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Letters to the Editor

**Residents Need to Attend Meeting
 And Voice Opposition to Tower**

There will be a Cranford zoning-board meeting on January 28 at 8:15 p.m. on the site of the proposed 130-foot cell tower located at the Cranford Swim Club property on the Cranford/Westfield border. Briefly, the reasons this tower is totally inappropriate here are stated here forth. 1. Too many important zoning laws ignored and too many serious variances required to build it here. 2. Tower would be located in an all-residential area and will set a precedent for more such towers to be erected in residential zones, thereby destroying neighborhoods. 3. Property values would be severely reduced and owners would have difficulty selling homes near such a site. 4. The tower would have a diesel generator and 225-gallon fuel tank. 5. Unknown health and safety issues. 6. The cell tower and antennas would stand approximately 60 feet above the three tops with four to five levels of antennas. Operation of such a tower would be 24 hours daily, seven days a week. 7. The tower will denigrate atmosphere of area and adjacent Lenape Park used by residents from many nearby towns and have an adverse effect on the Rahway River Parkway Historic District. The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders adamantly opposes the construction of this cell phone tower at the Cranford Swim Club site. Natural areas of placid parkland should be preserved for use now and for the future. It is evident that other areas will be subject to cell towers put in residential areas so let us stop this proposal now and let the elected officials of our towns, of Cranford and Westfield, know this is unacceptable. Please attend the January 28 meeting in Cranford of the zoning board. Call (908) 709-7216 for confirmation of the meeting.

Jenny Schuvart
Westfield

Following Dr. King's Legacy, Freedom Must Prevail

The nation celebrated Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday on Monday. He was a great American, using peaceful, civil demonstrations to achieve rights so justly deserved for the previously downtrodden black members of this nation. Dr. King fought so well, with such good heart, and prevailed by using the freedom granted to all citizens by the Constitution of the United States.

Some say his work is not done, and we have many more lessons to be learned. Perhaps so, as more progress in human and citizens' rights is needed. Also needed, while remembering Dr. King, are awareness and action to prevent backsliding of freedoms - whether it involves racial equality or citizens' rights in general. Unpopular, he stood for right over wrong.

We're concerned that government is renegeing on the pledges to, and memory of, Dr. Martin Luther King as rights are eroding. Government power is growing unfettered to feed the voracious and self-serving appetites of those in charge.

In the shadow of Dr. King's birthday observance this weekend, former Bogota mayor Steve Lonegan was arrested outside a town-hall meeting at Middle Township High School in Cape May Court House last Saturday while demonstrating with a placard in opposition to the Governor's "Sell the Turnpike" proposal. The mayor was not acting in a disorderly or threatening manner, just expressing his views and protesting as provided for by law and the U.S. Constitution.

Equally telling of the times, the mayor was arrested for demonstrating on so-called "private property," said the school-board member who ordered the arrest. The town-hall meeting was being held in

the public school. We believe the school is public property - at least that is what each of us is told as we are presented with the bill to pay for it.

Politicians and others in power have become morphed in their views. Many of them believe that when they win an election or become appointed to a position, they now own the entity to plunder as they see fit - not that they have been entrusted by the public to serve. It has become a warlord mentality.

It is very chilling. There are many rights, checks and balances being eroded. This stems from greed - eminent domain as now being practiced, no-show jobs, double-dipping, no-bid contracts, unbridled benefits, conflicts of interest as politicians own businesses and law firms doing government business - all of this is on the citizens' backs.

We believe citizens should stand up to restore their freedom. Otherwise, confronted with tyranny, we will doom ourselves by inaction.

Union County residents will have an opportunity to express their views to the Governor at a town-hall meeting at Union County College in Cranford on Wednesday, January 30, from 7 to 9 p.m. We urge New Jersey residents to attend and speak up. Sign up to attend at state.nj.us/townhallmeetings.

We remind our readers of a famous quote by Martin Niemoeller: "First they came for the Communists, but I was not a Communist so I did not speak out. Then they came for the Socialists and the Trade Unionists, but I was not one of them so I did not speak out. Then they came for the Jews, but I was not Jewish so I did not speak out. And when they came for me, there was no one left to speak out for me."

