

## Russo, Stephanie

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**From:** beach46403@aol.com  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 13, 2010 4:30 PM  
**To:** Russo, Stephanie  
**Subject:** Face the music. I think I hear the fat lady singing!

Of course Gary needs a plan, but they refuse to face the facts. This is a serious deal, yet this administration insists on continuing to goof around. Time is running out. Next year will be here before you know it, and they won't have done a thing. Just like last year! I'm tired of hearing about all of the cuts in staffing that they have made. I want a body count! Who are they? Nobody seems to know. They must have been ghosts, because everyone's still here.

Gary must initiate a plan for solvency

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January 13, 2010

Gary is a divided city at the most crucial time in its history. It has no shortage of residents who think they know what's best, and they don't hesitate to voice opinions. One side of town has pitted itself against the city administration, while any attempts at solutions are lost.

Many Garyites wallow in what could have been and dwell on all the so-called mistakes of the past. That's a waste of energy and does more harm than good. Gary needs to stop playing the victim.

At its core, Gary is a city full of decent, hard-working people. They don't deserve the mismanaged, bloated city and school governments they've been saddled with for years.

Faced with sanctions from the state, Gary is painfully streamlining its payroll and its services. The misery isn't going away, because voters in November likely will authorize placing permanent property tax caps in the Indiana constitution. When that happens, Gary's budget will shrink in half to \$30 million. Perhaps unfair, but reality.

The city needs a sound financial plan and a framework to empower it to return to solvency. It doesn't need a civil war. It's up to Gary citizens to become educated and to elect qualified candidates who promise and deliver results, not favors. On top of dedicated officeholders, Gary needs a CEO to make the tough decisions without political considerations.

More jobs need to be consolidated and eliminated. Paid consultants should be eliminated. Every cent of overtime should be scrutinized.

Gary is already taking a positive step by eliminating stipends for people who serve on city boards. That will save about \$50,000 -- and stop some political favors.

The city needs to find new revenue streams. It needs to lure businesses again and provide real jobs aside from the public trough. It's a daunting task, and the answers aren't easy. But it's time to begin.

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krazkat1 wrote:

To tcr: Very well said.

The city needs to find new revenue streams. It needs to lure businesses again and provide real jobs aside from the public trough. It's a daunting task, and the answers aren't easy. But it's time to begin.

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User Image<<http://sitelife.post-trib.com/ver1.0/Content/images/no-user-image.gif>> tcr wrote:

The able and capable aren't electable, and the electable aren't able and capable!

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User Image<<http://sitelife.post-trib.com/ver1.0/Content/images/no-user-image.gif>> millerbeach wrote:

It's tough to get an honest individual to run for office in Gary, or at least it seems that way. I've lived in this city almost nine years, and am amazed at the lack of qualified candidates, or the massive splintering of Democratic party votes. It's easy to write an editorial about electing qualified individuals, it's an entirely different story to actually do such a task. Show me a qualified individual, and I will be their most staunch supporter.

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**From:** beach46403@aol.com  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 13, 2010 4:24 PM  
**To:** Russo, Stephanie  
**Subject:** This is what passes for good leadership in Gary!

Please bear in mind that the City of Gary was actually buying random lots at this very same tax sale. Like PFM and others have already reported, there seems to be no clear strategy behind their actions. Besides the City buying hundreds of properties at this tax sale, properties that were formerly in private hands, Joel Rodriguez, the Mayor's assistant, also purchased several high-value properties on 700 Broadway. After questions about these purchases were raised, lo and behold, the City assumed his purchases. So, besides the direct costs of the tax sale purchase, the City also assumed over \$200,000.00 in demolition costs. And we still aren't sure what they have in mind! In this particular case, the former owners, (one of the principals of which happens to be a state lawmaker), were pleading with the County to retain their ownership. They were willing to pay taxes once certain assessment issues were resolved. But the City made sure there was no chance that would happen!

One could easily make the case that if the property was delinquent, what's the difference? The difference is: now there is absolutely no chance that any taxes will be collected, before at least there was a chance. And also, by the City and/or its agents purchasing these properties, they prevented private buyers from purchasing them.

And they wonder why they're broke!

\*\*\*\*\*

Gary loses GRIT in tax sale

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January 13, 2010

BY LORI CALDWELL, (219) 648-3258 <<mailto:LCALDWELL@POST-TRIB.COM>>

GARY -- A little paperwork a couple of years ago and the city wouldn't be in this mess now.

City attorneys could have filed appeals on property taxes owed and retained ownership on the building occupied by an FBI task force and two police divisions.

Then the FBI-led Gang Response Investigative Team, the Gary police Narcotics-Vice Unit and Internal Affairs Division could continue to operate there rent free.

"Unfortunately, the redemption period is over," a spokeswoman for the Lake County auditor said Tuesday.

A Skokie, Ill., firm purchased the downtown building in a tax sale in March 2008 for \$14,204.28 and an attorney for Vincennes Corp. plans to negotiate a rental agreement, the company's agent said Tuesday.

Back taxes accumulated on property at 531 Washington St. from 2004 until Chase Bank deeded the property to the city in July 2008. Chase spokeswoman Nancy J. Norris said the bank and Gary officials agreed the city would handle the delinquent taxes.

The Chase property was originally part of Gary National Bank, then Gainer Bank and later NBD and Bank One.

In April 2007 then-City Attorney Jerome Taylor said once Gary owned the building, the city would petition the county to resolve the back taxes.

That never happened.

Deputy Mayor Geraldine Tousant said Tuesday she wasn't aware the city received the deed, but acknowledged Gary spent at least \$60,000 since 2007 to repair the roof and furnace system.

