

The Westfield Leader THE SCOTCH PLAINS-FANWOOD
 — Established 1890 —
 Legal Newspaper for the Town of Westfield,
 Boroughs of Mountainside and Garwood
 And the County of Union, N.J.
 Members of:
 New Jersey Press Association • National Newspaper Association • Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce
 Scotch Plains Business & Professional Association • Fanwood Business & Professional Association

Periodicals - Postage Paid at Westfield, New Jersey
 P.O. Box 250 • 251 North Avenue, West
 Westfield, N.J. 07091

Periodicals - Postage Paid at Scotch Plains, New Jersey
 P. O. Box 368
 Scotch Plains, N.J. 07076

Tele: (908) 232-4407 • E-mail: editor@goleader.com • Web: www.goleader.com • Fax: (908) 232-0473

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the offices of the newspapers at
 P. O. Box 250, Westfield, New Jersey 07091

Published every Thursday by Watchung Communications, Inc.

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Subscription Price
 One-year - \$28 • Two-year - \$52 • Three-year - \$76 • One-year college (September to May) - \$20

Letters to the Editor

SP Mayor Should Spend More Time Becoming Knowledgeable on Taxes

The municipal budget has now been approved by a "4 to 1" vote. This budget requires a five-point increase in the portion of our property tax used for municipal purposes. I was the "1" that held out for a lower tax increase. What disappointed and disturbed me as much as the five-point tax increase was having to listen to the mayor again berate our governor and state legislatures for our local tax problems. I said it before and I'll say it again, the mayor (Martin Marks) should spend less time campaigning for the state legislature and more time becoming more knowledgeable on local tax issues and to demand greater accountability by those who manage our township's resources and expenses.

I hoped that he would have refrained from using his old charts "again" on how our tax dollars are distributed between the board of ed, county and our municipal government; his effort to shift the issue of municipal taxes elsewhere is running thin.

The mayor credited me with pushing to lower this year's tax increase from eight points to five points and, although I appreciate his acknowledgment, I believe our taxpayers would have been grateful to him to have endorsed my proposal to lower the increase from five points to two points.

In spite of the dramatic economic doomsday scenario that was portrayed by the mayor and my fellow council members, who supported the need to have the highest surplus ever, I believe that we could have responsibly lowered this year's tax increase by three points. I guess, unlike the mayor and my fellow council members, I am more optimistic about our nation's and township's future. I have over 30 years of corporate management experience and, in the worst of economic times in my career, I never observed such a frightful portrayal of looming bad things to come.

One thing I am certain of is that we don't need to alarm our citizens by saying the tax increase might not be enough, as

was mentioned at the budget meeting, or consider factoring into our high surplus contingency, cost to cover the eventuality of a tornado destroying town hall.

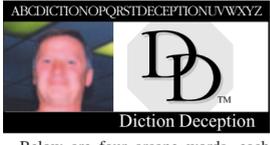
I was asked by the mayor at the meeting why I did not rely on the township's professionals rather than consult with my own. For the record, I tried to but was constantly told that simple requests for information would pose a hardship on our accounting system. An important township financial report that was filed with the state on February 10 was reluctantly provided to me in late March.

Also, as many of you know, I asked for but never received a full accounting of our mini-golf course and its financial impact on our budget, a facility, as noted by our mayor, that was to produce \$100,000 in new revenues to our township. Furthermore, I asked for expenses related to the Scotch Hills Country Club and never received a comprehensive report on this operation as well. And, although promised, I have not seen an all-inclusive project cost report related to the approximately \$4 million-renovation of town hall.

These are just a few areas I wanted to review for the purpose of establishing better accountability of your tax dollars. As for discussing my issues with our CMFO, you should know that she did not attend one single budget review meeting, and I was prevented by our local form of government from speaking with her directly by the township manager. In fact, I wouldn't have known what she looked like before the budget meeting if she had passed me in town.

This budget session is over and although I am not pleased with the result, I assure you that I will move forward to work with the mayor and council, raising issues on matters related to governing more cost efficiently as part of my continuing efforts to stabilize taxes and build a better Scotch Plains for all our citizens.

