Gr. Lawrence

March - 2006

11

Former Lawrence Cop Opens Private Investigation Service

Tom Duggan

Retired Lawrence police officer and former Essex County Deputy Sheriff Harry Maldonado recently held an open house for his new business, HM Investigations & Consulting, at 420 Common Street, Suite 101, in Lawrence.

Maldonado was a Lawrence police officer for over 20 years, spending 8 years as a detective in the multi-agency Gang Unit.

During his time as a detective, he worked with various agencies such as the DEA, the U.S. Justice Department, Immigration, and the U.S. District Attorney’s office.

Now, Maldonado is putting his vast law enforcement experience to work, specializing in investigative and security services for the legal, corporate and private sector.

“My background ensures that I am capable of conducting the various services needed in the private detective field,” says Maldonado.

HM Investigations & Consulting provides confidential, professional services to its clients, combining analytical, problem-solving and technical skills.

Maldonado says that what is most important to people is confidentiality when they are trying to find out information about a cheating spouse, potential business partner or prospective employee, “and that is what we do, we guarantee confidentiality; that’s of paramount importance.”

Maldonado’s HM Investigations & Consulting offers services such as background checks, pre-employment checks, child support and child custody background checks, insurance claims, personal liability investigations, missing persons, photographic and video surveillance, witness location and Locus investigations.

Harry Maldonado is bilingual and CPCS certified.

He can be reached by phone at (978) 688-4576, or by email at HMPD@comcast.net.

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SE HABLO ESPANOL

Massachusetts Republican State Senators Scott Brown and Bruce Tarr (with Valley Patriot in hand) are both on Kerry Healey’s short list for a running mate in this year’s race for governor.

Brown, who is in Hollywood this month while his daughter Ayla competes on American Idol, is considered by the media as the front runner for the Lt. governor position, but insiders say Senator Bruce Tarr and Lawrence Mayor Mike Sullivan are also in the running.
If Only Your Attendance Was That Good...

I couldn’t help notice former School Committeeman Carlos Ramos (who is now a proud DPW employee for the city of Lawrence) in the audience attending School Committee meetings over the last few months. By official count, I believe Ramos has now attended more meetings this year than when he was an elected official.

Juan Pablo Duarte

While the effort by the Dominican Consulate to rename sections of Broadway in Lawrence to Juan Pablo Duarte Boulevard was defeated by the Lawrence City Council’s subcommittee, an effort is now under way to put up signs in honor of Juan Pablo Duarte underneath the signs that say Broadway. If the effort is to be successful, the Lawrence City Council’s final vote on March 7th.

Mo Money, Mo Money

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The Housing Committee of the Lawrence City Council (Nilka Alvarez-Rodriguez, Jorge Gonzalez, Nick Kolofolos, Pat Blanchette) voted to sell three real estate lots for a total of $200,000. These will be sent up to the full City Council for a final vote on March 7th. Can you imagine if Lawrence starts to auction off hundreds of properties all at once?

News Briefs

Back to me to criticize other media outlets for getting it wrong without holding The Valley Patriot to the same standard. Last month reported in this column that Mayor Mike Sullivan refused to add items to the School Committee agenda because the School Committee had taken legal action to add items to the School Committee agenda.

Our school system struggles with educating our children. There was nothing that had anything to do with the mission of our school system. Our school system struggles with educating our kids and making it so that they can be proficient and can succeed on their MCAS. So, if the city wants to pay for it, if the city clerk, city attorney and council president Blanchette say it is fine … it is their duty to come up with the funds to pay this $2,000 bill. I do not want to be stuck with their bill.

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Lawrence Technical School Committee were also sworn in that evening, most of whom attended the festivities at St. Mary’s.

Initially, the inauguration party was “by invitation only,” whereby elected officials were given ten tickets each for friends and supporters to attend. But during the inauguration, the public was invited to attend the party, swelling attendance and resulting in a $4,000 food and beverage bill.

