

Actions more important than words

What do President Clinton, Congressman Gary Ackerman, Congressman George Hockbrueckner and former Congressman Tom Downey all have in common?

One year ago, when the congressmen sought re-election and the President was trying to get elected, they all spoke of the need for welfare reform. Each eloquently outlined the problems and the frustrations of the majority of the population with the entitlement system that had gone astray.

Congressman Ackerman and Hockbrueckner were re-elected. Clinton became President and the Democrats had total control of the House, the Senate and the Executive Branch.

A full year has passed and the welfare system is growing without controls or constraints. The entitle-

ments directed toward the welfare programs are eating up the federal dollars faster than the cutbacks are taking place on the defense programs.

The President, in his State of the Union address, once again eloquently outlined the problems and he would have you believe that he has the courage of his convictions to address them. Actions speak louder than words.

The Republicans have been trying to address this problem for years. They were thwarted by their Democratic colleagues. Congress, the Senate and the administration were of two different parties and were at loggerheads because of politics. Now that the Democrats control both houses and the Presidency, and the Republicans are in support of welfare reform, there is no excuse for inaction.

Give them a break

According to the long-range forecast, by today we should be seeing some break in the frigid conditions that have paralyzed Long Island since Christmas Eve.

Last week, when we spoke to the regional general postmaster for Long Island, Ed Gamache, he brought to our attention the number of injuries suffered by postal employees. Most of the professional postal carriers take their job very seriously. They will go that extra mile to deliver the mail even though they possibly will put themselves at risk. Over 100 post office people have injured themselves in attempting to fulfill their duties. They have slipped and fallen on the ice and snow.

As homeowners it is our responsibility to clear our walks leading to the mailbox and the front door. Over the last several years we have had mild

winters, and a snow shoveling became a thing of the past. With a good, old-fashioned winter upon us, we must return to the old way and that means clearing a path to the door.

Not only must we do our part for the postal employees, but we must make it easy for emergency personnel to get to our doors also. None of us can predict when we are going to need an ambulance, fire department personnel or the police. Why put them in jeopardy too?

Suffolk Life would like to take this opportunity to salute all who have had to struggle with the ice and the bitter cold, the snow plowers, the volunteer fire departments, the police and, particularly, all the volunteers who have kept Long Island going in its frozen state.

And why not?

The American public is angry, frustrated and disillusioned by the current welfare structure. They can't understand why both legal and illegal aliens can come into this country and immediately be subsidized. They do not understand why people on welfare can enjoy benefits that they themselves cannot afford by working. They are frustrated in seeing welfare recipients receiving medical, education and food benefits that are denied them, even though their own budgets are stretched to the breaking

point. Most residents are willing to temporarily put out their hand to help somebody less fortunate but, when the recipient's hand becomes a frozen stone, they no longer want to hold it.

Congress has a rare window of opportunity in 1994 to totally reform the system and once again make America the land of opportunity, where you are rewarded for working and you can achieve a better life by earning it.

And why not?

Is 12 too many?

If you believe the philosophy that the least government is the best government, then you would say the Suffolk County Legislature should meet 12 times a year, as its members are proposing to do.

Originally, the county legislature met every other week for a total of 26 meetings a year. In recent years they have taken a sabbatical over the summer, and have only met for committee meetings or on an emergency basis.

In constructing this year's agenda, the county legislators set their official meetings at 12. Critics say that this is denying the taxpayers their money's worth. Why should the legislators get paid \$46,000 a year for holding 12 meetings when in the past they got paid the same amount of money for holding 26? Admittedly, legislators put in time at committee meetings, and special meetings are sometimes called, but too often legislators miss or arrive late at committee sessions, and are conspicuous with their absence at regular meetings.

Legislators argue that they work 40 plus hours a week. There is a big difference between working and putting in time. Most legislators do put in that amount of time, but much of that time is spent in self-promotion, keeping

their name before the public, working on re-election.

