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## Editorial

### Editorial: Radnor in the wrong for fender-bender bill

By:  
01/30/2007

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Radnor Township has discovered a new way to add insult to non-injury. It's called a safety-service user fee. Here's how it works:

Say you're in a minor traffic accident. A car stops short and you bang into it. No one is hurt but a Radnor police car arrives at the scene. Insurance information is exchanged, apologies might even been made and decently (or grumpily) accepted. And then everyone goes off on their not-so-merry ways. (Who likes car accidents?)

A month later, you receive a bill from a company called the Cost Recovery Corp. for the services provided by the Radnor Police Department for being at the scene of the accident.

This is because Radnor Township has decided to charge non-residents involved in fender benders and other matters for such services. And it has hired CRC to do the collecting.

The company, based in Dayton, Ohio, does this by sending threatening letters to those people identified by police as being responsible for the accident.

Havertown attorney Mark Harbison was just such a person, as he explained recently to our Lois Puglionesi.

Last October he was involved in a fender-bender in Radnor.

In November he got a bill from CRC (with the Radnor Township Police Department as a co-signer) for "motor-vehicle accident services." It came to \$333.20 and was broken down thusly: \$209.44 for one police car; \$96.20 for a police officer; and \$28.58 for "police station prep."

He was issued no ticket or citation.

Harbison questions the legality of the township's power to "pass on emergency-response services, even to a responsible party," adding "That's what people pay their taxes for. I pay a Haverford Township tax and now I have to pay for Radnor."

Radnor Solicitor David Blake defended the new practice as best he could.

The bill, he said, "comes as a shock because it's not expected, and it's not happening in other communities in the area ..."

If only more communities "hopped on board," Blake suggested, people would get used to it.

Yes, more people need to get used to being picked up by their ankles and shaken. And more grubby little municipalities need to enjoy doing the shaking.

After Harbison challenged the authority of the CRC and its heavy-handed collection techniques, he got a letter from its parent company, United Telemanagement Corp.

CEO Dr. Terry Henley informed Harbison that payment of the bill was purely "voluntary" and that if the individual chooses not to pay it, "no further action is taken ..." Well, isn't that neighborly?

CRC's position seems to be: Here's the invoice for services rendered, but it's not really a bill. It's just a suggestion. Pay us whatever you think is fair, or nothing at all.

Harbison deserves credit for making a public stink about it all.

"It's not about the money," Harbison told us. "And it's not about me. This just seems wrong."

It seems wrong because it is wrong.

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Blake says that the board of commissioners may take another look at its arrangement with CRC next month "to see if it's something we want to continue with, tweak, or get out of completely."

Good idea.

Let's hope it's the last option.

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