Shifting Sewer Fees from Property Taxes Raises Many Questions

As part of his effort to control property-tax increases in New Jersey, Governor Jon Corzine has mandated that all taxing agencies - municipalities, school boards and counties - keep tax increases at or below 4 percent starting this year. We commend the Governor for this. However, political maneuvering is underway to work around the mandate. One of these is to move sewer charges from the property-tax bill and make it a utility charge to the residents. In doing so, the property-tax bill is surreptitiously offset, but the resident no longer gets the federal income-tax benefit.

An example of this is the City of Rahway forming a separate utility to collect sewerage fees directly from its residents. These fees are currently paid by the city directly to the Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority (RVSA) and are included in services supported by residents' tax bills. Garwood and Clark are making similar changes.

The RVSA is in the midst of a \$250-million court-mandated upgrade that is driving up sewerage costs for its 11 member towns - Westfield, Mountainside, Scotch Plains, Springfield, Kenilworth, Roselle Park, Cranford, Garwood, Clark, Rahway and Woodbridge.

Under a user-fee system, non-profits, such as houses of worship, Children's Specialized Hospital and YMCAs - which are tax-exempt - would now be

billed for sewerage services. Additionally, businesses could be more specifically assessed based on usage. Perhaps there are some good elements to this.

Rahway Mayor James Kennedy said in his annual address that under the "more equitable" user-fee system, the average Rahway homeowner would pay \$245 annually instead of \$441 currently.

Is Rahway just shifting the accounting to avoid the Governor's property-tax-limit mandate? The burden of paying for sewerage service still rests with homeowners and businesses. What are the next services to be shifted off the property-tax books - Police, fire, public works, county services and education? Is this what Governor Corzine envisioned when he enacted the 4-percent cap?

While we favor any system that is more equitable, we are concerned. Will towns actually cut their spending by the amount they were paying RVSA or simply shift those dollars to other tax-funded programs? Rahway intends to have United Water, which has privatized the city's water services, bill residents for the sewerage costs. Does this open the door to politically connected abuses? Will Westfield, Mountainside and Cranford be next?

We encourage more dialogue on this to ensure that the Governor's mandate to limit taxes is upheld and not "out maneuvered."

Didn't It Dawn on Township Officials That Mural Violated Zoning Laws?

Personally, I find the mural on the side of Mezzogiorno's a nice addition to the streetscape of our downtown area. The part that I find fascinating is that it was allowed to be painted over a period of time without the appropriate permits. Fortunately, the planning board had the good sense to grant the variance.

The mural faces the side of the municipal building adjacent to the parking lot. Township officials and the same planning-board members who held a hearing to consider the appropriateness of the mural with respect to the zoning laws had to have watched the progress of its completion.

Didn't it dawn on anyone in town hall that it was against the zoning laws?

Wouldn't it have saved the proprietor money and aggravation if township officials thought to act upon it while it was being painted more than a year ago? Would our police department watch a crime being committed and wait until it is over before stopping it? Would the fire department wait for our homes to burn down before turning on a hose? Of course not.

How can we expect our public officials to concern themselves about serious violations in our neighborhoods when they can't see a violation next to where they park their cars five days a week?

Reader Accuses Johnson of 'Ignorant Treatment of Catholic Schools' in Den

I am writing concerning troubling things I read in an article written by Bruce Johnson last week ("Devil's Den"). First, I applaud him on his great spirit and for knowledge of Westfield High School athletics. However, I am offended by his ignorant treatment of Catholic schools.

I have lived in Westfield for 16 years and am in the midst of my 13th year of Catholic-School education. I have been reading his column for several years, and it makes me upset when he uses phrases like "sugar-coated BS" and "wasting their money" with respect to Catholic and private schools. Just as you, Mr. Johnson, love WHS, so do I love Mount Saint Mary Academy, where I'm in the class of 2009, and Holy Trinity Interparochial School, where I graduated in 2005.

I am an athlete, but that's not why I chose my school. It was the exemplary education and sense of family that affected my decision. There are about 30 girls on the swim team, and we are very proud of their accomplishments. But don't think for a second that the other 350 girls

are not just as important to our school community.

There is a trend in the "Devil's Den" columns that appears to me to be nothing more than anti-Catholicism disguised as sports reporting. I don't appreciate reading that in my local newspaper. This is America, and we all have the right to seek the education that makes sense for us. Why don't you praise the athletic accomplishments of all Westfield residents, whatever school they attend, and stop attacking Catholic and private schools?