We don't blame the legislators for only wanting to hold 12 public meetings a year. Too many of these meetings are 12 and 16 hour marathon meetings. Some of them have been known to go into the wee hours of the morning, breaking up as the sun is coming up. They are ridiculous, they are counterproductive and they do not serve democracy. Residents who attend the meetings want to make or hear the arguments, but they have to go to work the next day. They can't call in and say the legislative meeting went on until 5 a.m. so I am going to sleep in. The legislators, because they set their own hours, can afford themselves this luxury.

Public meetings often deal with important and controversial issues, as well as routine business. It is the public hearing portion of these meetings that consumes so much time. Too often, the legislature schedules a number of highly controversial issues during the same meeting, resulting in a tremendous turnout of residents who may wish to speak for or against an issue. Too often they don't get a chance to speak because of the large number of speakers.

We have editorialized on numerous occasions that the county meet-

Same agency with a new mission?

Can you really teach an old dog new tricks? That question comes to mind as the result of an announcement that the New York State Public Service Commission (PSC) has embarked on a mission of self-change. The goal is good, but we're not ready to jump for joy until we see some meaningful evidence that this not-very-respected agency is not just spewing rhetoric.

If any state agency is in need of change, the PSC would have to be at the top of the list. That's why their proposed examination of "the utility rate-setting process in New York State to adapt it to meet changing needs and circumstances" breeds the hope, however slim, that the people and their ability to pay will finally become part of the rate-making formula.

Who really matters?

Until now, the primary consideration given in matters of utility rate increase has been that which is in the best interest of the utility. That became painfully clear to us many years ago while covering a rate increase hearing at the Patchogue Village Hall. The building was packed with ratepayers who pleaded with PSC Administrative Judge Frank Robinson to reject LILCO's (Long Island Lighting Company's) request for an increase in the rates. This was before the PSC played a part in formulating the disastrous rate structure that became a part of Governor Mario Cuomo's Shoreham deal, which drove rates to the highest in the nation. Pleading they simply could not afford higher electric bills, many of those who spoke declared they would be driven out of their homes if the rates went any higher. Considering the impact of the Shoreham deal, we can only wonder how many of those folks are still here, and how many fled to escape the rate hike insanity.

Chilling answer

At the conclusion of that hearing, we asked the administrative judge how much consideration is given in the decision process to the people's ability to pay. His answer was chilling. He said that little, if any, consideration is given to the plight of the ratepayers. The primary consideration, he said, is focused on the utility's needs and its fiscal health.

One of the goals of the PSC's planned rate-making changes is, a press packet states, to "over time, ensure that utility customers receive reliable and reasonably-priced utility service provided safely, cleanly and efficiently..." In order to achieve that goal, the PSC is going to have to change drastically. It is going to have to become what it was intended to be all along, an agency designed to protect the public from the greed of utilities.

There has to be more public accounting of where the dollars go. We're told constantly that the utility is only the "pass through" for the high taxes our area faces. Yet, when LILCO wins a tax certiorari case, as they did in Brookhaven Town several years ago and receives millions of dollars for overassessment of their properties, the windfall LILCO receives is never reflected in a rate de-

crease, nor is there a line on the bills that shows how that money is being returned to the ratepayer. When the utilities received a gift from the state legislature in the form of franchise tax assessment reductions on the transmission lines, there was no accounting of how that money got back to the ratepayers. We suspect it never did.

Where's the money?

From time to time we're told those monies are reflected in lower future rate hike requests. Sure. What we suspect happens is the utility, knowing full well that those funds are supposed to go back to the ratepayers, simply increases their rate increase requests by a like amount to offset that impact. There is never a public accounting of any kind that the people benefit.