The two-story brick building has reinforced walls, bulletproof glass and double-entry doors, features requested by the FBI.

Originally called the Gary Response Investigative Team, GRIT arrived here in 1997 as a multijurisdictional task force that has expanded its operation to include uncovering gang activity across Northwest Indiana. Various federal agencies and local police departments assign officers to work cases from the downtown site.

Because the Gary drug unit and GRIT are in adjacent offices, the two agencies can share information on suspects and open cases. A hidden garage entrance allows police to transport suspects and witnesses without being seen on the street, which investigators say is a benefit.

Former Chief Garnett Watson moved the Internal Affairs Division to a separate location so complainants would not have to come to the police station where they might feel intimidated.

A clerk in the auditor's office said even after the tax sale the city had an opportunity to claim the building.

"They (Vincennes) had to notify everyone on record in order to buy it," the spokeswoman said. "Then the city or anyone with any interest had 120 days after the sale to pay the taxes," she added.

Gary officials could have retained ownership of the building by paying the back taxes, then seeking appeals with the Lake County auditor, assessor and treasurer. Once the appeals were granted, the city would have had its property tax money returned.

Vincennes Corp. owns at least 60 separate properties in Gary, most of them on major arteries such as Broadway, Martin Luther King Drive, 4th and 5th Avenues and Clark Road.

"We've invested in the city and hoping it will flourish, Gary is a good place to be in," Vincennes agent Suzie Wilson said. "These (properties) were bought a long time ago."

She said once her company realized "what it was," she referred issues related to the GRIT building to her attorney, who was not available for comment.

FBI Acting Supervisory Agent in Charge Bob Ramsey said he hopes to meet with city officials to discuss future arrangements. "We're in preliminary stages," he said.

Police Chief Gary Carter said he has started to look for alternative sites for the drug unit and IAD.

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devilsporkchop wrote:

hey millergirl,

Atty. Taylor was pushed out of his job w/the city -- no doubt because he always tried to do the right thing -- he was surrounded by dolts and despicable people.

I wouldn't be surprised to find a connection between the East Chicago Democratic Political club and the Vincennes company.... if even just friends. The new Gary city attorney is from East Chicago.

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chicago wrote:

Mayor's race isn't this year is it? Which may be another reason for Clay's comfort zone.

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savegary wrote:

I blame not only City Hall, but the past police administrations for not keeping up with the building situation themselves. What was Chief Harris doing to make sure we legally owned the building? Does anybody in charge know what they are doing down there, or even paying attention to what is going on?

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concerned and fed up wrote:

This proves what I have said for the longest time..the City of Gary's Law Dept is incompetent! They have lawyers who can't get a job with a law firm. They also include criminals as lawyers. Soon we'll know what's the fate of Carl Jones, who is second in command. He has charges pending in Lake County Court for trafficking with an inmate. Rudy Clay was aware of this when he selected him for the job. What a shame! I guess anyone can go to law school & graduate.

1/13/2010 1:29 PM CST on post-trib.com

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User Image<<http://siterepost-trib.com/ver1.0/Content/images/no-user-image.gif>> meeee  
wrote:

Maybe this happened while the Mayor was in China or visiting Las Vegas with Joe Jackson... What a shame. Gary used to be a great city and still could be if some hones, competent people were there to run it.

GARY ON THE MOVE...

Remember that sign...it is on the move alright.

Downhill all the way.

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watchful eye wrote:

You've summed it up as eloquently as usual, D. In the past, I'd opined about the lack of name recognition being a detriment to qualified, politically unencumbered, and well-intended candidates who would seek to hold office in Gary.

It has long been my opinion that the voting public of Gary, and Lake County for that matter, are classic examples of people who suffer from 'Stockholm Syndrome'. They continue to sympathize with the very people who hold them as 'political hostages'.

Every four years they have a chance to 'escape', as it were, yet they opt not only to stay with them; they literally assist in the continued abuse of the rest of us political abductees.

Do you think that 2010 will be any different from previous election years?

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chicago wrote:

Rudy preys on the classic case of the unknown being scarier than the known. Many Gary residents seem to cling to the recognizable name and face of Clay with this mindset of "the devil I know is better than the devil I don't know".

Politicians thrive on this concept. Fresh blood with their new faces and/or ideas are perceived as a threat to them.

For me, I'd rather go down with a someone searching and striving to find a new path for Gary than being lost at sea with the same old "status quo" leadership from 1972.

In both cases the ship may sink but at least I know that tried everything I possibly could to prevent it.

If you keep trying the same old lame solutions over and over again to keep getting the same lame results is a sign of insanity.

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watchful eye wrote:

I wonder if the members of the DUAB ever log onto the Post Tribune website?

The Publisher can cut printing costs dramatically if she would eliminate the comics section and print more stuff on Gary City Hall. The antics of 'Rudy and The Crew' may be zany, but they're no laughing matter!!

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chicago wrote:

....and the band played on...

Par for the course with this administration. It's like watching an horror film. You know you're going to see some horrific scene; you just don't know when or how it's coming.

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watchful eye wrote:

Not only did the city lose the use of a building 'rent free', we also lost the \$60,000 dollars of tax payer money that was spent upgrading the property.

Good Lord!! Geraldine Tousant is on the Gary Board of Public Works. One would suppose that before she authorized even \$1.00 in improvements on a building, she would make darn sure the city held a clear title to it!

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January 9, 2010

Distressed United Appeals Board  
200 West Washington  
State House Room 212  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Dear Board Members:

This is a letter of complaint against the tax increase the city of Gary is requesting.

