

Dear Friends,

Those of you who attended or have read my notes about the last Town Board Meeting will be familiar with these issues: 1. My support for the Comprehensive Plan and the Rezoning Committee that is working to implement it.

2. My support for continuing the current level of video taping the Town Board meetings. Both issues come under the umbrella of helping Germantown step into the challenges of the 21st Century and remaining a viable community.

Everyone who watches the Town Board meetings on their cable has said that at last they can hear and see the proceedings and can get a good idea about what's going on with their Town government. The sound and picture quality of the previous video taping was so bad many folks had just stopped watching.

Germantown has no reliable coverage in the press. What coverage we do have about town doings is usually focused on one or two controversies that catch the Register-Star's interest. Often the only time they send a reporter is if someone calls them and asks them to come to hear about some hot issue.

The Germantown Government has no periodic newsletter that is sent to residents. They have a website, but it carries no narrative news, just the meeting agendas and, quite a bit after, minutes of meetings.

Those of you who receive this e-mail get a detailed account of the Town's business-- Department reports, Superintendent's Reports, Resolutions, comments and initiatives by the various Board members, etc. Otherwise, except for the cable broadcast there is no good communication to the general public. The cost of keeping the good video broadcast quality is minor--about \$100.00 a month. Yet there are those who would rather let the residents of Germantown fall back into the dark ages and cut the communication link. Their reason is stated to be frugality, and concern for the elderly and the low income folks in town. Well, I believe this is a false economy. They imply that the cost of communicating with the townspeople was a luxury--a frill- that could be trimmed and if so, the elderly and low income residents would somehow benefit.

On a larger scale--\$20,000 instead of \$1,200, is the issue of paying for a Planning Consultant for the Rezoning Committee. This money has already been allocated in this year's budget. It is a small amount considering the usual cost of such expert advice, and reflects a cut in the original hoped-for figure the Rezoning Committee asked for. The Rezoning Committee has a huge task, constructing a comprehensive zoning law that reflects the wishes and needs of the community. Because of the experience, knowledge and high standards of the leaders of the Committee the work to be done will be first-rate, not some slap-dash patchwork of band-aids. **It will stand as the central legal document for the land use decisions in Germantown. It is essential to have some professional contributions to this work to make it as sound as can be.** It needs to function well for the benefit of the residents and it needs to stand on well-vetted legal standards. To cut the Planning Consultant would be to undercut the final product of the Rezoning Committee

while they are doing this very hard work for the town. It would be an insult to the leadership of the Committee by devaluing their contribution.

Once again the plea to cut this funding is placed on "concern for the poor and elderly", a claim that is without basis. **A sound plan for future land use is a wise investment, not a luxury.** This money is in the budget--it is not a new proposal, a new cost. The economy is bad right now, putting many additional burdens on residents. But there will be no improvement in their lives if the Town lowers its standards on the final product of the Rezoning Board. There would have been no benefit to the residents if we canceled the purchase of much needed highway equipment. There will be no benefit to the public if we decided that the 20% of the cost of the proposed (and long-awaited) sidewalks was too costly and we dropped the idea. There will be no benefit to the public if we falter in making Germantown a place that businesses find attractive because we are planning to meet the challenges of the future.

Joan Snyder and Grace Ann Lamberta used the "better quality" video taping program to ask people directly to phone them and lobby against spending these funds. Ironically, if they go back to the old version of videotaping their message would not be understood.

I am asking that those of you who share my point of view about these issues, please phone or send in a postcard (addressed to the Town Clerk) or drop in at Town Hall or attend the July Town Board meeting (just what you wanted to do in July!) to let the Town Supervisor, Roy Brown know how you feel. Supervisor Brown **needs to know** how you feel. If he hears nothing from us and only from the opponents the cause may be lost. If you phone Town Hall (537-5600) ask that your call be logged. All mail to the Town Clerk will be recorded, so a postcard would be excellent.

We won't win this fight without your input. Pick up the phone or the pen.

Kay Abraham