Have you considered the consequences of what you write? It is shameful and appalling coming from one who so greatly motivates the Westfield athletes. Treat us with the same respect. Isn't that what sportsmanship is all about? It is not right to teach children that you can speak that way about opponents and rivals. It is not in the spirit of sports and friendly competition.

Glover: Ask for the Proposed Budget To be Posted on Township Website

It is not ironic that at the state and national level, political candidates seeking office, both Democrat and Republican alike, agree on the need for change, advocating fiscal responsibility and tax stability from government. Yet, still, we have individuals who can't embrace change, may be fearful to let go of failed policies or are unwilling to embrace, or even listen to, new ideas.

Regrettably, there may be little hope to alter the thinking of those who cannot recognize that the world, our nation, state and, yes, our municipality are facing many challenges fostered by challenging global and national economic conditions.

Today, we are witnessing a national crisis, stemming from a collapse in the sub-prime market that has critically stymied the credit markets. To date, our township has avoided effects of the sub-prime-housing foreclosure fiasco on our tax collections. Notwithstanding, the sub-prime fallout affects us all socially and economically. There are those under financial pressures who could be in trouble if this trend continues.

Recognizing this, municipal government can play a role in helping to provide much-needed relief to homeowners by working responsibly to reduce municipal property taxes through promoting and supporting the delivery of cost-efficient, essential services. These are hard times for many. Accordingly, it is essential that we embrace, as we have in the past during difficult times, a willingness to listen respectfully to new ideas that promote and encourage the needs of our taxpayers.

Calling for a viable municipal budget that takes less of a bite from a family's paycheck by not raising taxes this year is such a goal. As we are preparing to begin

the 2008 budget review, I want to reiterate that this should be your council's "number 1" objective. Challenge your council to accomplish this. You can also help; ask for your manager's preliminary budget proposal, not just his statutorily mandated report, to be open to all for review. Ask for it to be posted on our township's website. There are those in town who are qualified to comment on the proposed budget but only if they have the proper backup information.

As one who spent decades working in the financial industry, I can tell you firsthand that I have worked and raised a family through stock markets that had good days and bad months but typically, and fortunately, were followed then by good years in the economy. Experience has shown me that markets, housing and stock, are cyclical. But you know that - and for those who have experienced working through difficult times, you also know that - it's always darkest before the dawn and that this crisis, too, shall pass. The township can help, and it would be irresponsible for your elected and appointed officials not to try.

Throughout our history, when facing challenges, Americans have persevered by showing their ingenuity and resilience as a people and as caring neighbors. Today, as it has been throughout our history, we will move forward again, smarter and stronger. As I shared with you in the past, I am optimistic about our nation, state and township future.

Real change requires action; you can either work for it or fight against it. I prefer the former. It's about time.

Samuel Accuses Marks of Opting To Use his 'Old Trick of Smear'

Once again, Mayor Martin Marks has responded to an attempt to discuss serious issues concerning municipal business by launching a campaign of smear and innuendo.

He started at the recent township-council organizational meeting and followed up by having a person appointed at that meeting to the zoning board of adjustment, a quasi-judicial body, to repeat and expand on his partisan distortions.

The theme of this year's smear seems to be that last year was the "ugliest year in Scotch Plains politics" and that the reason for this is that Councilman Glover and I have publicly addressed issues that formally were decided by the mayor and municipal manager behind closed doors, and we have made public facts that are inconsistent with the mayor's agenda.

It is understandable that Mayor Marks and his friends truly believe that last year was an ugly year. Last year, they were on the receiving end of criticism - rather than being free to say whatever they wanted, truthful or not, without consequence.

Last year, at least Mayor Marks and Municipal Manager Tom Atkins were taken to court to defend their allegedly

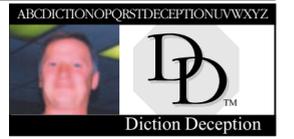
improper behavior during the 2006 municipal-election campaign apparently designed to maintain their grip on power.

The issue before us is the municipal portion of the 2008 Scotch Plains tax rate. Councilman Glover, aware of the revenues for 2007 and the outcome of the dire predictions made by the remainder of the council, the municipal manager and Joan Papan, made a proposal that an attempt be made to not increase the municipal portion of the 2008 Scotch Plains tax rate.

