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TIMES SINCE 1959

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 and for Westfield, Mountainside, Scotch Plains, Fanwood, Cranford and Garwood

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Letters to the Editor

Westfield School Board Finance Chair Responds to Newspaper Commentary

I would like to address the commentary written by the publisher [editorial board] of *The Westfield Leader* in the June 4 edition of the newspaper. In that commentary, the publisher wrote, "the school board is using bonding as a way to get around the 2-percent cap. Money needs to be put aside each year to fund maintenance and replacements, i.e. roofs and boilers. The budget should not be all salaries, wages and benefits." This would have been a great topic for the publisher to have asked to speak to us about. Perhaps they would have been able to provide a more balanced and informed commentary for the residents of Westfield.

I ran for my first term on the board in 2011. At that time, I believed that there were many improvements we could make in the way the school district managed its budget. I had the "outsider" perspective, very much the way many of the readers of this paper have. After four years on the board, it is clear to me that there was and continues to be room for improvement; however, I just did not fully understand how school districts fund the education for our kids.

In Westfield, almost 94 percent of the annual budget is funded by the residents. Less than 4 percent comes from the annual state aid. Based on the 2013-2014 state calculations of cost per pupil, Westfield spends \$13,140 for each student. The state average is \$14,543, so Westfield spends substantially less than the state average. Despite that favorable comparison, we strive every day to maintain the excellent services we provide while being sensitive to the rising taxes that our residents face. State aid and other sources fund less than \$1,000 of the annual cost per pupil. You fund the rest.

The publisher's commentary identifies many of the bonds that the residents of Westfield have approved over the years. This simply reflects the fact that the funding mechanism for capital projects for school districts in New Jersey, and local towns for that matter, is the issuance of bonds.

A bond in 1998, which is the first bond addressed by *The Westfield Leader*, was executed at a time when state aid was more than 6 percent of the budget (now less than 4 percent). In fact, in the early 1990s, state aid was more than 8 percent of the Westfield school district budget.

The idea of maintaining a "rainy day" fund for the district is not a new one but the state enforces a limit on what can be "saved." We are only allowed to maintain 2 percent of our budget in this fund and the intention is not to use it for ongoing capital expenditures but for unforeseen expenses that a district might incur. If, for example, a \$400,000 boiler needs to be replaced in the heart of winter, we would need to dip into this fund and get the job done immediately. We are very proud that each year we meet the maximum amount permitted to be carried over as set forth by the state, and we will always be ready in the event of a true emergency. These are not funds for maintenance. We also need to recall that not long ago, when we did responsibly try to

save funds for maintenance, the state came along and took away from Westfield taxpayers those funds that could have been used to improve our schools.

The rule imposed by the state in 2011 that mandated school districts live within a 2-percent budget cap is one that we have adhered to each year. We clearly do not spend whatever we want. Our tax revenues are capped, so that is the furthest thing from the truth. We have continued to look at ways to find savings in our operating budget, and when we find dollars, we have been investing in the infrastructure. Over the last four years, we have invested close to \$5 million excluding bonded improvements within our buildings, but that hardly meets our funding requirements. The buildings that we must maintain for our over 7,000 students and staff each day average almost 75 years old. They require ongoing significant capital improvements each year and the funding mechanism for these improvements are bond referendums. The towns do it and so do school districts.

As for the comment made by the publisher that "voters seem to have no say"; that is also not the truth. Any bond that the Board of Education recommends must be voted on by the residents. We have had some bonds fail, but for the most part, the residents understand that this is the way we fund improvements and large-scale maintenance and you have been extremely supportive. Additionally, all of the operating budgets are presented in many board meetings, and at any time, residents have been invited to voice their concerns. You have a say and you should make yourself heard. To suggest otherwise, as the publisher has done, is just not a fair reporting of the facts. If at any time you or the publisher has a question about our thoughts on a bond or the budget in general, feel free to reach out to me via e-mail at mfriedman@westfieldnj12.org.

