

## Letters to the Editor

### Westfield BOE Should Be a Good Neighbor, Not Build Un-Needed Turf

A unanimous vote by the Board of Education to create a lighted turf field at Westfield High School is preposterous on so many levels.

First is the hypocrisy of such a ridiculous recommendation. Twice the Board tried to put lights on Kehler Stadium, one of the two already existing turf fields in this town (do we need a third?), and twice it was vigorously protested by the residents surrounding Kehler, and as a result, did not happen. Why are the residents surrounding the high school any different? We don't want it either - you would know if you had just asked us.

Wasn't it just last year that the Board of Education cut teachers' pay, threatened to eliminate the paraprofessionals jobs or at least take away their benefits, reduced arts programs, took away field trips, cut back on librarians and music teachers, amongst other painful cuts? With all the state budget cuts, an out of balance county budget, and ever-struggling economy, isn't there something better to spend taxpayers' money on in this town than a third turf field with lights? Shouldn't they reinstate what they took away before spending our money on something so frivolous?

The square block surrounding the high school - First Street, Trinity Place, Dorian Road and Rahway Avenue - is already burdened with the demands of a high school, parochial school, commuter parking, two churches, and the Armory, with all the shows and activities that come with them. All these groups place a heavy demand on minimal and on-street parking, and contribute to excess traffic and noise in this residential neighborhood. Won't a lit turf field just aggravate that further? We believe that it will dramatically.

You say that this new parking plan that you also voted on, will help alleviate some of the burden on this already overburdened neighborhood. Well adding a few spots is not the solution to this huge problem. And the parking issue isn't just about the lack of parking spaces. The behavior of the high school students is horrendous. The litter, drug use, cigarette smoking with cigarette butts put out in the street or on our lawns, foul language, and sexual activity in cars leaving used condoms on the street, is disgraceful. You say putting a "code of conduct" in place is going to stop this? It's happening now. Adding a few spaces and a code of conduct is not going to take it away.

So the Board thinks we need lights on a turf field, so games and practices can go on into the dark hours of the night. You say the lights will create minimal spillage onto our properties. Why should we have to put up with any spillage? Then there's the noise that comes from games played until 9:30 p.m. or later - whistles, air horns, cheering, yelling. Add tournament play to that and we increase traffic and noise, as well as aggravate the already overburdened parking situation further. There are many young children who live in the houses sur-

rounding that high school field - they need to go to bed before 9:30, so that they can be well rested to succeed in school the next day. That will be very difficult with all the added noise. And I personally do not want to be entertaining in my backyard and have to hear all these noises.

And then there's the benefits that the residents who put up with all these issues get from having the current field there, which you are taking away. When sports teams and physical education classes are not using the fields, residents walk down and allow their dogs to run in the fenced-in area. The hills are used throughout the winter as a sledding destination when the weather permits - children from infants through the McKinley and Edison Schools go there for unstructured play in a natural environment. For these children, that loss is irreplaceable. Many families play their Thanksgiving football and soccer games on those fields every year. Others use it regularly to throw a ball around with Dad, or for pitching and batting practice. Not to mention taking away the beauty of the natural grass environment that currently exists.

Westfield does already have two turf fields. One of them already has lights. Why do we need a third? Why do we need another, with lights? Why not put the lights on Kehler? What is the impact of another turf field, with lights, going to have on the environment? Will there be drainage issues? Will the residents suffer from the odor? Will there be carcinogens released into the air? What is the impact on our health of the turf overheating?

The Board of Education wants to be a "good neighbor?" Then just as the high school places a letter in the mailboxes of the surrounding houses every year to warn them of the inconvenience that high school graduation is going to cause them (once a year!), they should put a letter in each mailbox telling us what the plan is and ask us for feedback. In fact, a good neighbor would have done just that before they voted unanimously in support of the project. In speaking to many neighbors, they had no idea that this was even up for discussion, and were shocked to hear it was already a done deal.

And the fact that you are piggy backing this bond referendum on another bond to repair roofs on the school is just unfair to the voting public. When we decide how to vote, you want us to weigh the need for roof repairs on our schools, with the need for a third turf field, with lights? Can't we separate the two?

Come on Board of Ed - be a good neighbor. The neighbors surrounding the high school don't want a turf field, with lights. Your town doesn't need a third turf field, with lights. Find something else to spend our money on, like...we'll save that for another time.

Kathy and Scott Robb  
Westfield



### Union County News Honor Holiday by Connecting With a Veteran This Memorial Day

Al Mirabella, Chairman  
Union County Freeholder Board

As Memorial Day approaches, our thoughts naturally turn to the sacrifices that have been made by Union County residents while serving in the U.S. military.

Each year on this day, thousands of Union County residents from all walks of life, including my colleagues on the Freeholder Board and many county employees, join in commemorative ceremonies and activities to keep the memory of the deceased alive in our hearts.

One of Union County's long-running traditions is the distribution of tens of thousands of American flags to veterans' groups and civic organizations like the Boy Scouts. Members of these groups fan out across the cemeteries of Union County each Memorial Day to ensure that every veteran's grave is visited, recognized and honored.

This year, we felt that it was important to establish a new tradition of reaching out, recognizing and supporting Union County's military personnel throughout their lives as well as in death.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are drawing to a close, but as history tells us there will always be conflict zones around the world, both small and large, that place our active duty personnel in harm's way. Training and readiness can also involve ex-

traordinary risks and long periods away from home.

To help raise public awareness of the many active duty military personnel and veterans who make their home in Union County, for the first time this summer we are marking one of our annual Summer Arts Festival free outdoor concerts as a special Recognition Day.

