

Saturday, October 20, 2007

## No secrets, S. Plainfield

Democratic Party honchos in South Plainfield didn't win any awards for open government this week. To the contrary. They get the booby prize for secrecy and obstruction at the expense of borough residents.

Here's the deal. When a former councilwoman claimed that her status as a divorced single mom had cost her a municipal job, she sued the borough and won. But the Democrat-run administration refused to make public any details about the settlement, most notably the amount paid. Taxpayers should have enjoyed easy access to this basic information. It was, after all, their business and money.

The local Republican Party turned around and sued. That was' two years ago. Now, after all of this very unnecessary and rather caustic legal wrangling, the administration has fessed up: It paid Darlene Pinto \$125,000.

Pinto, by the way, is a Democrat. She claimed she was denied the job as deputy borough tax collector because she was a divorced mother of three and had received a "sizable" divorce settlement.

Defendants in the suit included the borough's Democratic organization, former Mayor Daniel Gallagher, Councilman Dennis Cerami, and Borough Attorney and state Assemblyman Patrick Diegnan, D-Middlesex.

Now, was that so hard?