Mark Friedman
 Chairman of the Finance Committee
 Westfield School Board

Publisher's Note: I thank Mr. Friedman for crediting me for authoring the above mentioned commentary, albeit incorrectly. My interpretation is there is a difference between school board math and taxpayer math. As example, Mr. Friedman expertly states that school board math calculates the expenditure of \$13,140 per year for each student. However, taxpayer math using the school board published budget on April 15, 2015 yields a different number. From their published budget, total expenditures equal \$103,981,000 including making debt payment on outstanding bonds. Given that the board's budget estimates 5,363 full-time students plus others, bringing the total to 6,324, and then taxpayer math naively might calculate \$16,442 per year for each student.

Ultimately it's the amount written on the taxpayer's check that matters. Perhaps more credence should be given to taxpayer math.

Horace Corbin
 Publisher

ABCD EFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ



Diction Deception

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. Fucivorous - Eating or subsisting on seaweed
2. Incogitativity - Without the power of thought
3. Tureen - A large deep dish with a lid
4. Tufa - A porous limestone formed by deposits from springs and streams

EREMACAUSIS

1. A slow combustion or oxidation of organic matter in the presence of air and water
2. Skilled in questioning or interrogation
3. An increase in red blood corpuscles in the fetus
4. Explosive discharge of vomit

TRUMEAU

1. A marsh at a river's mouth
2. An eyepatch
3. A pillar which supports the arch of a double door or opening
4. A wine glass used by sixteenth century French aristocracy

CYESTIOLOGY

1. The branch of physiology that deals with pregnancy
2. The study of organisms existing in marshes and swamps
3. The branch of medicine dealing with diseases in birds, especially geese
4. The study of the mating habits of penguins

INFUNDIBULIFORM

1. Grooved or ruddy
2. Elliptical in form
3. Having the shape of a funnel
4. Having no form or shape

Is New Jersey Primary Just an Expanded Political Convention?

Once again, with a few exceptions around the state, a Primary election has produced dreadfully low voter turnouts - this time in the low single digits. Towns covered by this newspaper experienced turnouts of between 3 and 4 percent as voters saw little reason to venture out in heavy rain that occurred most of the day to vote for unopposed political party candidates for elected posts at the municipal and state level.

There was a Primary at the county level for Union County freeholder with six candidates for three slots. But, just to show how few people showed up to vote on June 2, in Westfield's Fourth Ward, First District, where 1,315 voters are registered, only 28 persons cast ballots - that's only 2 percent of the total registered voters in the district. Town-wide only 593 voters out of 21,315 registered showed up at the polls.

In neighboring Scotch Plains, around 600 residents voted with 105 casting ballots for seats on the Union County Democratic Committee in the Seventh District, the only contested district race in Scotch Plains' 23 voting districts. Next year Republicans will vote for their committee persons. These are important positions as they get to vote for who will appear on the election ballot representing their

political party.

New Jersey law allows only voters registered as Democrat or Republican to participate in Primary Elections. Unaffiliated voters can participate, but must declare which party's candidates they wish to vote for when signing in - at which point they become registered with that political party. Another problem with the Primary is that both political parties' bosses blackball candidates that oppose a candidate chosen by the party - to them it is anathema. Parties will even go so far as to pay off unwanted candidates with government fluff jobs at taxpayer expense to get them out of the way. Both parties operate together to keep the gates shut.

If party leaders say Primaries are to determine each party's General Election candidates, and only those registered to either party can participate, well then shouldn't the cost of the Primary be borne by the two political parties? This includes the cost of printing and mailing the ballots, salaries of election poll workers and the cost to transport the election machines to and from the polling places. After all, if taxpayers are funding the costs of elections, shouldn't they be allowed to vote without restrictions? It seems to us New Jersey's Primary is no more than an expanded political convention.

Congratulations to Our Grads, With Best Wishes For the Future

A round of high school graduation ceremonies will take place in our communities beginning next week and continuing during the latter part of June. Among them will be commencement exercises for Westfield High School, Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School, Cranford High School, Governor Livingston High School in Berkeley Heights, which also enrolls Mountainside students, and Arthur L. Johnson High School, which Clark and Garwood students attend.