Lawrence Mayor Michael Sullivan said that it was Council President Patrick Blanchette who came up with the idea of having the Lawrence school department pay half of the tab ($2,000) with the city of Lawrence paying the other half out of local funds.

“I consulted with the city attorney, the city clerk and had numerous conversations with the Council president,” Sullivan said, “and it was determined that we could legally bill the city for the inauguration party last January. I think it’s an appropriate expense for the school department to pay half of this bill. The School Committee voted to pay it, it was one of those members, and I am very proud of my votes on this committee.”

School Committeeman Amy McGovern was the only person on the seven-member board who voted against paying the bill, nussing with Sullivan during the meeting and saying she did not believe it was an appropriate educational expense.

“If this is a bill that can be paid for by the city, we haven’t gotten any documentation on that,” McGovern said.

“There was nothing that evening (at St. Mary’s Pizza) that had anything to do with education. There was nothing that evening that had anything to do with the mission of this school system. There was nothing that educationally enhanced our school system. Our school system struggles with educating our kids and making it so that they can be proficient and can succeed on their MCAS. So, if the city wants to pay for it, if the city clerk, city attorney and council president Blanchette say it is fine … it is their duty to come up with the funds to pay this $2,000 bill. I do not want to be stuck with their bill.”

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Gleed said cities like Lawrence have no incentive to spend money responsibly adding “According to current state funding formulas, the town of North Andover is required to pay more than 88% of the total annual costs to educate its children, and we are finding it exceedingly difficult to do so because of the burden of state transportation and special education mandates.”

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For the first time in over a decade, the City Attorney’s Office has a handle on most of the tax-title properties, which have crippled the city for years. The Office of the City Attorney, under the leadership of attorney Charles Boddy and certain members of his staff, has been quietly acquiring them in a rapid fashion over the past 18 months. Our city officials are now grappling with what the best uses of these properties are.

Some properties will certainly be sold to abutters to expand their current properties, just as others will possibly be sold to developers for the purpose of building new homes. Whatever the decision may be, much money is waiting, and much money is needed.

Just last week the City Council Housing Committee recommended the sale of three properties with a total of $200,000 of one-time revenue brought into the city coffers. This is badly needed revenue and is long overdue. The sale of more properties in the upcoming months is crucial to our city and has prompted the Housing Committee to meet more frequently each month.

Though the city officials may differ with what the best use of these properties is – the end result will help to balance the current fiscal year’s budget, along with future budgets. I believe that city officials need to take a hard look at the properties in question and do a massive sale of this latest bundle of properties recently acquired. If not an auction, similar to the successful efforts in Haverhill, then so be it, but let us move quickly to sell these lots and get them back on the tax rolls.

I believe our City Council is ready, willing, and able to get the job done!

The city of Lawrence is faced with a mammoth challenge over the next couple of months, dealing with the disposition of city-owned property. The sale of these lots is a great thing, albeit for side yards, parking, or new homes. But the greatest advantage is that these properties will generate tax revenue moving forward. The sale may help assist this current fiscal year, but the long term effect is what our officials will forever be proud of. Our tax base will forever be broadened in this process, which will help make Lawrence a better place to live.

The rhetoric by some that Lawrence needs to “pay its fair share” is coming from those who don’t understand our city, nor spend any quality time in our city. Current property owners who pay taxes are paying their fair share in Lawrence; however, we need more and we need a larger tax base. Taxpayers in Lawrence are paying increased bills right now due to the exorbitant assessment of their properties, which is a direct result of recent sales in our city.

The city has taken steps to lower the tax rate. However, the values due to the sales have gone up. Perhaps those who don’t think Lawrence residents pay their fair share (they know who they are) should take a look at the inflated sales – I’m sure that is all on the up and up!

