

Toy Town can breathe easy; Templeton finds itself in a mess

Upon my writing last week that I was “definitely interested to hear (Winchendon’s) defense of their actions,” in reference to the town’s problems with resident George Mizhir, it took just a short few hours after the *The Gardner News* hit the Toy Town streets to get a call from Town Manager Jim Kreidler.

Upon hearing Kreidler’s voice, I initially prepared to put up a stone wall of defense, ready to defend my stance on the issue.

Well, as much as one may aim to be perfect, one can make mistakes...just look at Newsweek.

It didn’t take long for me to see that unlike what Mizhir’s lawyer may want anyone and everyone to believe, in that the town is out to get his client — upon hearing Kreidler give some of the details on the man who I referred to last week as “no Mr. Rodgers,” I understood that Mizhir’s frustrating antics in dealing with a number of Toy Town officials or employees go far beyond that.

While Mizhir has done his share of sign writing and derided a number of public officials publicly, Kreidler admitted those are just some of the understood aggravations associated with his job. Kreidler then spelled out that the times the town has chosen to bring Mizhir to court is in response to when he has impeded someone’s ability to do their job, or has threatened to harm them.

Mizhir, who was arrested last December, arranged for that fate according to Kreidler after he knowingly broke an agreement he had made with the town, one which he had willingly abided to for some months up to that point. That agreement allowed Mizhir to enter Town Hall to do town business, as long as he had a police officer to escort him. The day he was arrested, Kreidler indicated that Mizhir went to the police station, asked for an officer, but when told that the department did not have the manpower to have

an officer to escort him to a land auction at Town Hall, Mizhir left the station and walked directly over, all within view of the officer who he had just talked to, and who knew of the agreement. Upon Mizhir’s entering Town Hall, he was arrested for violating the agreement.

After hearing from both sides, I have to say that if Mizhir chooses to file a civil rights lawsuit, it will likely fall under the now-popular phrase, “frivolous,” and the judge will unlikely lend much of a sympathetic ear.

What a difference a week makes. I thought Winchendon might see itself out of a million bucks courtesy of Mizhir.

Not anymore.

Templeton, though, is not so lucky, as town officials will be responsible for the town losing around a half million dollars.

The town, who had worked with the state to arrange sharing payments for work on a sewer line extension along Route 68, will instead be receiving much less in funds from the state than originally anticipated.

And they have no one to blame but themselves.

The project involved a grant application, with Templeton needing to take out a short-term loan to finance the project, as the Rural Development division required. Instead, the town chose to borrow using a long-term bond.

The mix-up now means that the state has thrown up their hands and told Templeton that they will not pay \$413,000 that the division would have — had the town just followed the rules.

If that wasn’t bad enough, the town paid higher interest rates on the bond that they took out, versus had they done what the state had required, so who knows how much money was wasted on higher interest?

For all the town has been hit with financially, one has to wonder if one is a Templeton resident...when will

the good financial news come to pass?

On top of that, one might have to cross their fingers in hoping that the Baldwinville Road work will be financed correctly, so that the money that is supposed to come from the state — will — and Templeton can finish the project snafu-free.

ON FURTHER REVIEW



ANDRES
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Between all the cleanup work that town treasurer Tammy Collier has dealt with, from the town paying unemployment insurance to people it shouldn’t have, and having not paid state and federal income taxes for a period of months — one just has to wonder if there are any other slimy rocks Collier will overturn in the near future.

While in Templeton there never seems to be a good element of timing — in Gardner, the timing of a forum on drug use in Gardner last Tuesday couldn’t have been better timed.

Just the day before, the North Worcester County Task Force again contributed to keeping drugs off the streets, as it, along with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency and U.S. Postal Inspectors worked together to arrest Gardner resident Andrew J. Iannuzzi, 36, of 5 Meadowbrook Lane, who was awaiting a shipment of a drug ingredient, along with having more of that ingredient, which is used in a date rape drug, at his home. It seems as though the Task Force has been a worthwhile entity in the Gardner area in the never-ending battle to

keep drugs off the streets.

While some may say that the battle is being lost, the efforts of the task force show that worthwhile victories are attainable.