Additionally this month, many more of our local students will graduate from public and private elementary and middle schools. Finally, young men and women from our area have already received or will soon be awarded undergraduate and graduate degrees from colleges and universities near and far, and are preparing to embark on their careers.

We congratulate all of our graduates, from the youngest elementary-school pupils to those collecting college degrees. Each graduation ceremony represents a rite of passage, as well as a bridge to the next level in their personal, academic or professional development. We also congratulate their families, their teachers and their communities for their collective contributions in shaping the lives of these young people.

For the honorees and their families, each transition is a special milestone, as graduates progress from childhood to adolescence and from adoles-

cence to adults. Each step along the way they are reaching new academic goals, honing social skills, absorbing life lessons, developing their individual talents, and learning about themselves and the world around them.

High-school graduates, diplomas in hand, are beginning their adult lives. By the end of the summer, many will be living away from home for the first time - attending college, serving in the military or perhaps traveling. Others will stay close to home but will be entering the workforce. Each of these avenues represents a continuation of our recent grads' education, and not just academically. They will meet peers from many different backgrounds, experience many new situations and broaden their skills and knowledge. Most also will develop from these experiences the personal responsibility, discipline and character that form the foundation for successful lives and careers.

Our college graduates are continuing their journeys as well, hoping to put their hard-earned degrees to good use as they begin their careers. They, too, will be learning to navigate new professional environments, to be independent and to tackle "real-world" responsibilities while exploring what direction their post-campus lives will take.

We congratulate all the graduates in our local communities and beyond, at every level, and wish each of them much success and happiness in the years ahead.

Letters to the Editor

Thanks for Supporting Me for Dem Committee

I want to thank all my neighbors for coming out on a cold and wet primary day to support me for my bid to remain as your Democratic Committee person in District 7. I congratulate Tom and Maureen on their victory and wish them well. This experience has shown me that more work needs to be done in Scotch Plains and that it all begins in the neighborhoods, person to person, talking about the issues and making sure we understand why a decision is made prior to acting.

I look forward to doing more in Scotch Plains and will be considering options for more involvement politically in 2016 when the municipal seats will be up. Until then I will see you around the neighborhood.

Thanks a lot!

Maureen Yewaisis
 Scotch Plains

Exxon Is the Worst Loophole Offender

Senator Raymond Lesniak (D-20) stated he will introduce legislation to close a New Jersey corporate tax loophole, pinpointing Exxon as the worst offender, and saying its time to put an end to companies gaming the system.

"The classic example of why the current system is failing is ExxonMobil," said Senator Raymond Lesniak (D-20th, Elizabeth). "Exxon's average state tax rate over the previous five years was 2.2 percent. That's simply outrageous."

According to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy Analysis of SEC Filings, ExxonMobil paid a low tax rate over the past five years, and received a tax rebate from New Jersey in 2014 in the amount of \$507,000. This resulted in a 5.6 percent tax rate last year.

Recently, Public Policy Perspective, a non-profit think tank, released a report saying New Jersey was losing close to \$470 million per year in lost tax revenue due to the gaping loopholes that currently exist in New Jersey's tax laws.

"We need to close these loopholes, capture this revenue, and hold multinational companies to the same level of accountability as the rest of New Jersey," Sen. Lesniak said.