It is grossly unfair that the citizens of Gary are being asked to pay a higher tax rate than the proposed tax caps.

The administration of Gary must learn to live within their tax cap budget as other cities in the state are doing.

Last year, the city received a tax increase. It posed a significant burden on homeowners' mortgages and budgets. Senior citizens are hurting.

Could any positive results from the extra money Gary received be noted? No.

1. Our streets are full of pot holes and deplorable.
2. There was an 85% rate increase for the Sanitary District plus a monthly fee for trash collection.
3. Snow removal is inadequate if moved at all.
4. Bulk items and yard waste placed on the curb are not picked up unless bagged which is not always possible.
5. The city administration ignores request in helping to keeping the city clean: Ex. placing dumpsters throughout the districts.

Finally, living in Gary has become a pronounced and obvious disadvantage. It is not always possible for persons to just pick<sup>up</sup> and relocate. We, as citizens receive no perks or amenities for the taxes we pay. This is a plea to the Distressed Appeals Board to not grant a tax increase.

We thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mae Tyler *mae Tyler*  
3121 W. 20<sup>th</sup> Place  
Gary, IN 46404

*Yvonne Mc Kenney*  
2032 Madison St.  
Gary, In. 46407

Minnie Scales  
Minnie Scales  
3124 W. 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue  
Gary, IN 46404

Mr. and Mrs. William Scales  
3636 W. 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Gary, IN 46404  
William Scales  
H. S. Scales

Mr. and Mrs. Cassel White  
1761 Wilson Street  
Gary, IN 46404  
Cassel White  
Cassel White

Mrs. Jane Ballard  
1762 Wilson Street  
Gary, IN 46404  
Jane Ballard

Mrs. Annie Johnson  
1795 Cleveland Street  
Gary, IN 46404  
Annie P. Johnson

Mr. and Mrs. Geoffrey Black  
689 Shelby Street  
Gary, IN 46403  
Geoffrey Black  
Terri Black

Mr. and Mrs. Eddie Johnson  
2345 Madison Street  
Gary, IN 46407  
Eddie + Bonnie Johnson

Mrs. Andree Anderson  
8221 Hickory Ave.  
Gary, IN 46403

Andrew James  
337 Juniper St  
Gary, IN 46404

Mrs. Mrs. Blanche Marshall  
2427 Conn. St.  
Gary, IN 46407

Katherine B. Sorden  
560 Taft Place  
Gary, IN 46404

Mr. W  
Mr & Mrs Cuffey  
689 N. Shelby Gary IN 46403

Pauline G. Springfield  
1520 Bigler St  
Gary, IN 46404

Meraldine Hauser  
Arthur Hauser  
2001 Park St.  
Gary, IN 46407

Senella Seabrook  
4801 - Van Buren St  
GARY IN. 46408

Russo, Stephanie

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From: beach46403@aol.com  
Sent: Friday, January 15, 2010 11:54 AM  
To: Beach46403@aol.com  
Subject: Marquette Project/Venus Cobb

## **Not again, please!**

**Well, if anyone was still wondering if this project is going to be on the up and up, and is going to be as transparent as we keep getting told, as we are constantly promised; I think that any and all of those doubts were just removed. Removed how you ask? How...out of all of the people in the world, did Venus Cobb just so happen to get the job of spokeswoman for the project? Some of you may be wondering; who is Venus Cobb? Why am I saying this? Well, for any newcomers, and any others to whom Venus Cobb is not yet a household name; here's a crash course. Hmmm...crash course...a perfect choice of words, if I do say so myself. Is there anything that Venus Cobb has had her grubby mitts on that hasn't crashed? Nothing that I can think of! So how...how, out of all of the possible good, qualified, respectable individuals that could have been recruited to bring credibility to this project, do we wind up with her? Not by accident, I'm sure! Just another political favor. Somebody told them: Hire this person...as a favor. OK, no problemo! Ipso facto, big surprise, now we got her. Lucky us! Just like Caren Jones, we got her, too. Aren't we lucky again! How do we keep getting so lucky?**

## **Crash Course:**

**The Dalton Arms: over \$13,000,000.00 disappeared under her watch. (Some might say with her help!) This is the once-beautiful building on 5th and Connecticut that has been empty for dozens of years. All of the money was stolen off of the front end of the deal, leaving nothing left to finish it. So there it stands, a monument to the ineptness and corruption of the Empowerment Zone, her alma mater.**

**The Dusties Buffet: Also on 5th Ave., just a hop, skip, and a jump from the Dalton, another horribly failed project. This was her baby all the way! She had pissed away nearly a million dollars before the first shovel ever hit the ground! But rather than admitting defeat, and cutting the agency's losses, she persevered. She saw it through. She made sure that the project got completed. Who cares if it wound up being the most expensive per-square-foot restaurant ever built in NWI. Minor details! Is it any wonder it's already out of business? But don't worry folks...we're not done losing money on this project just yet. Now that the Empowerment Zone has lost their nonpaying tenant, they decided to test their own skills in the restaurant business. Yeah, that makes sense. If a seasoned and obviously**

**shrewd, experienced restaurant operator couldn't make it, surely some idiots with no restaurant experience should be successful, right? It's OK, though, it's not their money at stake, it's ours!**

**County Market: I think that just about everyone knows about this debacle, unless you were living under a rock. (Which is where it'd be nice to see certain individuals crawl back under) This record-breaking project had her fingerprints smeared all over it from start to finish. Record-breaking; the highest square-foot construction of a grocery store in the entire Midwest. The shortest time from grand opening to going out of business in the grocery industry. This project was the laughingstock of the retail grocery business.**

