

To the Board of Commissioners,

CARFAC was established to independently assess, interpret and analyze complicated, highly technical topics the Board must consider in managing the township. Over the last six years, CARFAC members have been honored to advise the township on critical issues and initiatives such as pension and OPEB funding, an existing swaption, financial forecasting, creation of a stakeholders report, as well as the annual audit and annual budget.

CARFAC's analysis identifies best practices in use in other municipalities and what is sustainable over the long-term. CARFAC makes no decisions. Its analysis has no direct effect on any person or institution in the Township. It is strictly deliberative and advisory. It has no enforcement authority. The word advisory is in the committee's name, and defines its purpose. Members of the public have always been welcome to observe its meetings. The minutes of its meetings are available on the Township's website.

The members of CARFAC have held extensive discussions regarding televising and recording its meetings since the issue came up last December. We believe that the issue is not actually about televising meetings. Rather, we believe that it has developed from a mistaken opinion that CARFAC is being influenced by township administration to take certain positions. Nothing could be further from the truth. There seems to be a belief that televising or recording our meetings will either demonstrate that this is occurring or prevent it from happening – essentially placing a “nanny cam” at our meetings. We view this as entirely disrespectful to our professionalism and the personal integrity of each CARFAC member. If there is truly a concern about CARFAC's independence, then let's discuss that explicitly. Televising meetings is not the solution.

We have always held our openness, honesty, integrity and transparency in the highest regard. In fact, we do televise and/or publically publish our reports, typically at a BOC meeting. We also have created recorded reports, posted to the township web site. We televised our March meeting and plan to televise key meetings regarding the audit report and five year financial forecast. However, we do not believe that a formal resolution that mandates televised meetings provides the needed flexibility or is the best use of the township's resources, nor is it respectful of our professional judgement.

CARFAC is a project-based committee. Recording or televising meetings would inhibit, or worse, eliminate brainstorming and the free flow of ideas as committee members would be concerned that developing ideas would be later misrepresented or taken out of context. This is of particular concern since the recordings are made available permanently and accessible essentially anywhere in the world. Further, the physical layout of the meeting room as a dais would hinder informal and effective conversation.

CARFAC members are further concerned that people may inappropriately exploit their professional affiliations, which could inhibit the free flow and brainstorming of ideas.

Televising all CARFAC meetings will defeat its ability to examine the technical aspects of its assigned projects from a purely analytical, independent, neutral viewpoint. That is, it will not be able to do what it was asked to do when it was formed. When CARFAC provides its product to the Board and the public, it is the responsibility of the Board to seek and benefit from public input.

We are concerned that televising meetings will lead to politicizing the meetings and encourage “playing to the camera.” For example, at a recent BOC meeting, in addressing the CARFAC recommendation to contribute surplus funds to the pension fund, an accusation was made that it was initiated by administration to protect their pensions. This simply was not the case. Further, this type of behavior is disrespectful to the volunteer citizens of CARFAC, is embarrassing to the township, and is not productive of the goal of managing the township finances.

Resolving that all CARFAC meetings be televised is a fundamental change to its structure that will ultimately make it impossible for it to independently assess, interpret and analyze projects assigned to it by the Board. We are greatly concerned that our personal integrity is being questioned and that some Board members feel that our meetings need to be televised and recorded because of that. We are also concerned that televising meetings will impact our continued success and inhibit our ability to provide our best advice to the Board. Because of this, each member of CARFAC has individually determined that if the Board proceeds in that direction, CARFAC as it currently exists, cannot function.

Radnor Township Citizens Audit Review and Financial Advisory Committee
4.19.17