

LETTERS

Taxpayers too often getting a raw deal in this area

Editor,

Berrien County's tax dollars are being squandered and this will continue until there is more accountability.

Lake Michigan College's trustees dismissed Jennifer Spielvogel for alleged inappropriate spending from her presidential office. My questions are: Who was primarily responsible in promoting her candidacy, and why wasn't there an oversight process by the trustees that would have resolved this issue and prevented eventual termination? It seems that history repeats itself with no lessons learned.

I have a premonition that the court will find in Ms. Spielvogel's favor and a deal will be struck in which a settlement will be effected, with details sealed by court order. If my fears are realized, once again county taxpayers will be paying for two college presidents at the same time.

Equally disturbing is the revelation that Mary Jo Tomasini, the former chairwoman of the Board of Trustees and principle owner of Competitive Edge, transacted business with the school to the tune of 212,000 in promotional items over a period of five years. Allegedly, this was done without full disclosure to and consent from the Board of Trustees, as required by the school's ethics policy. If this is true, Tomasini should resign immediately and any trustee who has turned a blind eye to such an arrangement should do likewise.

LMC's statement regarding its purchasing department's responsibility is not to the point and doesn't address the matter of confidential disclosure.

Berrien County's Board of Commissioners have some of the highest paid county of-



icers holding that title in the state, which includes no-cost hospitalization coverage. I don't believe that the taxpayers are getting their money's worth. A shooting range for police training was an urgent need for all law enforcement agencies and a Coloma Township range site was obtained for lease. However, subsequent court rulings proved detrimental to the cause, as it was determined that the county's need could not supersede the township's ordinance governing zoning and land use.

Why didn't the board's legal counsel flag this endeavor and advise that a court opinion should be requested before exercising the lease? This would have saved hundreds of thousands of dollars in development costs and legal fees.

It was recently revealed that county officials must reimburse the federal government for loans totaling \$685,000 made to Whirlpool and Harbor Town in the early 2000s. While the valid intent of the loans can't be argued, couldn't legal counsel read the contract and advise the commissioners that the loans were not forgivable and would have to be repaid?

There was controversy between the county administrator and animal rights activists in shaping policy and design for the newly completed county animal control facility on Napier Avenue in Benton Harbor. I believe that without direct intervention and vigorous action on behalf of the animal rights supporters, operational changes would not have been made.

Remember. good government

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can't always be taken for granted, it must be demanded.

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