I have always demanded that the integrity of the neighborhood be our first priority – and I still follow that principle. This is why I am encouraging the sale of these lots to a variety of recipients such as abutters, developers and/or the city itself for off-street parking and open space. I believe this approach will benefit the neighborhoods greatly. At this point, we have a grand opportunity to expand our tax base by selling these properties to interested parties and continue to “pay our fair share.” Let’s get it done!

Patrick Blanchette is president of the Lawrence City Council and is in his fourth term representing District “A” (Prospect Hill). Blanchette is a Democrat and a member of the Lawrence Democrat City Committee. You can email him at pblanchette@glts.tec.ma.us
Mayor Michael J. Sullivan and I have been working over the last few weeks to develop a more systematic method of dealing with the situation concerning vacant lots that are owned by the city of Lawrence. Together, we have identified between thirty-eight and fifty vacant lots that will serve as the initial vacant lots that will be addressed through a new concept developed by the Planning Department.

The far majority of these vacant lots are located on the north side of the city within an area between Broadway and Prospect Street. Each of the vacant lots has been guided through the Land Court legal process by the City Attorney’s office and the one year right of possession is waiting to be determined.

For the first time, the Planning Department, working in conjunction with Mayor Sullivan, the City Council and various neighborhood groups, will present a complete plan for each of the vacant lots ... it is our intention to offer the majority of these lots through a public auction process to test whether the auction process offers the city of Lawrence a valuable tool in dealing with this issue.

Before that happens, the Planning Department will sit down with each councilor individually to have a look back and to discuss the particular needs and desires of the people they represent in individual districts and citywide.

Mayor Sullivan and the Planning Department have also started the process of seeking feedback from neighborhood and community groups that have a history of working within particular neighborhoods. Before the initial plan is presented to the City Council, we will attempt to identify key vacant lots that might be best used as green space, off-street parking or to address other needs within particular neighborhoods.

The central pressing need for the City of Lawrence is to return vacant lots back to productive homes for our citizens and to increase the revenue base for the city through the sale of a majority of these vacant lots.

This is just the first step. Mayor Sullivan and the Planning Department are optimistic that with increased communication between city departments and between the city and the stakeholders in the community, that we will be able to present an overall framework for the future disposition of vacant lots throughout the city.

Once this initial vacant lot plan is successful, we can begin to identify and target those vacant lots that are currently in Land Court and which of those should be focused on by the city for productive use. In each step of this process, Mayor Sullivan and the Planning Department will be seeking input and feedback from city councilors, residents and other stakeholders.

Already, city councilors Jorge Gonzalez, Nunzio Dimarca, Grisel Silva and Hossing Chau Nika Alvarez-Rodriguez have been extremely helpful in sharing their thoughts and concerns in a general manner with my office. Over the next few weeks, we will get detailed feedback from each councilor. We are greatly looking forward to working together with you during this exciting time in the history of our city.

Disaster Mitigation Plan

In the coming months, communities throughout the Merrimack Valley with us working together under the direction of the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) to develop and finalize plans that will help each community to develop Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plans for individual communities and the valley. Fifteen communities from Amesbury to Rowley and Lawrence to Newburyport will participate. The MVPC was awarded a grant from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency to develop this plan to comply with the federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000.

The Act requires every community to develop and implement a Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan to remain eligible for federal funding. The plan will address mitigation of naturally occurring hazards that we are all familiar with, including, but not limited to: wind storms, geologic hazards, floods, hurricanes, blizzards and fires. The Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan focuses only on naturally occurring hazards and does not deal with threats such as terrorism.

The plan will include an inventory of critical facilities within each community, a base map of areas within the Merrimack Valley that are affected by natural hazards and a vulnerability assessment for each community.

Mr. Alan Macintosh will head the effort as project manager and Mr. Jerrad Whittem, from the MVPC, will be the GIS Manager. I will work with Mayor Sullivan, the Fire Department, DPW, the Police Department and other appropriate city officials to create the plan for Lawrence and coordinate this with other communities under the direction of the MVPC. As we move forward in this project, I will update the planning process here, at City Council, and at various neighborhood meetings.