That idea hopefully struck home among those in attendance at the forum, along with the concept that help in fighting that battle must come from the whole community.

Best of all was hearing that after the meeting was finishing up, those in attendance talked about arranging future meetings. It’s good to hear they acknowledged that to fix the problem, it can’t be done in one single forum.

From trying to fix a problem, to doing one’s best to make a mess of things, look no further than the Internal Revenue Service.

For all that one may despise the IRS, it is working very hard to be hated even more. Help centers located in Fitchburg, Pittsfield, Quincy and Hyannis are on tap be closed, as the four locations will be among 68 closed in the country.

Tax season is a painful time for many, so the IRS is choosing to close customer service centers where people could get one-on-one help with their forms, along with curtailing the hours of toll-free phone service from 15 hours to 12.

The “rationale” to close the centers is that 9 million people visited them in 2003, while “only” 7.6 million visited them last year. So go ahead and screw 7.6 million...it’s not like they matter, right?

So the question is, what’s left for the taxpayer pulling out their hair over issues with their taxes?

The IRS Web site, will be where visitors will try not to become frustrated, trying to get help from the infamous FAQ. Those lovely Frequently Asked Questions. You read all 111 questions, and you discover that your question isn’t deemed frequent. Other than that, you quickly find out that the Web site is worthless to you. So you plan to go to the help center, only to find it closed. Then you try to call the

toll-free line, only to find that their hours are reduced, and if you get them during their shortened business hours, every one who has to get their calls in will tie up the lines.

The IRS Commissioner claims that taxpayers will notice no difference in waiting times.

This is from the same administration, in which Vice President Dick Cheney claimed that the Iraq War would last “weeks, rather than months.”

When again did the war start? March 20? That’s about nine weeks...oh...in 2003? Make that a couple of years.

I’d say the Bush administration’s effort to read the crystal ball on anything is so off, it’s hard to trust any of their “predictions.”

While on the subject of the administration, I wondered mightily what all the big deal was over the appellate court judges that the Democrats and Republicans were fighting so vehemently over the past few years. I figured that if the judges weren’t going to be Supreme Court justices, what’s all the fuss?

Then I read a little about Texas Supreme Court Justice Priscilla Owen, who cruised through confirmation after the compromise among moderate Republicans and Democrats put to end a push to fiddle with the Senate’s filibuster rules.

While those rules in the end did not change, I can’t imagine anyone having a good taste in their mouth once they discover what a gem Owen is. Eleven years ago, Owen received almost \$40K from Enron and the law firm that represented that corrupt company during her election campaign. In return for that investment, when Enron came to her bench two years later trying to skirt paying school property taxes, she not only didn’t step off the case, she wrote the opinion on it. If that wasn’t enough, she then allowed lovely Enron to contrive its own desired method to how it would have the property tax assessed, saving Enron a bundle of cash. I won-

der if I had donated \$5 to her campaign in Texas, if I could have gotten that same sweet deal?

Even though I earlier referred to Newsweek’s “mistake,” theirs is looking more and more as though it never made one. Just days after the Bush administration derided the magazine for irresponsible reporting, the FBI had to explain away a number of confirmed instances where the Quran was “mishandled.”

All the Guantanamo Bay prison commander during the press conference could say was that none of the 13 instances that the FBI admitted to involved the book being flushed down the toilet. They kept bringing that instance up, as though they wanted to pat themselves on the back, but at the same time — they refused to outline any specifics to how the Quran was “mishandled”...whatever that means. I guess we’ll just have to wait for a Lindy England-type photograph of the Quran going down the porcelain throne before the administration will really have to eat crow.

On The Subject of Sports

On the local front, Gardner’s Josh Boone continues to excel on the track, finishing on top with a 4:26.54 in the mile at the District E All-Class Championships in Shrewsbury on Saturday. Along for the trip to the states will be a host of other local athletes, including Gardner’s Sean Duncan in the two-mile (finishing third) and Tim Glover in the 800 (finishing fourth). Overall, the Wildcats finished ninth out of 33 squads...not too shabby.

For those who want to see how Boone and his teammates, along with other locals will fare in the State Meet, they won’t have to travel too far, as the meet will be held at Worcester State College next Saturday.

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