

The Westfield Leader

— Established 1890 —

The Official Newspaper of the Town of Westfield and the County of Union

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THE TIMES of Scotch Plains - Fanwood

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Letters to the Editor

Councilman Walsh Speaks Out On Westfield PBA Contract Negotiations

As recently reported in *The Westfield Leader*, the town has been renegotiating its Westfield Police contract, which expired in January of this year. Without explanation, the Mayor has not yet presented the police contract to the Town Council. Furthermore, the Mayor has not informed the Council as to what specific direction, if any, he has given to our labor attorney during the past eight months.

The Westfield Police Department deserves to have its contract renegotiated on time, not 8 months after the fact. They work hard for us. They keep our streets, our homes, and our neighborhoods safe. They are in my estimation one of the finest police departments in the State of New Jersey, and Westfielders are rightly proud of them. For these reasons, there is no excuse for delay.

In the renegotiation process, Westfield should be sensitive to the needs of our public safety officers and should provide them the resources they need to protect us in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Based on his years of experience, I am sure our labor attorney can meet these goals.

Westfield's police deserve to have their contract renewed on a timely basis. It is my hope that the Mayor will instruct our labor attorney to resolve this matter without further delay.

Councilman Kevin Walsh
Westfield

Editor's Note: Council Walsh (D) is Chairman of the Personnel Committee for Westfield.

Reader Questions Parking Deck And Other Town Issues

Over the past 18 months, your pages have covered certain matters which give concern to the average property tax payer in Westfield who is now faced with another major tax increase. The following come to mind:

1. Shoprite was prevented to develop on the border with Garwood and provide the town with additional revenue which would have provided relief to the taxpayer; and at the same time give Westfield a say in the handling of the traffic foul-up which we now have to endure.
2. We have the specter of two sides in a dispute, which we believe is about redistricting and not pure pique, suing each other with the long suffering taxpayer having to pick up the tab for both sides.
3. Bonuses were paid to certain officials without the Mayor's authority first having been given.
4. The failure to pay additional Workers Compensation insurance premium (was) consequent upon the granting of raises to certain staff members. The failure to provide for this (resulted in) the need for this sum to be paid from the Parking Fund. May we have confirmation that this has since been repaid, if only to give comfort to those who pay the extortionate parking fees imposed by Westfield.
5. The fact that certain departments of town government had failed to reconcile their bank statements over a period - It would be of consolation to all to learn that this is now being performed immediately (when) statements are received, and that no shortfall was discovered as a result of the prior lapse.

As regards (to) the parking situation in the town, it would give us some comfort to learn that the newly appointed official is earning his keep. Perhaps, through your columns, we could have a regular progress report as resolution of the parking situation becomes more and more like the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

It seems that the older resident in town gets very little for his/her tax dollar; and perhaps should when you consider the following:

Parking meters in Westfield run from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., and we are required to pay a quarter for each thirty minutes; whereas, the meters in Cranford only run from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and it appears that a driver receives one hour's parking plus a period of grace for a quarter. In Scotch Plains,

Westfield Police Contract Should Be Settled Fairly, Devoid of Political Muck

It's our sentiment that the Westfield police contract should be settled fairly and squarely without a lot of political hoopla. It's been seven months since the contract has expired. We don't think that our men and women in uniform should be put through the exasperation that results when politicians try to gain mileage at the expense of our public servants and at the expense of the taxpayers.

We understand that the Westfield PBA headed by President and patrolman, Bob Weiss, filed for arbitration. This is fully within their rights and a legitimate part of the bargaining process. No one argues that. Mr. Rick Danzer, labor attorney representing the town, will be updating the town council on the status of all this next Tuesday night. It is our understanding that the arbitration session is scheduled for September 13 the first available date given all the parties involved and given vacation schedules.

It comes as a surprise to us that Third Ward Councilman (D) Kevin Walsh, who is head of the personnel committee for the town, claims he's in the dark about the contract negotiations blaming Mayor (R) Gregory McDermott. With the council composed of 5 Democrats versus 3 Republicans, one would think that Mr. Walsh and his colleagues are in charge.

At the June 11 conference session, Fourth Ward Councilman (D) Lawrence Goldman led the other Democratic members of the council in a vote to prevent going into closed session to discuss police contract matters. His basis for doing so was to get the rest of the council's attention to discuss which insurance broker is awarded the town's business. Currently, the town's insurance is handled by AGA in Westfield.

From the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting

of June 25, we learned that BGIA, Business & Governmental Insurance Agency, out of Woodbridge, was interviewed as requested by Councilman Goldman. The finance committee, headed by Second Ward Councilman (R) Matt Albano, concluded that the extra fees involved from BGIA did not provide any advantage for the town to switch from AGA.

From their website, we see that BGIA is a Democratic firm. See www.bgiains.com. We know that AGA is a Republican firm. In our view, the best deal for the town is the most important thing, not party affiliation. Councilman Goldman is right in one respect, in that competition is good. Given a "dead heat" though, we'd rather see the business kept in Westfield rather than exported to Woodbridge.