Veterans Stadium to Be Ready on May 20th

I want all Lawrenceans to save the date of Saturday, May 20, 2006. That’s the day when the city can come together and celebrate the completion of our newly restored Veterans Memorial Stadium.

This fabulous project is certainly much more than a simple renovation and at a cost of $7 million has many new features that will be sure to impress residents and visitors alike.

Built to honor our veterans, the old stadium was short on monuments or patriotic symbolism of any kind. The new and improved stadium will feature many flags including an illuminated flagpole, wrought iron gates in the shape of waving American flags, and obelisks dedicated to the different branches of the service. There will also be a courtyard area that will be perfect for award presentations.

The old lamp system has been replaced with steel staircases and landings, and new handicap accessible sections have been added on the front row for the length of the field. The underside of the grandstand has been resurfaced with light reflecting paint and a new well-lit promenade with opening that serves your needs and answers questions that you have in a familiar way to the fans.

Parking will still pose a bit of a problem, but we are working on several options which might include cross-promotions and shuttle buses to available lots.

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Diabetes is a serious medical condition affecting 20.8 million people (7.0%) in the United States.

Deaths related to Diabetes are believed to account for 224,092 deaths in the United States in 2002, according to death certificates data. However, death tolls may be higher.

Deaths related to Diabetes are believed to be under-reported, as they’re commonly attributed to other chronic conditions, such as heart disease and hypertension, both strongly associated to Diabetes.

Diabetes is a medical condition characterized by high blood sugar (glucose) levels. Occurs when the body is unable to produce insulin (Diabetes Type 1), doesn’t produce enough insulin or is unable to utilize the one that it produces (Diabetes Type 2)

Insulin is a hormone produced by the liver, responsible for breaking down sugar in the blood and carrying it into the cells to convert it into energy. Sugar is found in the foods that we consume and constitutes the basic source of fuel for the body.

There are four types of Diabetes—Diabetes Type 1, Diabetes Type 2, Gestational Diabetes, and Pre-Diabetes.

Diabetes Type 1, also known as juvenile-onset diabetes, is commonly diagnosed among children and youth, although the onset of Diabetes can occur at any age. People diagnosed with Diabetes Type 1 are insulin dependant, critical in regulating glucose levels. Diabetes Type 1 accounts for 5% to 10% of all diagnosed cases.

Risk factors associated with Type 1 Diabetes are autoimmune, genetic, or environmental, and thus, the individual doesn’t have control over its development nor can prevent it.

Diabetes Type 2, or adult-onset diabetes, is the most commonly diagnosed in the United States, accounting for 90% to 95% of all diagnosed cases. This diabetes is associated with older age (45 and over), obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, family history, history of gestational diabetes, physical inactivity, and race/ethnicity, among others. According to data from the Center for Disease Control, and other reputable entities, among the most affected by this type of diabetes are the African-Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, American Indians, and some Asian and Pacific Islanders.

What’s alarming is the increased frequency in which Diabetes Type 2 is currently being diagnosed among adolescents, factor easily attributed to increased obesity in our nation, particularly among our children, according to recent studies.

Gestational Diabetes is diagnosed in pregnant women, mostly in African-Americans, Hispanic/Latinos, and American Indians; which may lead to complications, including birth defects. It is also common among obese women and those with family history of the disease. Although gestational diabetes generally disappears after pregnancy, it is estimated that women with this condition have a 20% to 50% greater risk of developing diabetes Type 2 in the next 5-10 year.

Lastly, Pre-Diabetes is characterized by blood sugar levels that are higher than normal, but not high enough for a diagnosis. Pre-Diabetes is considered a pre-determinant for Type 2 Diabetes, as well as heart disease and stroke, though there are steps a person can take to prevent the onset of this disease.

