

High Hopes For Property Tax Forum Not Realized from State Leaders

When I first heard about the Property Tax Forum that Scotch Plains's Mayor Martin Marks fostered I had high hopes. This was based on being able to put the reasons on the table for the rapid rise of our property taxes and have the public address the panel directly. I can't understand how we can fix the problem without identifying the causes.

An example would be should your car stop running, would you expect the mechanic to fix it without knowing the cause? However, as I feared this open and frank discussion did not happen, in fact the tax paying public was relegated to only spectators.

Regardless, Mayor Marks should once again be commended for his bold actions to call for this forum and his suggestion to sit down with Asw. Linda Stender and Asm. Jon Brannick and develop a bipartisan legislature to address the property tax situation. However, I have my doubts that this will ever take place. This is especially important since Governor Cody has decided to be a non-actor in the property tax problem's resolution.

The timing for this could not be better, since the assembly is up for re-election this coming fall. This means they need something from us, which is our vote. The best way to do this is to do a "job well done" by giving us property tax reform, which includes spending controls. Without this action, we will have no other

Editor's Note

We received more than a dozen letters from members of the Westfield Baseball League critical of the Westfield BOE's decision to deny the league use of the WHS varsity field. We thank everyone but regret that all letters could not be printed.

Erratum

The photograph published on June 30 entitled BARTENDER IN FANWOOD of John Paff incorrectly listed his website. The correct website is www.njbartender.org

choice but to look at the other candidates in November.

Obviously the legislature in total don't care since they decided it was more important to go on vacation then to worry about the affordability of our keeping our homes and pushing for any property tax reform.

When it comes to the meeting, my take of the discussion was a group of people that are responsible for spending our money who are unable or unwilling to address the problem, don't want to discuss the facts and were to busy pointing fingers and coming up with excuses to address the issues. If it was in my power and they reported to me I would have to take action to assure that the problem is solved. This would consist of removal from the equation of those that are part of the problem, rather than part of solution.

There was no discussion as to the salaries that our public employees receive, the public funded medical coverage, political patronage positions, Abbott districts, bonus of tax payer money to politically connected individuals, number of employees and most of all complacent voters.

One only has to take a look at the parking lot and see the All Wheel Drive Volvo Wagons and the BMW to mention a few of the vehicles driven by members of the panel and one can easily see that they do not have the same concerns about keeping their houses as many of the common taxpayers have!

The president of the school board most likely spoke for many when she thanked the panel for not placing the blame on the school board. This is amazing since they alone are responsible for 64 percent of the local property taxes in Scotch Plains.

Considering that our elected officials and those that control our money only have excuses I came away from the forum with a profound realization that we are in deep trouble and can't count on our elected officials to fix the problem. It is obvious that the ship will sink, if we the common people don't act and do so soon.

Albert Muller
Scotch Plains

Letters to the Editor

Voice Your Opinion to BOE, Let Our Kids Play Summer Baseball

It has come to my attention that Dr. Foley and the Westfield Board of Education recently denied use of the Westfield Varsity Baseball field to our summer baseball teams as a result of the complaints of a single resident who purchased a home adjacent to the baseball field.

I have four children that play various sports such as soccer, lacrosse, baseball and football, as well as join in other activities that the school system, PAL, PBA, YMCA and other organizations offer in this great town of ours, whether they are sports or after school programs.

I have been lucky enough to have grown

BOE Doesn't Value Kids in Sports

It has come to my attention that Dr. Foley and the Westfield Board of Education has recently denied the Westfield Baseball Association the use of the varsity baseball field for their summer games. I was told the reason is because one resident living adjacent to the field had complained.

How does one family have such power over the BOE? It's not a safety or health issue. What is the basis for your decision? Does allowing children to play baseball violate any law? The only injustice here is your decision to deny our children access to the field.