We Need Change Of Leadership In Union County Government

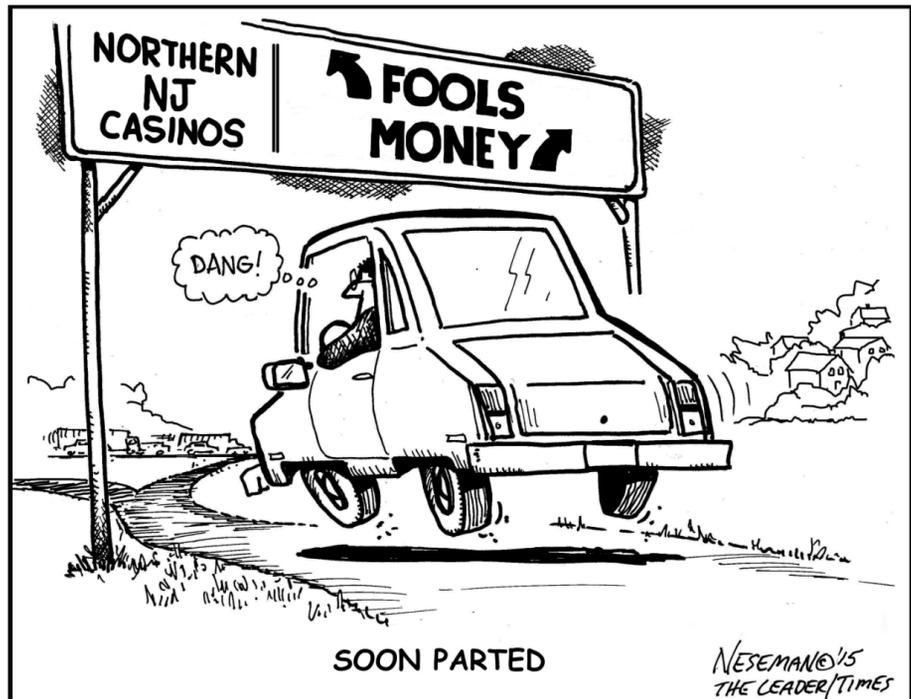
My name is Joseph G. Aubourg and I'm running for the Union County clerk. I'm running for this position to raise awareness of the services our county offers residents. I plan to send out newsletters and contact constituents via social media to let people know what is going on in the county.

In addition to the newsletter, I will keep people informed and trained on the types of services the county offers and plans to implement. For example, there is an election app that provides information on elections throughout the county. I plan to inform and improve the services that are implemented in the County Clerk's office. Instead of having to submit all forms in person to the Clerk's office, there should be databases formed to collect the forms electronically. This will save taxpayers time and money as a result.

The Freeholder candidates, René Dierkes, Rich Fortunato, and Joseph Bonilla, and myself believe as well that there needs to be accountability throughout Union County government. We have innovative ideas to bring to government which will save taxpayer funds. Union County is the eighth highest taxed county in the entire country, and we need new people in office who can tackle this situation with a fresh approach. We need transparency in our county. We have incredibly high taxes and most citizens don't know what the county is doing with their money.

I'm sure you have a strong opinion on what is going on in our county since it's your paycheck that is funding it. Our government has been controlled by one party and there has not been substantial positive changes as a result; it's business as usual and it will continue to be so unless you decide to participate in the system. We need a change in leadership that will bring diverse and progressive opinions on the board. I will bring this type of forward movement to the board, and to the residents in this county.

Joseph G. Aubourg
 Candidate for County Clerk
 Roselle



NORTHERN NJ CASINOS

FOOLS MONEY

DANG!

SOON PARTED

NESEMANO'S THE LEADER/TIMES

GOT GAS?



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Asm. Jon Brannick (R)
 251 North Ave. West
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 57 Union Place, Suite 310
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State LD-22
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Asw. Linda Stender (D)
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Asm. Jerry Green (D)
 17 Watchung Ave.
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 (908) 561-5757

7th Congressional District
 Representative Leonard Lance (R)
 425 North Avenue E., Westfield, NJ 07090
 (908) 518-7733
 [Westfield, Mountainside, Garwood, Summit and Cranford are in the 7th Congressional District]

12th Congressional District
 Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman (D)
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 [Fanwood, Plainfield and most of Scotch Plains are in the 12th Congressional District]

LD-21 includes Westfield, Mountainside, Garwood, Summit and Cranford.
 LD-22 includes Scotch Plains, Fanwood, Plainfield, Clark and Linden.

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