

More Lawyers And Higher Expense

To the Editor:

At a recent meeting the Readington Township Committee hired yet another law firm to "respond" to recent requests by two residents to view open public records. Unless you are trying to figure out how NOT to release documents, you don't need a law firm to make photocopies. It is obvious that this is our officials' attempt to thwart the flow of information, rather than be transparent in their actions, as they have publicly proclaimed they are. It is a sad irony that they are now spending more taxpayer's money in an effort to conceal their previous expenditures and activities.

Instead of more out-of-control legal

and public relations spending, Readington officials should have submitted their own public record request for the DOT's Environmental Assessment Report prior to proposing their unnecessary \$22 million bond. If they had done so, they would have known that this FAA-funded document and the Department of Transportation recommended that there be NO increase in runway length at Solberg Airport.

Nevertheless, Mayor Shamey's repeated his ludicrous statement at several public meetings just before the bond referendum: "I haven't read the [Environmental Assessment] report, but I know what it says." Then again, perhaps committee members already had a copy of the report, but its conclusions didn't support the land-grab-by-jet-scare-hoax they had in mind.

Instead of proclaiming an "impasse" through their highly-paid attorney, the Township Committee might make an attempt at professional mediation before embarking on what seems to be their favorite activity: protracted and costly litigation. If they had contacted the Rutgers Center for Negotiation and Conflict Res-

olution or some other mediation group, they just might be able to reach a reasonable solution to their imaginary fears. And if the Solbergs are NOT acting in good faith, as the township has claimed, then an experienced mediator could flush that fact out as well.

I have e-mailed both Gerry Shamey and Frank Gatti the contact information for the Rutgers Center, but have yet to hear any productive response. They prefer to pay \$300 per hour to a Public Relations firm to keep spinning their agenda to the taxpayers. Mayor Shamey has said that he doesn't want "outsiders" (mediators) involved in this issue, but the township's condemnation attorneys and spin doctors are not residents.

Why wouldn't Readington try these alternate means of conflict resolution instead of taking the township down the path of horrendous legal fees and huge debt? Perhaps it is because they want to depict themselves as the heroes who saved the town. Personally, my heroes are public officials who are more conscientious with my money.

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