



MEET-AND-GREET...Union County Freeholder candidates Anthony Esposito of Roselle, left, and Jack Molenaar of Fanwood, right, were only two of nine Democrats running for three seats on the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders in Tuesday's Democratic Primary Election to attend a Meet-and-Greet in Plainfield on May 29. The League of Women Voters forum was held at the duCret School of Art in Plainfield.



PORTUGAL DAY...Pedro Monteiro, center, Consul-General of Portugal in Newark, and Portuguese American Leadership Council of the United States (PALCUS) Vice-Chair Katherine Soares, second from right, participate in the first annual Union County Portuguese flag raising ceremony in commemoration of the Day of Portugal, Camões and the Communities. They are joined by, from left to right, Union County Freeholders Angel Estrada and Sergio Granados, Freeholder Chair Bette Jane Kowalski, and Union County Surrogate James LaCorte. The Portuguese-American Community will be celebrating "Portugal Day" throughout the month of June with various celebrations in several municipalities.

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## Only Two of Nine Freeholder Candidates Attend Forum

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

*Editor's Note: Last Wednesday Freeholders candidate forum was held after press deadline for the May 30 issue of this newspaper. Please see the results of Tuesday's Primary Election in our front-page story.*

PLAINFIELD – Freeholder candidates Jack Molenaar of Fanwood and Anthony Esposito of Roselle were the only two of nine candidates to attend last Wednesday's Freeholders Democratic Primary candidates forum.

The League of Women Voters of Union County had to alter the forum, held at the duCret School of Art in Plainfield, to a "meet-and-greet" because a quorum of four candidates had not been met.

Mr. Esposito said he and Mr. Molenaar would focus reducing the Union County portion on tax bills. Mr. Esposito said Union County is the seventh highest county in the United States for property taxes.

"It is quite clear to anyone who studies the politics of Union County that this county is run by an oligarchy," Mr. Esposito said.

"At this time the county has not won the trust of the communities, especially with their problems with corruption and patronage," Mr. Molenaar said.

Both Mr. Esposito and Mr. Molenaar expressed concerns with transparency, overspending, and tax dollars funding projects which are equitable or benefit all 21 municipalities.

"Every Freeholder has the responsibility to not steer money towards their friends and family during the budget process," Mr. Molenaar said.

Mr. Molenaar said all current Freeholders and 2019 candidates should "come clean on all of their, and their family, connections to all Union County contracts."

Mr. Esposito said he filed a lawsuit to stop the "grandiose project" called the "Mind and Body Center" in Roselle. He said the project would have cost \$59 million, funds for which would have been borrowed from the Union County Improvement Author-

ity (UCIA). He said that borrowing would have cost Roselle residents an additional \$500 a year in municipal taxes.

The UCIA should be "dissolved" as the entity is a way for "disgraced qualified Freeholders to pad their pensions," stated Mr. Molenaar.

"Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely," Mr. Esposito said.

Mr. Esposito said the "oligarchy" controlling the current Freeholder board has been in control for over 25 years.

"Redevelopment and its issues are best left with our communities, not Freeholders," Mr. Molenaar said.

Mr. Esposito said the Freeholder board "should squeeze every wasted dollar out of the (county) budget." He said the juvenile detention center, opened in 2011, has been closed before the bonds on the facility have been paid.

Mr. Esposito, who holds 13 United States Patents, is a retired senior chemist at Coty Inc. research and development group in Morris Plains. He served on the Roselle Board of Education for 15 years, as the Roselle Soccer Association treasurer for 19 years, and as a Roselle Public Library Trustee for 11 years.

Professionally, Mr. Molenaar oversees a \$15-million budget as senior director of transportation services at Rutgers University.

Mr. Molenaar served Fanwood as a non-consecutive, three-term councilman.

Freeholder candidate Wilma Campbell of Plainfield stated that she could not attend the candidates forum because she was welcoming her newest grandchild on the same day.

The following candidates did not respond to emails or call in regards to presenting their campaign information or answer the questions requested regarding their candidacy, League of Women Voters representatives said:

Freeholder incumbents Bette Jane Kowalski, Rebecca L. Williams and Sergio Granados, as well as candidates Lorraine McNeil and Sylvia Turnage. Also on the ballot for freeholder was Alex Lospinoso.



WASHINGTON UPDATE...Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-12th, Trenton), left, talks to Fanwood residents about national political issues at a town-hall meeting last Wednesday hosted by Mayor Colleen Mahr, right.

## Watson Coleman Discusses Impeachment at Town Hall

By FRED T. ROSSI  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

FANWOOD – Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-12th, Trenton) expressed support last week for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's go-slow approach to a potential impeachment of President Donald Trump, saying that various House committees should first gather as much information as possible and "seek the truth," which she said, "will tell us where we go next."

