

MAYOR'S MILLION DOLLAR "JOKE" Village Taxpayers Are Not Amused

..... continued from cover

BACKSTORY

In preparation for the Village of Warwick general election held on March 15, Warwick Valley Dispatch teamed up with WTBQ to host "Meet The Candidate" Q&A session with questions submitted by fellow residents and readers. Air time was donated by Stephen Kitar, host of the "Free Speech" show and moderated by the Dispatch Assisting Editor, Keith Newman. Both the moderator and the host worked independently and did not share any questions or other information prior to the event, ensuring full transparency and objectivity. All participants were notified in advance that this event will adhere to a Town Hall format and questions would not be shared with the candidates prior to the interview.

Readers of our hometown paper and listeners of the WTBQ were encouraged to submit questions to those running, for weeks preceding the event. The majority of the questions received were directed to the candidates with an existing track record - Mayor Newhard and Eileen Paterson; Mayor Newhard serving 20 years as a Village Mayor and Eileen Patterson serving 3 terms as a Trustee.

Each candidate got the opportunity to speak on behalf of themselves, their team and their campaign, and answer some popular questions that were submitted.

During Mayor Michael Newhard's interview, a question was asked regarding an incident that occurred 16 years ago in which the mayor turned his shirt into the local dry cleaners leaving a \$1,000,000 check in his pocket. Mr. Newhard struggled to answer at first but later submitted a Letter to The Editor, with his explanation and recollection surrounding the events.

Warwick Valley Dispatch has a strict policy of one submission per individual per 6-print cycle. Despite this being his fifth consecutive submission in one month, we would still like to give Mayor Newhard the opportunity to explain his actions; we will be including his submission as a sidebar to the story, along with Mr. Kitar's response.

Below, the Dispatch will allow the explanation of the events as viewed by each party in their own words - submissions from Michael Newhard and Stephen Kitar.

MICHAEL NEWHARD

" I recently participated in a candidate event for the upcoming election hosted by the Warwick Valley Dispatch and WTBQ Radio. The format was to respond to questions from the readership. The questions and answers went well. Some tough but important questions and I appreciate the opportunity to be asked and to answer what is on the minds of constituents.

Before the end of the program Mr. Kitar took out a photocopy of a check that was from the Albert Wisner Public Library written to the Village of Warwick for one million dollars!

When presented with this on the air I was taken aback and tried to piece the why and what that surrounded the check. After some careful reflection I was able to remember the series of events that surrounded the issue of a check written in my handwriting from 2005.

We received a check from the library to pay a water bill and the check was inadvertently sent to us blank. It was brought to my office, and I responded that I would personally return the check to the library.

Seeing an opportunity to play a practical joke I filled out the check with the Village's name and for an absurd sum. One million dollars. I slipped the

check into my shirt pocket and left for the day with the plan to bring the check to the library the next day and to deliver it with the remark, "We think you overpaid your water bill!" And this did happen as I describe. The prank check was destroyed, and a new check was issued to pay the bill.

End of story? Not exactly. Prior to my delivering the check to the library I had changed my shirt that had the check in the pocket. My wife was gathering laundry to bring to the cleaners and the shirt was taken. When the cleaners did their routine pocket check, the check was found.

Should I have played a harmless prank? I believe not. As I've matured over the years in my position I have much less of the prankster in me, especially in such matters.

In consideration I hope that you will allow for my explanation of the incident as well as my apologies to my constituents and to the library.

Mayor Michael J Newhard"

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STEPHEN KITAR

" I am not at all convinced by Mayor Newhard's recollection. While no accusations were made during the program, I wanted to give the Mayor a chance to explain himself before the check is turned in to the authorities for a proper investigation. At the same time as a village resident and a taxpayer dutifully paying into the Village budget, I find it not only not-all-funny or amusing, but unethical and unprofessional, to say the least.

Frankly, I don't see an incident like this to be easily forgotten; however, mayor Newhard really struggled with remembering what transpired. How many million-dollar pranks have to be going on behind closed doors to lose all recollection of it? His answers went from "I don't know what you're talking about" to "I do not remember" to "shouldn't it have been returned to me as my personal property?"

I am appalled by the "funny" business, and senseless actions of this elected official clowning with public funds, while the Village is perpetually broke, bogged down by legal suits, and incapable of dealing with a crumbling infrastructure.

I was amazed that not one of the 8 participating candidates were able to answer the single most-popular question, constituting the majority of submissions: "Please name a single most impactful accomplishment from the current administration in the past 20 years?"

Even Newhard's own running mates struggled to produce an answer. Tom McKnight mentioned that the mayor has "a steady hand" whatever that means; Carly Foster stated that the mayor always shows up to work?! Newhard himself struggled about as much to answer that simple question as he did when trying to figure out why and when he pocketed a million-dollar check, written by a third party. I myself think it's very sad that we, as a community, have NOTHING to show for the accomplishments of the current administration, while they are rewarding themselves with hefty salary increases and lifetime benefits. According to seethroughny.net, Mayor Newhard's salary increased nearly 15% in the last year alone, compared to 2020. Unfortunately, it doesn't seem to be an isolated incident of Mayor Newhard abusing his position of power, as we continue to receive letters from the residents documenting and inquiring about it. They would like to see more accountability and transparency for the allocation of taxpayer money, simple and easy to understand laws and regulations, and rules that do not get applied selectively. To find out more, keep reading the Warwick Valley Dispatch or tune in to the "Free Speech" show on WTBQ."

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Eleanor Horoshun, Editor-in-Chief

Note from The Editor:

Tune Into WTBQ Every Thursday and Saturday at 11AM Leading Up to the Election Day! Each Broadcast will Feature a Different Candidate for a Full Hour of Candid Conversations!

Village Trustee Candidate


Thursday February 17th 11:00 AM	Carly Foster
Saturday February 19th 11:00 AM	Tom McKnight
Thursday February 24th 11:00 AM	Lugene Maher
Saturday February 26th 11:00 AM	Brian Torpie
Thursday March 3rd 11:00 AM	Joseph Amaturio

Village Mayor Candidate

Saturday March 5th 11:00 AM	Eileen Patterson
Thursday March 10th 11:00 AM	Michael Newhard
Saturday March 12th 11:00 AM	Matt Sullivan

WTBQ 93.5 FM / 1110 AM / wtbg.com

The Warwick Valley Dispatch will be including the transcript from the "Meet the Candidate" event in its entirety in follow up issues.



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