The symptoms associated with Diabetes are frequent urination, excessive thirst, increased appetite, unusual weight loss, fatigue, irritability, and blurry vision. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, please see your health care provider for further testing. Diabetes is a disease that can lead to serious complications and premature deaths. Diabetes triples a person’s chances of developing heart disease and stroke.

Also related to diabetes are high blood pressure, blindness, nerve damage, and kidney disease, food complications, often leading to amputations, skin complications, dental disease, and sexual dysfunction.

Although Diabetes is non-curable, it is controllable. People can lead normal lives if they are successful at maintaining close to normal blood sugar levels, and incorporate exercise and good nutritional habits into their lives. Diabetes need to consume a diet low in carbohydrates and high in grains, beans, and vegetables in order to help regulate blood glucose levels.

Diabetes can be prevented. Regular exercise, good nutrition, stress management, as well as limited alcohol consumption could be incorporated into our daily lives, as much as regular medical check-ups. As a first preventive measure, we encourage you to take Diabetes risk test today! You can find it online on the American Diabetes Association web page. You may also contact the YWCA of Greater Lawrence, Women’s Health Advocacy Services program.

Remember, an ounce of prevention, is your best protection!

For information and/or education on diabetes prevention, call the YWCA of Greater Lawrence at (978) 686-0301. To learn more about YWCA resources, visit www.ywcalawrence.org. People with diabetes may call the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center REACH 2010 program for education and services on Diabetes maintenance at (978) 686-6209. Elderly diabetes may call the Lawrence Council Aging at (978) 794-5880 for information and services.

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Residents of the Park Garden Apartments in Methuen pose with owner Phil Manzi (sitting with blue shirt) at former Methuen Mayor Sharon Pollard’s Appreciation Dinner. (top, right) Methuen State Rep. Arthur Broadhurst chats with Haverhill Mayor Jim Fiorentini. At Large Methuen Councilor Kathleen Rahme and Methuen District Councilor Deborah Quinn (bottom) enjoy the festivities.

L-R: Haverhill Mayor James Fiorentini; State Senator Steven Baddour; National Grid Account Manager Jill Fitzpatrick; Energy Bucks client and homeowner Louis Denoncourt; U.S. Representative Marty Meehan; and State Representative Brian Dempsey all came together to create awareness of the Energy Bucks program at a Haverhill home being weatherized. Community Action Inc. hosted the event and services the city of Haverhill. Over 800,000 Massachusetts residents are eligible for the program that helps save up to 30 percent on energy bills. To find out more, visit www.energybucks.com.

Sergeant Pierre A. Raymond 1976-2005
"The City of Lawrence will never forget!"

Pictured with Lawrence Mayor Michael J. Sullivan (center) and Clear Channel Director of Public Affairs Lois Catanzaro of Chelsea (far right) are Raymond’s brothers Alfio Raymond (far left) and Joseph Raymond (second from right) and his mother Santina N. Raymond (second from left), all of Lawrence.

ABOVE: Wilfredo Laboy (l) and Mayor Sullivan (r), presents Certificates of Appreciation to President Larry West, Chris Wekelo, and Sean Sweeney of the Lawrence Civil War Memorial Guard for their support of the 3rd Annual Civil War Weekend. The LCWMG is planning the next civil war event to be held on Saturday, September 23rd and Sunday, September 24th.

Campaign supporters for U.S. Senate Candidate Kevin Scott (R) and candidate for state Representative Lonnie Brennan (R) of Georgetown came together for a joint rally in his hometown. Brennan is challenging Barbara L’Italien, Scott is challenging Ted Kennedy.

