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**Paul Peyton** ASSIGNMENT EDITOR  
**Suzette F. Stalker** COMMUNITY  
**Michael Pollack** EDUCATION & ARTS  
**Victoria McCabe** TECHNOLOGY  
**Horace R. Corbin** PUBLISHER  
**David B. Corbin** ASSISTANT PUBLISHER & SPORTS  
**Karen M. Hinds** OFFICE MANAGER  
**Fred K. Lecomte** MARKETING DIRECTOR  
**Michael L. Bartiromo** MARKETING PRODUCTION  
**Robert P. Connelly** OPERATIONS & LEGALS  
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**Letters to the Editor**  
**Part of 'Surplus' Budget Funds Could be Returned as Rebates**

I propose a solution to the budget surplus "problem" we seem to have. Maybe a percentage of funds over a fixed surplus amount can be given back to our residents in the form of tax credits or rebate checks. Wouldn't that be nice? Using arbitrary numbers, consider: If the fixed budget surplus is pegged at one million and the actual surplus is found to be two and a half million, then a certain percentage of the difference (say, 60 percent of \$1.5 million) could be rebated back. In this example, \$900,000 would be rebated back and \$600,000 would remain in the surplus. The town would not be adding or subtracting any money actually needed, but redistributing some of it back into the hands of taxpayers.

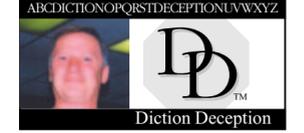
I'd like to make another point pertaining to increased accessibility to information regarding budget decisions. A good part of our budget restraints is due to previous budgeting decisions, such as bond issues, capital improvements and salaries and contracts. I would like to see

pertinent background information be presented to us taxpayers at the time the budget is being discussed by the council. It would help us to understand, for example, when each bond was voted on, when the final payment is due and the progress of its intended goal; when salaries and contracts were last negotiated, what current and future increases are called for and how they measure up to like contracts in neighboring municipalities.

I know that our council has moved judiciously and fairly in deciding those expenditures. But, as I like to follow the council's budget discussions, I would appreciate greater accessibility to the background and details involved, and I'm sure many informed and interested taxpayers would agree.

The information could be provided in a mailing or on the town website before the annual budget meeting, and perhaps commentary by officials could be included.

**Sai Trifiro**  
 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. Trichogenous - Producing hair  
 2. Loke - Private road or lane  
 3. Paludism - Malaria  
 4. Polder - Lowland reclaimed from a lake or sea by means of high embankments

**RUBIGINOSE**  
 1. Rust-colored  
 2. Resembling German measles  
 3. Having a large, but flat nose  
 4. Resembling a honeycomb

**THRENODY**  
 1. A poem or stanza having eight lines and two rhymes  
 2. A song of lamentation; a dirge  
 3. Government by three men or coalition of three parties. A triumvirate  
 4. Characterized by three knots or nodes

**COZEN**  
 1. The hip or hip joint  
 2. A person who steers a boat  
 3. Mentally ill; insane  
 4. To cheat or defraud

**POLLAN**  
 1. A white fish found in some lakes in Ireland  
 2. A hornless animal, as a goat, deer, ox, etc.  
 3. Any body of persons having an organized system of government  
 4. Hay fever

**Thank You, 'First-Responders' For a Terrific Job in Fanwood**

There was a terrific response last Tuesday by first-responders in rescuing the three people trapped in Fanwood on South Avenue when the three-story building wall fell at the Station Mews construction site. The concrete block wall fell onto the adjacent single-story Livingston Wilbor Corporation machine shop and collapsed the building with people in it. Fortunately, life-threatening injuries did not happen. Rescue personnel rushed to the scene, and with great care and professionalism, extracted the injured from the rubble.

It's comforting to know that highly-trained and motivated rescue professionals are in our midst and ready to go, available on a moments notice - and that they know what they are doing when emergencies befall us.

Accidents do happen. Yet, everyone wants to be sure that all measures are in place and that the utmost of care is being exercised to prevent their occurrence. We're sure that Fanwood, county and state officials are going to give this accident scene a very thorough review to see that similar things do not happen in the future.

Fanwood and other towns have undertaken ambitious programs and are making good progress with redevelopment. This accident serves to remind us all

of the difficulties involved and the need for the utmost and deliberate adherence to design and construction fundamentals, particularly in retrofitting tight work areas and restricted jobsites.