It appears that rather than explain why he will again insist on raising taxes, the mayor chooses his old trick of smear.

No matter how many paid and unpaid political appointees the mayor and his team enlist to support them or how many people they don't reappoint to commissions and boards because they display independence or how many people they prevent from volunteering because they criticize the mayor, we shall continue to discuss the issues.

Dick Samuel
Chair, Scotch Plains Democratic Committee



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. Trutinate - To weigh or consider
2. Deictic - Pointing out or proving directly
3. Truculence - Savageness of manner; fierceness
4. Dehors - In law, outside of or foreign to

TORPESCENCE

1. A state of insensibility; numbness
2. Small number; insufficiency
3. A feeling of discomfort, especially in the bowels
4. Capability or liability to be torn apart or disunited

HOMILIST

1. A lap cloth worn by a bishop when he sits during the celebration of Mass
2. In Latin, a lawgiver
3. A sermonizer; preacher
4. A recorder or registrar

IMPALR

1. To stretch or distort
2. To hold mutual discourse
3. To beat with a stick or club
4. To scatter; disperse

PHILOLOGYST

1. A person fond of or living by hunting
2. A stamp collector
3. A self-absorbed, self-loving person
4. A person who loves women

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 Letters to the Editor

Thank You, Newspaper Staff and Readership

The past two years, I have had the privilege and pleasure of serving our communities through *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*. It has been extremely rewarding to have a role in providing our towns with news, entertainment pieces and new goleader.com features.

I accept a position as communications and external-affairs manager for the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra with excitement, as music and the promotion and discussion of it are my great passions. I leave *The Leader/Times* with wonderful journalistic experience and a much deeper understanding of Westfield and our surrounding communities.

I have acquired new skill sets here, thanks to our publisher, Horace Corbin, and his eagerness to help me explore new facets of journalistic media, in particular the Internet and video-journalism. I have developed a keen interest in local politics, a subject I never before knew was so important. And as I begin a new job, I have the fondest memories of this one.

I will continue to be an avid *Leader/Times* reader, and I hope to pen the occasional "Vic's Picks" to keep in touch with you (and my CD collection).

Thank you to both the newspaper staff and our readership for the extraordinary opportunity to serve you.

Victoria McCabe
Westfield

Vehicles Must Stop Rather Than Yield

I appreciate the letter of Mr. Falcone (January 17 letter to the editor) and his concern for pedestrian safety. My first bill that ever passed the Assembly was my pedestrian-safety initiative that would require motorists to stop rather than yield to pedestrians. I worked on this legislation on a bi-partisan basis with Assemblywoman Linda Stender. Unfortunately, the bill has not yet passed the State Senate.

It is extremely important that vehicles stop rather than yield because the "yield concept" is somewhat vague depending on the location of the pedestrian.

Motorists are required to stop when a pedestrian enters the crosswalk. I submit that they will more carefully look for pedestrians.

Motorists need to be vigilant and show civility to pedestrians. I am aware that certain pedestrians fail to cross at the designated locations, and enforcement in this area is also important. We should not need further injuries and deaths to encourage people to slow down and to be extremely careful when operating a motor vehicle or crossing the street.

Thank you, Mr. Falcone, for asking my views on this very important issue.

Jon Brannick
Assemblyman LD-21, Westfield

SP Reader: 'Martin Marks is a Spender'

In response to Mary DePaola's letter to the editor, *Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* of January 17, 2008, regarding Councilman Kevin Glover's promises for property-tax freezes, I say, "Yes, Ms. DePaola, you are absolutely right!" It will take a miracle to deliver tax relief after Mayor Martin Marks and his Republican council's spending spree in 2007.

Lets see: \$4 million for the town-hall renovations, \$4 million for the senior center and \$2 million for the turf-fields. That's a total of \$10 million - almost all borrowed and all this with a recession looming.

"Martin Marks is a Spender" - Sounds like a good campaign slogan for 2008, don't you think?

As far as all the ugliness goes, I can personally testify, after attending many town meetings, that I was appalled at the treatment that Mr. Glover was receiving from Mr. Marks and Ms. Malool, which included shouting and throwing notepads across the table. Yes, Scotch Plains, these things did occur in your town hall.

I give credit to Mr. Glover for not losing his cool but defending his positions calmly and logically.

Chris Thompson
Scotch Plains