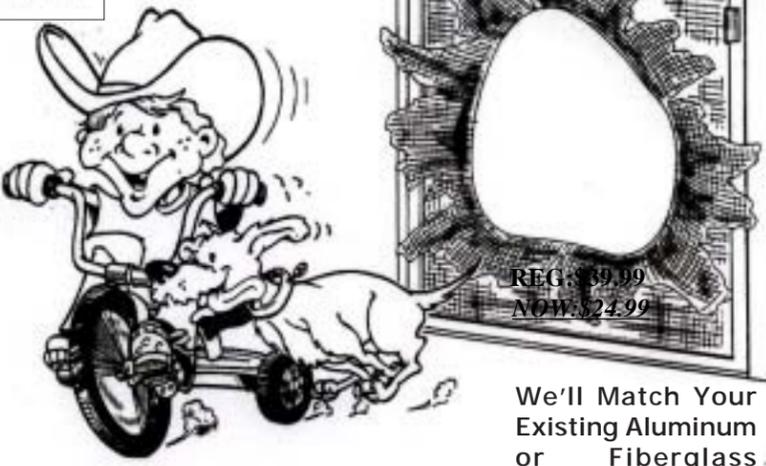
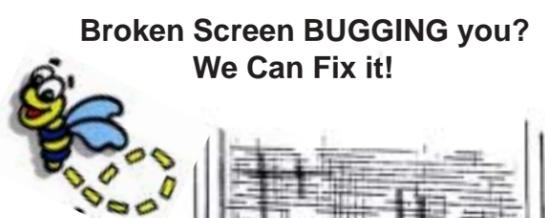
This is truly a way to express the notion "Let the people decide." Give them the choice to reduce taxes at the same time they have the choice to raise taxes. Then let the selectmen and town government implement whatever the people decide at the polls.

This approach will make town leaders think twice before voting to put an override on the ballot when there is a good chance beleaguered taxpayers might pass an underride instead.

Ted Tripp is an International Consultant in high-tech manufacturing methods. He has BS and MS degrees in Chemical Engineering from MIT. He is also the head of the N.A. Taxpayers Association. You can reach him at [tripp@gjs.net](mailto:tripp@gjs.net).

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Footnotes from

# TOM DUGGAN'S NOTEBOOK

## Nunzio DiMarca, A Sad Reality



As much as I love and respect Lawrence City Councilor Nunzio DiMarca, it is time I speak freely about why I refuse to support him for reelection this year. The fact is, I didn't support Nunzio DiMarca two years ago so that he could abuse his position to get jobs for his friends and family (jobs that were never posted). I didn't support Mr. DiMarca to harass the mayor, take cheap shots at the mayor's administration or stand in the way of progress. But most importantly, I didn't support Nunzio DiMarca so that he could sit at the Council table and *bash police officers*, or make the Lawrence Police Department look like a bunch of racists thugs (a slap in the face to both me *and my family*). I didn't support him so that he could (once again) play the race card to divide people in an election year in a desperate attempt to get votes. No, I supported Nunzio two years ago because I was given personal assurances that the days of conflicts of interest, playing race politics and making deals for personal gain were over. But since the passing of his campaign manager last year, DiMarca has gone right back to the days of old. He was thrown off the Council by voters in 2003 because of his arrogance and shameless conflicts of interest and now he is about to be defeated again for the very same reasons. When Councilor DiMarca loses this November, I only hope that he will look in the mirror to find the person responsible for ending his own political career. It wasn't a conspiracy by Police Chief John Romero. It wasn't a plot by Mayor Mike Sullivan or the people in his sinister administration. It wasn't even Patrick Blanchette.

No, it was Councilor Nunzio DiMarca himself who behind the scenes got his family member a city job. It was Nunzio DiMarca who embraced the racists and cop haters at the ACLU meeting last month. And it was Councilor DiMarca who placed an item on the City Council agenda entitled "police brutality" so that he could pander to the race hustlers in an election year. It is clear to me now that Mr. DiMarca has such hatred for the cops in Lawrence (and, in particular, Police Chief John Romero) that he is incapable of objectively voting for what is best for Lawrence. DiMarca has shown by his own actions that he is too obsessed with settling vendettas against the chief to see that he is slandering an entire Police Department. It hurts me to say it, but the truth is, Councilor DiMarca is a divider not a uniter, as he was when he got elected in 2005. His reckless, phony accusations against the Lawrence police, Mayor Sullivan and Chief Romero have caused immeasurable damage to the city and its reputation. No, I will not be supporting Councilor Nunzio DiMarca in November and it is a crying shame. Until he began his crusade against Lawrence police officers, he was well positioned to get reelected. But, gleefully carrying the mantle for the ACLU and the racists who believe in a "Latino Agenda," he has completely blown any chance he had at a political future. Not only will Nunzio DiMarca not be a contender in 2009 for the mayor's race (as he has convinced himself that



he is), he will most likely come in last in this year's at-large City Council race.

## Cancer Screening Van Coming to Lawrence

As we reported last December, women in the Merrimack Valley will have easy access to free mammography screening in the convenience of a mammography van thanks to a gift from Lawrence native Cynthia Alekel Mohr. The Dana Farber Cancer Institute's (DFCI) Mobile Mammography Van, which now travels throughout Boston, will be on the streets of Lawrence on Saturday May 12<sup>th</sup> to provide free mammogram screening. Thanks to a \$100,000 gift from Cynthia Alekel Mohr establishing the Cynthia Alekel Mohr and Family Mobile Mammography Fund which will pay for the expansion of the van services for women in the greater Lawrence area. The van will be at the YWCA of Greater Lawrence at 38 Lawrence Street. For more information please call Miverva Grullón at (978) 687-0331 Ext. 1048.

