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Paul Peyton
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR
Suzette F. Stalker
COMMUNITY
Michael Pollack
EDUCATION & ARTS

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Horace R. Corbin
PUBLISHER
David B. Corbin
ASSISTANT PUBLISHER & SPORTS
Karen M. Hinds
OFFICE MANAGER

Fred K. Lecomte
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Michael L. Bartiromo
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Robert P. Connelly
OPERATIONS & LEGALS
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SERVICES

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What Is Westfield Police Chief Going to Tell Mayor and Council?

It's not fun picking up the pieces in becoming acting governor, or becoming acting mayor, for that matter - just ask Westfield Mayor Andrew Skibitsky. He's being kept busy these days tackling one mess after the next.

Westfield has a police chief who says he's going to retire, quit or something. Now, Chief Bernard Tracy went on vacation and has not provided a written notice to the town of his intentions. We've been told that the chief is going to address the town council when he returns from vacation.

Chief Tracy has already been hired by the Linden school system - Is it legal to hold two jobs like this? What is the chief going to tell the mayor and town council that anyone really wants to hear - other than goodbye?

Furthermore, the police department led by the chief is conducting a shameful public disciplinary hearing involving Detective Sandra Chambers, who is supposedly charged by the police chief with fixing a parking ticket. We can't tell from attending the hearings whether this is a vendetta, lovers' spat or a reach for the gold ring in lawsuit awards - and we're not making this up.

So far, there must be thousands of Westfield taxpayer dollars being spent on attorney fees for this farce. Does anyone really believe that the attorneys want to resolve this, given the outpouring of public funds for their services? It's staggering if one conceives that this could be maneuvered to evolve into a discrimination lawsuit, which could cost the taxpayers untold sums.

It makes no sense to us and it will make no sense to the taxpayers when the bill comes in to clean up this mess.

In addition to the Sandra Chambers hearing, we understand there are other police department disciplinary hearings and possible lawsuits that may surface in the coming months that the mayor must deal with. The mayor will have his hands full.

When will it all end? Surely, the public must understand that this is not just an amusing anecdote, or Westfield's version of Reality

TV. While this is going on, the real Westfield "men-in-blue" are the true professionals. They do an outstanding job in spite of being without leadership.

The police and firefighters performed admirably, in fact heroically, on Monday afternoon when they saved the life of a toddler who became trapped after falling down a construction hole at Tamaques Park.

But this leads to the next question - how can a construction hole be allowed to exist unsecured in a public park? Not only that, there were six such holes there Monday. Where is the supervision?

The contractor, which was installing new lighting at the park's tennis courts, apparently left the holes without installing any fencing. It is unconscionable how an error of this magnitude could have occurred.

Mayor Skibitsky was further distracted this week from his efforts to fix problems in Westfield when it was discovered that a home on Sylvania Place was demolished without a permit to do so. The contractor has the framing already up. Had an alert resident not reported the mis-permitted work and the mayor not stepped in, would the construction have been completed and a certificate of occupancy been issued to the developer? Well, there's a stop work order issued - but now what?

The mayor formed a special committee several weeks back and it will soon be reporting on the Department of Public Works' operation in an effort to improve matters. We understand this will include reviews of engineering, building, maintenance and construction department procedures. Mayor Skibitsky plans to expand this "white paper" approach to the entire town government. We think this is a good idea. Someone is going to have a lot of reading to do once these reports come off the press.

We know Mayor Skibitsky is tackling all these issues, one by one. We hope he can get it done.

No Child Left Behind Act Has Public Schools Reeling

Called NCLB, the federal and resulting state requirements have even officials of good public school systems like Summit, Westfield, Ridgewood and Scotch Plains-Fanwood convinced that there will be no schools that will pass in the next few years.

As the NCLB requirements become increasingly stringent toward the goal of 100 percent compliance by the year 2014, more energy and money will be spent just trying to figure

out how to deal with the administrative reporting and testing requirements.