"I don't believe Donald Trump should be President," she said at a town hall meeting last Wednesday at Forest Road Park. "I think he should be gone." She cautioned, however, against rushing too quickly into an impeachment process, pointing out that the U.S. Senate, which is controlled by Republicans and requires a two-thirds vote to convict, would not do so at this time. The Congresswoman, now serving her third term, said she did not want to see the Senate exonerate the President, who she said — in a voice mimicking President Trump's speech pattern — would then campaign next year boasting repeatedly, "No collusion, no obstruction."

Mrs. Watson Coleman said her "dream" is for the House to put together so much incriminating information on the President, who she called "the most corrupt President in our lifetime," that the Senate "can't deny it." She also described the President as "the biggest threat to our democracy" and said his conduct is "close to a dictator."

About two dozen residents braved extremely hazardous weather conditions last week to attend the hour-long meeting, which was hosted by Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr, and heard Mrs. Watson Coleman review current legislative initiatives being taken up by or already enacted by the House, including voting rights, prescription drug costs, women's repro-

ductive rights, criminal justice reform, gun safety, the minimum wage and campaign finance reform. She lamented that the Senate has refused to take up most House-passed legislation.

She also spoke about climate change, which she called "an important element in our stewardship of this planet," and expressed her support for the Green New Deal, although she believes the overall initiative will be broken up into a series of individual pieces of legislation.

Mrs. Watson Coleman said that some infrastructure funding for the multi-billion-dollar Gateway rail tunnel project, which involves building new rail tunnels under the Hudson River, and for upgrades to the Northeast Corridor, has been tucked into different appropriation bills despite the Trump Administration's coolness toward those projects.

She also addressed a high-school student's question about lowering the voting age to 16 by saying her "instinct is that it's too young," although she lauded efforts by high-school students in recent years to organize large marches nationwide to call attention to school shootings. She said when she was 16 years old, she "was not mature enough" to vote, "but this generation is different."

## Senators Push for Study By NJT on One-Seat Ride

TRENTON – Legislation sponsored by Senator Nick Scutari (D-22nd, Linden) and Senator Tom Kean Jr. (R-21st, Westfield), which would require NJ Transit to conduct a feasibility study on restoring the one-seat ride from the Raritan Valley Line to New York City, passed the Senate Transportation Committee Monday.

"Raritan Valley Line commuters deserve one-seat rides to New York Penn. The commuters in my district have been very vocal about how the recent service interruptions have negatively impacted their lives. They deserve answers – not more delays," Sen. Kean said. "Full-time, one-seat rides would shorten commutes and raise property values. It's time for us to take action and get the Raritan Valley Line back on the right track."

The Raritan Valley line comprises about 10 percent of NJ Transit's daily ridership system-wide. Despite the high volume of customers that ride this line to New York City, the Raritan Valley line is the only line that does not have one-seat service into Manhattan any day of the week.

"The Raritan Valley Line is a large rail operation with strong ridership numbers and it is perplexing to me, and to those in the area, why NJ Transit would view this passage to New York City as expendable," Sen. Scutari said. "Our businesses, our

residents and our economy are feeling the effects of this loss every day. The continued temporary loss of revenue, the loss of time and the loss of tax dollars cannot continue to persist without incurring permanent losses."

The Regional Plan Association conducted a study on the impact the one-seat ride service into Manhattan has on the towns surrounding the rail line. The study revealed that towns are more desirable to commuters and see increases in their residential property values. These towns greatly benefit as well; salaries for jobs in Manhattan are 60 percent higher than the same jobs in New Jersey.

The bill, S-3574, would require NJ Transit to prepare and submit a report to the Legislature detailing the findings of the study within six months of enactment.

The report would be required to include findings concerning: Why service was initially suspended; historical and expected ridership for the direct rail service to New York City; action that NJ Transit would be required to take in order to provide the service; the amount of time those actions are expected to take; the cost to provide the service and any factors that may delay or increase the cost of providing the service.

The bill was released from committee by a vote of 6-0.

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REMEMBERING OUR VETS...Union County Freeholder Chair Bette Jane Kowalski, Vice-Chair Alexander Mirabella and Freeholders Sergio Granados, Christopher Hudak and Angela R. Garretson join Clerk of the Freeholder Board James Pelletiere, Union County Office of Veteran Services Coordinator Janna Williams, VFW Post 2230 Commander Robert Jeans, Jim Daly of VFW Post 335, Boy Scouts and dozens of volunteers for the annual American flag deployment on veterans' graves May 25 at Graceland Memorial Park in Kenilworth. The County Freeholders supplied more than 30,000 flags to mark veterans' graves throughout Union County.

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