

Letter to the Editor: Passaic Valley Sewerage Spent \$176,000 on Lobbying the State

According to a recently released report by the N.J. Election Law Enforcement Commission public entities in the New Jersey spent over \$2.1 million to lobby the state government in 2009. However, the report states this figure may be grossly understated as this report only covers what these entities spent on private lobbyists. Unfortunately, public entities are not legally required to file lobbying disclosure reports that their private sector counterparts are required to do.

Passaic Valley Sewage Commission (PVSC) spent \$176,000 in 2009 on private lobbyists. As I have previously reported back in December 2009 in my letter to the editor regarding the waste and abuse at Passaic Valley Sewage Commission, Clifton is one of the top five largest ratepayers to PVSC, so Clifton taxpayers footed part of this \$176,000 spending! No wonder the Clifton taxpayer's sewer fees are so outrageous.

First we learned that the head of Passaic Valley Sewage Commission's salary was in excess of \$300,000 annually and his contract entitled him to a lump-sum departure payment equal to six months' salary every year employed up to a maximum of 24 months. On top of this, we learned taxpayers paid \$730,240 to foot the entire cost of health benefits to PVSC employees in fiscal 2008 since PVSC employees are not required to contribute anything to their health benefits (state employees are required to contribute 1.5% of their annual salaries to the cost of their health care insurance). Now this! Spending \$176,000 on lobbying efforts in this economy is sinful!

Bravo to Governor Christie who has spoken out against this abuse and has specifically highlighted the waste and abuse at Passaic Valley Sewage. As a result, the head of PVSC recently retired. Last month, Governor Christie signed an executive order banning state authorities, boards and commissions from hiring lobbyists and ordering them to end existing lobbying contracts. However, local officials must also speak out against this abuse and take a leadership role in speaking out against this abuse.

Back in my December letter to the editor, I called on the Clifton City Council to take the lead and ban together with the other 46 local municipalities who are also ratepayers to PVSC in an effort to form a coalition against this abuse. Hawthorne took my advice and took the lead in speaking out against this abuse and wasteful spending by way of a letter which Hawthorne asked Clifton and other rate paying municipalities to enjoin. Bravo Hawthorne! I only hope each of the other 45 municipalities enjoins your letter as Clifton has done. I am sorry Clifton did not take my advice and be in the leader in this effort rather than the follower.

As a candidate for Clifton City Council, I assure you that if I am elected to the Council, I vow to be your voice on the council and I will take a pro-active lead and speak out against this abuse and others as I done in my letters to the editors. I assure you I will not be a silence member of the City Council on any issue that involves taxpayers' rights and wasteful spending.

Speaking of Clifton's outrageous sewer fees, I understand Clifton's sewer bills will be mailed out shortly. Get ready for your shock at the amount of your bill.

Mary Sadrakula
Clifton, NJ

