

The Westfield Leader THE SCOTCH PLAINS-FANWOOD
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Letters to the Editor
Mayor Marks Statement on FW Cell Tower Case 'Totally Incorrect'

Scotch Plains Mayor Martin Marks statement in his September 6 letter to *The Times* that the Fanwood zoning board's denial of a cell tower application was overturned by the courts and that a cell tower was erected shortly after is totally incorrect.

The Verizon application that he refers to was not for the construction of a new cell tower but rather for the attachment of cell antenna on an existing high-tension tower in the PSE&G right-of-way that runs through the borough.

The Fanwood Zoning Board did not deny the application, as Mayor Mark's states, but approved it after almost nine months of hearings with extensive testimony from the applicant's experts, our own expert witness and testimony from adjacent residents in opposition to the plan. The residents appealed the zoning board's decision to the mayor and council and at a public hearing six days before a closely contested election, the then mayor and council overruled the zoning board's decision. Verizon then sued the mayor and council.

In 2005, state Superior Court Judge Walter Barisonek, in a strongly worded rebuke of the then mayor and council, upheld the zoning board's decision and a subsequent review by the courts upheld Judge Barisonek's ruling.

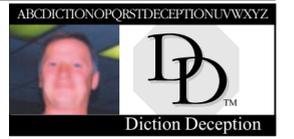
I personally find that cell towers have become visual blight on our landscape but it is almost impossible to deny them

once a gap in communication coverage is proven. The best that any community can hope for is to minimize their impact. Fanwood, after successfully fighting an attempt by Cellular One to build a 160-foot tower in the downtown area in the early eighties, took a proactive approach to the pending onslaught of cell towers and the new determination that cellular communication was "an inherently beneficial use."

We realized that zoning could not be used as a protection from cell towers so we attempted to control their location by designating the PSE&G tower in the light industrial zone on South Avenue as a "cell tower zone." We further implemented an ordinance that required communications companies to locate cell antennas on existing buildings or other structures. Of the five cellular companies, three have located their equipment on the South Avenue tower, which is structurally the maximum allowed. Verizon has located on the above-mentioned tower off of North Avenue and another company has located on a tower off of LaGrande Avenue.

The Willow Grove application presents a different set of circumstances than Fanwood faced and I wish my Scotch Plains neighbors well during these difficult and often emotional hearings.

**Greg Cummings, Chairman
 Planning/Zoning Board
 Fanwood**



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. Orcus - The lower world; Hades
2. Hirundine - Relating to the swallows (birds)
3. Sillon - A defense built in a wide ditch
4. Chiliad - A thousand of anything

Should Our Education System be Part of Today's Political Ways?

Last week, the Associated Press reported that New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine was set to sign into law, a bill whereby credits earned at New Jersey's county colleges would have to be accepted by the state's colleges and universities.

The idea is that students should not have to repeat courses already earned, and that it was a waste of time and money. In general, this sounds good to us, at first glance.

Up to this time, the state's colleges and universities have not agreed to this universal transfer of credits. The unspoken word of our institutions of higher learning seems to be that many of these county college credits do not measure up to acceptable standards.

In several areas, the universities may have a point. Should Rutgers be forced to accept Essex County College credits from courses taught by indicted Senator Sharpe James or by indicted Assemblyman Mims Hackett, who just resigned, yet stays on as mayor of Orange? Or perhaps Rutgers should be forced to accept courses taught by indicted Senator Wayne Bryant.

And then, there are those courses on government ethics taught by disgraced former Governor James McGreevey at the "mobile" Plainfield campus of Kean University.

Unfortunately, there are too many soiled politicians around, and they have infested too many of the state's 19 county colleges — and bigger institutions too, such as the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

These wrongdoers have blundered, arguably plundered, billions of dollars from the School Construction Corporation.

It's an outrage, and we've all been asleep. They have been permitted to permeate and take advantage of our educational system. What is this doing to our youth?

We need to purge today's political ways, as we know it, from our education system. Integrity and public confidence must be restored. Only after this is achieved and assured, should we consider reopening the gates to the minds of our youth. Even then, we must maintain our guard as evidenced by how ephemeral integrity can be when encountering the forces of power and greed.

The cost of integrity is high, but the price of its absence has been disaster. There are some good leaders out there, and we believe the public is becoming aware of the need for change.