The PSC also voices a desire to

increase public input into its proceedings outside the formal rate case process. The PSC has, in the past, listened to the public's views, their pleas for rate relief, and then ignored those comments when making its decisions. Why is it necessary for a monopolistic utility, which has no competition, to spend ratepayer dollars to advertise? Or to tell people that which they have already heard in every newscast, and read in every newspaper—that LILCO has proposed a rate freeze? Why can't those wasted dollars be put into rate reductions? How can the PSC stand by while utility officials get astronomical salary increases and lucrative golden parachutes, at the same time rates are going higher and higher.

No confidence

The sad fact of the matter is that the PSC has done a dismal job of pro-

tecting the public in the past, and we have no confidence that the same agency, with the same people involved, will do a better job in the future despite their claims of seeking change. We have long said there needs to be a complete shake-up in that agency, the election of trustees instead of politically-connected appointments.

If suddenly the PSC began playing hardball with their utility friends, started rejecting the wasteful spending of the past, and forced them to enact efficiencies of management to survive rather than reward them with increases to squander, we might be able to see some light at the end of a long, dark, dismal tunnel of rate structure fiascos. Until then, despite the rhetoric of change, we see the same old dog playing the same old tricks.

And why not?

What are they hiding?

Freedom of Information laws are designed to allow the public an opportunity to secure information concerning the affairs of their governments. Unfortunately, some governments have gone overboard in their interpretation of the law and have established policies to thwart the flow of information the law is designed to create.

Government and school district officials have implemented policies that are, in our view, designed to discourage the public from securing the information they seek. What used to be forthcoming with a simple request is now cloaked with the requirement for a Freedom of Information form, and the resulting 10-day time the municipality's Freedom of Information officer has to respond.

A case in point: a Brookhaven Town resident recently sought to review a file at the office of the town zoning board of appeals. The file was that of a request for a variance for an existing industrial building, nothing complex. The matter was of interest because of problems with a sand and gravel operation and excessively loud music at all hours at an industrial building in the area. The resident was given a Freedom of Information form to fill out, which then had to be approved by the town attorney's office.

The town attorney was out sick, and the attorney who was in charge

of Freedom requests was in court. The request to see the file, which was readily available, was not granted at that time. The Freedom request would have to go through the normal process, which allows the town to sit on the request for 10 days, about a week after the hearing at which the variance request would be heard. That would effectively prevent any prior knowledge of what the variance request was all about.

Launder the file?

Another member of the town attorney's staff explained that it was necessary for a member of that office to review the file before permission to review it would be granted, because "confidential information" might be included.

What confidential information? Could it be a note that indicated the applicant is a friend of a high and mighty and thus entitled to special treatment? Could it be that the request was playing catch-up, covering the legal requirement that should have been accomplished before the building was first constructed? What information is so vital that a file has to be laundered before being seen by the public?

It was once a routine procedure to ask to review a file, which was immediately granted. There was an attitude of cooperation at town hall, a spirit of "we're here to serve you."

That was before the cloud of scandal descended upon the Brookhaven Town government, the claims of corruption and questionable actions. Now the attitude is one of "we're in power, we make the rules." If a town employee is quoted in a newspaper article, an edict comes down that "no one talks to the press." Call an office and ask a question and you're told "no one can talk to the press, you have to talk to the supervisor's office."

It's not the rank and file employees that are causing this blanket of secrecy over town affairs. They are the same cooperative people they have always been. They are being saddled with edicts and rules and policies that keep them from serving the public the way they used to do and would like to do again. It stems from what appears to be a bunker mentality on the part of town officials who, until the final disposition, if it ever comes, of the federal and county district attorney investigations into alleged wrongdoings, are still under a cloud of suspicion.

Many horror stories

This is not an isolated case in Brookhaven Town, nor is it a problem there alone. We constantly hear horror stories from residents and taxpayers who battle the problem. Because they have the key to the vault of information, too many public officials arrogantly thumb their noses at the people's right to secure information that should be readily available. What are they trying to hide?

