

Letters to the Editor

Resident Asks: Who's In Charge?

Mr. McDermott or Mayor McDermott

I attended the Town Council meeting on Tuesday, September 30, to listen to the latest presentation by Nassau HKT regarding the massive apartment buildings, retail space, and parking decks the mayor is planning to build in the center of town.

What I found particularly disturbing and disappointing is Mayor McDermott's unwillingness to review the proposal for these massive structures objectively. While as a resident of Westfield Mr. McDermott is entitled to his opinion the same as any other resident, as "Mayor McDermott" he must remain objective, present all the facts to the taxpayers, good or bad, and consider the opinion of all taxpayers when deciding how to proceed with the proposed construction.

Based on Mayor McDermott's response to direct and specific questions, it seems that Mayor McDermott is determined to proceed based on the personal opinion of Mr. McDermott as to what is best for our town, regardless of what other taxpayers think. How I arrived at my impression of Mayor McDermott can be best explained by a summary of his responses at the meeting.

When asked what timeline the mayor had in mind for deciding on how to proceed on the proposed construction, the mayor could not, or would not, give an answer. The mayor stated that after the results of the financial, traffic, environmental, and school impact studies are received at the end of the year, he would decide then. The fact of the matter is that preliminary financial, traffic, environmental, and school impact studies should have been completed 12 months ago as a reality check to see if it makes sense to proceed with this project. The studies could then have been updated as the project progressed. However, Mayor McDermott did not see the importance of this, and instead is allowing Nassau HKT to market/sell the project on renderings alone. This is a smart move by Nassau HKT, as they are very experienced at this business. Nassau HKT wants to sell the project based on pretty pictures until they feel the taxpayers are so in love with the structures, that they couldn't imagine living without them. At that time Mayor McDermott and Nassau HKT can present the results of the reports, and push the project through.

To date the renderings do not, and I don't think they ever will, show the relationship of the proposed massive structures to the existing surrounding structures. For now the issue of when the studies should have been completed is a moot point, because no matter how much taxpayers complain, the studies will not be ready until the end of the year at the earliest. Beyond that, Mayor McDermott will not commit to a schedule. So now, the taxpayers have no idea when Mayor McDermott is going to try to push this project through. The taxpayers have to keep monitoring on a daily basis in order to keep informed. The more those opposed to these structures have to keep guessing to figure out what Mayor McDermott has in mind, the easier it will be for Mayor McDermott to advance the personal agenda of Mr. McDermott.

When asked if he is still considering the option of not building the proposed structures, Mayor McDermott basically responded that he could not anticipate any results from the studies which would lead him to conclude that the proposed structures should not be built. Mayor McDermott is of the opinion that no matter what the problem, the plans can be adjusted to fix the problem. Mayor McDermott is not willing to keep the option of not building the proposed structures on the table for discussion. This is not an objective point of view, and as such Mayor McDermott is not looking out for the best interest of the town, but instead is looking out for the interest of Mr. McDermott. Evidently Mr. McDermott is extremely confident that no matter how round of a peg these structures become, Mayor McDermott has a large enough hammer to drive them into a square hole.

When asked if he would support a

non-binding referendum to poll the opinion of the taxpayers, Mayor McDermott replied that he would not. Hiding behind the redevelopment legislation, Mayor McDermott stated that he is not required, and does not see the need, to have a non-binding referendum as a means of polling the taxpayers to obtain accurate verifiable information as to whether or not the taxpayers want the structures built. Even though these structures will permanently change the character of town, and set a precedent for other contractors and real estate developers to buy up land and continue to over develop the town, Mayor McDermott does not think it is required to find out if the taxpayers want their town to be changed in such a manner. Mayor McDermott feels that the opinion of the taxpayers is not important, and that Mr. McDermott has the knowledge and ability to decide for the taxpayers what is best for their town.

While Mr. McDermott is entitled to his opinion, for a project of this magnitude which will permanently change our town, Mayor McDermott is obligated to review all the facts objectively, present the facts to the taxpayers, and proceed based on the decision of the majority of the taxpayers. Mayor McDermott is not supposed to use his office to advance the agenda of Mr. McDermott and Nassau HKT. I encourage the town councilmen and all taxpayers to keep the heat on Mayor McDermott to ensure he proceeds based on the will of the taxpayers, not the will of Mr. McDermott and real estate developers.

John Lizzo
Westfield

Resident Says Build One Deck and Evaluate

Talk about a scary letter! First Ward Councilman Sal Caruana brought Halloween early with the projected annual losses of the parking decks. Over \$340,000 per year for the first five years! Not even a potential self-financing capability until years 16-20 and who wants to place a bet on that scenario!

Councilman Caruana comes to an excellent conclusion with which I strongly agree as previously expressed in this space. Build one deck and evaluate the impact before going any further. The obvious place is the Prospect site, which can service both downtown parking needs, the original reason for a deck, and commuter needs as well with a five minute exercise walk thrown in for free. The mix of downtown parking versus commuter parking can be adjusted to make sure the deck operates at capacity thus costing taxpayers as little as possible.