There's much to be done in Fanwood for the borough to complete its redevelopment visions. We hope this accident does not unreasonably thwart these plans and that the review underway contributes to ensuring the safety of ongoing and future projects.

Since 9/11, government emergency management organizations have made significant improvements to their coordinating communications systems. The ease of which communication now occurs greatly enhances propagation of calls for help and results in rapid response times. In that first-responders came to Fanwood from as far away as Bayonne, Jersey City and Hoboken, it speaks for the far-reaching effectiveness of the communication technology in place.

In retrospect, the incident was expertly managed and within the scope of nearby forces including: Fanwood, Union County, Elizabeth Special Operations, Westfield and Plainfield fire departments along with the support of the State Police Urban Search and Rescue Task Force One.

We're grateful to everyone that came to help.

**Was SP Open Space Fund Really Used for Recent Acquisitions?**

During the past year I have read about the use of the Open Space Trust Fund to purchase private property in town. Recently, the use of the Open Space Trust Fund for the purchase of such property was lauded by Councilman Strauss on Channel 34.

One of the things I read was that the Scotch Plains Township Council approved a \$380,000 bond ordinance to finance the purchase of the home at 2377 Richmond Avenue that was to be razed and turned into additional parkland at Jerseyland Park. It was said that the transaction would be funded with township Open Space Trust Fund money. I also read that the township government at one point intended to purchase the western half of the Cooper Road island for \$350,000, using money from the Open Space Trust fund.

The actual purchase was announced later in the year. Thus, it seemed to me that \$730,000 had been used last year from the township's Open Space Trust Fund.

I was surprised to find that only \$140,000 was paid out in 2006 from the Open Space Trust Fund and none of the remaining funds encumbered or identified as bond payments for the future. It would help me to better understand this process if the Mayor and/or council could explain if the Open Space Trust Fund was really used to make these purchases. Perhaps the payment of the debt created by these transactions will be an additional tax burden for the residents of Scotch Plains in coming years.

**Barbara Baldassarre**  
 Scotch Plains

**Theodore Roosevelt 1907 Speech Could Help on Immigration Issue**

As a history buff, I want all U.S. citizens to consider reading below a speech President Theodore Roosevelt gave back in 1907. Then decide about legalizing 20 million illegal aliens, not 12 million reported; and how much more care we continue with liberalized, health care and education that continues to break our schools and hospitals around the country? In New Jersey alone we spend well over \$2.1 billion on illegals. Our prisons are at 30 percent of the country's incarceration population. Can we afford any more?

Theodore Roosevelt on immigrants and being an American in 1907: "In the first place, we should insist that if the immigrant who comes here in good faith becomes an American and assimilates himself to us, he shall be treated on an exact

equality with everyone else, for it is an outrage to discriminate against any such man because of creed, or birth place, or origin. But this is predicated upon the person's becoming in every facet an American, and nothing but an American... There can be no divided allegiance here. Any man who says he is an American at all, we have room for but one flag, the American flag... We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language... and we have room for but one sole loyalty and that is a loyalty to the American people."

Where are leaders when we need them? Hello, President Bush.

**Kevin Retcho**  
 Linden

**Letters to the Editor**

**FW Naturalist Urges Residents to Explore**

I love to fish and hike. So when I can combine those two things I have the ingredients for a great outing. My excursion took place on Thursday, May 17, but I will not reveal the location except to say that it was in the Highlands of northern New Jersey. Not saying where I was adds a bit of intrigue to the story. Nothing earth shattering occurred. It was simply a nice day in the woods. There are many more beautiful places in our state than you probably imagine. It just takes a little desire to get out of your normal routine and go some exploring. Have an adventure.

I left Fanwood around 6 a.m. Since the lake water is getting warmer, I knew I'd need to get to my fishing spot early. The last quarter mile to the camp that was my destination is over a dirt road. I don't like to get there too early because walking through the woods can be pretty creepy in low light. Stumps and rocks can look like black bears. It was pretty chilly there, around 50 degrees, I guess. I was glad I packed a windbreaker just in case I needed it. The wind was blowing out the clouds that remained from the previous night's showers.