If good schools, such as in this area, don't believe compliance is possible, where does that leave Plainfield, Elizabeth, Newark, Paterson and Camden? They have absolutely no chance.

The real question is "How do we convert this energy to the real purpose - educating our youth?"

Letters to the Editor

Westfield User Fees Must Target Field Maintenance; Otherwise, It's a Tax

I was gratified to see Paul Peyton's typically thorough critique of the Westfield Town Council's proposed ordinance for user fees for financing the maintenance of the fields. While I do not oppose the concept of user fees, I do not support the town council's approach, unless the funds are specifically targeted to maintenance of the fields, preferably to be placed in a trust.

Otherwise, user fees amount to picking the pockets of the families of children with no benefit to the taxpayer.

User fees theoretically help defray expenses that should not be borne by the general taxpayer. Not all the taxpayers use the fields. Imposing more taxes to pay for more field maintenance is arguably unfair.

User fees also enable rational allocation of scarce resources. There are simply not enough fields for the games and practices that each team wants. User fees help assure that the fields are used when reserved and that they are used for the purpose they were designed.

However, a small amount of user fees is worse than no user fee, unless the fees are set aside solely for maintenance of the fields.

When I served as the town council's liaison to the Recreation Commission, I obtained a study on adopting user fees, which disclosed that no other town in our vicinity had adopted them - which meant we had no experience to draw from. Furthermore, a \$10 user fee would only produce at most about \$70,000 in revenue, which was a drop in the bucket, as a full time four-member crew to maintain the

fields was estimated at the time (1999) to cost from \$400,000 to \$600,000.

Seventy thousand dollars can buy sprinklers, fencing, back stops, goals, storage sheds, grass seed, clay, shovels, rakes, sta-dry and other materials and equipment to keep the fields in good condition. It will not pay for even one full-time maintenance person but it could purchase some outsourced landscaping, if collective bargaining agreements permit.

But \$70,000 provides nothing if it merely becomes part of the operating budget. It becomes a line item on the Recreation Commission's spreadsheet with no break for the taxpayer and nothing for the players.

Even if there is a set aside, user fees do not solve the entire field maintenance problem. The Board of Education fields would not be included, since the BOE and town fields are managed separately. How do you charge players for use of both town and BOE fields, if that organization uses mainly BOE fields?

For example, in baseball, children in kindergarten through second grade play exclusively at Jefferson School Field. Why are they paying for maintenance of town fields? Can an organization just ask for BOE fields and not pay a user fee?

Enacting modest user fees only works if they are set aside for field maintenance but there are better ways of assuring good field maintenance at very little taxpayer cost and they should first be explored.

Jack Walsh
Westfield

Nation Is Grateful for the Sacrifice Of Our Brave Military in Iraq

We are responding to the letter written in the Aug 18 edition of *The Westfield Leader* by Julia Dvorak et al in referencing the cause of Cindy Sheehan - the mother of a soldier who was killed in Iraq. Ms. Dvorak's letter demands President Bush explain why our troops are in Iraq and for what cause our troops continue to die.

President Bush has explained this over and over again: it is set forth in the original Joint Iraq War Resolution which was passed overwhelmingly by both houses of Congress (296-133 House; 77-23 Senate). The resolution illustrates that our cause was originally pragmatic (WMD) which turned out to be false; strategic (fighting terrorism there instead of here) and noble (bringing liberty to the oppressed).

To answer Ms. Dvorak's demand directly: the noble cause is liberty. Liberty is not only for the rich countries of North America and Western Europe but an inherent human right. Our armed forces are bringing liberty to a people who have lived in poverty while their brutal dictator lived a hideously evil and wealthy life, savagely ruling his own people.

America is grateful that Ms. Sheehan's son volunteered for service - just as my father did 40 years before. When my father was buried in Arlington National

Cemetery last October, the airman who handed my mother the American flag that had been draped over his coffin said words that I am sure were also spoken to Ms. Sheehan: "The President would like to thank you on behalf of a grateful nation."