Happy 50th Anniversary!
FELIX & MARIA GONZALEZ OF LAWRENCE
A reception for Felix & Maria will be held at
THE FRENCH SOCIAL CLUB
MARCH 18TH
AT 7PM

Residents of the Park Garden Apartments in Methuen pose with owner Phil Manzi (sitting with blue shirt) at former Methuen Mayor Sharon Pollard’s Appreciation Dinner. (top, right) Methuen State Rep. Arthur Broadhurst chats with Haverhill Mayor Jim Fiorentini. At Large Methuen Councilor Kathleen Rahme and Methuen District Councilor Deborah Quinn (bottom) enjoy the festivities.
During the 1980s and 1990s, Lawrence, Massachusetts was known throughout the nation as the arson capital of the country, the auto-fraud center of the country, and a place where businesses went to die. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts had to establish a fiscal oversight board because the city’s finances were in shambles, the operating budget was unsustainable and the school system was in constant threat of being taken over by the state Department of Education.

Murders were climbing, storefronts were covered with steel grates and plywood, quality of life was dwindling, and the once bustling mill buildings were vacant with no hope of economic stimulation in site.

Today, Lawrence has a different story to tell. The school system continues to show signs of improvement, auto fraud is at an all-time low, there hasn’t been a murder in the city for more than 18 months, and major corporations are actively seeking places to locate within the city limits.

Money is being invested in the private sector, for public infrastructure, in non-profits, and in education. All of these investments are helping to create a positive future for the people of our city.

The Private Sector

With regard to the private sector, there are dozens of major projects underway whereby private investors are contributing millions of dollars to renovate the city and bring it back from the brink of total economic devastation.

Millionaire developer Bob Ansin recently purchased the Wood Mill on Merrimack Street and is now developing the mill in a project called “Monarch on the Merrimack.” Ansin plans on investing $200 million to create a mixed-use site.

The mill will have more than 600 residential loft condominiums and upscale retail businesses, including a jazz club, a cyber café, a kosher deli and so much more. Ansin says it will be a “community within a community” where people can live, shop, dine, go to the movies and in the morning walk across the street to the McGovern Transportation center and take the train to work.

The Monarch on the Merrimack project includes opening up 10 acres of river front property. To date, there have been more than 550 people from 70 cities in 12 states put on a waiting list for residence at the Wood Mill building.

The New Balance Corporation

As Lawrence Mayor Michael Sullivan said during his last election: “Take a good look around. In Lawrence, good things are finally happening.”

And though there are always the naysayers and doom dwellers who obsess on every imperfection in the city as a sign of impending catastrophe, an objective look at the once crumbling city shows a revival not seen in the past 200 years.

Yes, if you drive around and see what is happening in Lawrence, you may start to notice that things are changing and they are changing for the better. Buildings are being renovated with millions of private and public dollars being funneled into projects that are attracting more businesses, more homeowners and, of course, more tax revenue.

Many projects that have been in the planning stages for years are starting to come to fruition and they are worth mentioning because these projects are helping to create a renaissance in Lawrence where businesses and families want to come to spend their time and energy.

The KGR Building houses private businesses and non-profits like Habitat for Humanity. The Ayer Mill has invested $1 million and recently installed new windows, underwent a major renovation of the clock tower and is thriving like never before.

Chet Sidell has invested over $5 million in the KGR Mill building. As a result, many organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, Lawrence Community Works and Cambridge College are now housed in the KGR Mill building. Lawrence students finally have an opportunity to receive a four-year college education within the city limits.

Malden Mills is once again growing. Recently purchased by the Winn Company, there is the potential for a $90 million apartment redevelopment project.

Sal Lupoli purchased the Riverwalk Mills on Merrimack Street and has created “Sal’s Riverwalk.” So far, Sal has invested $15 million in the project and created more than 200 jobs. Several businesses have already moved into the once empty Riverwalk building, including “Imagine That,” the Merrimack Building on Merrimack Street in Lawrence is now "Monarch on the Merrimack," a community within a community.
Valley Credit Union, Paintball, and Sal’s Restaurant.

The South Canal International Business Center has received more than $3 million in new investment. As a result, six new international companies have moved into Lawrence and four acres of riverfront property have opened up.

