

The Commuter

As promised in the September *Commuter* newsletter, the Commuter Parking Advisory Committee (CPAC) is distributing the responses we have received to our commuter related issues survey for candidates for Township offices. The candidate responses were submitted to the CPAC as joint responses for both the Democratic and Republican candidates. The material below is listed question by question. First we have the question listed, which is then followed by the Democratic candidates' response and then by the Republican candidates' response. The candidate responses are being distributed as received by the CPAC.

The Democratic responses were submitted by: Mayor William P. Neary, candidate for Mayor; and Councilman Don Klemp and Nancy Pinkin, candidates for Council. The Republican responses were submitted by: Christi Calvano, candidate for Mayor; and Dan Brown and Walter Decker, candidates for Council.

1(a): In your opinion what are the proper uses for Parking Utility revenues such as commuter parking fees and rental payments?

Democrats: Parking fees and rental payments have always been used for the expenses of the Parking Utility. We see no reason to change this successful policy.

Republicans: Commuter parking fees and rental payments, which are directly related to the parking utility should be used for the management and maintenance of the parking lots.

1(b): How would you determine if and when future fee increases are necessary?

Democrats: Future increases will only be necessary to pay for future increases in costs associated with operating the Parking Utility. The costs associated with new long-term debt with a new facility is not anticipated to have an impact on parking rates. As in the past, if an increase is being considered, the Township will work with the Commuter Parking Advisory Committee and the public to establish reasonable rate increases.

Republicans: Fees for the parking utility should be a function of the cost of its management and operation. At all times, the utility should be operated in an efficient manner in order to keep fees to a minimum. Fee should be raised in proportion with increases in the operational costs for the utility.

2(a): Is commuter parking a more, less or equally vital resource to East Brunswick than The Library or Crystal Springs?

Democrats: Commuter parking is equal to other vital resources provided to township residents.

Republicans: East Brunswick is a diverse community. As such, most citizens benefit from the services and programs provided by the township. These services include the Parking Utility, The Library and Crystal Springs. All are important to the community as a whole.

2(b): What do you see as a fair monthly permit fee for East Brunswick residents?

Democrats: The permit fee is and will always be determined by the cost to operate the parking utility.

Republicans: A fairly monthly fee is one which charges the user that which is needed to offset the costs of the management, maintenance and operation of the facility.

2(c): Do you agree or disagree with the following statement (and why?): It would make economic good sense for the Township to subsidize commuter parking costs because it will result in higher real property values and greater tax revenues?

Democrats: East Brunswick's property values benefit from having a first rate parking facility. Another indoor parking deck with more parking spaces will be more beneficial. We are committed to stable fees at these facilities.

Republicans: It makes good sense for the township to provide parking for its citizens at a price that will offset the true cost of the service provided. To some, breaking even would be considered a subsidy because if the lot were operated by a private, profit making organization, the price for parking would be higher. As such, the township is providing the service at a reduced cost when compared to the market. This is good for the community because the people who use the facility are taxpayers who need it to earn a living, part of which is used to pay taxes. Homes throughout Middlesex County are selling for historically high prices, which may be a function of the area and its proximity to New York.

3(a): What are your views regarding the impact on commuters of the redevelopment of the Golden Triangle?

Democrats: The redevelopment plans for a Transit Village will result in a better facility, more parking spaces for commuters, and safer access to buses, weather protection and property tax stabilization for all East Brunswick residents.

Republicans: The Golden Triangle Project will have an impact on the commuters. A new parking facility could provide better facilities to the commuters, but will mostly likely also result in an increase in parking fees. Multi-level lots require more maintenance and security than flat lots and there will be construction and debt costs that will be included in the parking fee. If the new lot is managed by an outside company, there will be an increase in costs because private companies need to make a profit in order to stay in business.

3(b): How much weight do you give these impacts against other concerns of the Town?

Democrats: We don't have a scale that weights impacts, as such, however a better parking facility with innovative additions to our commercial area benefit our entire town in a positive way.

Republicans: These issues are important. It would be nice to have a modern facility, but at what cost to the commuter? Additionally, the project calls for the replacement of a major taxpayer in the town, Sam's Club, with many smaller businesses. It also calls for housing which along with the businesses and commuters will increase motor vehicle congestion in the area. In addition to increased costs, it could result in delays to the commuters who must navigate through the traffic in order to enter and exit the parking facility.

4(a): Have you accepted any campaign contributions or other campaign support from Coach USA or Academy Lines, any of their affiliated companies or management personnel in the past two years?

Democrats: No.

Republicans: Our campaign is a grassroots campaign. As such we have minimal, if any donations from large corporations in general and both Coach USA and Academy in particular. We do not know with whom they are affiliated, but since there is an absence of donations from corporations, it is safe to say we have not received donations from any affiliate of those companies.

4(b): Do you pledge not to accept any campaign contributions or other support from any bidder, their affiliated companies and management personnel for East Brunswick's commuters bus contract?

Democrats: Our campaign fund will not accept these contributions.

Republicans: We pledge to reject donations from Coach USA or Academy. In fact it is prudent to reject donations from those companies. Pay to Play is a bad practice in the state of New Jersey and where possible it must be avoided.

5. How should the CPAC fit in to the Township's management of the parking facilities and bus contract?

Democrats: The ad hoc committee has been a tremendous resource in representing commuter's views on commuting issues and as a citizen volunteer committee we pledge to continue to seek their advice and input on these issues in the future.

Republicans: The CPAC should serve as the eyes and ears for the township with respect to issues facing our commuters. Where possible the Township should seek its advice when preparing RFP's for bus services and should work with the Committee to address problems associated with the service. The Township must however, accept the responsibility for the preparation of a high quality RFP and must select the service provider based on the bid, the record of the bidder, legal requirements and the recommendations of the Committee.

6. Do you have any other comments you would like to communicate to commuters?

Democrats: East Brunswick has a long history of providing high quality parking at low prices. East Brunswick has the lowest ten trip commuter ticket prices in the area because of the town's ownership of the facilities. We pledge to do our best to enhance and improve the utility in the future. The Democrats have just completed a major rehabilitation of the Neilson garage, negotiated stable rental fees from the bus company and started construction on the Tices Lane/Route 18 intersection that will dramatically improve access to the Transportation Center and is prepared to build a modern parking deck for our commuters. The new deck's pro forma does not necessitate any significant parking fee increases for years into the future. We believe that a new Transit Village will make commuting easier, property taxes stable, and East Brunswick even more desirable in the future.

Republicans: The commuters are important to our community. Where possible the Township should do its best to provide excellent parking and commuter services at the lowest price possible. East Brunswick has a fine record of providing these services to our residents and we intend to maintain that record. Please realize there are many opinions with respect to the use of the parking facility, fees and the selection of the service provider. We will do our best to meet the desire of the majority of our commuters.

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