## Siglo 21 Misinforming Latinos

Last week Siglo 21, (a partially bilingual newspaper) printed the following paragraphs about the ACLU and our website posting about the meeting: *Tommy Duggan, the director of The Valley Patriot, the only member of the Anglo-American press present at the gathering with the ACLU, reported the event on his web page with the following words: "And all the criminals, cop haters and social malcontents came out of the woodwork to tell their sad and sordid tales of victimization at the hands of the evil, white, racists at the Lawrence Police Department." With those remarks, Duggan dismissed the complaints as claims coming from Latino delinquents taking advantage of the racial conflict to justify their antisocial behavior. To validate his point of view, the director of The Valley Patriot forgot to mention that there were "white Americans" at the meeting who gave their testimony regarding police violence. Mr. Duggan also failed to mention in his initial report that some of the victims pointed to Latino policemen as part of the abusive officers.* The only problem here is, this is a blatant falsehood (lie?). There was only one "white American" who



spoke at the ACLU meeting among all the cop bashing that went on and it was Kurt Charenza. Charenza, a decorated military man, did not speak one word about police abuse, racism or police brutality. His beef (the only one who seemed to have a legitimate complaint that night) was that he was stabbed and beaten by civilians to the point of having permanent nerve damage to his face and that the Lawrence police refused to investigate the crime. This is a far cry from being a "white Americans" at the meeting who gave their testimony regarding police violence." It is sad, yet predictable that the Spanish language media cannot give an accurate portrayal of what happens at meetings like this because they are so beholden to an agenda of promoting fear and distrust among Latinos towards the police. The only "Latino policeman" mentioned at that meeting was by Mr. Charenza who mentioned a "Latino" police officer he spoke with while trying to get his case resolved. Mr. Charenza did not ever make an allegation that he was abused by Lawrence cops and the fact that Siglo21 would promote such a lie only goes to show what lengths people will go to promote hate.

## Blanchette Shills as new Sales Boy for the Tribune

Are things THAT bad at the Eagle~Tribune that they need to dispatch City Council President Patrick Blanchette to sell ads for them at the Council table during Council meetings? I mean, I know the Trib is bleeding money every month (and with the impending departure of Ken Johnson, Al White and Taylor Armerding), people are very nervous about their futures over on Turnpike Street. But I didn't think that the Tribune was capable of stooping so low as to have an elected official shill for their advertising department while conducting city business. Yet, there it was. Last month at a personnel subcommittee meeting of the Lawrence City Council, Patrick Blanchette attacked Personnel Director Frank Bonet for advertising in The Valley Patriot and "not the Eagle~Tribune, in violation of the city charter." My

question for Blanchette is this: Where in the charter does it say that the city has to advertise in the Eagle~Tribune? Just because "reporter" Mark Vogler has been acting as Blanchette's own personal press secretary and only prints his point of view on any given issue, that doesn't give Blanchette the right to shill for their ad department as a quid-pro-quo to funneling advertising dollars back to the paper. It is a sad state of affairs for both Blanchette and the Trib. But it does explain why Vogler spins every story coming out of City Hall to benefit his pal Patrick Blanchette. I'm just not sure it's ethical. For the record, The Valley Patriot has a much better advertising value for your buck, delivering more than 12,000 papers monthly to FOURTEEN different communities and that's not including the thousands of readers who download the paper on-line each month. Plus, advertising in The Valley Patriot gives you an entire month of exposure for one tenth of the price the Eagle~Tribune charges for ONE DAY. I wonder what Council President Patrick Blanchette would say if another councilor was trying to redirect city funds to The Valley

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Patriot from the Council table during a meeting? Anyone want to bet he would be screaming "conflict of interest"? I guess it just depends on who is doing the advocating and who gets the benefits.

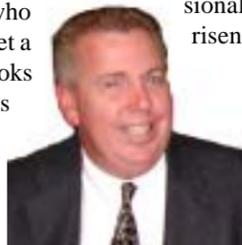
**Conventional Wisdom:  
Stock Rising for Alvarez**

Here is a snapshot of whose political stock has gone up and whose has gone down in the last month.

**(UP) NILKA ALVAREZ-RODRIGUEZ:** Nilka's stock has gone up considerably in the last few months, thanks to two brave votes she made at the Council table. First, she supported David Camasso for comptroller despite the fact that she received a lot of pressure from racist Latinos in the Latino Agenda Crowd who insisted she vote against him (Camasso is not Latino). Second, Alvarez was the deciding vote to stop giving waivers to non profits when they apply for construction permits in the city. This, despite the fact that Alvarez is a big supporter of Poverty Pimps like Law-rence Community Works and has been one of their biggest advocates in granting those waivers. "If the city of Law-rence wasn't in such bad shape financially and we could afford to give waivers, that would be one thing, but we need the money," Alvarez said. "I have to vote for what is best for the people of Lawrence," she emphasized. It took great courage for Councilor Alvarez to take such positions and the public has been well-served and taken notice.