Kevin Glover
 Scotch Plains Councilman



Below are four arcane words, each with four definitions - only one is correct. The others are made up. Are you sharp enough to discern this deception of diction?

If you can guess one correctly - good guess. If you get two - well-read individual. If you get three - word expert. If you get all four - You must have a lot of free time!

All words and correct definitions come from the board game Diction Deception.

Answers to last week's arcane words.

1. Locusta - A small spike or elongated cluster of flowers in grasses
2. Thylacitis - Inflammation of the oil glands of the skin
3. Perron - An outside staircase
4. Libant - Tasting or touching delicately

PLEROTIC

1. Swollen; too full
2. Plaitlike or folded
3. Rainy; humid
4. Restoring or producing anew; such as in tissue

SPRINGAL

1. A species of South African gazelle
2. An active young man
3. Resilient; flexible
4. Pure; fresh

FUSTIGATE

1. To scold or nag
2. To shape like a spindle; thick, tapering at each end
3. Fermentation resulting in a strong, musty smell
4. To beat with a stick or club

LENTIGO

1. In music, gradually becoming slower
2. A freckle or freckly condition of the skin
3. An allergic condition caused by an over consumption of legumes such as peas or beans
4. Having the shape of a lense

Letters to the Editor

Fanwood Committee Says 'Thank You'

The Fanwood Clean Community Committee would like to extend their thanks to the 60 hearty volunteers who participated in the April 21 Clean Community Day. Thanks also go to the Lions Club, Fanwood Bagels for donating bagels and cream cheese and to NJ Transit for providing two flagmen while litter was removed from the train track areas. Approximately 2 1/2 tons of litter was removed from Fanwood's public areas.

The morning began with Mayor Colleen Maher welcoming and thanking the volunteers and proclaiming that it was "Clean Community Day."

Environmental education material was given to the Scotch Plains/Fanwood School system and the libraries of both Fanwood and Scotch Plains.

Chairman Clint Dickson,
 Bob McCarthy, Linda Talcott,
 Greg Cummings, Dean Talcott,
 Pam Sayles, Fanwood

Community Thanked For Egg Hunt Success

On behalf of the Scotch Plains Recreation Department and the Scotch Plains Junior Women's Club, I'd like to thank all those for making the Easter Egg Hunt on March 31, 2007 such a huge success.

The event would not have been possible without the generosity of the following local businesses: Palmer Video, Apple Blossom Flower Shop and Scotch Hills Pharmacy.

Without the dedication of members within the community, who were willing to donate their time helping with the various activities, this event would not have run so smoothly. We would especially like to thank the confirmation candidates from St. Bartholomew Church, as well as the Girl Scout Cadettes.

Once again, I thank everyone involved who had a helping hand, whether small or large. Your commitments, once again, made the Egg Hunt a day to remember for the young and the young at heart.

Stephen Dahl
 Recreation Supervisor
 Township of Scotch Plains

Girl Scouts Sing-Along Participants Thanked

The 12 members of Junior Girl Scout Troop 256 and their leaders would like to thank the 400-plus Girl Scouts and other community members who participated in our recent sing-along on the Village Green. It was wonderful to hear so many voices singing Girl Scout standards as well as fun new songs. The young ladies of Troop 256 - all fifth graders at Terrill Middle School - organized and ran the event, which celebrated the 95th anniversary of Girl Scouting in the USA and the 50th anniversary of the Girl Scouts of Washington Rock Council.

The council serves about 11,000 member girls and adults in 24 towns, including Fanwood and Scotch Plains. The girls could not have accomplished such a grandiose project without the help of many township employees. Township Manager Tom Atkins, Recreation Director Ray Poerio and his staff and Police Chief Brian Mahoney and his department were all instrumental in ensuring a fun and safe event.

We also appreciate the work of Channel 34's Bill McMeekin, who videotaped the event to be shown on public access television. We are fortunate to live in a community that supports events such as the sing-along and the girls who ran it. Thank you to everyone who helped make this a wonderful event.