**GUEA: Everybody should remember GUEA. Who could forget! Somehow, even though GUEA and the Empowerment Zone, were seemingly joined at the hip, Venus Cobb managed to evade federal prosecution--unlike all of her cohorts at GUEA. Jojuana Meeks, Charmaine Pratchett, Johnnie Wright, Derrick Earls, Roosevelt Powell, Willie Harris, Will Smith Jr., et al; ask Venus about all of her friends; ask her how they're all doing. Yeah...they'll all be back soon, too. They'll all be part of this project also. Why? Because she owes all of them. Why? Because she's out!**

**Such a deal!: Not linked you say? GUEA spent over \$250,000.00 remodeling a house that they purchased. Guess who got to buy it for around \$60,000.00? Did you get a chance to get a deal like this? Neither did I.**

**East Chicago: Her hometown. The same place where Rudy has recruited all of the other "stars" currently pillaging our city. What is it about East Chicago? Weren't we getting along fine before all of these East Chicago transplants infiltrated the ranks of city government? We may not have been doing great, but we were sure doing a heckuva lot better than we have been lately!**

**If our "lucky streak" continues, maybe she'll holler at the rest of her old team; Felicia Flowers-Smith, Letty Almodovar (the unholy trinity). Venus'll need help, she's not smart enough to do the damage all by herself. (How smart can she be? She played a lead role in making 30-million dollars evaporate and she's still broke! That's how smart she is!) And they'll come--count on it! Like moths drawn to a flame; they'll come! It's like a force of nature. Misappropriating public money is like a sport to them, a sport which if it were an Olympic event; these ladies would be bringing home the gold. But, unfortunately, in this case, they'll be hauling it away! Unless someone stops them--unless we stop them.**

**In most places, if a government official were even tangentially connected to even one of these scandals of these titanic proportions, their careers in the public**

**sector would be forever over. But here, in Gary, instead, she is afforded special privilege. Here, she is some sort of folk hero among her peers.**

**Our fine park, this beautiful lakefront gem, is not so much of a project to their likes, as it is a vehicle which they have already identified as a means to get their greasy paws on public funding and drag it off. They don't have the park's needs at heart. They don't have the desires and needs of the citizens at heart. They are blinded by the dollar signs. Why is it that they have overlooked nearly every common sense, inexpensive-to-implement idea; in favor of every over-the-top, questionably necessary scheme? Because they need to puff this thing up big enough so that there'll be plenty to steal without anyone noticing! Isn't it funny (sad really) that suddenly the City gets interested in Marquette Park when there are millions of dollars involved; but never cared in the least about it before? They can barely mow the lawn! They can't even plow it properly! They can't fix the playground apparatus. They can't even provide a functioning bathroom! They can't spend \$10,000.00 on maintenance of the park; what makes you think that they'll be able to properly administrate the spending of \$28,000,000.00? And it seems to have become a race to see how fast they can burn through this RDA cash. The still-lovely Marquette Park has slowly deteriorated over the course of many decades--and everyone still loves it! Maybe we should slow down a bit. Maybe we should make sure we get this right. Can't the RDA simply dedicate this funding for the park, without turning it over to these characters all at once? Maybe we should see how they do with a million or two before we get carried away and turn over the entire 28-million dollars!**

**What is the tradeoff here? Why do you suppose that the RDA suddenly got so generous? Why didn't they recognize the importance and value of improving Marquette Park immediately upon their formation? How could they have missed such an obvious opportunity? No folks, this is politics; this is business as usual. We may not yet know what behind-the-scenes deal has been struck; but sooner or later, we'll find out. The light will go on, and in retrospect, we'll recognize the deal. It's just a matter of time.**

**All of the usual hyenas--the usual sharks--smell the blood; the public project with lots of zeroes involved. It's really quite disgusting; people that have nothing important to offer, but conversely are quite expert at taking, come out of hiding; seemingly summoned out of hiding, to participate in the latest fraud. Doesn't anybody do their homework? Shoot...before you know it, Venus will be hiring her pal Jojuana Meeks. Her prison term is just about up. Surely we'll be lucky enough to have her on board, too. I wonder how many times Venus has visited her former partner in the federal penitentiary? Probably none! That'd be odd, though. I don't**

**think that I can remember seeing her out in public outside of the company of her good friend and associate, Jojuana.**

**Everything she touches, everything she gets near, have things in common; tremendous amounts of money vanish, and failed projects are left in her wake. This is her track record. This is her modus operandi. This is her resume'. Is there any reason that we should expect different from her now? Has she atoned for her past sins? Is her service to our community--her service to Marquette Park--some act of contrition? I highly doubt it--just another notch in her belt. We can't afford any more of her projects! The community can't afford any more of her "good works". Venus, go back to wherever it was you've been hiding out these past couple of years. We have not missed you. We haven't needed you're special gift. (the gift of taking) We've been all right--we'll be all right! We can make it without you. Our park will be OK without you. (in fact, that's probably the only chance it's got!)**

**We got it covered. Thanks, but no thanks!**

**So, while it may sound tempting and sexy to have some quasi-governmental unit sashay into town and sprinkle this fairy dust over our beloved Marquette Park, just don't be completely shell-shocked if it turns out to be Agent Orange instead. And don't be surprised if some of these same individuals with these same smiling faces, one day aren't smiling; but instead grinning with the blood oozing from their recently sated maws--smeared on their cheeks, from just having feasted on the spoils of the carcass of another fated deal. And guess who'll again be left behind to clean up the mess? Same as ever.**