**(UP) LAWRENCE MAYOR MIKE SULLIVAN:** Mayor Sullivan has taken his share of insults and cheap shots by city councilors who insist that he has done nothing for the progress of Lawrence. Yet, Sullivan has just hired a comptroller and put forth a plan to transform Essex Street into two-way traffic. Just two weeks earlier, city councilors Marie Gosselin and Patrick Blanchette urged the rest of the Council to hold up the nomination of "any" names sent down by the mayor until Frank McCann was reinstated as the DPW director. But there they were, unanimously passing Sullivan's choice for comptroller and the Essex St. plan.

**(DOWN) POLICE CHIEF JOHN ROMERO:** Although the investigation against officer Kyle Wilcox was well under way before the American Criminal Liberties Union came to Lawrence last month, the perception is that Chief Romero disciplined the officer in response to public pressure. Romero, whose policy is to have Lawrence police investigate their own, is also coming under fire by officers within the ranks who say that cops who are not in favor with the chief's "clique" don't get a fair shake when his internal investigation unit looks into allegations. Whether or not the allegations against Wilcox are true, Romero's reputation has taken a hit and damaged his credibility.



**(UP) METHUEN MAYOR BILL MANZI:** Manzi took a lot of political heat off of himself by appointing an independent finder of facts to evaluate Chief Solomon's role in the scandal involving federal grants given to the Police Department. Had Manzi acted without an independent recommendation, he would have been in a no-win situation. Those who hate the chief or the mayor would be crying that he was covering up, and those who like the chief would be saying it was a personal vendetta. Manzi was smart enough to do what Mike Sullivan should have done with DPW director Frank McCann and remove the politics of it. Manzi handled the situation professionally and his political stock and credibility have risen because of it.

**(UP) NORTH ANDOVER'S POLICE CHIEF RICHARD STANLEY:** Last month, The Valley Patriot editorial detailed some of the troubles at local liquor establishments in North Andover and how the licensing commission was not doing enough to combat the problem. Within days of our May edition hitting the streets, Police Chief Richard Stanley took a proactive move by drafting a new policy on reporting liquor license violations to the licensing commission. We applaud Chief Stanley for acting swiftly to address the problem. Instead of trying to cover up or make excuses for the situation, Stanley did something to improve it.

**(UP) DPW DIRECTOR FRANK MCCANN:** A month ago, Frank McCann looked like he was on his way to an involuntary retirement. After being suspended by Mayor Mike Sullivan for cost overruns on High St. (where Council President Blanchette lives), McCann went from unpaid suspension to paid leave. Since then he has been collecting a paycheck and Mayor Sullivan had given every indication that he was not going to bring McCann back. But something has changed in the last thirty days and now we are hearing rumblings that McCann will get a public hearing and be reinstated as the DPW director. Some say it was a secret deal between councilors and the

mayor (if they vote for Camasso, McCann can come back), but, whatever really happened, McCann is positioned to have a very good month and could be back to work by the time the June Valley Patriot comes off the press.

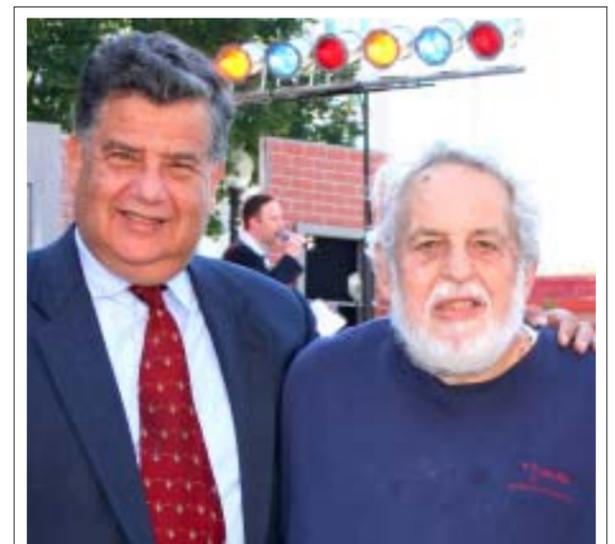
**(DOWN) ANDREA TRAFICANTI:** Still laid off, still threatening to sue everybody, still obsessed with Mike Sweeney... and still laid off.

**The Fox Guarding the Henhouse**

While watching a North Andover School Committee meeting last month, Cindy Jalbert got up to the microphone to talk about the budget. Speaking at the meeting is not unusual for Cindy because she speaks during every public participation. But this time it was different. She said that she was speaking not as a parent, but as an employee of the school system. What? Did I hear her right? She's an employee of the school department? The override advocate and North Andover's own desperate housewife is now working in central office overseeing the budget. What line item in the budget is she being paid from and is the override needed to keep her position? Isn't this scenario like the fox watching the hen house? After all, wasn't Cindy denied a spot on the Finance Committee for being too polarizing?

**Readers No Longer With Us**

Former Lawrence City Councilor Norm Letourneau passed away last month. Norm was the first city councilor elected to represent District "E" (Mount Vernon) under the current charter. Norm was an avid reader of The Valley Patriot via our website and emailed me a few months ago to let me know he kept up on the happenings in the Lawrence area while enjoying his retirement in Florida. Also passing away last month was Haverhill Mayor Jim Fiorentini's dad, John, and the father of Lawrence City Councilor Jorge Gonzalez. Our hearts go out to the Letourneau, Gonzalez and Fiorentini families and friends.



Haverhill Mayor Jim Fiorentini with his Dad, John.