The Washington Mills rehabilitation project has invested $32 million where 150 people “live and work” in artist apartments within the city limits.

The Gleason Building is being renovated to include 15 new condominiums and retail shops, and the Blakely/Truell Buildings on Essex Street are being refurbished with more than $16 million, creating 68 new apartments as well as new retail storefronts for the downtown area.

Finally, the Adtec Building has recently received a $6 million dollar investment, which brought in the Cambridge Culinary School and pluss new condominiums.

The Public Sector

On the public sector side, there have been millions upon millions of dollars invested in the city’s once-crumbling infrastructure. Lawrence Mayor Mike Sullivan recently secured a $3 million bond to restore historic City Hall. Sullivan has also renovated the Lawrence Public Library, built a $33 million new water treatment plant (which will double the city’s water capacity), helped establish a $25 million regional transportation center (with a 900 car parking garage and community policing headquarters), built a new ball field at South Lawrence East School, kicked off a $6 million renovation project for the WW II Veterans Memorial Stadium, obtained a $1 million state allocation for the Gateway South River Walk, and secured $500 million for brownfield remediation as part of the Brook Street Park Restoration Project.

“Ten or twenty years from now, when all of these projects are finished and the results are more easily visible to the casual observer or visitor to the city, people will stare in disbelief that Lawrence was ever downtown,” Mayor Sullivan said. “I am optimistic of the numerous projects going on in the city.”

“This is a revival, the fruits of which will be felt by generations to come. Long after all of us are gone, generation after generation will be able to say they are proud to live in the nation’s Mecca of business and industry and it is all happening right here, right now,” he added.

Non-profits Are Also Investing in Lawrence.

The Lawrence Boys & Girls Club has invested $8.5 million in the “Kelly’s Club,” which is presently under construction. Located on Water Street in Lawrence, the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Lawrence helps thousands of children every week, gathering them in a place to play and hang out, an alternative to getting into trouble on the streets.

Lawrence General Hospital has also embarked on a hefty investment in the city, pumping more than $23 million into its emergency room expansion project on Prospect Street. The Greater Lawrence Family Health Center has opened up a new center with a $5 million investment. The YWCA has a new Family Aquatic Center built entirely with private funds to the tune of $3 million, and the YWCA Fina House has invested $6 million in the city while providing critical services to women in the Greater Lawrence area.

Investing in Education in Lawrence

The Lawrence Family Development Charter School spent more than $8.5 million last year for the renovation of its new school allowing them to build on the site of the old Saint Anne’s School.

Central Catholic High School has also undergone a $12.5 million expansion paid for entirely with private funds and tax incentives.

Cambridge College, Lawrence’s first ever, four-year secondary school, has more than 340 students enrolled in its new Lawrence campus on Union Street. This is nearly 3 1/2 times more than the number of students school officials expected would be enrolled when it opened its doors a few short years ago.

At Merrimack College, there is a Lawrence collaborative with Bellesini Academy partnership, the Lawrence Math and Science Collaborative with Bellesini Academy providing a good example of what a new school with the Bellesini Academy provides “Transforming Lives through Education.” The academy is under a grant to renovate a new school on Water Street.

The Notre Dame High School offers the Cristo Rey and Corporate Work Study Program, and at the Esperanza Academy there is the $1.2 million restoration of Grace Episcopal Church, which is now able to offer the “School of Hope” to Lawrence girls. The Bellesini Academy provides “Transforming Lives through Education.”

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What a difference a few years makes. Dr. Chuck Ormsby (part owner of The Valley Patriot) was a voice in the wilderness three years ago when he first took office on the North Andover School Committee. Bucking the insiders, Ormsby was often found voting alone on educational issues, getting attacked by his colleagues for “micro-managing,” while trying to reform the school system.

