

To the Editor:

The Cheltenham voters have spoken, and the impact on the Board of Commissioners was dramatic - two long term incumbents unseated. The message is clear: the commissioners did not communicate well with their constituents, most notably regarding the 600-car, multi-story parking garage that SEPTA plans to build at the Jenkintown-Wyncote rail station. Consequently they failed to grasp both the extent and the depth of the community's animosity toward this project.

Time after time we've been told that, on advice from the township solicitor, the commissioners cannot comment until SEPTA submits a formal, detailed plan (which is still months away). Presumably any public comment could be construed as prejudicial, thereby risking a law suit which the township could ill afford to defend. I'm sure there's a fair amount of truth to that. However, this advice also has the faint aura of a gag rule of convenience, an excuse not to say *anything* of substance related to the SEPTA issue. This relative silence has, in turn, given rise to a suspicion among many, or at least a predisposition to believe, that the township's leaders have some tacit agreement to let the garage plan go through without a serious challenge. That's just a vague, subjective impression. But impressions often influence elections, especially when the key issue is as intensely felt as this one.

Let me suggest a way the commissioners could begin to communicate better. If, individually or collectively they believe that this project, as currently described and justified by SEPTA, would actually *benefit* the township and its citizens, then they ought to present their reasoning. Surely the solicitor couldn't object to a factual exposition of specific economic, social, environmental, and/or infrastructure benefits, supported by independently verifiable info and data. If our leaders truly believe that we might all be better off with the proposed garage in place, let's hear the rationale. Abiding by the solicitor's admonition, they would not have to say whether they think such benefits outweigh the well publicized negatives, or how they might someday vote on the matter.

The citizens of Cheltenham Township deserve no less.

Ronald C Dunbar