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## The Classroom

Peter Larocque, Lawrence School Committee

I for one would like to see us as the adults who live in Lawrence keep the discussion concerning the future of the Lawrence public schools to what is really relevant to education, which is, what is actually going on in the classroom?



Already as the upcoming election gets closer, the question I continue to hear is, who do you support, the superintendent or the teachers? I believe this whole issue has surfaced as a result of pending union negotiations currently underway between the teachers' union and the school district. It is my hope that at the conclusion of the negotiations all parties will leave the table with amicable resolutions and a spirit of unity that will be reflected in our continued pursuit of excellence in education.

Divisive questions such as this have no place in public education. I support children and teachers who support children. I support hard-working families that invest time and energy in the educational lives of their children and I support a school system that continues to show gains in education. The minute any of these items change, my support may change as well. I continue to be a strong voice for families and children, advancements in education, and stronger community involvement in the educational system. We as citizens, parents, taxpayers, and homeowners of Lawrence, need to raise the level of discussion to what is fundamentally important to us and, in that list of importance, where does our children's education rank?

We cannot continue to waste precious time and energy on questions that only serve to divide and take away our focus on the bigger picture.

One of the important issues before us this year is the renewal and reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act. Many of the major players are beginning to send their recommendations to Congress implementing a number of changes. What I can read so far is that many are asking for greater state and local control that calls for more flexibility and leeway but still maintaining the federal government's position in holding states accountable for student learning. I don't believe that this is as difficult as it may sound. Because I believe we can be accountable and also flexible without big government hovering over our shoulders. The America I know and the America my dad fought for in WW II was not designed for Washington to control how we educate our children in Lawrence. The one size fits all approach does not work!

One group advocates that the federal government's role should be to supplement and support rather than to dictate states' efforts in education.

Here in Lawrence, our student population is so diversified and transit that to have all evaluations of students, teachers and the entire school district based on one test (MCAS) is just not fair! Nor is it right!

If my memory serves me right, didn't someone stand up sometime ago in Washington and say, "the era of big government is over?"

Well, then, can you please explain the apparent conflict? Special education students should be able to take modified tests. English language learners not born in this country should be allowed more time to learn English before they are required to be tested.

These are some of the recommendations that I can read and agree with that are being put forward. Let us all be clear. Any program or initiative or plan coming out of Washington that disallows any type of local control is not good government. So please, now is the time to let our representatives in Washington know what you believe should be recommended for change in the NCLB Act.

This is the level of conversation that will actually have more effect to what is going on in the classroom than who do you support. I continue to make myself available to all my constituents and welcome your input on the future of Lawrence's educational system.

**Peter Larocque is a member of the Lawrence School Committee, 255 Essex St. Lawrence, MA 01842. He was elected by the Lawrence City Council to fill the unexpired term of Amy McGovern. You can email him at [plarocque@lawrence.k12.ma.us](mailto:plarocque@lawrence.k12.ma.us)**



## Lawrence on the Move

Mayor Michael J. Sullivan



The newly approved plan to change traffic flow on Essex Street from one way to two ways, between Union St. and Broadway. This project will cost \$700,000 and will be funded through community development block grants and capital improvement money.

## Finally, Essex Street Will Have Two Way Traffic

For far too long, the residents of Lawrence have been complaining about the flow of traffic on Essex Street. Pedestrians complain about the fact that Essex Street has become a speedway because of three lanes of traffic from one end of the street to the other. Businesses have complained, and rightfully so, that their customers have no place to park and with the congestion on Essex Street during the day, potential customers cannot even get to their establishments.

During the last two elections I heard the message of the voters loud and clear about the problems on Essex Street. The message was: change Essex Street from one way to two way traffic. This is an issue that Lawrence residents have been talking about for more than 20 years, but until recently nobody had been willing to take on what seemed like an insurmountable task.

With the help of City Councilor Grisel Silva, who first brought the issue to my attention last year in a column she wrote in The Valley Patriot, we began to formulate a plan to pull together community development, the planning department, the Police Department and several members of the business community to see what could be done to finally rectify the traffic problems downtown.

Community Development Director Tommy Schiavone spearheaded the effort on behalf of my office and a plan was put together to do the unimaginable, restore Essex Street to the hustle and bustle we experienced 30 years ago.

While I fully understand that this will not happen overnight, the improvement plan we have put forth will be the first step towards bringing more customers and more businesses to the downtown area. This means an increase in tax revenue for the city as well as an increase in the economy for those who live and work here every day.

Within thirty days of the council's vote to approve this project (which took place May 1st), we will begin to install new signage, new crosswalks, a beautification plan for tree pruning and trimming, new banners highlighting the wonderful downtown city of Lawrence and, most importantly, a change of traffic flow from one way traffic on Essex Street to two way traffic from Union Street to Broadway.

Currently, Essex Street has three lanes of traffic, all traveling west from Union to Broadway. Under the plan approved by the council, there will be only two lanes traveling west and one lane traveling east from Broadway to Union. My Essex Street plan will add more than 40 parking spaces to the downtown area. This is good news for everyone, business owners and their customers alike.

One of the alternatives we are looking at to provide even more parking downtown is to take the city-owned parking lots and open them up for parking as well. Though it is not etched in stone just yet, my plan is to offer these parking lots for free to business owners and their employees so that there is more parking available for their customers during the day.

