

THE ELMHURST INDEPENDENT

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CAC objects to “Anyone else offended?” column

Written by admin

Ms. Dee Longfellow asked in her 9/27/12 editorial, “Is anyone else offended?” by the Citizen Advocacy Center (CAC) and Elmhurst College hosting Dr. Dick Simpson of UIC to discuss his latest academic paper on political corruption. The tone was sarcastic musing of why a Chicagoan should come to suburbia to talk about corruption. This is why: Corruption does not stop at the Chicago border. Dr. Simpson is nationally recognized for his vast experience in addressing government issues, both as an insider and a watchdog. He has spent a career documenting the “corruption tax” paid when public officials serve for personal interest rather than the public interest. His sixth report, “Green Grass and Graft: Corruption in the Suburbs” documents convictions beyond Chicago’s borders and offers tangible reform solutions.

CAC was also identified as “the local hot bed of political dirt digging” and an organization that protests indiscriminately. We are an award-winning community legal organization that for 20 years has worked to build democracy by strengthening the citizenry’s capacities, resources, and institutions for self-governance. CAC’s work starts in Elmhurst and extends statewide. Our resources are free, our doors are open to the public, and information about CAC is available at www.citizenadvocacycenter.org. The following are a few highlights of CAC’s work in Elmhurst:

- 1) Protecting First Amendment Free Speech rights via a federal lawsuit and bringing statewide and national media exposure to anti-democratic activity in City Hall. We also worked with District 205 to protect Free Speech rights during public comment (twice);
- 2) Reforming Illinois’ Tax Increment Financing law based on issues identified in the Elmhurst TIF 3 creation process and helping a community group organize to reduce TIF incentives approved on a TIF 1 project from the initial \$5 million plus request to \$1.2 million;
- 3) Questioning finance issues at City Hall. One inquiry led to monies being repaid; and
- 4) Helping individuals successfully organize. Examples include, placing referenda on the ballot, addressing a gas station leak, helping a local journalist protest the selling of a local paper, and helping organize a march to promote a historic preservation ordinance.

People worldwide are fighting for the freedoms Americans have, yet very few Americans actually engage in the democratic process. If a qualifier for “political dirt digging” and indiscriminate protesting includes teaching people interested in government issues how to successfully use First Amendment freedoms, along with community lawyers enforcing democratic rights, I regard that as a compliment.

Ms. Terry Pastika

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