Regina Whitmer
 GSWRC Junior Troop 256
 Scotch Plains

Deadlines

- General News - Friday 4pm
 - Classifieds - Tuesday 12pm
 - Ad Reservation - Friday 4pm
 - Ad Submittal - Monday 12pm
- For more information, see
 www.goleader.com/help

Is Community TV Becoming "Only for the Nonce?"

The future of community cable TV stations, such as TV-34 (Scotch Plains), TV-35 (Fanwood or Mountainside) and TV-36 (Westfield), faces many uncertainties. Where it ends up tomorrow is certain to be different than where and what it is today.

The battle between Verizon FIOS and Comcast for subscribers of Internet access, TV and "On Demand" programs points to community TV's uncertain future. Currently, Comcast pays Westfield about \$100,000 per year for cable franchise rights. Other towns receive proportionate compensation from Comcast. Now that FIOS offers the public an alternate pipeline, where does this leave the town, the viewers, Comcast, the many fine workers at the stations or community TV?

Comcast is not about to transmit the community TV stations from their network to the network of its competitors without a fight - and perhaps without rescinding the substantial payments to towns.

Similarly, towns and school districts have invested in facilities, equipment and personnel to produce local programming. Is this a bad investment if limited to an exclusive outlet in the face of growing alternatives? Are future investments of questionable value now that the distribution pipelines are becoming dispersed through multiple purveyors, the Internet and with satellite?

Since Comcast pays the towns, does Comcast effectively control distribution of the local stations? If not Comcast, who does control the stations? Who allows what is to be aired, and what is produced and what is censored?

The current issue between the new broadcast arm of Westfield High School's journalism program and town officials (including the school board) illustrates the questions of control, censorship and free speech. In this case, the student journalists produced a TV-36 program that portrayed the town's use of the TV station as "propaganda." Town officials expressed concerns to the board of education; the superintendent and principal agree that invoking prior review is the correct course of action.

In an unprecedented move, the WHS principal has invoked the right granted to him by board of education

policy to review and approve all future telecasts from the high school before permitting them to go forth. *Hi's Eye*, Westfield High School's newspaper of 73 years, has a tradition of non-censorship. Is the school newspaper soon to be censored as well? How does this affect the status of the heretofore-outstanding journalism program at WHS? What does this tell the students? What does this tell you?

There is an unambiguous demarcation between producing, directing and distribution. Many fine programs become produced, but they don't become available to audiences. As distribution means become more varied, this bottleneck will go away. The exclusivity (and limitations) of community cable TV will disappear. The hoped-for result is that the production of content will have many other outlets, and that the public will have greater access.

In the production aspect, airing unedited public meetings is of enormous value, in our view. Government needs a watchdog. Our towns do a good job of producing these. The county has been recalcitrant. But the distribution and availability of these productions are limited. Elsewhere, many communities throughout the country are making these available "On Demand" by posting them on the Internet - isn't this a more modern means?

The public, government, artists and journalists deserve outlets for their work. Clearly, there is a need for responsibility in production, freedom from censorship and an expanded distribution.

There are many good things possible due to the current trends, but several traps for misuse of community productions and distribution exist. We don't think it is a good idea for government to collect franchise fees paid for by your subscriber charges, wherein these monies then flow to government control.

Government naturally becomes the auteur director, with productions reflecting their purposes. To overcome this, an independent board is recommended to ensure that censorship and propaganda is not the outcome.

With the many dynamics at hand, has community TV become a word to be used only "for the nonce," - having met a need that is not expected to recur?

Persons Should Take Extra Moment Before Making Hurtful Comments

April 18, my husband, a Virginia Tech alumni and an Asian American, went to pick up dinner from a local restaurant. After placing his order, the manager on duty walked over to him, pointed to the picture of Cho Seung-Hui on the front page of the paper and said, "Is this your cousin?"

My husband simply looked at her in disbelief and walked out of the restaurant. When my husband called me and told me of this incident, I was shocked that anyone could possibly utter these words. He was upset, but remained amazingly calm and seemed to let the words just roll off his back. I, on the other hand, couldn't stop shaking from anger and hurt. The answer as to why we reacted so differently, and me so much more strongly, only caused me more concern. My husband grew up with comments like this one and had to learn how to

deal with them the best he can. It seems I am only beginning that difficult journey. His reply to my asking how he let it go so easily was "being angry with her would only spread the hatred."