Of course, we want to be flexible and we will be making more decisions about that on a month-to-month basis. We have some very capable and brilliant people working on maximizing our potential for parking, while keeping the traffic flowing evenly and smoothly.

By now you must be asking yourself: what is the cost of this major downtown project? How can we afford to do this at a time when the city is so financially strapped?

The fact is that we are most likely going to make a minimum investment of \$700,000 with the main source of funds coming from community development block grants and capital improvement money. Much to my surprise, the funding problems we have had in the DPW will not affect this project one bit.

What's been really surprising to me about all this is how supportive the business community and the City Council have been since the inception of this plan. All the business owners and employees we have talked to over the last several months have been extremely supportive of this plan. I think they really support this project because they realize the impact this is going to have on improving traffic problems, parking problems and increasing the number of customers patronizing their stores.

That's good for everybody. I haven't had one business owner speak in opposition to this plan. Not one city councilor. Not one member of the public has showed any resistance to making Essex Street two way. Even the City Council approved the downtown plan last month by a unanimous vote. I can't remember the last time I sent down any kind of plan which received such widespread support from the voters, the business community and the City Council. No matter what you try to do in the city of Lawrence, there always seems to be someone looking for an excuse to throw a monkey wrench into the works, but not this time.

Maybe that's because we have such capable and innovative people helping us to bring this project to fruition. We have hired T.E.C., a Lawrence company which has been on board early on and brought to the table its expertise and experience with these kinds of projects.

Continued at top of next page

## Parking Space Summary

### Existing Conditions

- Existing Spaces = 280
- Total Illegal Spaces = 78
  - Parking Restrictions = 22
  - Bus Stops = 56
- Total Legal Spaces = 202

### Proposed Conditions

#### (With Roadway Widening)

- Existing Spaces = 280
- Total Illegal Spaces Requiring Removal = 3
- Other Legal Spaces Requiring Removal = 9
- Total Legal Spaces = 268

So now, here we are. Within thirty days (from May 1<sup>st</sup>), the ordinance passed by the City Council will take effect. The new trash receptacles, benches, tree trimming, pruning, and the erection of new signs will actually begin in June. Then we will order the new traffic lights for the eastbound traffic, which is the bulk of the expense of making Essex Street two way. From start to finish, the project should take no longer than a total of five months.

That means by the end of the year this downtown renovation project will be completed and the citizens of Lawrence will be able to take advantage of a newly renovated, fully functional downtown area that is inviting to visitors of Lawrence. It welcomes Lawrence residents to spend more time downtown.

As for the interruption of traffic while the project is underway, we are going to try and install traffic lights on weekends to minimize the inconvenience for people who live and work downtown. There will be a portion of the project where the number of lanes will be brought to two so that we can restore one side of the street while allowing businesses to continue on the other side without having to shut down Essex Street completely.

I really have to take my hat off to the many people who banded together and stood behind this idea and helped the people of Lawrence to achieve progress in the downtown. I want to thank the City Council, particularly District Councilor Grisel Silva, Community Development Director Tommy Schiavone, Planning Director Michael Sweeney, the professionals at TEC, Police Chief John Romero, the downtown merchants, and most importantly the voters of Lawrence who had the faith in me and my administration to give us two terms in the mayor's office to get major improvements like this accomplished.

I also want to thank The Valley Patriot for continually keeping the Essex Street issue alive over the last few years and encouraging all of the people of Lawrence to come together and discuss ways of making this happen, instead of listening to the tired rhetoric we hear from others about how things in Lawrence just cannot move forward.

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

Originally Published in the December, 2005 Edition of The Valley Patriot

## It's Time for a Conversation About Making Essex St. Two Ways

Grisel Silva, Lawrence City Council, District "B"

Although many people in City Hall may disagree on the pros and cons of making Essex Street a two-way street, most in the community agree that it's long overdue to have a public discussion about helping downtown businesses by changing traffic flow.



Essex Street to a two-way street. I am open to the pros and cons that the public might come up with as I am trying to keep an open mind on the matter.

What do you think about changing Essex Street from one-way to two-way? Do you think that it would improve our economic growth and public safety in the downtown area? I

In September of 2003, business leaders and city officials gathered together with Lawrence Main Street Inc. They developed a program that was to entice new businesses into the area and assist them with storefront renovations, repairs and a cleaner downtown area. They talked about the possibility of opening Essex Street to two-way traffic. They spoke about issues that, through the years, have affected businesses, organizations, economic growth, and public safety in the city.

Essex Street was turned into a one-way street from Union Street to Broadway by former Mayor Larry Lefebvre in the early 1980s. The west side of Essex Street from Broadway to Water Street is still a two-way street. But, the vast majority of buildings on that stretch of Essex Street are residential homes.

Prior to the early 1980s, Essex Street always had two-way traffic. The downtown area was bustling with successful businesses and had a bright future of economic growth, though a slow down in the economy had started to take its toll.

The original purpose of changing Essex Street to a one-way street was to make downtown Lawrence the new Mecca of commerce in the Merrimack Valley, helping to fill some of the vacant storefronts and boosting the city's economy. Thriving businesses like Cherry & Webb, KAPS, AB Sutherlands and famous restaurants like Morin's and Blue Bonnett quickly fled the city, resulting in a long period of economic decline for Lawrence. Throughout the years, Essex Street has become a drag strip and home to boarded-up buildings, bars and nightclubs.