After a mile, I came to the camp lake. Two Baltimore orioles flew in front of me and landed on a small island. The island had a beaver lodge on its bank. Using a rapala, I caught and released four large-mouth bass that ranged from 8 to 13 inches. I continued my hike to a larger lake. Using the same lure, I caught a 10-inch and a 12-inch crappie. A large turtle surfaced and brought his head out of the water to watch me. I brought a small backpack to hold my gear, which includes water, fishing tackle, food, my diabetic supplies, cell phone (for emergency use only), camera and another fishing rod that's set up for bait fishing.

When I find a nice spot, I stop, take off the backpack and cast out a night crawler. Using a night crawler, I caught a half-dozen bluegills and a 13-inch yellow perch. With the lure, I caught another four bass in the big lake. While walking around the lake's edge I saw two baby chipmunks.

They were about four inches long and had the same markings as their parents. They were cute, chubby and clumsy. They definitely needed to hone their motor skills. I also saw an eight-inch long lizard. That was a first. When I got home, I looked in an Audubon book and was able to determine that the lizard was a five-lined skink. When I saw the lizard, I expected it to stand on its hind legs, speak with an English accent and try to sell me insurance. I guess I watch too much TV.

Purple violets, wild geraniums and Jack-in-the-pulpits were growing in places along the trail. The blueberry bushes were in bloom. When I return in the summer I will be treated to luscious berries. I ate my peanut butter and jelly sandwich in a shaded spot overlooking the lake. I headed back to my truck. I had been fishing and hiking for five hours and covered about three miles.

I was rewarded with a great day. All I did was decide to seek out an adventure and do it. You can do the same thing. You really don't need to go too far. It can be a local park. Just get out, open your eyes and ears and enjoy Mother Nature. A little advice - turn off your cell phone and leave the head set at home. Be where you are, not where you're not.

**Dean Talcott**  
 Fanwood Environmental Comm.

**Do the Math**

**Editor's Note:** The NJ Lottery lauds its Independence Day Raffle, claiming, "This game will offer the best odds to win \$1 million."

They will sell \$10 million dollars, award \$5 million in prize money and pocket the rest. Winners will also be subject to a minimum of 25 percent tax by the IRS.

The return on the betting dollar is 37.5 percent based on the above -- a very bad bet in our view.

**Quote of the Week**

From an unknown source from the Internet on the illegal immigration bill, "Yankee doodle has gone to Mexico riding on a burro."

**Westfield BOE Member Anne Riegel 'Very Disappointed' Over 'Character Attack' by Former Principal Dr. Petix**

I had hoped I wouldn't need to write this letter. However, based on the responses to former WHS principal Dr. Petix's recent letter about the broadcast journalism program, I feel it has now become necessary. Many of the comments Dr. Petix attributed to me in his letter are simply untrue. I am very disappointed that a long-time educator and role model for our students would convey his opinions using character attacks and inaccurate information.

Dr. Petix made numerous references about what I supposedly said or what I "really meant." I don't know what he based these comments on; he never contacted me about what actually took place. Contrary to Dr. Petix's allegation, I never gave Dr. Foley "marching orders" to "keep those kids quiet." Dr. Foley did follow up on his own concerns about the broadcast; I had no input into his subsequent actions or those of Interim Principal Mr. Fyffe. And when I complimented our students as "doing a great job," I meant just that. No "translation" necessary.

Dr. Petix claims that I censored him last year at a board meeting. During his comments about the future of the world languages department head position, Dr. Petix repeatedly ignored board policy and state law by publicly criticizing other staff members. Despite our willingness to hear his opinion about alternative supervision structures, he continued to violate these rules. After numerous warnings, I was forced to ask him to stop speaking. Censorship? No. Abiding by policy and law? Yes. (The tape of this meeting is available to those interested.)

Another flaw in Dr. Petix's letter is his criticism of the Mayor for reaching out to me as the board of education president. In fact, our current liaison relationship is set up for contact to occur precisely this way. Since the Mayor's concerns over the TV program occurred on the Friday evening of spring break, when no staff members were available, I agreed to take responsi-

bility until administrators could be reached. Reflecting our efforts to improve the relationship between the town and the school board, I felt it was important to make myself accessible to the Mayor. However, this access did not equate to doing his "bidding."

I've been a volunteer member of the board of education since 1999. In that time, I've been dedicated to the success of this district, trying to attain excellence and meeting the needs of our students. I was an active supporter of the new broadcast course, which was designed to offer more students an opportunity in journalism, and I am proud of the journalism and writing programs offered at WHS.