Finally, anything that can be done to make the structure as unobtrusive and as attractive as possible must be done. Height, building materials, capacity, landscaping - all should focus on preserving the beauty of Westfield. If additional parking must come, impact on the community must be the first priority.

Robin Fry
Westfield

Westfield Shopper Says A Deck Is Not Required

The continuing talk about building parking decks in downtown Westfield leaves me baffled. I shop downtown often, probably five or six times a week. I always find a parking space within the first loop around a parking lot.

Today when I went downtown, a Friday afternoon, there were at least 20 spots available in the lot across from Talbot's on North Avenue. Yesterday, when I stopped in at Baron's in the morning, there were three spots in the lot behind the store. Even last Saturday afternoon, with the town mobbed with shoppers, I found a spot, one of many, in the lot on Prospect Street.

Why do we need an expensive parking deck in this town?

Carol Morton
Westfield



Nicholas Scutari, DEM
Candidate for State Senate, LD22
**My Plan to Improve New Jersey;
A New, But Experienced Voice**

As the Democrat Party candidate for the State Senate, I want to set out for you my plan to improve New Jersey. My prior service for seven years as a Union County Freeholder makes me ready to now represent you in the State Legislature.

My record includes advocacy for open space initiatives, dredging of our harbors to spur economic growth and an appreciation that we must adopt smart growth including timed building ordinances to insure sufficient infrastructure to end the sprawl and the over development.

My service as a prosecutor will allow me to be your advocate. I support legislation, which would fit jails for video

transmission to eliminate unnecessary transport of prisoners, freeing police for crime fighting duties.

I understand the critical issue of the property tax crisis in our state. Over the past two years the Legislature was forced to make cuts because of severe budget shortfalls. The entire tax structure for providing services and school funding is failing and must be changed. We face more hard options.

I am a new voice, but an experienced one. These are tough times in New Jersey, but I believe my experience and dedication will serve you best.

Nicholas Scutari

FW Councilman Responds to Letter From Candidate Colleen Mahr

I would like to respond to a Letter to the Editor from Colleen Mahr, Democratic Mayoral candidate on October 2, involving the existing emergency service communication tower structure.

Her letter suggests that the current bipartisan council did not discover that the borough's emergency communications system needed enhanced grounding.

In 2002, the council unanimously supported earmarking \$18,000 in the 2002 Capital Budget for lighting protection for the Borough Hall building complex at 75 North Martine Avenue. The existing emergency service communication tower is considered a part of the building. Three thousand dollars out of the budgeted \$18,000 will go towards upgrading the grounding system as a part of the completed installation and prior to the actual activation of the enhanced emergency service radio communication system.

Another fact undetected by the Democratic Mayoral candidate was the bipartisan support from the Borough Council involving a \$120,000 allocation in the 2003 Capital Budget. The allocated amount will go towards the purchasing and installation of a new emergency services tower structure to replace the nearly 30-year-old aging tower.

If only Ms. Mahr would have attended either our agenda or council sessions on a regular basis instead of attending a few where police department personnel were briefing the mayor and council on various types of radio tower structures available, perhaps she would know all the facts involving this

issue. As the Chairman of the Public Safety Committee, the current administration is forever grateful and dedicated to those individuals who proudly serve our borough as volunteer fire and rescue squad members and police officers.

Dave Trumpp, Republican
Fanwood Council Candidate

The Religion of Secularism Has A Dark Tone For Society

I can't help but express my dismay at Sarah Masel's letter in last week's *Westfield Leader*. Why shouldn't anyone have the right to use this medium for expressing his or her opinions?

Her letter smacked of intolerance, and dare I say prejudice. If we are members of a free and open Society, then it should follow that our newspapers reflect the community in proportion to its character.

The crack about *The Leader* endorsing Msgr. Harms had a dark tone to it, but I say *The Leader* should endorse Msgr. Harms and all the leaders of religious congregations within our community!

These communities are one of our town's greatest assets. They constantly work together for the betterment of Westfield, and I am sure that if you sit them down together, they would very happily concur.

Now I have a question. What about the religion known as secularism? Do these people believe they are the only ones with a voice in our community? It is the intolerance of secularism that could lead our society down a dark path void of concern for our fellow man.

I respect Sarah Masel's right to have her views, but I deplore the effect such a view will have on society at large.

Javier Perez-Santalla
Grand Knight
Westfield K of C

Liu Returns Home From Operation Iraqi Freedom

By BENJAMIN CORBIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Westfield resident Lance Corporal Rong Liu of Golf Company 225 Second Battalion 25th Regiment reserves was stationed in Anasaria, which was about a quarter mile from the hospital where Jessica Lynch was rescued. His company spent about five months in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Mr. Liu, a graduate of Westfield High School, spoke with *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* about his duties and experiences in Iraq.

Golf Company was in charge of patrolling the city of Anasaria. They were there to locate Former Baathes Party members, the Fedayeen and the 55 most wanted list members.