I believe it is time to have a public discussion once again about changing

would like the residents of Lawrence, downtown businesses, civic organizations, and city official to express their opinions and engage in public dialogue.

A few things that we need to think about when considering such an important issue:

1. Request that the city attorney explore the legalities of changing Essex Street and what provisions exist to prevent such a change. Also, what financial penalties might incur.

2. Collect data, gather information from the public, and find out all the pros and cons of changing Essex St.

3. The big issue will be "funding" because capital funding is used to create infrastructures. We may need to seek grants or pass a capital improvement bond to fund such a change. The estimated cost could be more than \$3 million.

The one thing we should NOT do is get bogged down with how Essex Street will look or whether we should have parking meters. We must first focus on IF and HOW we can make Essex St. a two-way and then, once that is established, other details can be discussed and debated.

There are so many issues that we will have to address in the meantime. Where is the city parking lot revenue going? Into what accounts and where is the money being spent? Parking revenue can certainly play a large part in paying for changes made to Essex St.

Grisel Silva is the District "B" City Councilor and was just inaugurated on January 3rd. You can email Councilor Silva [gnsilva2861@verizon.net](mailto:gnsilva2861@verizon.net)

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# From Page 1: Blanchette Drove me out of My Job

activity” and fell under the category of “excessive spending.”

According to emails and memos obtained by The Valley Patriot, Limperis refused to sign off on non-union raises, questioning how the city could legally give raises to non-union workers when no money was available in the budget and while collective bargaining was still in progress with the city’s 22 labor unions.

That’s when Council President Patrick Blanchette sent an email to Limperis demanding that he not question the expenses, stating:

*“Again, the city council voted to appropriate money in the form of a transfer. No other questions should be asked. Let’s stop with the games and leave our difference at the door. Unfortunately I think titles are going to some people’s heads. Even though signatures are needed - it does not allow for people to be obstructionists. Also, no need to involve someone from DOR (Department of Revenue) in this city matter. Let’s keep our issues in our own house.”*

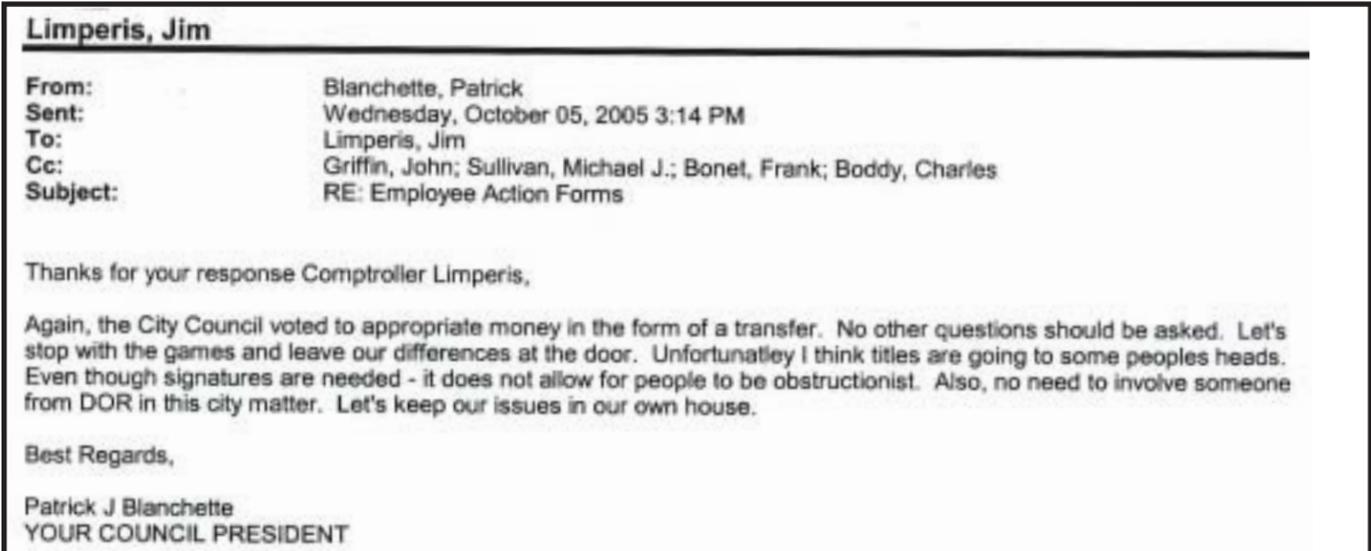
Limperis says that during the entire seven months he was comptroller, he routinely experienced interference from Blanchette to approve expenditures he felt were illegal because there was no funding source for the appropriations.

“Patrick Blanchette is one of the most unprofessional people I have ever had to deal with. He wanted to make sure his friends in City Hall got their raises at any cost. He was telling me to disregard Massachusetts General Laws and sign my name to an expense that I have every legal right to question. And when I said I was going to the Department of Revenue to get clarification, the political attacks began.”

“But after he made my life so miserable that I could no longer stay in my job,” he continued. “he changes his story when he is in public, telling the voters during Camasso’s hearing last week that he wants a comptroller who will question expenditures. What he really wants is a comptroller who will question the mayor but blindly approve whatever the City Council and, in particular, the council president, wants. During Camasso’s hearing, he stated pretty clearly that he wanted a comptroller who would question expenses and refuse to sign off on anything questionable. Yet, when I tried to do that, he came after my job.”