**Hopefully, it's just an odd coincidence that the firm playing the lead role shares a surname with one of America's contemporary horror-movie producers. It'd be awful if we later drew on this similarity in recounting the horror story which will likely unfold in the coming year in the heart of our relatively peaceful and idyllic community.**

**Marquette Park needs loving care. The last thing it should have to endure is being violently raped. Like the Dalton. Like the Dusties. Like the County Market. Like GUEA. Like countless other deals we have been victimized by in this city by individuals claiming to have our best interests at heart. They don't, though. Not by a longshot!**

**Ms. Cobb's presence is a red flag. A warning sign. Take heed. Take action. Before it's too late! I'll take no pleasures in saying "I told you so" later.**

## **Russo, Stephanie**

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**From:** Gary Votes [garyvotes@yahoo.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 14, 2010 10:18 AM  
**To:** Russo, Stephanie; D2ogg1@aol.com; Tom Eaton; Ted Prettyman; Carol Smith; Carole Barnes; Carole Carlson; Jerry Davich; Jim Nowacki; Jon Seidel  
**Subject:** Gary's Impending Collapse

### Continued Financial Troubles in Gary Due to Mismanagement

There have been two interesting incidents in the past few months that reinforce the notion that people in Gary's elected positions are financially irresponsible when it comes to administration in the public's best interest.

Last year, the Gary School Corporation received \$12.6 million in federal funds from a Title I program "aimed at helping qualified students reach state and federal levels in the areas of math and reading." But because of their mismanagement, Gary officials were required to return almost \$1 million because it failed to spend the money on at-risk students.

In today's Post-Tribune, it was reported that the City of Gary lost ownership of a two-story commercial building at a tax sale for \$14,000. The City of Gary knew that they had to redeem the property but failed to do so.

The Post-Tribune reports:

"Unfortunately, the redemption period is over," a spokeswoman for the Lake County auditor said Tuesday.

A Skokie, Ill., firm purchased the downtown building in a tax sale in March 2008 for \$14,204.28 and an attorney for Vincennes Corp. plans to negotiate a rental agreement, the company's agent said Tuesday.

So the City of Gary lost the equity ownership in a building because they failed to respond in time and redeem the ownership to the property. They now plan to rent it back to the City. If you want evidence as to why the People of Gary oppose giving the administration of the City of Gary more property tax money, this is a case in point.

They cannot manage. They cannot administer. They cannot govern. Giving them more of our tax dollars will only be wasted and not used in the best interest of the people of Gary.

(Note: Wednesday I received a call from Patty Shell of the Lake County Treasurer's Office concerning unpaid property taxes in Gary. We discussed PFM's "financial model" based on 100 percent of Gary's property taxes being paid, to which she said, "That isn't going to happen!" I shared with her our projections of a \$10 million shortfall in 2010 and how Gary will eventually be forced into bankruptcy. She said, "We are thinking the same thing.")

PFM never contacted Lake County officials in preparing their report.  
Richard Barnes, Ph.D.  
Gary, IN

## Russo, Stephanie

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**From:** beach46403@aol.com  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 17, 2010 8:10 AM  
**To:** Beach46403@aol.com  
**Subject:** Venus Cobb/Empowerment Zone/GUEA

Another sweetheart GUEA deal?

GUEA -- GUEA sold home on the cheap to director of group that gave large loan

\* Story <[http://nwitimes.com/news/local/article\\_04a36313-f1e6-5c0f-bd59-b7f5578d7718.html?mode=story](http://nwitimes.com/news/local/article_04a36313-f1e6-5c0f-bd59-b7f5578d7718.html?mode=story)>

\* Discussion <[http://nwitimes.com/news/local/article\\_04a36313-f1e6-5c0f-bd59-b7f5578d7718.html?mode=comments](http://nwitimes.com/news/local/article_04a36313-f1e6-5c0f-bd59-b7f5578d7718.html?mode=comments)>

JOE CARLSON

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219.662.5339 | Posted: Sunday, June 10, 2007 12:00 am | No Comments Posted

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GARY | By all accounts, it was no small job bringing the derelict home at 724 Delaware back to life.

The now-defunct Gary Urban Enterprise Association spent nearly \$200,000 in public funds on a total rehab of the burnt-out building, bringing it down to studs and then rebuilding it into the sturdy home it is today, sources familiar with the group's funding say.

When the time came to sell it in 2002, the GUEA let it go for a bargain -- just \$57,000, deeds on file in Lake County indicate.

The buyer was Venus Cobb, the politically connected leader of federally funded economic development group called the Gary-East Chicago-Hammond Empowerment Zone.

Ken Willis, owner of the company that managed the project, expressed surprise at the purchase price. But he said was unable to provide an exact accounting of the work done, partly because most of his records during that period of time have been handed over to federal authorities. Cobb said last week she was never aware how much the GUEA spent on renovations.

The same year that Cobb bought the home, Cobb's organization floated a \$3.18-million loan to the GUEA for an 44-unit housing development called the Emerson Renaissance on the city's east side, GUEA records show.

The GUEA formally dissolved earlier this year after an embezzlement scandal made it impossible to raise operating funds.

Cobb denied that there was any connection between the loan from her organization to GUEA and the home she bought from the organization. A former GUEA official told The Times that it was widely known at the time that the deal on the home and the unorthodox loan were linked.

"There was no relation to that (loan)," Cobb said. "My funds that I use are (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) dollars, and any type of allocation of expenditure of loan dollars goes through a very stringent review and approval."