A word of advice to governmental officials at all levels: make it tough to get the information people seek and you create an aura of suspicion that you're hiding something. Democracy is supposed to be a government of, by and for the people, not a kingdom for the mighty. Freedom of information should be a credo that public officials live by rather than a law that can be manipulated to benefit the power brokers.

And why not?



It's your health. . .protect it!

The average American citizen is totally confused and baffled by the proposed Clinton health plan. The administration has fed the public a continual diet of distortions, half-truths and fear propaganda.

Don't trust the government

The last time the American people were sold a massive socialistic program was the establishment of the Social Security system. The public was told that Social Security was insurance. They paid in a very small percentage of their income through payroll taxes and would have a supplemental benefit when they retired, they were assured.

Originally, the program required a contribution of one-quarter of 1% by both the employer and the employee. It was capped on the first thousand dollars of earned income. Everybody thought this was the maximum amount you would ever be expected to pay. Social Security was just an old age retirement fund, a pension for those who did not have one.

The government lied to us. The program is not an insurance program in which your premiums are invested in interest-bearing documents or other investments that grow and appreciate over time. Social Security, we now know, is a tax—nothing more, nothing less. Social Security funds go into a trust fund that is then raided by the United States government to pay for general operating expenses.

It is expected that the threshold age of 65 for retirement will be changed and moved up to probably 70 years of age sometime in the future. No one

told recipients that if they continued working after 65 they would lose one dollar for every dollar earned until they are 71.

Social Security holders originally did not pay income tax on Social Security benefits. This year, the tax laws have been changed so that up to 85% of Social Security benefits are taxed, again. "Notch baby" recipients receive less than those who joined before and after they time they did.

There is a whole host of other examples of abuse and the government going back on its original promises. We bring this up only to demonstrate that you can't trust the government. Politicians lie directly and indirectly. This has become more pronounced recently. Clinton lied all through the campaign, and for some strange reason the media, the watchdog, is not holding him accountable.

What crisis?

If you listen to and believe the President or his wife, America is suffering from a catastrophic health crisis. Sorry, Mr. President, we don't believe this lie either. Approximately 87% of the American public, according to documented reports, are covered by some sort of health insurance plan. In addition, those not covered must, by federal law, be provided clinic or emergency room care, which includes doctors, nurses and hospitalization, if necessary.

Where is the crisis?

No one argues that medical insur-

ance premiums are far too high. No one argues that the cost of healthcare has gone up way beyond the benefits of healthcare. The economics of healthcare do not make a crisis which requires the social and economic re-engineering of America.

A tax is a tax

The Congressional Budget Office announced last week, to the Clintons' chagrin, that the funding for the proposed health plan is a tax. This will be the biggest peace-time tax increase ever shoved down the American public's throats.

Employers will be expected to pay a 7% payroll tax. Employees will be expected to contribute another 2%. This is the beginning, just like Social Security started as a total tax of one-half of 1% with a very tight cap. This tax will be starting at 9% with no cap, and will only be controlled by the government's ability to control itself. What a laugh!

This tax will cause massive layoffs across the country as employers struggle to meet this new mandate and remain profitable. The tax will be reflected in lower starting salaries and fewer raises for those who continue working. There is no Santa Claus. This money will have to come out of payroll budgets. It's the workers who will pay, make no mistake about this.

Pure socialized medicine

While economically, the Clinton health plan will be unbearable both for employers and employees, it will be worse for the individuals who will be dealing with a pure socialistic system of medicine.

Consider this—you will be forced into a healthcare alliance. Today, we are able to pick and choose our own health insurance company based upon its financial stability, the quality of services provided, the items that they cover and the flexibility of choosing our own doctors and hospitals.

Under the Clinton health plan, you will be forced to accept whatever practitioner happens to be available. You will be forced to use the hospital that may be closest to you. You may well be denied the right to specialists when you have a serious illness or physical problem. The availability of these specialists will be based upon a bureaucratic system where government officials will determine who will live, who will die, at what time and under what cost controls.