I then realized that our future children will one day have to face a person who says something insensitive, rude or cruel to them simply because of the color of their skin, and there is absolutely nothing we can do to prevent it. We can only teach our children to react in the way my husband did: to walk away and not to "spread the hatred."

I have not mentioned the name of the restaurant, the manager or the owner. The purpose of my letter is not to accuse anyone or to cause "trouble" for the business. Rather, I hope that readers take an extra moment to think about the things they say. This may seem to be extreme example, but things 100 times more hurtful have been said before. Each one of us makes generalizations and has prejudices. The key is, overcoming them and not allowing them to affect the way we treat others (through both our words and our actions). As we remember the victims at Virginia Tech, I ask you to become more aware your own prejudices and make an effort to change them at every opportunity. Let's make this a time to overcome, rather than to succumb. You never know how the comment you make may effect those around you, no matter if it is said full of hate or as a simple "joke." Moreover, when you are the target of someone else's ignorance, strive to stop the cycle of hatred and anger and let it "roll off your back."

WECARE Thank All Who Visited Booth

WECARE (Westfielders Concerned About Responsible Development) wishes to thank everyone who visited the WECARE booth during Spring Fling. We thank you for your continued interest in town issues and for your ongoing support.

Please see our website at www.wecarewestfield.com for information provided at our booth and current town issues. Congratulations to Nancy and Mackenzie Smith of Westfield, winners of the "Westfieldopoly" game drawing.

Sharon Stockwell
 WECARE, Westfield

Thank You Scotch Plains Police for Going Above Call of Duty

My wife and I would like to thank the Scotch Plains Police Department for their assistance during the early morning hours of Friday, April 27. My wife was traveling on West Broad Street during torrential rain, and ran into a flash flood, which had covered the road completely.

An officer arrived very quickly (I met him at the scene) and went into the knee-deep water with me to help push the car out. He then waded across the flood to help another stranded motorist. Even after both motorists were freed, he stayed on the scene with road flares and lights to prevent others from doing the same.

He was soaked to the bone. I'm sure the police consider actions like this routine, but this was truly above and beyond the call of duty.

WHS and Women's Club Thanked for Daughter's Success

It is with great pride that my daughter Courtney Erin Fox-Sherman has been honored as an outstanding freshman at Rutgers and also being on the dean's list. My humble and heartfelt thanks to the Westfield Woman's Club for their incredibly generous scholarship, which made it possible for Courtney to attend Rutgers.

We also thank the Westfield Rotary Club, the Westfield High School Latin Club and Math Department for their support and financial contributions.

David and Lee Robertson
 Scotch Plains



Thanks to All Who Supported Relay for Life at Spring Fling

Kasey's Crew East, the Westfield High School Relay for Life team, would like to thank everyone who donated to benefit the American Cancer Society at the Spring Fling. The team made \$581 toward their \$10,000 goal at the event, which puts them over the halfway mark at \$5,021. The teens would like to give special thanks to the Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce for allowing them space at the event and supporting their efforts.

Donors were given a chance to win several donated items. An autographed hat and photo donated by actor Robin Williams was won by Samantha Borr of Westfield. A "Night at the Museum" DVD donated by Pete Luscombe of Westfield was won by Molly Adams of Westfield.

Sammy Luscombe
 Westfield

Westfield Rec. Deptment Thanks Race Participants, Volunteers and Sponsors

The Westfield Recreation Department would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who sponsored, volunteered and participated in our 17th annual road races held on Saturday, April 21.

It was a great day for over 200 runners and many resident families who came out to participate in our 1-Mile Fun Run and 5-Miler road race. Plaques and trophies were awarded to the top finishers of the 5-Miler, and medals awarded to all Fun Run participants. Hats off to Dalton Herzog, age 11, for finishing first in the 1-Mile Fun Run; and to Eric Sokol, age 12, coming in a close 2nd. Congratulations to Luciano Oliveira of Long Branch, who won the 5-Miler with a time of 29:30, and Linda Wolfe of Berkeley Heights, who won overall female with a time of 33:23. Great job.