Congressional leaders have said in several federal spending bills that empowerment zones like the one in Northwest Indiana should spend money only "in conjunction with economic development activities," said Brian Sullivan, a HUD spokesman in Washington D.C.

"Would that preclude these funds from being used in residential activities? No. But a case would have to be made that it is an economic-development activity," Sullivan said.

Cobb said the project qualified because it created local construction jobs and training opportunities. Felicia Flowers-Smith, who earned \$6,300 a month as GUEA's financial consultant in 2002, agreed.

Reached at her home in Las Vegas, Flowers-Smith said the housing loan also qualified as economic development because it created "rooftops," without which commercial and industrial developers refuse to build new locations in Gary.

Cobb said the project was scrutinized by officials from HUD from beginning to end, without any negative findings.

"There has been nothing has come up with HUD in terms of illegal use of these dollars, (or) conflict of interest of any kind. They are perfectly aware of everything that has transpired and there has not been any issues," Cobb said.

Bill Shaw, spokesman for HUD in Indianapolis, confirmed that the project was justified in federal applications because local construction jobs would be created. He said it's not clear if HUD was told about the house that Cobb bought.

All told, the GUEA did extensive renovations of more than a dozen homes around the city, including houses that eventually were occupied by former executive director Jojuana Meeks and the relatives of GUEA officials, GUEA records show.

Cobb had just moved to Gary in 2001 from Denver. When looking for a place to live, Cobb said she chose 724 Delaware because it was inside the empowerment zone.

GUEA sources said Cobb lived rent-free in the home for many months before buying it. Cobb said the delay between when she moved in and when she purchased the home came because the GUEA's title to the home was not clear.

Link to Empowerment Zone info: [http://www.in.gov/dlgf/files/Gary\\_Constituent\\_Packet\\_12.pdf](http://www.in.gov/dlgf/files/Gary_Constituent_Packet_12.pdf)

Mayor King Leads Gary to Celebrate Opening of County Market

By Bianca Shreeve, USCM Intern  
November 21, 2005

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The city of Gary (IN) ushered in a new phase of economic development September 28 with the opening of the County Market, the first grocery store to open in Gary in over thirty years. Gary Mayor Scott L. King, County Market owner Jim Hatchett and many other Gary residents held

a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the store's spirited grand opening. The market is part of a new 25-acre retail complex that will also include restaurants, shops, a movie theatre and bank.

"We welcome County Market to the city of Gary," King stated. "This store will provide much needed jobs and shopping opportunities for our community. Now our residents can spend their hard earned dollars in a high quality market that will spur other economic development within the city."

For the past thirty years, Gary residents have had to drive almost ten miles outside city limits to reach the nearest grocery store. The new 55,000 square-foot County Market is now easily accessible to city residents and ideally located near the interstate on one of the city's busiest intersections. The market currently employs 260 residents of Gary's Empowerment Zone, has been open approximately one month, and has already stimulated growth in the local economy with new establishments opening up in the surrounding area. As a testament to the store's importance to the city's renaissance, the inside walls are ringed with large, historic, black and white photos of dignitaries visiting Gary, from John F. Kennedy to Michael Jackson.

The County Market in Gary is owned and managed by Jim Hatchett, a Gary native with a long history of retail management. Hatchett spent a great deal of time training new employees on product knowledge and good customer service.

The Gary, East Chicago, Hammond (GECH) Empowerment Zone, working closely with King, made the County Market Plaza a reality. The GECH Empowerment Zone is one of fifteen Round II Empowerment Zones across the country, federally designated to revitalize depressed areas and boost local economies. The GECH Empowerment Zone supports public/private partnerships and encourages member cities to cooperate in the development of projects that benefit the entire region. The Gary County Market is a perfect example of this strategy, with all three cities collectively approving its construction.

The development was funded with \$6.3 million in Empowerment Zone bonds, \$2 million in Empowerment Zone loans and private investments from local banks and other organizations. King was instrumental in negotiating city tax incentives and acquiring the property for the development of the County Market, formerly an underutilized park.

<<http://usmayors.org/images/pagesGenBmprRight.jpg>>

Posted in Local <<http://nwitimes.com/news/local>> on Sunday, June 10, 2007 12:00 am Updated: 10:25 pm.

If anyone has any further inquiries regarding GUEA and their relationship with the Empowerment Zone, as well as questions regarding Venus Cobb's and Jojuana Meeks' relationship, I suggest that they contact Chris Meyers; as he worked for Jojuana Meeks at GUEA during the time most of the shenanigans were being carried out. (I wonder how he missed everything? Maybe he didn't miss it at all. maybe he was just afraid to say anything. He likely didn't want to do anything to piss off his idol and mentor, Scott King.)

Venus Cobb's handiwork should come as no surprise to him either. He's been right there through the whole sordid affair. Have you ever seen or heard Chris Meyers act in any way other than complete sycophancy? I haven't; and I don't expect to anytime soon either.

I wonder if he'll have the stones to speak up now if he sees any shenanigans? I am quite sure that he won't! Now he is beholden to his new mentor and idol, Rudy Clay. Hey, Chris: Maybe someday you'll be just like him! You've certainly been heading in that direction!

**Russo, Stephanie**

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**From:** Gary Votes [garyvotes@yahoo.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, January 18, 2010 6:10 PM  
**To:** Russo, Stephanie  
**Cc:** D2ogg1@aol.com; Jim Nowacki; Carol Smith; Carole Barnes  
**Subject:** More abuse of public monies in Gary....  
**Attachments:** Not again.doc

Good morning, Susan,

I realize that the Distressed Unit Appeals Board has yet to make their decision as to exempting the City of Gary from additional tax caps.