I share Dr. Petix's passion to protect the longstanding privilege of allowing our students to publish without administrative censorship. I also recognize the school district's responsibility to ensure that good editorial practices are in place. Dr. Foley and Mr. Fyffe's main concerns are about how students adhere to editorial

processes and curriculum requirements, not about which topics students want to address. I strongly support students' rights to express opinions on potentially controversial issues, including those about administrative and governmental organizations. The students and their advisors are already developing stronger editorial procedures for the broadcast journalism productions, and I am confident that the principal's prior review of the televised "Blue Devil News" will be a temporary measure. Nothing about the operation of the *Hi's Eye* has changed, and no student publications or broadcasts have been altered in any way.

Given the discussion about journalism standards, it is a shame that a former educator did not adhere to such principles. I hope future issues can be debated passionately and respectfully, without misinformation or character attacks.

**Anne Riegel**  
 Westfield Board of Education

**Thank You Dr. Petix, We Can't Teach Journalism Through Censorship**

**Editor's Note:** The following letter was copied to the Westfield Mayor and town council.

I can't let the week pass without offering my undiluted encouragement to the Westfield *Hi's Eye* staff/Blue Devil News and my thanks to Dr. Robert Petix for his wise and courageous guidance as expressed in his letter on the issue.

We can't teach journalism through censorship.

And we can't teach journalism that is intended to challenge authority when our students are directed by town officials who so readily submitted to authority without question.

In fact, this is no minor event in Westfield when compared with the national state of our "free press."

The parallels should warn us that if we want to ensure comfort for political officials at the town level, we might end up with journalists trained to ensure comfort for political officials at the highest levels of government.

Our town politicians, like our national politicians, require constant scrutiny and journalists are on the front lines of that duty.

*Hi's Eye*/Blue Devil News should only expand its questioning of the larger world and bring those questions and answers to our smaller world here in Westfield.

Again, my grateful thanks to all of those who speak for freedom of the press.

**Barbara Briemer**  
 Westfield



**Westfield High Journalists Follow Up On Free Speech Controversy**

After much discussion and many pieces regarding our news station, we at "Blue Devil News" (BDN) thought it would be appropriate to discuss our feelings regarding Kim Angus's town council commentary. We appreciate all the support from our viewers, the readers of *The Westfield Leader*, *Hi's Eye* and especially Dr. Petix for defending our journalistic ambitions and student civil liberties; however, we would like to make a major correction to his letter.

The teachers have not been silent. We would like to thank the English Department, the Social Studies Department and Ms. Walsh for writing letters in support of free speech and in defense of our journalism program. According to the administrators at WHS, their primary concern is the quality of our education.

Let us reflect on the mission statement that outlines our education: "The mission of the Westfield School District, a system built on successful cooperation among family, school, and community, is to prepare students to reach their highest potential, and to become productive, ethical and responsible citizens through rigorous educational programs which respect individual differences and diversity."

A responsible citizen is someone who learns to preserve civil rights and liberties, someone who attends government meetings, someone who stays informed, someone who calls their representatives, and finally someone who reflects - all actions our journalists have taken. Within WHS, our journalism classes teach us about the great reporters of our time: Maureen Dowd, Bill O'Reilly, Keith Olbermann, and those of our past, such as Edward R. Murrow, Bob Woodward and

Carl Bernstein.

These figures have made drastic change in government and society by saying something. In school, we speak of their greatness, their courage and their skills. What would have happened if Mr. Murrow had decided that he was not going to report on McCarthyism because of his tone? What would have happened if Ms. Dowd was handed back her draft about the Bush administration with "might hurt his feelings" scripted by her editor at the top? They are not only responsible journalists but responsible citizens, our reporting role models.

Kim chose this piece to see how the town operated. As an AP [advanced placement] government student, she was genuinely interested in local government. After her research, she had a negative opinion of the functions of the town council and their political actions. She did not have an agenda. She was not a sacrificial lamb; she spoke on her own accord. What scares us, and many other members of the WHS community, is what if no one can speak of their own accord again without being censored? She spoke for many who have negative feelings of the council and stood idly by.

Prior review will negatively impact our education. We believe journalism should not be focused on image. We will not substitute our journalistic tone for euphemisms to make people feel better. We will continue to observe, report and challenge any wrong doings through our station, and we hope for your continued support.

**The journalists of BDN, Westfield High School**