

OPINION

EDITORIAL

LCHC expansion great news for downtown Lynn

Finally, reuse for long-vacant Central Ave. building

The pending expansion of Lynn Community Health Center into three-and-a-half floors of the six-story former Lynn School Administration Building at 12-30 Central Ave. is among the more positive signs for the downtown since the economic downturn of 2008, especially given that the building has been vacant for 10 years.

And unlike the LCHC's recently completed annex on Union Street, which as a non-profit is not on the city tax rolls, the Center is renting the space in the Central Avenue building, which is owned by the Somerville-based investment firm RCG, and is on the tax rolls.

Jim Cowdell, director of the Economic Development and Industrial Corp., said Tuesday he is confident the health center's occupancy of the building will help attract additional tenants, perhaps in biotechnology.

"We're working closely with Bob Coughlin (President and CEO of the Mass Biotechnology Council), and we brought him into the city recently and showed him that building," Cowdell said.

Meanwhile, RCG Managing Principal Matthew Picarsic told The Item last week that on the building's ground level, he'd ideally like to see a café or similar business. And since the health center, according to its executive director Lori Berry, will see an additional 5,000 to 6,000 behavioral health and eye-care patients per year in the new space, there will certainly be ample foot traffic to support such small service-oriented businesses.

Cowdell called the health center's expansion a major step forward for the downtown.

"If you took a snapshot say five years ago, we didn't have hardly any residents downtown and there were vacant industrial buildings. Now we have 250 new residents — on Mount Vernon Street and in the Sloan Lofts and others — and occupancy is going up, and during the most challenging economic times of our life," Cowdell said.

The slow but steady growth of the downtown, along with its flourishing arts and cultural scene built by LynnArts, Raw Arts, Lynn Museum, Arts After Hours, Centerboard, the restored Lynn Auditorium and popular eateries including the Blue Ox and Turbine Wine Bar, are indeed positive signs. Now it's up to all who live and work here to spread the word that downtown Lynn is making strides.



Cowdell called the health center's expansion a major step forward for the downtown.



Should we be concerned about contraception?

As Washington Post columnist Ruth Marcus recounts Rick Santorum's history of flip-flopping on contraception funding, she points out that George H.W. Bush, when he was a Republican congressman in 1969, recommended evenhandedness on the subject: "We need to take sensationalism out of this topic. ... If family planning is anything, it is a public health matter." Of course.

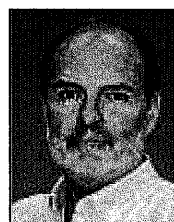
The logic of evolution coupled procreation and pleasure with remarkable success. Now the world is filled with Homo sapiens. Fortunately, as the world's population nudges up against the limits of its natural resources, reason and science have evolved, as well, enough to permit us to control the size and timing of our families.

This is a good thing, healthy for parents, for children and, as Bush says, for society as a whole. In fact, it's such a good thing that even people who believe, technically, that it's a bad thing — American Catholics, for example — find enough good in contraception that many of them practice it in opposition to the official policy of their church. The laity is ahead of the clergy on this, which is also a good thing.

Of course, not everyone sees it this way. And in a world that's already overpopulated — or will be soon enough — one wonders if easy access to the rational and civilized practice of contraception could be threatened by the election to the presidency of a zealous true believer.

Rick Santorum, for example, is an unlikely eventual nominee for the Republicans and certainly unlikely to be elected president. But the right combination of a faltering Mitt Romney campaign, already apparently bent on self-destruction, and a sudden reversal of the recovering economy and ... well, it could happen.

Santorum, who believes that con-



JOHN M. CRISP

As the world's population nudges up against the limits of its natural resources, reason and science have evolved, as well, enough to permit us to control the size and timing of our families.

trapection is a violation of the will of Providence, says that as president he wouldn't let his personal religious views shape policy. But the Feb. 25 edition of The New York Times carries a column by Tom Ferrick Jr. that features a video of Santorum speaking in Houston in 2010 to mark the anniversary of a landmark address by John F. Kennedy in the same city 50 years previously.

During the 1960 campaign, Kennedy had to convince skeptical Protestants that a Catholic president wouldn't be controlled by the pope. He began his speech to a group of ministers with this line: "I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute."

Santorum believes otherwise. As

Ferrick puts it, Santorum went to Houston to bash Kennedy, not to praise him. In fact, Santorum sharply criticizes JFK for creating "a purely secular public square cleansed of all religious wisdom."

Santorum would like to reintroduce religious wisdom into the public square, and his version of that wisdom includes prohibitions against contraception.

So, is ready access to birth control in danger? Probably not. I think.