This nation is grateful for the sacrifice of our brave servicemen and women who voluntarily put their lives in harm's way. The next generation of Iraqi children will live a life of liberty because of the sacrifice of men and women like Ms. Sheehan's son. A noble purpose indeed.

We support President Bush and his courage to take on the demons of this world.

Brian and Denise Collier
Westfield

Caring Hearts; We Shouldn't Be Dupes for Islamic Terrorists

I have a few questions for the six "Caring Hearts from Home" who said the President must explain the Iraq war motives to Ms. Sheehan and the nation.

Where have you ladies been for the last several decades, from the time of the Iranian takeover of our embassy through all of the many atrocities inflicted on our nation ending with September 11, 2001?

Westfield Resident Laments Plans For Another Bank at 1 Elm Street

Do we really need another bank in Westfield? I was very disappointed to read in the August 18 edition of *The Westfield Leader* that HSBC was to likely move into the 1 Elm Street facility. 1 Elm Street had a terrific opportunity to be one of the signature buildings of Westfield because of its respectable design and location (across the street from the train station and on one of the main downtown streets).

Couldn't Mr. Cook have been a little more creative? Have you ever had the pleasure of eating at The Blue Water Grill in NYC? If not, it is a great seafood

restaurant located within a converted bank in the center Union Square - what a wonderful and unique experience!

Westfielders, we had seven years to do something with that facility and all we could come up with was another bank. Where is the planning? By the way, the Wachovia Bank on Elm is also a big waste of space. How many people work in that behemoth - four? Come on Westfield, we have got to do better than this.

Carl Gambello
Westfield

Westfielder Calls for Residents to E-mail Opinions to Officials

Has anyone noticed recently how the town gardens and the grounds around the monuments look? Thanks go out to Councilmen Echausse, the manager of the DPW, Claude Schaffer, and the town workers. The grounds and gardens look a lot better than what they looked like at the beginning of the summer.

If I may make a suggestion to the manager of the DPW, make one of the town workers have the responsibility to visit every garden and monument in town each week to make sure they all look groomed and weeded. That person should have garden tools like clippers and weed killer to do spot cleanings.

It would go a long way in beautifying Westfield. Now, all the town has to do is buy or convert one of their small trucks into a vehicle, which could hold many gallons of water so the town worker could water the gardens when he makes his weekly visits. Dr. King's flowers need water real soon.

Has this happened to you - you get home from work at about 6 p.m., start the grill to cook some steaks, set the picnic table outside on the deck, gather the rest

of the family to have a nice family meal, when all of a sudden your neighbor's gardeners with their lawn mowers, weed-wackers and leaf blowers show up in full force?

What happened to that nice relaxing meal? In a very loud voice, "Would you please pass the salt!"

Or what about Saturday or Sunday morning - you are sleeping in when that knock down rebuild Mc Mansion, which is going up next to your house, which is going to dwarf your house when it's finished - all of their guys show up at 8 a.m. hammering away.

Are you sick and tired of paid contractors spoiling our quality of life? If you are, please e-mail the mayor and council at mayorandcouncil@westfieldnj.net and let them know.

I have already requested to have the ordinance changed months ago but I need your help. Please e-mail them and tell your friends. Let their friends e-mail them, too, even if they don't live in town.

John Mancini
Westfield

New Initiative Will Help Support Autistic Kids And Their Families

As many people in our towns are aware, I have been working wholeheartedly on a comprehensive program to support our local autistic residents and their families.