We want to keep you posted on the continuing misdeeds of Gary's city administration and why the people of Gary are so upset.

<http://www.post-trib.com/news/lake/1993653.ggenesis0116.article>

Is a story about Rudy Clay appointing his wife to head up the Genesis Center board of directors. She is already working as head of Weights & Measures and drawing a salary. This is yet another ploy to keep additional money in Rudy Clay's family. Please read some of the comments posted by the public.

On Thursday night, followed by a Saturday session, there was a public forum to discuss the \$28 million RDA grant to rehab Gary's Marquette Park. All voting members of this operation are city administrators. There are no voting community groups so the deal will go through.

But what is alarming is that chairing this event is one Ms. Venus Cobb, a woman who has historically been associated with graft and corruption in Gary. I am attaching an essay by Jim Nowacki that reports her history of failure.

[http://nwitimes.com/news/local/article\\_04a36313-f1e6-5c0f-bd59-b7f5578d7718.html](http://nwitimes.com/news/local/article_04a36313-f1e6-5c0f-bd59-b7f5578d7718.html)

With the city's GUEA failure in which several people went to prison, Venus Cobb purchased a GUEA house for \$59,000 that had just been rehab'd with \$200,000 worth of taxpayer's money.

If DUAB gives the city of Gary more of our property tax dollars, they will be squandered and stolen. You have to know the people you are dealing with and the extent of the political corruption that exists.

We implore the DUAB to NOT grant Gary property cap exemptions. It is our money they are wasting and there is nothing we can do to stop them unless you agree NOT to give them more of our tax dollars. Please contact us if you have any questions on this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard Barnes, Ph.D.

Also, if the City of Gary does not have enough property tax revenue, it may be due to the large number of tax-exempt properties in the city. Here is a comparative summary:

Gary, Indiana

Number of tax exempt organizations in the City:.....603

Total Asset Amount of Tax Exempt  
NonProfit Organizations in the City:..... \$515,289,990

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Hammond, Indiana

Number of tax exempt organizations in the City:.....328

Total Asset Amount of Tax Exempt  
NonProfit Organizations in the City:..... \$99,345,102

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Merrillville, Indiana

Number of tax exempt organizations in the City:.....51

Total Asset Amount of Tax Exempt  
NonProfit Organizations in the City:..... \$9,352,764

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Source: <http://www.taxexemptworld.com/>

## **Not again, please!**

Well, if anyone was still wondering if this project is going to be on the up and up, and is going to be as transparent as we keep getting told, as we are constantly promised; I think that any and all of those doubts were just removed. Removed how you ask? How...out of all of the people in the world, did Venus Cobb just so happen to get the job of spokeswoman for the project? Some of you may be wondering; who is Venus Cobb? Why am I saying this? Well, for any newcomers, and any others to whom Venus Cobb is not yet a household name; here's a crash course.

Hmmm...crash course...a perfect choice of words, if I do say so myself. Is there anything that Venus Cobb has had her grubby mitts on that hasn't crashed? Nothing that I can think of! So how...how, out of all of the possible good, qualified, respectable individuals that could have been recruited to bring credibility to this project, do we wind up with her? Not by accident, I'm sure! Just another political favor. Somebody told them: Hire this person...as a favor. OK, no problemo! Ipso facto, big surprise, now we got her. Lucky us! Just like Caren Jones, we got her, too. Aren't we lucky again! How do we keep getting so lucky?

### **Crash Course:**

**The Dalton Arms:** over \$13,000,000.00 disappeared under her watch. (Some might say with her help!) This is the once-beautiful building on 5th and Connecticut that has been empty for dozens of years. All of the money was stolen off of the front end of the deal, leaving nothing left to finish it. So there it stands, a monument to the ineptness and corruption of the Empowerment Zone, her alma mater.

**The Dusties Buffet:** Also on 5th Ave., just a hop, skip, and a jump from the Dalton, another horribly failed project. This was her baby all the way! She had pissed away nearly a million dollars before the first shovel ever hit the ground! But rather than admitting defeat, and cutting the agency's losses, she persevered. She saw it through. She made sure that the project got completed. Who cares if it wound up being the most expensive per-square-foot restaurant ever built in NWI. Minor details! Is it any wonder it's already out of business? But don't worry folks...we're not done losing money on this project just yet. Now that the Empowerment Zone has lost their nonpaying tenant, they decided to test their own skills in the restaurant business. Yeah, that makes sense. If a seasoned and obviously shrewd, experienced restaurant operator couldn't make it, surely some idiots with no restaurant experience should be successful, right? It's OK, though, it's not their money at stake, it's ours!

**County Market:** I think that just about everyone knows about this debacle, unless you were living under a rock. (Which is where it'd be nice to see certain individuals crawl back under) This record-breaking project had her fingerprints smeared all over it from start to finish. Record-breaking; the highest square-foot construction of a grocery store in the entire Midwest. The shortest time from grand opening to going out of business in the grocery industry. This project was the laughingstock of the retail grocery business.

**GUEA:** Everybody should remember GUEA. Who could forget! Somehow, even though GUEA and the Empowerment Zone, were seemingly joined at the hip, Venus Cobb managed to evade federal prosecution--unlike all of her cohorts at GUEA. Jojuana Meeks, Charmaine Pratchett, Johnnie Wright, Derrick Earls, Roosevelt Powell, Willie Harris, Will Smith Jr., et al; ask Venus about all of her friends; ask her how they're all doing. Yeah...they'll all be back soon, too. They'll all be part of this project also. Why? Because she owes all of them. Why? Because she's out!