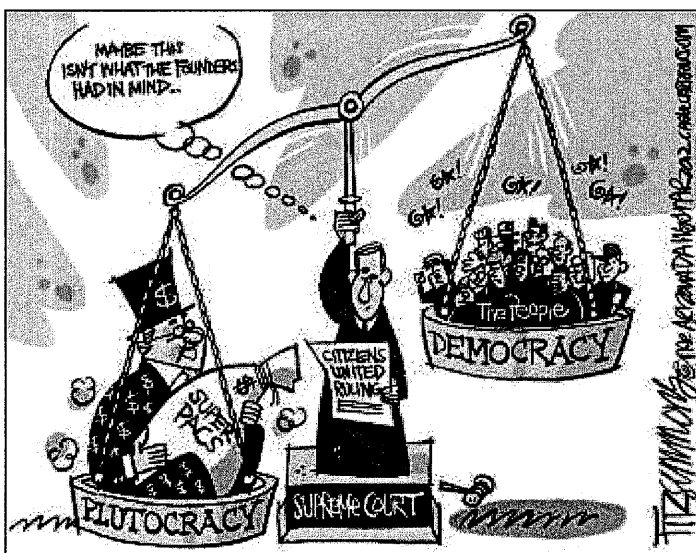
Still, the moral objections to contraception — while not identical — at least overlap with the moral objections to abortion, and the campaign to diminish or destroy a woman's right to control her reproductive destiny continues unabated.

Furthermore, a quick search of the Internet reveals a surprising amount of anti-contraception activity; it's not hard to find deeply committed, diligent individuals and groups with money and power that are willing to call many or all methods of birth control "murder."

But there's hope in the fact that Americans often manage to subvert zealots with their own brand of practical, rational wisdom. In an outburst of self-righteous dogooderism, the government prohibited alcohol in the 1920s, but Americans kept right on drinking.

In the same vein, the church and Santorum may pontificate about the evil of sex for pleasure or any other purpose except procreation, but many of the flock will do what they think is right. Some will call this self-indulgence or insufficient adherence to principle. But others see it as a blend of practical moral wisdom and freedom.

John M. Crisp teaches in the English Department at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi, Texas. Email: jcrisp@delmar.edu.



The Daily Item

ESTABLISHED DECEMBER 8, 1877

Peter H. Garage
President & Publisher

Phil Ouellette
General Manager

Jeff McMenemy
Managing Editor

Lewis Quigley
Advertising & New Media Sales Director

Stephen Flynn
City Editor

Sean Leonard
Editorial Page Editor

Amber Parcher
Web News Editor

Ralph Nelson
Information Services

Lori Towne
Controller

PUBLISHED BY:
HASTINGS & SONS PUBLISHING CO. INC.
38 EXCHANGE STREET
P.O. Box 951
LYNN, MA. 01903
COPYRIGHT 2010 THE DAILY ITEM



Are the jobless numbers cooked?

To The Item Editor:
It is evident that the economy and in particular the unemployment picture is the dominate issue in the upcoming election. But can we trust the numbers being released each month by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). When calculating the unemployment rate the BLS does not include the people who, out of frustration, have stopped looking for work.

Why not? They are still unemployed, are they not? The Congressional Budget Office, a non-partisan organization which advises Congress on costs of legislation when it is proposed, stated that if these people (estimated at 1.2 million) were included in the calculation, the unemployment rate would increase by 1.25 percent. That would bring last month's unemployment rate from 8.3 percent to 9.55 percent. And this does not include the people who are working part-time jobs because they cannot find anything else. And

LETTERS

what about all these other adjustments, assumptions and interpretations in the footnotes that are factored in, such as the seasonal adjustment that can be manipulated to come up with a lower number? Why not give us the raw real-time numbers?

The Bureau of Labor Statistics is part of The Department of Labor which is part of the Obama Administration. It is headed up by Obama-appointed Hilda Solis. Can we honestly assume that the information supplied is not tainted by politics?

There is nothing new in deception disguised as hope.

Wayne Matthews
Lynn

Fear-factor hurts economy

To The Item Editor:
It's too bad that a whole world economy and many millions of people suffer because of the greed of a very few through rumors and threats of war.

Fred Peck
Lynn

YOUR LETTERS WELCOME

The Item encourages readers to write Letters to the Editor. Letters are subject to editing for brevity and clarity. For verification purposes, all letters must include a signature, address and telephone number.

Please send letters to:

Letters
The Daily Item
38 Exchange St.
P.O. Box 951
Lynn, MA 01903

Please send e-mail to:
letterstoeditor@itemlive.com
Subject: Letters