When asked about his experiences in

Iraq, Mr. Liu said, "At night the Iraqis would take pop shots at us. They did this to unnerve us."

Mr. Liu went on to say how Iraq made you grow up real fast, and how even a simple shower is a great thing.

Mr. Liu said, "What made it worth it was knowing that the Iraqis would not be tortured anymore and to have the learning experience of another culture. I'm also happy to say that my company had zero casualties, which was the most important point."

Now that Mr. Liu is back, he is returning to civilian life by continuing his education as a full-time student at Kean University, while still finding the time to volunteer as an Emergency Medical Technician with the Westfield Volunteer Rescue Squad.

Council Candidate Says Fanwoodians Want A Say In Their Own Downtown

In 1999, the current Republican team was elected into office being against a project that was proposed on the Dean Oil site, at the corner of LaGrande and Second.

This project proposed one two-story 25-unit apartment building. The Republicans referred to the project as the "Towers of Fanwood."

Four years later, they now have changed their tune. The downtown plan that they have put together, with their handpicked developer, will allow up to 130 residential apartments in multiple three and a half story buildings!

The Jung administration has repeatedly stated that they have held more than 22 meetings on the downtown revitalization, yet the community residents and businesses indicate that they are not really sure what is in the plan or it's current status. Most of the meetings have been behind closed doors, where they are making the housing density of the downtown block higher and the buildings taller. Any public meetings held were not de-

signed for open discussion, but were rather "information sharing" that were often misleading or gave little credibility to the facts presented.

We believe that the downtown of Fanwood should reflect the vision of the citizens of Fanwood, not the vision of the developer and their hired professionals. We all want a downtown that looks good and has a diversity of stores. Why must we have a downtown that is planned by outsiders and not by the community who will ultimately have to live with what is built?

The Mahr, Molenaar and Dolce team will incorporate your ideas and suggestions to ensure that the plan reflects the vision of the entire community. We believe the downtown should be planned by Fanwood residents for Fanwood residents.

Together, we will make a better Fanwood by putting Fanwood first!

Jack Molenaar, Democrat,
Fanwood Council Candidate

OWEN BRAND

Your Home Town MORTGAGE BANKER

IVY MORTGAGE

**Residential - Construction
Commercial - Bridge Loans**

Local (908) 789-2730
Toll Free (888) 489-9680
Pager (908) 552-5007
obrand@ivymortgage.com

Licensed Mortgage Bankers - NJ Dept. of Banking
Equal Housing Lender

NORTHSIDE

TRATTORIA

The Fall just got hotter.

Jazz at the Trattoria

"What is swing? Man, if I gotta explain it, you don't have it!" Louis Armstrong

Northside Trattoria
16 Prospect Street
Westfield, New Jersey
908.232.7320

November 12th, '03 & December 10th, '03

Beginning this Autumn, the Northside Trattoria will play host to some of the finest jazz ensembles in New Jersey.

On the second Wednesday of every month you are cordially invited to join us for a four course dinner followed by an evening of jazz.

The evening will commence with a four-course dinner beginning at 6:30pm. Music will follow from 8:00-10:00pm. Guests will be served an assortment of appetizers, a seasonal salad, a choice of entrees tailor-made for each event, desserts and cappuccino or espresso.

DINNER SERVED AT 6:30PM | MUSIC FROM 8:00 - 10:00PM
RESERVATIONS STRONGLY RECOMMENDED
e-mail: wychwoodcatering@aol.com

The Pink Line Project

October 18, 2003

Join Westfield as we
Paint the Town Pink for Breast Cancer Awareness

*Pink is for prevention,
knowledge, and early detection.
Let's paint the town with it!*

**Saving Lives,
Saving Communities**



The Finest in 18th Century Reproductions

**Columbus Week Savings on
Hundreds of Floor Pieces Storewide****

PLUS DON'T MISS
STATTON 1/2 PRICE CHERRY BEDROOM*

Pineapple Bed Queen Size
List \$2835. Sale \$1418.

Night Stand
W22 1/2 D16 1/2 H28 1/2
List \$1339. Sale \$670.

Chest on Chest W37 1/2 D19 H62 1/2
List \$4428. Sale \$2214.

Double Dresser
W59 1/2 D19 H34 1/2
List \$4158. Sale \$2079.
Mirror W28 1/2 H39
List \$905. Sale \$453.

Sleigh Bed
Headboard Height 44 1/2
Queen List \$4212. Sale \$2106.

* Select Bedroom Pieces Only
**Must take October Delivery

SHIFMAN
Bedding
Now On SALE
SAVE 30-50%
PLUS UP TO
\$110 INSTANT REBATE

Valley Furniture Shop

33 Forest Avenue, Hawthorne, New Jersey 07506 • (973) 427-1848
20 Stirling Road, Watchung, New Jersey 07069 • (908) 756-7623
Monday-Saturday 10-5:30 • Thursday Evenings 'til 9 PM • Sunday 1-5