We don't have confidence with mandating that county college credits be transferable to the state colleges and universities. Leave the issue up to the educators. Separate education from political influence.

For those county college students and professors wanting their credits transferred, demand better from our leaders. It's they who are letting you down.

'Jerseyland,' a Black Community Where I Grew up in Scotch Plains

I'm writing in response to Elizabeth Mangan's letter to the editor in the September 6 edition, "Scotch Plains Resident Praises Plans for John Shippen Community Center." She is looking forward to new senior citizens' and community center at Scotch Hills Country Club, writing "A place to sit and walk down memory lane, watch a movie, to listen to music or just pass the time of day with peers." You can do that now at Scotch Hills.

In the letter, she wrote, "John Shippen, who along with black residents of Scotch Plains, gave us the rights to the property." Apparently she does not know the history of the Shady Rest Country Club.

In 1921, Shady Rest Country Club (SRCC) became the first Afro-American golf and country club in America, run by and for blacks. It became a social and economic institution for the local community and the metropolitan area.

Top black tennis and golf pros played at SRCC. Also black professionals and big name bands performed at SRCC. To name a few - Cab Callaway, Earl Hines, Count Basie, Lionel Hampton and Ella Fitzgerald with the Chick Webb Band.

When Plainfield Avenue and Jerusalem Road (dirt roads) were paved, Mr. William Willis, Sr. (owner of SRCC) could not afford the new tax assessment on the property. In 1938, he was forced to change ownership and the Township of Scotch Plains became the owner. Mr. Willis leased it year-by-year and ran SRCC for remainder of his history.

I suggest she watch the video, "A Place for Us: The Story of Shady Rest and America's First Golf Professional" the next time it airs on Scotch Plains TV34. The video was produced by the Elder Sports Management Instructional Institute and was funded by the PGA of America Foundation and the New Jersey Council for the Humanities.

Maybe, if she better understood the history of the Club House, she would not be eager to tear it down.

Mayor Martin Marks and the town council should not even consider this site for a new center. This site has historical significance, and it is located in the center of "Jerseyland," a black community where I grew up.

**Lois Hamlette
 Westfield**

Judge Brock's OPRA Ruling Not Helpful To Public for Access to Union County Records

The county has deliberately made the OPRA process a Gordian Knot that has to be cut by someone. Unfortunately, Judge Kathryn Brock was not the person. Her recent order rejected challenges filed by the Union County Watchdog Association and the New Jersey Press Association that attempted to reduce the layers of county bureaucracy that citizens must wade through to obtain OPRA requests.

Obtaining OPRA records from Union County is sometimes downright impossible. Even those who follow the county rules, and pay the county fees without question, get the run-around when requesting public documents that the county, for some God-forsaken reason, hesitates to share with the public.

My recent trip through the county maze trying to obtain OPRA information is an example of the hoops one must jump through. I requested the business and operating plan required of M&E Railway in compliance to their May 9, 2002, contract with Union County. This information is critical to residents in the eight towns along the route where unspecified freight will be hauled on untested tracks, without environmental or safety testing. This information is also important to taxpayers who are funding this multi-million dollar project.

My OPRA labyrinth on July 9. After filling out the form and sending the check, I received an 11-page undated document that had evidence of pre-dating the contract. This obviously was not what I requested and paid for, so I contacted the clerk for the date of that document to see if it did, in fact, comply with or was in breach of the terms of the M&E 2002 contract with Union County.

Several e-mails and phone calls later, I was told that the Union County director of economic development would contact M&E on my behalf and find out the information I requested. I received an e-mail saying that M&E updated that document. I requested the updated one, which was the only one I originally asked for, and received a response from the director that same day. He claimed that the existence of such a document was "conjectured on the part of his staff." He promised to look into the situation. His e-mail on August 10 said, "I'll keep in touch."

Over a month later, and numerous unanswered phone calls, no one in Union County offices are "in touch" with me about my paid for OPRA request.

I am very disappointed in Judge Brock's ruling because it slams the door shut [on obtaining OPRA information].

**Richard Lenihan
 Roselle**

Wild Animals Fare Better Than WF Residents in Survival of the Fittest

This summer an alligator, or to be more personal, Gregory Gator, was found at Gregory Pond on Clark Street in Westfield and trapped. He will be transported to a more appropriate home out-of-state. Darlene Yuhas, a spokesperson for the state Department of Environmental Protection, said it was necessary to remove the alligator more for the safety of the animal than the people.