Such a deal!: Not linked you say? GUEA spent over \$250,000.00 remodeling a house that they purchased. Guess who got to buy it for around \$60,000.00? Did you get a chance to get a deal like this? Neither did I.

East Chicago: Her hometown. The same place where Rudy has recruited all of the other "stars" currently pillaging our city. What is it about East Chicago? Weren't we getting along fine before all of these East Chicago transplants infiltrated the ranks of city government? We may not have been doing great, but we were sure doing a heckuva lot better than we have been lately!

If our "lucky streak" continues, maybe she'll holler at the rest of her old team; Felicia Flowers-Smith, Letty Almodovar (the unholy trinity). Venus'll need help, she's not smart enough to do the damage all by herself. (How smart can she be? She played a lead role in making 30-million dollars evaporate and she's still broke! That's how smart she is!) And they'll come--count on it! Like moths drawn to a flame; they'll come! It's like a force of nature. Misappropriating public money is like a sport to them, a sport which if it were an Olympic event; these ladies would be bringing home the gold. But, unfortunately, in this case, they'll be hauling it away! Unless someone stops them--unless we stop them.

In most places, if a government official were even tangentially connected to even one of these scandals of these titanic proportions, their careers in the public sector would be forever over. But here, in Gary, instead, she is afforded special privilege. Here, she is some sort of folk hero among her peers.

Our fine park, this beautiful lakefront gem, is not so much of a project to their likes, as it is a vehicle which they have already identified as a means to get their greasy paws on public funding and drag it off. They don't have the park's needs at heart. They don't have the desires and needs of the citizens at heart. They are blinded by the dollar signs. Why is it that they have overlooked nearly every common sense, inexpensive-to-implement idea; in favor of every over-the-top, questionably necessary scheme? Because they need to puff this thing up big enough so that there'll be plenty to steal without anyone noticing! Isn't it funny (sad really) that suddenly the City gets interested in Marquette Park when there are millions of dollars involved; but never cared in the least about it before? They can barely mow the lawn! They can't even plow it properly! They can't fix the playground apparatus. They can't even provide a functioning bathroom! They can't spend \$10,000.00 on maintenance of the park; what makes you think that they'll be able to properly administrate the spending of \$28,000,000.00? And it seems to have become a race to see how fast they can burn through this RDA cash. The still-lovely Marquette Park has slowly deteriorated over the course of many decades--and everyone still loves it! Maybe we should slow down a bit. Maybe we should make sure we get this right. Can't the RDA simply dedicate this funding for the park, without turning it over to these characters all at once? Maybe we should see how they do with a million or two before we get carried away and turn over the entire 28-million dollars!

What is the tradeoff here? Why do you suppose that the RDA suddenly got so generous? Why didn't they recognize the importance and value of improving Marquette Park immediately upon their formation? How could they have missed such an obvious opportunity? No folks, this is politics; this is business as usual. We may not yet know what behind-the-scenes deal has been struck; but sooner or later, we'll find out. The light will go on, and in retrospect, we'll recognize the deal. It's just a matter of time.

All of the usual hyenas--the usual sharks--smell the blood; the public project with lots of zeroes involved. It's really quite disgusting; people that have nothing important to offer, but conversely

are quite expert at taking, come out of hiding; seemingly summoned out of hiding, to participate in the latest fraud. Doesn't anybody do their homework? Shoot...before you know it, Venus will be hiring her pal Jojuana Meeks. Her prison term is just about up. Surely we'll be lucky enough to have her on board, too. I wonder how many times Venus has visited her former partner in the federal penitentiary? Probably none! That'd be odd, though. I don't think that I can remember seeing her out in public outside of the company of her good friend and associate, Jojuana.

Everything she touches, everything she gets near, have things in common; tremendous amounts of money vanish, and failed projects are left in her wake. This is her track record. This is her modus operandi. This is her resume'. Is there any reason that we should expect different from her now? Has she atoned for her past sins? Is her service to our community--her service to Marquette Park--some act of contrition? I highly doubt it--just another notch in her belt. We can't afford any more of her projects! The community can't afford any more of her "good works". Venus, go back to wherever it was you've been hiding out these past couple of years. We have not missed you. We haven't needed your special gift. (the gift of taking) We've been all right--we'll be all right! We can make it without you. Our park will be OK without you. (in fact, that's probably the only chance it's got!)

We got it covered. Thanks, but no thanks!

So, while it may sound tempting and sexy to have some quasi-governmental unit sashay into town and sprinkle this fairy dust over our beloved Marquette Park, just don't be completely shell-shocked if it turns out to be Agent Orange instead. And don't be surprised if some of these same individuals with these same smiling faces, one day aren't smiling; but instead grinning with the blood oozing from their recently sated maws--smeared on their cheeks, from just having feasted on the spoils of the carcass of another fated deal. And guess who'll again be left behind to clean up the mess? Same as ever.

Hopefully, it's just an odd coincidence that the firm playing the lead role shares a surname with one of America's contemporary horror-movie producers. It'd be awful if we later drew on this similarity in recounting the horror story which will likely unfold in the coming year in the heart of our relatively peaceful and idyllic community.

Marquette Park needs loving care. The last thing it should have to endure is being violently raped. Like the Dalton. Like the Dusties. Like the County Market. Like GUEA. Like countless other deals we have been victimized by in this city by individuals claiming to have our best interests at heart. They don't, though. Not by a longshot!

Ms. Cobb's presence is a red flag. A warning sign. Take heed. Take action. Before it's too late! I'll take no pleasures in saying "I told you so" later.