Limperis even put his concerns in writing during the controversy. In a letter to Mayor Michael Sullivan dated October 7, 2005, Limperis writes:

*“As your comptroller, I would like to alert you to ‘very’ suspicious activity in regards to 24 Employee Action Forms dropped off in my office this week that needed my approval ... The major reason why I have held off my approval to these Employee Action Forms is because I feel that this expenditure is excessive and will cause continuous pressure in the next few months as it relates to collective bargaining with the 22 unions throughout the city.”*



An Email From Lawrence Council President Patrick Blanchette to Comptroller Jim Limperis demanding that he **NOT** question city hall raises despite his legal obligation to do so under Mass Gen. Law 41, Section 52. Blanchette also discourages Limperis from notifying The Dept. of Revenue

“I have received continuous pressure from Council President Patrick Blanchette as to ‘why isn’t this signed, sealed and delivered yet.’ ... I am still uncomfortable with non-answers and most recently the aggressive push for my approval by council president Patrick Blanchette. At no time in the near future am I willing to approve these transactions as I feel they are not in the best interest of the city of Lawrence.”

According to Mass General Law 41, section 52, it states: *“The auditor or officer having similar duties in cities shall approve the payment of all bills or pay rolls [sic] of any departments before they are paid by the treasurer, and may disallow and refuse to approve for payment, any claim as fraudulent, unlawful or excessive.”*

Limperis says that the interference of the council president and Blanchette’s constant harassment during the work day, “as well as the insults and slanderous comments he made at City Council meetings, always in my absence, made it very difficult for me to do my job as comptroller. He was doing everything humanly possible to get me to approve expenditures I believed were inappropriate and made it very clear he was going to have my job if I did not adhere to his wishes, legal or not. He is a bully and he is the single most reason I left the city.”

Limperis said he is bothered by comments made by Blanchette even after he resigned last year. “I’d finally had enough. I resigned and went back to the private sector and Blanchette is still taking cheap shots at me in public meetings. He has called me a quitter and made some very disparaging remarks about my character, of course now that I am gone, just as he used to do when I was not at a council meeting. I will tell you the truth. I left the city of Lawrence because of the behavior of the council president and it is no wonder there have been no applicants for the budget and finance director’s job and only one applicant for comptroller.

What professional in the private sector wants to deal with the likes of a bully who thinks it is perfectly appropriate to micromanage the day-to-day operations of the city and push his weight around making threats of political retribution. That’s why

Lawrence can’t get good applicants and it’s why Lawrence can’t keep good employees for very long.”

Limperis says that the last straw centered around his travel allowance and the stipend he received as part of his contract with the mayor’s office.

“All of a sudden, Blanchette is making public statements about my contract at City Council meetings, making innuendoes that I am corrupt or incompetent, making motions to take away my travel allowance and referring to some city ordinance stating that as a department head I am not entitled to any stipend. But the police chief gets a travel allowance, the treasurer gets a stipend, the superintendent of schools has a city car in his contract. But the one guy questioning raises for his friends in City

Hall is suddenly stripped of money I was entitled to as part of my contract with the mayor. I had an agreement when I came on board with the city and he bullied me and John Griffin until I finally gave up and said I don’t care about the car allowance anymore. I am going to back to the private sector.”

Limperis said it was Blanchette’s ongoing public statements about him at City Council meetings long after he resigned that led him to come forward after leaving his position with the city of Lawrence.

“For the record, I am not a quitter,” Limperis said. “I was driven out of my job and if it wasn’t for Blanchette, I would still be there working in City Hall I hope Dave Camasso has better luck with him than I did.”

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# Even If Entering Iraq was a Mistake, Leaving is Worse

Dennis Prager

In arriving at their decision that America should withdraw its forces from Iraq, the Democratic Party and the Left around the world regularly make reference to what they regard as America's initial error — invading Iraq.

Perhaps the Left is correct in its contentions that bringing freedom to a Muslim Arab country at this time in history is impossible and that an Iraq under Saddam Hussein would be better for American and world security.

But even if the war was a major blunder and even if everything the Left charges — including "Bush lied" — were true, none of these contentions has any bearing on the question of what should be done now.

The preoccupation of the Left with the alleged wrongness of the war and the alleged deceit of President Bush is another example of passion rather than reason determining a leftist position on a major issue.

A responsible, rational opponent of the war in Iraq and of George W. Bush would say, "I am appalled by the disastrous war in Iraq, appalled by the wasted American lives, appalled by the moral wasteland of Iraq, and I loathe this president.

But we are in Iraq. And as much as I loathe supporting anything this president does and as much as I oppose this war, I know what is likely to happen if we leave Iraq. So I cannot in good conscience advocate an American withdrawal or fixing a specific date to do so."

In a recent column I argued that the Left rarely asks "What happens next?" when advocating social policy. I offered numerous examples. Withdrawal from Iraq and announcing that America has "lost the war" are the latest and most egregious.

If we leave Iraq:

It will be a great victory for the most dangerous ideology on earth today. The people running North Korea are presumably as evil as the Islamists. But there is no ideology emanating from North Korea that threatens mankind. We are fighting an ideology, supported by millions of people, that wishes to conquer the world and routinely engages in mass murder of the innocent — especially the innocent — to achieve its totalitarian goals.

No one will trust America's commitment for the foreseeable future. Nations and forces aligned with America against freedom-hating enemies will conclude that it is actually quite easy to defeat the United States of America. Just kill relatively few of that country's soldiers, and the U.S.A. will soon abandon you.