Meanwhile, it is interesting to note that unnamed raccoons are left to breed their own mischief in an unoccupied house earmarked for construction on Cacciola Place in Westfield, posing a health hazard and causing the occupants of neighboring houses to live in a state of anxiety for several months.

Although these notorious black-masked bandits will have their night in court, it appears as if they have already proven their case — wild animals fare better than Westfield citizens in survival of the fittest.

**Theresa Stiles
 Westfield**

MEET THE CANDIDATES

Charles Mitchell, Sr.
 Candidate for Union Cty. Sheriff

I am a lifelong Democrat who is running on an independent reform slate, challenging incumbent Union County Sheriff Ralph Froehlich. I am a sheriff's officer with more than 20 years experience in various law enforcement and security positions.

I will leave my current law enforcement post if elected sheriff by Union County voters and would seek the most qualified personnel instead of handing out jobs to family members and politically connected people.

Double-dipping Assemblyman Joseph Cryan should resign from his job as undersheriff. Mr. Cryan was never qualified for the key law enforcement job.

Assemblyman Alfred Steele resigned as Passaic County undersheriff after being nabbed in a bribery sting operation by FBI agents.

Gov. Jon Corzine signed a bill this week that prohibits politicians from simultaneously holding more than one elected office. That does not go far enough because, while banning dual office-holding, it only effects elected jobs and it exempts those currently in office.

New Jersey should join the majority of other states that outlaw such practices as holding more than one public job.

Two other state lawmakers under federal indictment also collected multiple tax-funded paychecks.

Cryan needs to decide if he wants to be an assemblyman or undersheriff, and since he has problems showing up for work and no law enforcement experience, he should resign the appointed job.

A report by New Jersey Policy Perspective targeted Mr. Cryan's job as undersheriff as an example of the "unethical conflicts and consolidation of too much power among elected officials who make laws and also hold administrative positions that carry out those laws.

The law should be changed so that no elected official can collect multiple paychecks at taxpayer expense. Time should be provided for the nearly 700 elected state, county and municipal officials that now hold other unelected government jobs to find alternate employment or let their current terms expire.

Westfield Has Installed Stupid Tax for Parking in Wrong Spots

New Jersey is noted for its taxes on the people who live here. I live in the Town of Westfield and this town is to be commended. It has gone to the max and installed a stupid tax. You may wonder how a stupid tax works.

Well, if you read this paper you must have seen letters from people who received tickets for pushing the incorrect number in the parking kiosk. I am also guilty of this. I entered 109 but was parked in 209 and, of course, I received a ticket. I decided to go to court rather than pay the ticket since I realized I made an honest mistake and I also had my receipt as proof that I had paid to park in the time span noted on the ticket.

At court I met several others who were there for the same "crime" I had committed. We all spent several hours sitting in the hall of the courthouse waiting our turn. When I was called I was told exactly what the others had been told - this was an undefendable ticket. There was no defense for stupid people who entered the wrong number.

I was fined \$20 for my mistake and did not get back the \$2 I paid for a spot I didn't use. It's really true, Westfield has a great education system and I did get a lot smarter from this incident. I will no longer shop in Westfield where I have shopped for 50 years (I bought my first pair of Levi's at the Leader Store in 1953).

**Richard Parry
 Westfield**

Mayor Should Not Have Issued Comments on Cell Tower Case

Editor's Note: The letter writer is Chairman of the Scotch Plains Democratic Committee and an attorney for one resident opposing the proposed cell tower by Omnipointe Communications, Inc./T-Mobile at the Willow Grove Swim Club.

Two week ago [in a letter to the editor], Mayor Martin Marks, gave a legal lesson to the residents of Scotch Plains who are concerned about the possibility of a cell tower being built by Omnipointe in their neighborhood.

He is not sufficiently qualified to give reliable advice on legal issues.

Mayor Marks said: "As with many land use board applications, there can be misconceptions promulgated among our residents." He is right. If you listen to what he says, you would have a misconception of what the law really is. You would, however, know what Omni-Point wants you to know.

Mayor Marks also said that "the township council can be the appellate body" from the proceedings going on so that the township council (including himself) must not involve itself while there is an active application pending. He said this could jeopardize the rights of the applicant and/or residents. This, however, didn't stop him from doing just that and giving a signal to the members of the zoning board what his views were.