The following local residents ranked high in their individual age groups: Mike Olivares, Scott Kornfeld, Scott White, Ian Cottrell, Dominic Larche, Ralane Bonn, Patrick Currie, Abigail Kwok, Kelley Masterson, Hilary Hefner, Maria Velluci, Jeannine Forbes, Joe Wilson and Ann Skudlark. Thanks for your participation. For detailed race results, please visit: www.compuscore.com. For pictures visit: www.tigerpawimages.com.

This event helps raise money in support of the department's drug and alcohol-free teen programs. Proceeds will also be put towards Project Graduation-Bash 2007 for Westfield High School seniors. Project Graduation is tri-sponsored with

the Optimist Club of Westfield, the high school parent-teacher organization and the Westfield Recreation Department.

We hope this annual event continues to grow and receive the continued support of the community. The department acknowledges the following area businesses and organizations whose kind support helped to enable the department to run a safe and successful event: JMK Auto Sales, Hershey's Deli, Town Bank, PROforma Printing, Century 21 Taylor and Love, TC Graphics, Anthony James Construction, The Mattress Factory, Leventhal Family Chiropractic, Elizabethtown Gas Company, Penny Pray Antiques, Drug Fair, Weldon Materials, ShopRite of Garwood, SnowBird, Westfield Mortgage, The Running Company, United Soccer Academy and the US Sports Institute.

The department would also like to thank the Westfield Police Department, Westfield Rescue Squad, Optimist Club, Junior Optimist Club, all race participants, and all of the special volunteers who took the time to help on race day. Special thanks to: Anne Bergin, Dana Rollieri, Paul Checchio, Doug Albert, and Tony Cuccaro for all of their "behind the scenes" work on race day. We could not have done it without you. Hope to see you all next year.

Traci Kastner
 Program Coordinator
 Westfield Recreation Department

Hopefully Republicans Will Clean Up Act Next Year on Budget

During the past four months I have spent a significant portion of my otherwise uncommitted time attending various public meetings of our township council and studying public documents to help my understanding of the proceedings.

I am an active Democratic activist and I also pay more than the average amount of municipal property taxes often referred to by the mayor and council in selling tax increases. As a result of my above activity, I have learned a great deal which will help me in both capacities.

What is apparent, from attending the budget presentations given to the council by the professional staff, is that the presentations were amateurish at best. Our highly paid part-time chief financial officer did not have the time to attend any budget meetings except the public hearing. She seemed to have been there for no other reason than to demonstrate her loyalty to the mayor.

It is also apparent that a majority of the members of the council do not understand important aspects of municipal budgeting or chose to ignore it to support erroneous arguments not supported by the facts.

The mayor, a member of the council, presented a well made chart which was probably paid for by the taxpayers, to show items that were not within the discretion of the council. The chart was impressive but wrong. So what, it looked good.

In a series of well-rehearsed questions and answers, the mayor told us that there were no user fees for recreation in the

budget and would not support any in the future. When it was pointed out to him that there were, he seemed annoyed. He explained that while he did say that there were no user fees for recreation in the budget, he should not be held to what he said but only what he meant.

Ms. Malool, who on election night welcomed her new Democratic colleagues elected to the council by declaring them incompetent, demonstrated her incompetence when trying to point out the effect on the surplus of Councilman Glover's well thought out suggestion to lower the increase in our tax rate by three points. She said the surplus would be about \$700,000 if Mr. Glover's plan were adopted. This is not even close. The surplus, in fact, will be at least five times more than she said it would be. I suspect that not one of our professionals would dare support her statement. To be fair, she probably misread the speech that had been prepared for her.

Just when it looked like the new Democratic councilmen had been fully vindicated, Jeff Strauss had to have his say. You can't fault him for not knowing the chances of a tornado knocking down the municipal building, but he should have understood that Mrs. Papen's message related to next year's budget not this year's. I guess ad libbing can always get you into trouble.

Hopefully, by next year they will have cleaned up their act.

Dick Samuel
 Scotch Plains