Everyone knows that insurance rates are increasing by leaps and bounds. We think the insurance system is out of control, but that this is a subject for a whole set of other editorials.

Meanwhile, let's make sure that those that risk their lives for us are fairly paid. They and their families must have good health care too.

Westfield has one of the best police departments in the state, in our opinion. It's also one of the lowest costs per household. They are a positive and integrated part of the community; more than just enforcement and ticketing. Let's keep it that way.

In the final analysis, we're confident that the contract will be fair to our police personnel. It might be cute to say "Let's get it done before 9/11." Also, it doesn't matter how many lawyers we put on the job. It's obviously going to take nine months to get the job done - just like obviously having a baby.

Township Manager Questions Lack of Background Information on Salaries

Editor's Note: This letter was originally sent to Times reporter Fred Ross

Your July 16 fax was received yesterday. We want to respond to your request in good faith. The list is enclosed by way of fax transmission to you at this time. It would be greatly appreciated though if *The Times* at least complied with my request to include the years of service, which the public might find informative.

I also would ask that you share this letter with Editor/Publisher Horace Corbin. I can fully appreciate and respect the role that our weekly newspaper has with keeping their subscribers and readers well informed. However, when the published list of salaries for the Board of Education personnel appeared a few weeks ago with no explanation, I certainly wondered why no accompanying article appeared with the list.

It can be difficult at times to compare one municipal organization to another. Size of town in terms of population, square miles, total budget, etc., are facts that can be taken into account. Organizational structure of municipalities can also differ considerably. For example, the form of a local government can impact the duties and responsibilities of various personnel. Scotch Plains is a Council-Manager form of government which by State Statute and local administrative code assigns the Municipal Manager with more responsibilities and authority than a Municipal Administrator in a Township Committee form, Borough form, Mayor/Council form or a Special Charter.

The Township does not have any separate offices or personnel performing the single functions of personnel/human re-

sources, purchasing, budget, public information, or technology. All of those functions are handled by the Manager and his staff with assistance from Department Heads on a more decentralized basis. Quite a few municipalities have separate offices for some of these functions. Here in Scotch Plains some of our management leaders oversee a variety of functions. Bob LaCosta is a case in point with the titles of Construction Official, Zoning Officer, and Building Subcode Official, but he also helps out daily with land use administration and planning along with our Engineering Department. Bob does have some inspectors reporting to him on field assignments, but the administrative oversight is broad. Walter DiNizo as Director of Public Property ultimately is in charge of streets and roads, storm sewer, and sanitary sewer maintenance, vehicle maintenance, and buildings and grounds. As Department Head, Walter is involved in much capital planning and is the daily liaison to the Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority and the Plainfield Area Regional Sewerage Authority. Fire Chief Jonathan Ellis is Fire Subcode Official, Fire Safety Inspector, Right to Know Coordinator, and along with a few other department heads helps out with technology issues with some beneficial advice from citizen volunteers with expertise in the technology field. These are just some examples.

To do a topic proper justice, numerous variables and perspectives need to be considered. Simply publishing a list of salaries does not give the public the full information, just as this letter could not give a full picture.

Thank you and continue enjoying your summer. Don't get too excited about the Mets now...they are still underachieving!

Thomas Atkins
Scotch Plains
Municipal Manager

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Leader Reader Applauds Parking Editorial

Thank you for your editorial in the July 18 issue regarding the parking regulations. This is the only town that came up with the hair-brained idea to charge from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., plus the exorbitant charge.

This has been an irritant for me, being a 30+ year resident. I applaud your stance. I hope it helps to restore the old regulations.

You do a great job of reporting the town news.

Barbara Manos
Westfield

Westfield Resident Offers Alternatives To Parking Decks

Mrs. Lawrence Fergus and Mr. John R. Mancini have expressed their displeasure that Westfield residential taxpayers could be expected to fund the construction of multi-million dollar parking garages. They have offered reasonable alternatives.

I attended a rally in 2001 organized by citizens (taxpayers) against the parking decks. Councilmen Salisbury and Neil Sullivan attended also. Mr. Salisbury requested us not to send him any more e-mails regarding the issue. The councilmen were asked about a referendum by a well-known local M.D. Mr. Sullivan advised the doctor that it would require several questions, and it would be too complicated! Perhaps we can hire a consultant to frame two or three questions for a referendum.

Alternatives to parking garages have been successfully implemented in other towns. For example: valet parking (is used) in Greenwich, Conn., shuttle buses (are employed) in Roselle Park and jitneys (are used) in Millburn.