His comments about the issue of placing a cell tower near school property not being something the board can consider is not correct and, in fact, is a legal issue now before the board. He also suggests that since Scotch Plains is mostly residential neighborhoods with few industrial or commercial areas, cell towers will need to go into residential areas. He fails to

point out that there are already six places in Scotch Plains, which have cell antennas on them.

Three of them are on high voltage towers, which were already in place for the electric company, and another is on the water tower on Jerusalem Road. The only two cell towers in Scotch Plains were built without variances, one by Union County and the other by the Township of Scotch Plains under Mayor Marks's leadership.

The mayor should not "continue to monitor the process as it unfolds" because it would "jeopardize the rights of the applicant and/or residents." The zoning board is considering important issues, which can affect the property rights of Scotch Plains' residents and the health of many of our school children. Even if it were not an attempt to interfere with this process, it is inappropriate for our mayor to lecture residents on behalf of the position of Omnipointe.

**Dick Samuel
 Scotch Plains**

Sen. Lautenberg's Website Petition Link

I'm sure you already know, but the web link for [Senator Frank] Lautenberg's petition, as given, doesn't work.

Meanwhile, I couldn't agree more with Senator Lautenberg. This [the Bush] administration should be impeached.

**Barbara Briemer
 Westfield**

Editor's Note: The full address is www.democratsenators.org/019/07/07/petition.jsp?petition_KEY=71. Or go to www.lautenbergforj.com and click petition link. Paid for by Lautenberg for Senate.

Letters to the Editor

Patriotic American Says 'Enough is Enough'

Senator Lautenberg, I feel compelled to address your letter to the editor of September 13 ("Lautenberg, Dems say 'Enough is Enough'") in which you imply that our President and our four-star army general, David Petraeus, are liars. I know a majority of Americans across this great country of ours would share my anger having read this. Have you ever thought to ask one of the many volunteer soldiers who have re-enlisted how they feel about the war effort? Americans know we must win the war against terrorism to keep our freedom. We must be united in this effort.

You, your political cohorts and the Democratic political fundraising front group MoveOn.org have a vested interest in defeat. Why else would you have chosen words of gutter politics and propaganda? Words that give comfort to the enemy and used by the enemy for propaganda.

For the security of our country, move on and do not run for senator next term. Enough is enough!

**Monica Felsing
 Fanwood**

Why Didn't County Commissioner Answer?

There's a clip on U-Tube that captures the total disrespect that taxpayers endure from certain elected officials serving on Union County commissions and advisory boards. The video, entitled, "Politician tells tax-payer 'I don't respect you!'" can be seen at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=AF56S2TRCA. It takes place at a Cranford council meeting where a resident asks Councilman George Jern about a Union County commission he was paid to serve on with county tax dollars.

The commission was formed to produce a report on shared services. The Cranford taxpayer, Tina Renna, president of the Union County Watchdog Association, simply asked Commissioner Jern why there was no report produced by this commission that Union County paid \$33,000 to have done.

Jern's response was, "I don't recall, to be honest with you." That remark seems like a stretch from "being honest" with anyone. Jern tried to wiggle out of the question by noting the lateness of the hour, and how many billions of dollars are being spent on foreign policy, and how he got Cranford out of so many messes, but Renna kept him on track.

She was simply addressing one relatively small leak in the Union County budget. Compared to other more expensive and useless studies that were dead-ended, and commissions that never produced anything of value to the county, it is relatively small. The county budget just seems to constantly make more room for more waste. Taxpayers have to put their fingers in the dike and stop every leak.

We pay dearly when you tally up the budget column for so many items that should be labeled, "Money down the drain." Jern's group seems to be one of them. Renna, and all citizens of Union County, have a right to a simple response to the question asked of Jern. He claimed he didn't want to debate with Renna.

All the lady wanted was a simple answer. Why was that so difficult for Jern? It sounds like he was covering for something greater than the information that was being required of him. This video clip gives the public a small peephole to watch through, as these elected officials dodge questions, display their lack of respect for all of us who pay for their pompous positions.

Commissioner Jern owes Tina Renna and the Union County taxpayers an apology. Why does he want the job of a public servant, if he looks down upon those he has sworn to offer his service and expertise?

**Arlene Murphy
 Roselle**



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 Email Photos in color
 Email Ads as pdf files in color
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