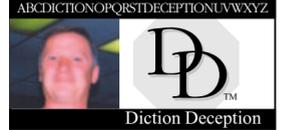
The initiative is entitled "Community Partnership for People with Autism" - helping to facilitate the participation of individuals with autism and their families within our community settings. The plans include developing collaborative autism safety and emergency preparedness programs; establishing a local resource guide and center; supporting autistic resident inclusion in town recreation programs and events; increasing family support networks for parents and siblings; implementing experiential learning and social skills development; expanding inclusion within religious practice and congregational life; providing means for quality care; promoting appropriate community employment opportunities; supporting autistic talents/handicrafts; procuring autism scholarships and grants; and encouraging medical campaigns to promote awareness and action. These projects are directed toward the autism population,

which has unique attributes and needs. Hopefully, this type of initiative can be duplicated to support the inclusion of all special needs residents within our towns.

Families with autistic members don't function in conventional ways. Functionality can be achieved only through accommodation and acceptance. And with acceptance, they are able to achieve understanding and purpose. Individuals with mental or physical disabilities and their families can then overcome their traditional isolation and be acknowledged as "participants" in community life.

It is my goal that CPPA will help to guide and support the educational, emotional, spiritual and social welfare of children with autism and their families in all aspects of our community. If you have a family member or friend afflicted with autism, or if you have interest in supporting these programs, please e-mail me at livingarrows@mindspring.com. I hope we can become a community for all.

Adrienne Robertiello
Scotch Plains



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. Melliferous - Producing honey
2. Crotalidae - The pit vipers
3. Taniwha - A dragonlike beast in Maori legend
4. Threat - To insist or quarrel

RIF

1. To dismiss from employment
2. A small brook
3. Active; vigorous
4. To defile

THEBAISM

1. Deception; sleight of hand
2. The habitual use of opium
3. Devotion to the greedy pursuit of riches
4. Hospitality

THEROID

1. Like an animal or beast
2. Rust-colored
3. Pertaining to the earth
4. Having the shape of a funnel

JACAL

1. A fool or imbecile
2. A hut built of logs and daubed with mud
3. A nickname
4. A rabbit or hare

Heat Hasn't Stopped Watering of Planters

Despite challenges of extreme heat and drought, the Garden Club of Westfield has maintained summer planters at Broad and Elm Streets. Club members who do the daily watering of the planters appreciate the many comments expressed by passers-by.

We also gratefully acknowledge the contribution made by David Williams of Williams Nursery to our community project: three seasons of flowers in downtown Westfield.

Jane Curtis
President
The Garden Club of Westfield

Police Thanked For Ticketing Tailgater

On July 25, I became a very grateful biker. In the mid-afternoon I had the good fortune to be riding my motorcycle behind a local police officer from Garwood.

Another motorist was tailgating my motorcycle at a high rate of speed and attempting quite often to pass me. Ultimately he did pass me on the right. After the car passed me on the right the officer pulled both vehicles (bikers are vehicles too) over. The officer issued traffic violations as appropriate and this biker is extremely grateful for consideration shown for his presence and right to be on the road.

I would like to thank the police officer who was so attentive and noticed the motor vehicle driver who endangered my life.

Paul Rottstock
Cranford

Weingart Family Thanks Community

The love and concern, support and friendship of so many has been so selflessly expressed during our difficult time; we couldn't possibly thank each and every one of you.

Over the last several months, we have been surrounded by the care and generosity of our family, friends (near and afar), neighbors and acquaintances, our parish, St. Michael's Church, Scouts and Cranford School's. Every card, note or letter, phone call, house visit, flower and gift put a smile on our faces and in our hearts.

Each day has been made a little easier for us by the wonderful meals organized, prepared and delivered; the willingness of time invested in our children, whether it was transporting them to school or activities and/or spending time caring for and entertaining them. From grocery shopping to wedding and planting to helping us care for our furry, four-legged family member, you have touched our lives in so many ways.

We feel blessed to be so fortunate and to be a part of such a caring, giving and cohesive community, like that of our neighboring hometown of Westfield. Last, but not least, we are grateful for the prayers bestowed on us. They have given us strength and hope each day and for those that lie ahead of us. May God bless you, too.

The Slattery (Weingart) Family
Cranford