But now, Dr. Ormsby seems to have gained a little more respect from his colleagues as he has been elected vice chairman of the Committee.

Caggiano Sees the Light

Long considered the most liberal member of the North Andover Board of Selectmen, there may be a ray of hope for Mark Caggiano. During the North Andover Democrat Breakfast last week, Caggiano put together a platform which included asking each and every municipal employee, retiree and elected official of the town to agree to increase the amount they contribute to health insurance by 5%. Caggiano estimates that such an increase would save the town about $500,000. Caggiano is also the only candidate for selectman who is addressing the issue of “smart growth” and criticizing the way the Lucent/Orit Goldstein project was being handled by town officials.

Maybe it is an honest conversion by Caggiano, but it wouldn’t be unreasonable to assume he is suddenly becoming more conservative because he is up for reelection. Let’s hope it is an honest conversion just as Caggiano gets reelected.

Charles in Charge

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Seth J. Itzkan, John Michelson, Darien Criminmin

It’s not enough to be competitive. To pro-
fit in the global environment, communities
have to lead. Think Silicon Valley and
Triangle Park. Today, the Merrimack Valley
once again has that chance.

The infrastructure and know-how are
here, as is the will. What’s missing, we believe,
is a leadership role in industry, repurpose a
historic landmark, and make a profit at the
Merrimack Valley? Why not take a
direct approach to this goal. We know that
government policy incentives should be
directed toward this goal. We believe that nanotechnology can be ‘green’
and help to enable a better environment.

Likewise, Eco-Industrial Networking is
becoming an essential component of
industrial competitiveness. Additionally, on
the team providing guidance to the project
are two luminaries we are privileged to
have in our neck of the woods: Dr. John Warner
of the University of Massachusetts at
Lowell, the recognized global expert in Green
Chemistry and nanotechnology. As
Warner explains, “companies that have
products that are more environmentally
benign will have a competitive advantage.
That’s unequivocal.”

Additionally, Green Chemistry method-
ologies are non-energy intensive and thus
provide significant cost savings. As such,
the practice is quickly gaining with overseas
competitors who have much higher energy
 costs.

China, for example, according to Dr.
Warner, has five Green Chemistry institutes,
and the Japanese Ministry of Trade and
Commerce has issued a mandate that
industry should adhere to Green Chemistry
principles. Also, according to Dr. Warner,
last year was the first time the U.S. was not
the world leader in Ph.D.s in chemistry. As
Dr. Warner warns, “The myth that the U.S.
will always be the innovator isn’t
holding. We don’t have a lock on creativity and
innovation.”

Dr. Warner’s vision is that a
Green Chemistry Center located in the valley
would be a boost for the region. It would provide training
to managers, chemists, and technicians, while
also serving as a demonstration center for
new manufacturing processes.

Ideas could be prototyped in a manner
that was cost effective for medium-sized regi-
nional businesses. Additionally, the center
would serve an important role in workforce
development, creating a new generation of
skilled workers versed in the science and
techniques of environmentally safe
manufacturing.

Complementing the Green Chemistry
Center would be a regional center for Eco-
Industrial Networking (EIN). This is an
emerging practice in industry that is
stimulating growth while reducing
environmental impacts. Specifically, it
entails the coordination of resources among
diverse industries in close proximity. The
Merrimack Valley is ideally suited to benefit
from an EIN initiative because of its rich density
of industrial and manufacturing interests. According to Peter Lowitt of the
Devens Enterprise Commission, a focus on
EIN can create a market advantage for
regional businesses. The precedent for a
regional EIN effort has been established
in England with its National Industrial
Networking Program (NISP). The program
facilitates resource and material flows
management across the entire country.

The Innovation Valley initiative seeks to help stimulate economic growth and quality-of-life enhancements in the Merrimack Valley. Every month we will report on innovative businesses, practices, and ideas that are helping to make Merrimack Valley the place to be. Look for our article in print media and online at www.ivalley.org.

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