Crime to pay

Most of us are lethargic, sitting back and saying to ourselves if I don't like the program, I can pay out of my own pocket to go to the doctor of my choice. This is totally false.

The Clinton health plan makes it a felony for either you as a patient, or a doctor as a provider, to pay or accept anything on top of the government prescribed allocation. This means that even if you have the money or are willing to mortgage the ranch to save your life, you will not be able to do so. Even if you found a practitioner willing to deal under the table, you both would be considered criminals for trying to protect your life.

Recent writings by Elizabeth McCaughey, a writer/scholar of the Manhattan Institute who has spent the last six months studying the Clinton health plan in detail, revealed that doctors in the future will be regulated into fields of discipline by quotas. Not only quotas established by need, but quotas established by race, color, creed and gender. Doctors who may be brilliant surgeons may end up being gynecologists because there was a need for someone of color, gender or creed to balance the number in the field.

Democracy has always been based upon the premise that we are responsible for our own actions, for our own well being. As Americans we are free to choose where we work, how we work and how much money we make. The only thing that differentiates any of us is our abilities, our education, our willingness to work, to invest and to pull ourselves up by our own boot straps.

The choice of what doctor you choose and the extent of health related services you desire has been, up to this point, an inalienable right.

Are we willing to throw away the American dream and trade in our system of government for outright socialism? This is what the Clintons are trying to do, in reality—sell the American public.

The choice is yours, but this choice will require every individual getting off his or her duff, writing to the President, to our senators and our congressmen and expressing your viewpoints. If you are willing to die for your government, not your country, don't do anything. Someone else will make the decision for you.

Don't be surprised that if they do that, they will determine how long you will be able to live and under what circumstances you will die.

And why not?

The 'no compromise' fringe

Although Wall Street tycoon Louis Bacon has taken title to Robins Island, with the announced intent to use it as a private retreat and a promise to preserve its natural resources, the battle for public takeover of the island continues. The no-compromise fringe of the environmental crowd is moaning and groaning and plotting still to force the use of county dollars to realize their total acquisition demands.

The Nature Conservancy, which had been a partner in Suffolk County's efforts to purchase the island and had supplied legal funds in the battle to do so, withdrew its financial legal support and forged an agreement with Bacon to help in the environmental preservation of the island's most environmentally sensitive areas. We applaud the Nature Conservancy's wisdom in accepting compromise and working in a cooperative spirit to bring about preservation under private ownership. It is that compromise and cooperative spirit, rather than the "all or nothing" attitude of the fringe group, that will accomplish the environmental benefits we all seek.

Fringe unhappy

However, there is dissension in the ranks of the environmentalists with the no compromise fringe voicing opposition about the Nature Conservancy's new position on Robins Island. They are upset that the Conservancy is work-

ing cooperatively with the new owner, rather than continuing in a fruitless effort to insist upon public ownership. They fail to see the value of compromise, of working together to save the majority of a property they consider environmentally valuable, rather than continuing a fight they stand to lose. They want the whole pot, nothing less, and are willing to gamble the future of majority preservation to foster their own views.

Raise the funds

State Assemblyman Steve Englebright (D-Settauket), a leader of this fringe group, has launched an effort to raise funds to purchase the island outright. For once we agree with Englebright. We have long stated that the environmentalists should provide the dollars to pay for their dreams rather than expect the financially hard-pressed public to foot the bills. Certainly those who want it should be willing to pay. Billy Joel and Paul Simon, celebrities with a strong feeling of concern for Suffolk County and its natural resources, have been generous with their time and talents in the past to help raise funds for worthy causes. Perhaps the fringe group could spearhead a series of fund-raising concerts and events to create an environmental trust fund to purchase those "precious" properties the environmentalists lust for. This would free public dollars for public benefit, and

land purchases which are essential for the preservation of our water. Robins Island is not in that category.