In Red Bank, parking decks were rejected. Red Bank is currently implementing an alternative. According to *The New York Times*, they refused to have residents pay for it through in-

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Fanwood Resident Recalls WWII; Asks For Stamp For War Hero

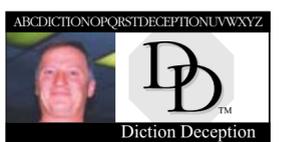
Wednesday, August 7, will mark the 60th Anniversary of the first successful Allied counterattack of World War II. It is the date in 1942, when U.S. Marines landed on Guadalcanal, Florida and Tulagi Islands, British possessions in the Solomon Islands, previously captured by Japan. A date one would hope shall live on forever in American historical annals.

The landing preceded the British offensive at El Alamein by three months, the Soviet's start of the German rollback at Stalingrad by six months and the Allied landings on the beaches of Normandy by 22 months!

For the first time, the 'unbeatable' Imperial Japanese Army, (the U.S. Navy defeated the Imperial naval forces at Midway in June of 1942) met defeat, after a series of unprecedented land conquests in Asia and the Pacific. After Florida and Tulagi were quickly taken, the battle ensued on Guadalcanal for six months sending the Japanese reeling back in retreat. This, by a much smaller force of ill prepared Marines, who had just five weeks to ready for the landings and had to endure malaria, dengue, starvation, shortages of medicine, ammunition and ordnance.

In November, the Marines were reinforced by the 182nd U.S. Infantry. What remained, of the approximately 35,000 Japanese troops, who had fought on the island, were evacuated in February 1943, routed by an American presence never more than two-thirds its size.

The writer was stationed on Guadalcanal for 18 months prior to VJ Day. In my off-duty time I visited the scenes of the battles, at both the Ilu and Tenaru Rivers and Bloody Knoll Ridge. Locations such as the small isthmus, where Gunner Sgt. John Basilone, of



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. Inquisition - The act of defiling; corruption
2. Crispin - A shoemaker
3. Pilum - A heavy javelin used by the Roman infantry
4. Darque - Scottish for a day's work

YAULD

1. To pull back or retreat suddenly
2. Active, vigorous
3. Elderly, worn out
4. Breaking out in blisters

QUERL

1. To please
2. To drop food from the mouth when partly masticated
3. To coil or wind round
4. To quiver or to shake

MEED

1. Reward or merit
2. Withered or emaciated
3. Grief, sorrow
4. A wedge

PARTAN

1. An exclamation of disgust or contempt
2. A large bowl in which fat is burned by means of a wick
3. Scottish for crab
4. A large basket; a wicker basket for carrying loads

Answers will appear in next week's issue.

Reader Remembers Moon And Decks Parking Tickets

Your article about the Apollo 11 moon landing brought back some great memories. Those of us "boomers" who grew into adulthood during the '60s, as NASA pursued its goal of landing men on the moon by the end of the decade, were privileged to be able to witness this monumental achievement in real time. May I point out however, that the first men to leave Earth's gravity were aboard Apollo 8 during the 1968 holidays. Those men included Jim Lovell - who went on to command Apollo 13 and Frank Borman - who went on to command Eastern Airlines. Their first

Residents Should Vote On Parking Decks Issue

I echo the remarks of John R. Mancini with respect to allowing the voters to decide on the parking decks in the July 11th issue of *The Westfield Leader*.

This is a major commitment to which many studies have been made (costly and at taxpayers expense) and I believe should be the taxpayer's decision.

Frederick Meyer
Westfield

Reader Points Out High Costs Of Union County Officials' Trips

As one of your subscribers, I want to make sure that all your readers and taxpayers welcome back our county officials from their 5-day "all expenses paid" trip from festive New Orleans. Here is just a small list of the already incurred expenses that we taxpayers picked up the tab for.

Reservation fees were paid for eleven individuals to attend the National Association of County Officials Conference at the Sheraton New Orleans. The conference was held on July 12 through July 17.

Lodging was paid for Lewis Mingo, Jr., Mary Ruotolo, Angel Estrada, Chester Holmes, Alex Mirabella, Rick Proctor, Deborah Scanlon, Nicholas Scutari, Daniel Sullivan, Elizabeth Genievich and Michael Murray. The rooms cost \$154.20 per night per person for each of the five nights. This cost totals \$8,481.

These expenses are just those that I have uncovered so far while perusing through the county's vouchers and check registers. I review the expenses frequently. Normally, there are always other expenses on the trips and junkets that our county officials and their guests incur. Let me factor some of these expenses in right now - not including airfare.

There is a \$30 per day meal allowance per person. If they held to this amount,

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Erratum

The Regular Honor Roll for the fourth marking period at Edison Intermediate School in Westfield should have included Steven Royston, eighth grader. We regret the error.

Erratum

An article and picture that appeared in last week's issue incorrectly identified the Town Crier at an Independence celebration in Mindowaskin Park on July 11 as Sam McCaulley. John Lawson, who appeared in the photograph, served as the Town Crier for this event. We apologize for the error.

Also last week, the column on the first man landing on the moon incorrectly listed Apollo 10 as the first mission to circle the moon. It should have stated this to be Apollo 8. We apologize for the errors.