For active duty military personnel and their immediate families, we are also providing a number of complimentary passes to our recreation programs that normally require a fee, such as the county swimming pools.

We also hosted a Veterans' Job Fair on Wednesday, May 23, at the National Guard Armory in Westfield. Active duty military personnel were invited to attend, and admission was free of charge. More than 50 organizations, government agencies, recruiting firms and companies in Union County came together to make this event a success, including major employers like Wells Fargo, Prudential, Johnson & Johnson, Panasonic, Barnabas Health, NJ Transit, and PSE&G.

I hope to see many of my friends and neighbors at a Memorial Day parade or remembrance ceremony this year to join in strengthening the spirit of respect and appreciation that lasts all year long.

### Mountainside Schools Update Holiday Schedule and Website Plans

Dear Mountainside families:

As we look forward to our Memorial Day weekend, I just want to remind you that we will be off from Friday, May 25 through Tuesday, May 29. School will reopen on Wednesday, May 30. In addition, as school draws to a close, I want to make you aware of a change in schedule for the last three days of school so that you can plan accordingly.

We are scheduled for half days on Tuesday, June 19 through Thursday, June 21. Traditionally our half days end at 1 p.m. Because of a multi-day teacher workshop that begins promptly at 1 p.m. for two of the three days, it will be necessary to dismiss students at 12:30 p.m.

Maschio's Food Service will not be serving lunch on these days. Students are free to bring a snack. Bus pick up will remain at 1 p.m. and supervision will be provided between 12:30 and 1 p.m. for students who ride the bus.

If this earlier dismissal creates a hardship for your family, please con-

tact the building principal to make special arrangements.

Also, you were recently sent two links to which I would appreciate your response. The first is a survey about our website. We would like your feedback so that we can work on substantial changes over the summer and launch a brand new website in September. Please see the survey at [www.mountainsideschools.org](http://www.mountainsideschools.org). The second link is for volunteers to help us make improvements in the appearance of our schools, both inside and out over the summer. Please see the projects and sign up.

Please contact Wayne De Vico (908-232-8828, ext. 222) for additional information.

Nancy Lubarsky  
MS Chief School Administrator

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### Appointed Member Ohlig to Run for Full Term on the Westfield BOE

I am writing to publicly announce my intention to run for a three-year seat on the Westfield Board of Education. It was an honor to be appointed to the board in January to fill an open vacancy and this time of service has been a positive experience. I believe I have become a contributing member of the Board in this time and I would like to continue in that role. Certainly, the involvement I've had this year will allow me to hit the road running should I be elected to serve again.

I believe I am uniquely qualified to serve on the board. First, I have the perspective and experience of a parent with three children currently enrolled in our district's schools. As a parent, I have become intimately familiar with Westfield's special education system and the tremendous resources it demands to provide our most vulnerable students with the best education possible. Second, my professional training as an attorney has provided me with the ability to listen, to quickly process lots of information, to identify core issues, and to solve problems in a rational and logical way despite the heat or emotion of the moment.

Finally, I have many years of volunteer experience in our schools and community. I participated in the Westfield School District Strategic Planning Council, which created the district's current 2010-2015 Strategic Plan. My involvement in this process gave me the opportunity to focus on the wide-ranging needs of our district, identify those areas in need

of attention and improvement, and conceive of concrete solutions and action steps to achieve our stated goals. I have been a volunteer in our schools, serving as president of the Jefferson PTO, member of the Parent Teacher Council, and on various school committees. In addition, I have extensive volunteer experience on the town-wide level.

I was a trustee and president of the Westfield Education Fund, a member of the Board of Directors of the Westfield Area Y, and previously was appointed to serve on the Westfield Planning Board. I am a founding board member and officer of Liam's Room, a Westfield-based non-profit organization aimed at improving pediatric palliative care. My parenting, professional and volunteer experiences have prepared me to serve as an effective member of our board of education.

Like any Westfield parent, I hope that my children and all students who graduate from the Westfield School district leave confident and prepared to tackle whatever academic roads or careers lie before them. More importantly, they should be good citizens who act with integrity and a sense of service. I want to continue to serve on the board to further support our school district in this goal. I look forward to talking to members of our community about the issues they believe are critical to the success of our schools and garnering public support for my election.

Gretchen Ohlig  
Westfield

### Clancy Will Not Seek Re-Election To the Westfield Bd. of Education

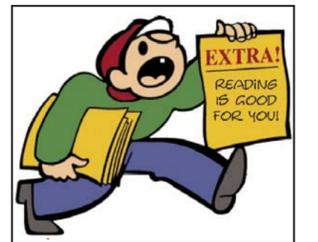
Thank you, Westfield, for allowing me to serve on the Board of Education since 2006. As a 26-year resident and a mom of soon to be five Westfield school graduates, I have been honored to work alongside the most dedicated and hard working people of our community. I have said it many times before and I'll say it again, we are so fortunate to live in a community that cares so deeply about its children and their education.

I am filled with mixed emotions as I declare that I will not be seeking another term on the Westfield Board of Education. I promise to dedicate my time and energy over the next seven months to the board's current goals and objectives. However, next year, with our fifth child heading off to college, and two more to go, I will be increasing my career responsibilities.

As an educator, I spend every day guiding children, making inquiries, exploring new concepts and ideas and hopefully instilling in them a

love of learning. How lucky I feel to passionately love what I do! I hope that I have made a positive impact on the district; I know that it has had one on me. Every person working in this district has one objective - to maintain and raise the quality of education for our children. I thank all of them for their continued hard work and I again thank the community for giving me an opportunity to serve you.

Jane Clancy  
Westfield BOE Member



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