

Tape recording of the conversation between Gerard J. Shamey, Readington Township Mayor and Lawrence Berger of January 6, 2006.

Receptionist: Ok hold on one second, I will put you through.

Gerard Shamey: alright

Lawrence Berger: Gerry

Gerard Shamey: Hi, how are you doing?

Lawrence Berger: Larry Berger, how are you doing?

Gerard Shamey: ok

Lawrence Berger: uh, I don't know if you want to do township business on office time, or, uh now that you're Mayor, I don't know if you have any of your own time

Gerard Shamey: no, not really but no you do the best you can with it but no I'm ok

Lawrence Berger: Ok, you probably know I've been involved with the Solberg's in trying to cut a deal with the town over the airport and the surrounding land

Gerard Shamey: Right

Lawrence Berger: The deal came to, I would say, a screeching halt last week when Frank, um, Gotti and uh

Gerard Shamey: It's actually Gatti, not Gotti

Lawrence Berger: it's Gatti, ok – and Julia came back with a, with a series of things which were frankly – I don't know where the hell they came from – the issue of expanding the runway was the first thing we discussed and there were a whole bunch of other things that didn't make any sense. Uh, if the deal is going to be made, it seems to me we need somebody at the table, like you, who knows how to make a deal. Because I was very disappointed as to where we were.

Gerard Shamey: Uh, huh

Lawrence Berger: I know that there is a new meeting coming up that I think is on the 17th or 19th, a so-called town meeting, which is going to be an assembly of people, who are all I assume anti-airport who are going to get together in a room and uh, you know, scream and yell at each other. I don't think we intend to spend any time energy or money, uh, attending that meeting or imposing that or doing anything to it. I think it's a bad idea to have a meeting to get people all riled up against the airport particularly if we're going to make a deal down the road someplace

Gerard Shamey: Uh, huh

Lawrence Berger: Uh, the Solberg's are going to be using their money to fight the the committee and the primary and ultimately the election – see because, if they can't make a deal you're literally forcing them to do that. I think there is a deal to be made, and I think if the right people are in the room – I think a deal that works, I told the Solberg's right at first - they are not going to get everything they want, the town is not going to get everything it wants, there's going to be some compromises made. Um, but what came to us last week was take it or leave it, this is the way it's going to be or no deal and the interest was no deal – take a hike and that means the Solberg's are going to spend a lot of money fighting in the primary and a lot of money in the general election. I assume that the township people are going to be running and spending a lot of money also, and I don't know if that's where we want to be.

Gerard Shamey: Um

Lawrence Berger: Because they have no choice, they have no choice but this is a danger asset and they're going to throw a lot of money and I guess over time – you spend enough money on political stuff, you ultimately get what you want. The thing that is a major issue is how much money is spent,

Gerard Shamey: Right

Lawrence Berger: And I don't think that is the smart way to go.

Gerard Shamey: What would be their ultimate goal in taking over the township committee?

Lawrence Berger: Keeping the airport – kee, kee, kee keeping the airport. They're they're very strange people, I don't know if you know them, but Thor Solberg, Sr. deceased was the 5th guy to fly the Atlantic after Lyndburg

Gerard Shamey: Right, no, I knew that, yup

Lawrence Berger: And, and, somewhere in their, in their blood stream is this keep the airport alive at all costs notion. And to keep the airport alive, they have to be able to sell more fuel than they sell, that's how airport's make money, and, which means that you need to land either more planes or larger planes and I don't mean 747's, I mean corporate jets there which can sell fuel, which is as simple as that. The runway is too short, which we can say is unsafe and the strange part about it, the longer the runway, the less the noise because the planes are up in the air sooner

Gerard Shamey: Uh, huh

Lawrence Berger: And, if the township's real objection is noise, which is what I thought it was, then we can set noise tenards, there's ways to deal with that – uh, and there's there's noise barriers, and there's a lot, I mean there's really a good faith concept of, that's, that's, the, that's, that's a one way expand to to a reasonable number that's safe. Provides certain things that cause you to make it never to be Morristown like, no tower for instance, or no operating hours between x and y or they've already agreed basically to to ban all Phase 1, Phase 2 Jets which are of the noisiest types. I mean they are willing to make some significant compromises, but they're not willing to basically flush the the airport down the toilet which is what, uh, Frank came back with.