I have volunteered my time as a coach in multiple sports for the last five years in Westfield. It has been my experience that the BOE fields are the worst maintained in town. I raise this issue because it shows that the BOE obviously doesn't place a value on what a child can learn on the playground or in sports.

It's bad enough that you don't devote the proper resources to maintain the fields, but now you find it necessary to deny our kids the opportunity to play on the fields. Your decision is extremely disappointing.

Tom Fazio
Westfield

up in this town and have been able to have a successful business here for the past 24 plus years and though I believe our taxes are very high and possibly out of control, I have always been impressed with this town's ability to keep "The Small Town" appearance. That, I believe is one of the reasons we all stay, return or move here for the first time.

We have one of the best school systems and excellent sports programs that a town can offer as well as a dedicated group of individuals, whether paid or volunteers (too many to name) that make all of these and other very important programs work. But, if this is all it takes (complaints of a single resident) to shut down part, or all of our systems that we put into place and have worked so hard to achieve, then we had all better start looking for a new address.

Let's not forget that at one time we were all children and may have not had all of these great programs when we were younger to take advantage of. After all, I believe that it is our children of our community and the communities around us that are the most important factor here!

These programs are here to keep our children safe, productive and active and to become an asset and not a burden to us all. We know when they move on to another community, or stay in ours as they get older, that they will be representing the town they came from and continuing programs they so much enjoyed as children.

I very seldom voice my opinion and usually will go with the flow, but we all need to voice our opinions when it is as important as this and when it affects our children of our community.

Please let your voices be heard and help our programs continue. And, if you decide to find a new address, be sure it's not next to an airport, stadium, dog pound, super market or a varsity baseball field.

Nicholas Archambault
Westfield

WHS Varsity Baseball Field Closed to Summer Leagues

By FRED LECOMTE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD — The board of education's recent decision to close the Westfield High School varsity baseball field, located behind Edison Intermediate School, is not sitting well with summer baseball leagues that utilize the field.

Board Secretary Robert Berman told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times* this week that the varsity field has been closed to organized baseball leagues for the past two weeks following complaints from area residents.

According to district spokeswoman Lorre Korrecky, Westbrook Avenue residents Xiaoming Chen, Janice Gwaldis and Doriann Prasek complained at the board's April 12 meeting of foul balls on their properties.

Business Secretary Robert Berman said this week, "The Westfield High School varsity baseball field was utilized all spring and has been restricted from use for the past two weeks, with the JV field and the Roosevelt School field as alternate sites."

"We worked out a schedule with the (Westfield) Recreation Department and we have been in contact with Westfield Baseball League representatives and an engineer to explore what steps, if any, can make our varsity facility safer for nearby residents."

Frank Fusaro, President of the Westfield Baseball League who has resided in Westfield and played baseball in Westfield for many years said, "We are extremely dissatisfied with their decision and we have asked them to reverse their decision. Unfortunately, they are standing by it and refusing the baseball teams the use of the fields."

"They seem to think that it is a severe safety issue, and while we are not trying to minimize that safety issue, we feel that it is important that the varsity field remain open and allow our ball players to play there. We once again ask the property owner why they purchased a home immediately adjacent to a varsity baseball field."

According to Mr. Fusaro, over 1,500 families have kids who play baseball on the varsity field.

Mrs. Liz Younger, the mother of a 12-year-old baseball player said she feels school officials need to find another solution to the problem of foul balls landing on neighboring properties.

"It is not acceptable that one family can dictate the use of a field that has been in use for many years and affects a great number of players and families," she said.

WeCare Updates Web Address, Information

WESTFIELD — The public advocacy group, WeCare (Westfielders Concerned About Responsible Development) announced a new website address, wecarewestfield.com.

WeCare invites the public to visit the website for updated information regarding the group's mission statement, residents concerns list, the town's current parking improvement proposal, WeCare's parking proposal and WeCare's Top 10 campaign issues list.

WeCare thanks residents for their continued support and hopes that the new website provides updated information on issues that are important to citizens and the Town of Westfield.

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