

Work release? Greedy Townsend deserves tar and feathers

By JANET O'NEILL

Well, here we go again with yet another person in a position of public trust defiling that trust. The June 14 article regarding D. Bruce Townsend's sentencing for stealing more than \$100,000 of taxpayer's money was disgusting in its entirety. The one to two years in the county prison with immediate work release privileges seems like a slap on the hand and adolescent scolding by the perhaps too-lenient Judge Kenneth Biehn.

Townsend's attorney stated that the Judge "recognized the potential good in Mr. Townsend and gave him a sentence that will allow him to realize that potential." Well, maybe the judge sees that potential but taxpayers see a practiced thief, plain and simple. It isn't unrealistic to assume that if someone had not contacted the District Attorney's office about alleged misappropriations that the township manager would still be booking motel rooms and heading to Sam's Club on the peoples' money.

I've been employed in the township that houses Bucks County Prison and have seen first hand that "work release" often translates to "thief release." There are prisoners who recidivate and pick the pockets of the helping hands who agree to employ them. Obviously being caught doesn't translate to being cured. Remorse exhibited by defendants isn't necessarily for their deeds but rather for being caught. Maybe the judge is just too optimistic or maybe he should know better.

How does anyone really know exactly how much was misappropriated in the 25 years before Townsend's habit of picking residents pockets was reported? Considering some of his outlandish spending (motel rooms, restaurant meals, vacation rentals, video and computer equipment and purchases at Sam's Club), what were the supervisors doing?

The chairman of the Northampton supervisors, Peter Palestina, pointed out the many benefits that Townsend enjoyed as township manager. Where were Mr. Palestina and the rest of the supervisors while this debacle of blatant, exorbitant greed was being practiced? Who was minding the store? Apparently the manager exercised carte blanche access to the till.

Perhaps the supervisors were also busy creating ways to spend taxpayer's money on ridiculous and unnecessary expenses like township newsletters, a bocce ball court and a mini-park and fountain area where sitting for too long may be hazardous to your health because of steady automobile fumes. It appears avaricious spending is a by-product of government, legal or illegal. They take our money and find a thousand ways in which to spend it. Fleece the sheep!

Spare me the rhetoric of doing "good" for the community. Citizens in this township appear to be responsible and capable enough to pay their own way and to certainly supply their own entertainment. Nor do seniors need their entertainment paid for by taxpayers. By the time we are seniors we should know how to entertain ourselves without the necessity of local government deciding ways for us to play.

Townsend hid his thievery but the township supervisors spend openly and gleefully deciding what is best for you.

To read that Townsend was not happy with his \$107,000.00 salary and his accrued investments and pension of \$400,000 to \$500,000 is an affront to every taxpayer in Northampton Township. His limp and childish excuse that a grudge against the supervisors made him do it is almost infuriating enough to resurrect the practice of tarring and feathering. With gluttonous greed he repeatedly stole from the decent citizens of Northampton Township.

The article also mentions the recent conviction of Suzanne Newsome's one- to three-year state prison sentence for stealing \$14,000 from Bristol Township and lying to a grand jury. More details were not available in the article, but one has to wonder at the discrepancy in these two sentences. Perhaps Newsome didn't steal enough to afford a better defense or perhaps it's who you know and how much you whimper that tempers your punishment. What should be gleaned from this disgusting event is to watch carefully the one who is watching the money.

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