Gerard Shamey: Uh, huh,

Lawrence Berger: The speed is at the present, runway length the airport can't survive, (pause) because you end up with a lot of itty bitty little planes, uh, that don't buy any fuel, they don't use any fuel

Gerard Shamey: Uh, huh

Lawrence Berger: And, uh, that's, that's really what's driving this whole thing and uh, I mean I've sat through 6 or 7 of these 2 or 3 hour meetings...my stomach says I'm I'm, I don't know, you and I need to deal back someplace because your name is really familiar

Gerard Shamey: Uh, yeah there was something, I forget, uh yeah

Lawrence Berger: I mean I'm in the real estate business

Gerard Shamey: Right, I forget what it was about, but yeah we did have something way back when

Lawrence Berger: Um, my stomach's real good, I mean sometimes you say look you can't make a deal if you guys are too far apart it's never going to happen, I don't feel that way here. I mean I think there's an honest deal to be made which gives the town what it wants, it, it gives you the open space land that you want. You know the airport's never going to be expanded beyond a certain parameter – uh, it's a great place for balloon festivals and all that other lovely stuff and somebody can go down in history as the guy who solved the airport problem

Gerard Shamey: Chuckle

Lawrence Berger: That's where I thought Frank was going

Gerard Shamey: Uh, huh

Lawrence Berger: Then he did a double reverse on me and I just don't really understand it. I mean the Solberg's are gearing up to fight the primary and all that, and I said hey let's make a couple phone calls, I said you know – you're a lawyer, you're a smart guy,

uh maybe you disagree with me – maybe you think that there is no deal, I mean, I think there is.

Gerard Shamey: Uh, huh

Lawrence Berger: And I think it's worth spending some more time in a meeting, talking about it, but I'm also nervous about this January meeting coming up because you set to get people fired up and we ultimately do do a deal, how do you get them unfired?

Gerard Shamey: Uh, huh

Lawrence Berger: How do you get them to say, yeah it makes sense, you guys did a good job and all that stuff

Gerard Shamey: Yeah, well the January 17th meeting is it's a public informational meeting and the Solberg's will get a letter, you know inviting them to it and...

Lawrence Berger: Uh, is it, is it, is it a lynching – or is it...

Gerard Shamey: No, it's a public information meeting...

Lawrence Berger: Chuckles

Gerard Shamey: ...that's going to be designed to just, everybody wants to know where we are at with the negotiations

Lawrence Berger: But..

Gerard Shamey: And and we're going to bring them up to date with where we are at

Lawrence Berger: But, but, as you know, presentation is everything – one one floor presentation is where there's a little impass at the moment but everyone is negotiating in good faith and they say we're all building into a deal. The other way is the Solberg's are dirty rats, they turned down our offer and uh, we're never going to make a deal with them

Gerard Shamey: Hmmm

Lawrence Berger: Those are, those are, given the present facts, I can go either way in terms of where you're at – and I think that throwing down the gauntlet and making war doesn't make any damn sense

Gerard Shamey: Uh, huh

Lawrence Berger: It's just, cause in the end, if the Solberg's threw enough money at this damn thing, they...

Gerard Shamey: They'll get what they want, is what you're saying

Lawrence Berger: They will

Gerard Shamey: So, they, my understanding is they want a 5,000 foot runway – is that accurate?

Lawrence Berger: And there might be some give on that, not a huge amount of give,...

Gerard Shamey: Uh, huh

Lawrence Berger: ...but some give on that. Their, their, their, when ,when they made their proposal, they were like – they gave me numbers and I said – hey, you guys I want an absolutely reasonable proposal – it might be at the high end of reasonable, but I don't want something that's crazy. It's a, what they proposed was not crazy.

Gerard Shamey: Right

Lawrence Berger: It was in the realm of something you can begin to negotiate from, and nothing that they said was in concrete, it was all within, I think the range of reasonable. And what came back was totally unreasonable

Gerard Shamey: Uh, huh. Ok, well I'll pass this all on back to the committee

Lawrence Berger: Ok

Gerard Shamey: because we are a committee...and, um

Lawrence Berger: And um, you know if you want to chat, if you want to do it over a cup of coffee or whatever, I'll be happy to sit down with you when Thor Solberg can sit down and talk just to get a sense of...the guy is not an unreasonable guy

Gerard Shamey: Uh, huh

Lawrence Berger: He just, this airport thing is his life, he has kept himself and his family poor for all these years because that airport is that important to him

Gerard Shamey: Right

Lawrence Berger: So that means, so in a certain sense it's religion

Gerard Shamey: Yeah, ok

Lawrence Berger: Ok

Gerard Shamey: I'll bring it all back to them....

Lawrence Berger: Ok, bring it back

Gerard Shamey: And we'll take it from there

Lawrence Berger: Ok

Gerard Shamey: Thanks, bye