

On My Mind
5/01/09

As money becomes available under the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to dust off the plans for various Capital Improvement Projects and finally implement them, it might be a good idea if those in charge took a second look at the plans, to see if they are still relevant, the projects are still needed, the best solution is being offered for whatever was intended at the time.

Not only do circumstances change, often more than a little - witness the decline in the economy, in the tourist industry - but attitudes also change. What was once acceptable may no longer be; what was once unimportant may now be more so.

A clear example of the need to take a second look, and at the waste that occurs if a second look is not taken, is the second path in the vicinity of the now-closed dump in Puerto Rico. The second path, which runs along the main road, is redundant - in addition to being hot, dusty and exposed to all the exhaust from the cars, trucks and busses that travel that route - but it was planned while the dump was still active, to avoid its smell and unpleasantness. However, by the time it was decided to implement the plan for the alternate route, the dump had closed, and the second path was, in essence, no longer necessary. But no one stopped to re-examine, to re-evaluate its need.

The over-abundance of street lights on the road that connects Beach Road and Middle Road between the Bank of Guam and DFS is another example. Power wasn't that cheap even then, but no one bothered to stop and ask whether all those lights were really necessary. At least they've been able to cut power to half of the lights, as is now the case.

The announced plan to reconstruct Route 36, the Kalabera Cave road, falls into this category as well. To begin with, there is no demand for such a road at this time. Golfers go to the Kingfisher golf range; (too many) tourists go to Kalabera. There is no connection between the two interests. Moreover, as awareness of the need for environmental protection intensifies, the fact that the area the road would impact encompasses what might be called the last piece of wilderness on Saipan - isolated, unspoiled, untouched for over sixty years by all but a handful of trekkers - becomes more significant. If the CNMI ever intends to promote eco-tourism - another recent "attitude" shift - as it is intended, it will need to preserve such wilderness areas or there will be no place left on island to practice eco-tourism. Whatever the original impetus to rebuild that road, the change of values and perspective in the meantime call for thorough re-evaluation and reconsideration of the decision to wreak such havoc on the area.

Given the administration's penchant for re-programming CIP funds, it might also behoove those in charge of CIP monies to tighten the controls over what gets funded and when and why. With funding at a premium, plans, decisions, made years ago should not be automatically implemented without a close look as to priorities as well as present needs and circumstances.

Short takes:

Kudos to the person who took out an ad advertising his cows as alternate lawn mowers or a personal food source! Now that's creativity! A real sense of entrepreneurship! Even though I am not ordinarily interested in cows - I do drink milk but rarely eat beef anymore - it was an eye-catching ad that certainly caught my attention, so I called to ask for details. Seems the rancher has about 50 head of cattle, which are becoming too expensive to maintain, so he's decided to sell a few. He can be reached at 789-7587.

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Kudos as well to the *Saipan Tribune* for the investigative reporting leading to its "Sunshine Project"!!! In this day and age when more and more newspapers are being shut down, the *Trib* has shown just how effective a newspaper can be in providing important information to its community. The report appeared in its 4/27 issue.

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It will be interesting to see to what extent Rota's shoreline is altered by the recent removal of a rusty fishing vessel from the reef just north of its Tatqua Beach. This one was not done in conjunction with the Army Corps of Engineers, according to the story in today's *Saipan Tribune* as was the removal of a wreck from Managaha Island which brought on extensive erosion problems, so maybe the effect won't be as disastrous. One can only watch, and hope.

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Calendar notes: The Friends of the Arts' production "My Fair Lady" is at the Susupe Multiple Purpose Center (SMPC) today, Friday, 5/1, and tomorrow, Saturday, 5/2 at 7:00 p.m. On Sunday, 5/3, the matinee will be at 3:00 p.m. It's a fun story, with a great cast. Enjoy!

Also tonight at 6:00 p.m. at the Garapan Fishing Base, a rally for improved status for alien workers is slated that will march to American Memorial Park where several speakers will be presented, including Representative Tina Sablan, Ed Propst, Ron Hodges and gubernatorial candidates Juan N. Babauta and his running mate Galvil Deleno Guerrero; **Monday night, 5/4, at 6:00 p.m.** Retirement Fund members will meet at the SMPC to discuss next steps in organizing, taking action; on **Tuesday at 6:00 p.m.**, Arora Pankaj of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 9, will discuss the Brownfield project in Marpi at the SMPC; from **5:00 - 8:00 p.m. on 5/7**, the Mariana Islands Nature Alliance will hold its annual membership meeting - all interested in joining are welcome - at the 13 Fishermen Memorial on Beach Road. Agenda items include announcement of grants received and in the pipeline totaling more than \$250,000!

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All the talk about test scores and numerical requirements for highly qualified teachers makes the finding from a recent retreat held for Chuuk public school principals all the more significant. The retreat was a collaborative effort by the College of Micronesia, the Department of Education and Xavier High School. It was reported in the January issue of *Micronesian Counselor*, available on the web at < www.micsem.org >.

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A major lesson learned: that the strategies for training teachers be changed from an "analyze-think-change" to a "see-feel-change" approach. In other words, allowing principals to engage in self-reflection, beginning with their experiences and feelings which are in the form of a personal narrative and not a consultant's report. It would include story-telling, which gives principals a way to reflect on their practices, to challenge the value structure, and to resolve dilemmas, so they become better prepared to confront the ethical dimensions of their leadership role. Rich food for thought!

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The furor created by the various comments made by public officials in regard to the conviction of the CNMI Lt. governor is disturbing. Not one of us is all good, or all bad. We all have flaws. When those flaws go so far as to violate law, they should, of course, be punished. But that doesn't mean everything about the the whole person is thus totally flawed. It's not an "either-or" condition. We can and should give credit to those aspects of the person that remain unflawed.