The very best Iraqis — and members of their families — will be slaughtered like animals.



ill mean the end of the possibility of the of a moderate form of Islam for the seeable future, perhaps generations. In the Muslim world, might is revered, and the various Islamists will therefore be revered.

Moreover, they will have earned the right to that they constitute an unstoppable force. America, the most powerful country in the world, surrenders to them because the Islamists murder fellow Muslims and killed the indescribably tragic but militarily small total of 3,000 soldiers in four years — one-one-hundredth the losses the U.S. experienced in World

War II — who in the Muslim world will stand up to them?

Iraq will turn into a far more potent terror base than Afghanistan could ever be. One of the major powers of the Arab world, one of the most oil-rich countries in the world, may well be ruled by jihadists.

Moderate Arab regimes will likely be overthrown by a combination of an emboldened Iran and an Islamist Iraq that regards moderate Arabs and Muslims as loathsome as, if not more so than, Americans and Jews. It is almost inconceivable, for example, that the Jordanian monarchy would long survive an American defeat in Iraq.

The American military will suffer a crisis of morale that it will not soon overcome. Though defeated not by the Islamist enemy but by the American Left — most particularly the Democratic Party and the mainstream news media — it will be hard to convince many people to join or stay in the U.S. military. Why bother? Even if you do a great job, if you haven't done it all — whatever 'all' means in a place like Iraq — you will be told that you lost the war.

And those who have heretofore murdered fellow Muslims will focus their attention on murdering us. The left dismisses the argument that it is far better to fight them in Iraq than in Europe and America. But the dismissal is simply irrational. The people we are fighting, including Osama bin Laden and all the variations on al Qaeda, know that the battle for Iraq is the battle for their future — that if they win in Iraq, they win all over the Middle East and beyond; that if they lose there, America and the West win.

But none of this matters to the Left because Democrats and others on the Left do not ask what will happen if America leaves Iraq. They are certain that the war was wrong, and that, in addition to handing George W. Bush and the Republicans a defeat, is what they seem to care about.

Dennis Prager hosts a nationally syndicated radio talk show in Los Angeles. He is the author of four books, His Web site is [www.pragerradio.com](http://www.pragerradio.com). COPYRIGHT 2007 CREATORS SYNDICATE, INC.

## Fallen Law Enforcement Officers to be Honored on May 13 During 19th Annual Candlelight Vigil in Washington, D.C.

Attorney General Gonzales to deliver keynote address as 382 names are dedicated on the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial

Washington, D.C. - The names of 382 law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty will be dedicated on the walls of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington, D.C., during the 19th Annual Candlelight Vigil on the evening of Sunday, May 13.



U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales will deliver the keynote address and lead the lighting of candles and reading of names of the officers being added to the Memorial. This year's names include 145 officers who died in 2006, plus 237 from earlier years who had previously been lost to history.

The number of officers killed in the line of duty last year declined nearly 8 percent from 2005, when there were 157 officer deaths. The 2006 figure was the lowest annual total since 1999, when 143 officers were lost.

"While the number of officers killed in the line of duty has declined in recent years, the fact that one officer is killed every two-and-a-half days in our country is a sober reminder that protecting our communities and safeguarding our democracy come at a heavy price," said Craig W. Floyd, Chairman and CEO of the NLEOMF. "Our Candlelight Vigil is a unique opportunity for the law enforcement community and the nation as a whole to remember our fallen officers and show our gratitude and support for their family members and other survivors."

Including this year's officers, there are now 17,917 names engraved on the Memorial, representing officers from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, US territories, and federal law enforcement and military police agencies.

Attended by 20,000 people, the Candlelight Vigil kicks off National Police Week - a time to honor those law enforcement officers who have died in the line of duty, as well as the 800,000 officers who continue to serve in federal, state and local law enforcement agencies nationwide.

Dedicated in 1991 by President George H.W. Bush, the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial permanently records and commemorates the service and sacrifice of America's law enforcement officers. Beginning in 2011, the Memorial will be complemented by the first-ever National Law Enforcement Museum, the largest and most comprehensive museum of its kind, providing visitors with a high-tech, experiential voyage through the past and present of law enforcement in the United States.



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Left to Right: Brad MacDougall, former Valley Patriot of the Month Luther McIlwain, his sister GLEndora Putnam and Methuen Councilor at Large Kathleen Corey Rahme at the Tuskegee Airmen Gold Medal Presentation in Washington, D.C.



State Senator Bruce Tarr, Barbara Anderson from Citizens for Limited Taxation, and Methuen State Senator Steve Baddour at the Lanem Club in Andover.

Former Lawrence Licensing Commssioner Roger Twomey (pictured here with his wife Marilyn) made his official announcement last week that he will be a candidate for the Lawrence City Council this fall. Towmey is running for one of three At-Large City Council seats. Currently in the race are; Twomey, Joe Parolisi, Nunzio DiMarca, Nilka Alvarez and Carlos Matos. Six are nominated in September. Three are elected in November.



Lawrence City Councilor Nilka Alvarez-Rodriguez (center) at a recent fund raiser with Rafael Grullon, Luz Santanna, Anna Rodriguez and her husband Richard Rodriguez.



Sally Cerasuolo O'Rorke announced her campaign for mayor of Haverhill with her middle daughter, Melissa Cerasuolo.



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