Impact seen

We have already seen the impact of the non-compromise fringe on the squandering of county dollars. They refused to accept 90% of the lands at Hampton Hills in the eastern portion of the county. They held out for all or nothing, and convinced politicians to go along with their demands. While they were successful in their opposition to cluster development in return for free land, they accepted a questionable deal that left in private ownership a golf course, the potential source of water contamination because of fertilizer and other chemical use. They gambled the water preservation they professed to be protecting. It cost the taxpayers about \$18 million to buy the land, triple that figure when you add interest over the term of the bonds. This at a time when the county was being run at a deficit, and taxpayers were forced to pay higher property and sales taxes to foot that deficit spending.

We applaud the Nature Conservancy's effort to apply compromise to the environmental effort to preserve. We believe their attitude is the mark of the true environmentalist. The fringe no compromise crowd should learn a lesson from that action.

And why not?

Who is running the county?

"The county specifically waives any right it may have to utilize part-time/seasonal police officers at any time in the future without the consent of the PBA."

This excerpt was taken from a letter of agreement between the County of Suffolk and the Suffolk County Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (PBA). It was signed by David S. Green, director of labor relations, serving at the behest of County Executive Robert Gaffney.

The letter of agreement acknowledges that there is a shortage of police protection in Suffolk County, and that an immediate way to overcome this shortage is through the use of seasonal help or part-time police officers. Most businesses and governmental agencies hire part-timers as a way of meeting the seasonal demands of their operations. It is good business to do so.

Suffolk County, through this letter of agreement, gives to the Suffolk County police union the right to refuse the county's right to manage its own future. It not only binds the current administration but future administrations as well, if it is allowed to stand.

It is the responsibility of the county executive and the other elected county officials to ensure the people's safety and well-being. That is not something they can pass off like a hot potato. Hiring adequate police enforcement must be done to meet the needs of the time and the people, not weighed by the police union on the impact those seasonal or part-timers might have on the creation of full-time positions. Giving up this right to the police union is insane. It is ludicrous. It is, to put it simply, stupid!

Where is Gaffney's common sense? How can anyone as the chief executive give up the right to run his administration to anyone? How can he bind future administrations that might face

different needs or have different outlooks on government? Why should the police union have sole discretion of the county's ability to deploy law enforcement officials when the need occurs?

The members of the Suffolk County Legislature, from both sides of the political fence, should fight Gaffney to the wall on this issue. If they don't, they will be as guilty as he is in walking away from the responsibility he was elected to assume.

Three conversations

This past week we were engaged in three different conversations regarding President Clinton's Healthcare Proposal.

The first was with a reader who called to bawl us out for our editorial last week. He was incensed that we did not feel there was a health crisis. He acknowledged that 87% of the American people have some form of health coverage. He went on to say he didn't and he needed it. He had nowhere to turn. He said he had only \$9,000 a year in income.

We reminded him that if there was a medical emergency or need, he could go to any local hospital which, under federal law, must provide him with medical services regardless of whether he had the assets to pay for it or not.

We also suggested that in addition to the hospitals, there were health clinics set up throughout the county that provide health services for people who had limited incomes or no incomes at all.

His response was they could put a lien on his house. We asked him if he felt it was fair for the public to subsidize his medical needs when he had assets to pay for his own? He then went on to say that he was currently receiv-

ing medical care through the VA Hospital, complaining about the quality and the bureaucracy of the system. The VA hospital provides the veterans with medical services for not only war-related conditions but for all other conditions that require medical services. The VA hospital is a government-run entity. It is a perk for those who served in the armed forces. VA medical care has been subjected to criticism as it is a government bureaucracy with very strict rules and regulations. The overall care is adequate, but not what you would expect from a public or community hospital. It definitely is not a premier medical center that our congressmen and President would avail themselves of.

Unfortunately, the VA hospital is a living example of the kind of care we can expect to receive under Clinton's socialistic medical plan. Clinton's plan will not allow the average American access to top rate medical services.

