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Joseph Tarantino: The ‘Narkewicz Effect’ — if nonprofits have money, liberals want it

By JOSEPH TARANTINO

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NORTHAMPTON — After listening to Mayor David J. Narkewicz’s advocacy for his proposed PILOT program, I have one suggestion: He should resign and leave the job of mayor to someone better able to hold the office without embarrassing the city or himself.

It is just appalling that community leaders from the Cooley Dickinson Hospital and Smith College feel pressure from the mayor to justify themselves. (guest columns, Nov. 6) It is unnerving, but not surprising, that they have been targeted simply for having money that the mayor thinks the city can better spend.

Unfortunately, the shame and humiliation that begging induces eludes our mayor. Just as ridicule subsides over Northampton’s demand to be made whole by MGM Springfield, Narkewicz wants now to shake down nonprofit cancer hospitals, history societies and educational institutions that find themselves the unfortunate vassals to the city’s current elected nobility.

The idea that a cancer patient can come to Northampton for treatment without somehow paying tribute to the mayor is an affront that he’s determined to fix.

Narkewicz and company aren't the first liberals to blow through other people's money faster than they can seize it, but the mayor is among the first to try to squeeze cancer patients at nonprofit hospitals. Devising new ways to separate people from their money is not innovative leadership, but rather a manifestation of the soaring incompetence endemic in One Party Rule.

Narkewicz looks to Boston's Democratic Party machine for inspiration. Perhaps he should take a look at Detroit's as well. There, 50 years of One Party Rule — saying yes to every tax hike and yes to every teacher demand — sent taxpayers packing. It's not the homeless or street criminals who flee voracious tax collectors, it's the people who have to most to save in seeking refuge elsewhere. Detroit is in bankrupt ruins because of the style of One Party Rule we're saddled with here in Northampton.

The mayor's panhandling is not situational, it is ideological. Money equals power. The more money something has, the more power it wields. If anyone believes that a successful shakedown of nonprofits will ever quench the thirst for higher taxes and another Proposition 2½ override, I have some beachfront property in Florence I'd like to sell you. As a liberal, Narkewicz chases this dream one tax increase — and now shakedown — at a time.

If Cooley Dickinson Hospital accedes to the mayor's demands, will donors be less likely to give money to a charity knowing of its diversion to the same tax collectors that are already at their throats?

If they stand up for themselves and resist the shakedown, will they be more likely, or less likely, to visibly invest in their institutions with this mayor around?

Here is the Narkewicz Effect: Where people have money in their pockets, they have liberals in their faces. MGM Springfield is learning this lesson. Remember that the mayor welcomed MGM to the area in true style — with his palm up, looking for money.

Local nonprofits are never going to give this mayor all the money he wants. The PILOT proposal is a smoke screen to argue that he did everything he could to avoid the next Proposition 2½ override. What we need is a new mayor.

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