The second conversation we had was with a doctor. We asked him his opinion. His response shocked us. He didn't know much about it, he figured Clinton was going to shove it down our throats anyway. When we explained some of the ramifications to both patients and doctors, he became alarmed and said, "Maybe I should start doing

some reading about it." Unfortunately, his reaction mirrors that of most citizens in the United States. Sit back, take it and then complain about it when you can't change it.

Our third conversation was with another reader, a senior citizen, who had seen the Depression, experienced the New Deal, the Great Society and was filled with skepticism and distrust for politicians in general. She said, "Rarely are things as they appear. Social Security is not what I thought it was going to be."

Just yesterday I heard President Clinton speaking to senior citizens in New Jersey. He said his and Hillary's plan was the only one that would provide prescription services and long-term catastrophic coverage. On the Rush Limbaugh show recently, Rush produced a USA Today article stating that President Clinton had inadvertently made this claim, but other plans do contain the same coverage.

Did President Clinton deliberately lie to the senior citizens or does he not even know what is contained in the plans proposed? If he is misinformed, why should any of us believe a word he says? For your own future health, don't sit back on this issue. Care enough to be informed.

And why not?

The TDR: a solution or disaster?

The sound of popping corks has faded, the champagne is long gone. The celebration is over, and the time of reality is at hand. It is now up to governmental officials to implement the "historic" pine barrens legislation, which is heralded to preserve our groundwater through the preservation of the water sensitive sectors of the pine barrens area. The manner in which they accomplish this task could result in success or spell disaster for both the goal and other county areas.

The first obstacle that greeted the implementation effort was the lack of funding. State promises of funding have, as has often happened, not produced the promised dollars. With the lack of dollars has come the premise of Transferred Development Rights (TDR). On the surface, the premise of utilizing TDRs to protect sensitive areas seems sound, and has produced meaningful results in some areas. But TDRs can carry side effects which may benefit the goal desired, at the expense of others.

A TDR is designed to take the value of development rights from one parcel in the sending area, that which is

to be preserved, and transfer those rights, at a specific cost, to another property in "the receiving area," where increased density would be permitted. For example: Parcel A, located in a water sensitive area, would have the right under its current zoning for the construction of 100 housing units. To preserve Parcel A, those 100 units can be transferred, with a cost involved, to Parcel B, which is not in a sensitive area. The dollars received for the sale of the TDRs would help accomplish the purchase of Parcel A.

Sound good? Perhaps, if you consider only the goal of preserving the sensitive parcel. But if the construction of those added 100 units on Parcel B are not located in the same community or school district, you just might have a different view. If the added 100 units brings a need for added services, or produces more children for the school district, guess who pays the bill? The folks in the area of Parcel A get to keep their open space, while the taxpayers in the area of Parcel B bear the burden of added population and get to pay the bill.

Done properly, within the same

school district, the TDR could produce benefit. If you are comfortable with the notion that government always operates with common sense, good sound planning and without political shenanigans, you'll be happy. But if you believe that, please call us, we have some property on Florida's waterfront for sale, and a bridge or two as well.

Why do we sound suspicious? Because there is money involved, and dollars to be made by someone. Look at the history of land deals and zone changes and you might share our view.

There must be strict compliance to stiff rules, with no exceptions, if TDRs are to work for the benefit of the goal, preservation of our water sensitive lands, rather than the enrichment of the players. First there must be total disclosure, who owns the land being preserved, who is buying the TDRs, and at what cost? Disclosure means who are the people involved, so that their political involvement and connections come under scrutiny. No "Route 1002 Corporation" smoke screens which hide the names of the individuals involved.

Then, an accurate accounting of the

fney spends on the golf course and the ski slopes.

We have seen examples in the past of Gaffney not knowing about what his staff is doing. We wonder if he knows, or even cares, what his staff has given away with his letter of understanding agreement?

Who's running Suffolk County, anyway? Apparently Gaffney isn't!

And why not?