

Letters to the Editor

'Oh That Evil Tea Party!' They Say 'Mean And Nasty People!'

Last week in an emotionally charged letter, Ms. Nix of Scotch Plains criticized statements of mine previously published here and at the same time rolled out the Democrat campaign theme for the local election this November. She complained that I had inaccurately described the recent budget votes in Scotch Plains.

She also threw rhetorical bombs at something she called the "Scotch Plains Tea/Republican Party." Details matter even when they are inconvenient, and two details not mentioned by Ms. Nix is that both Mr. Glover and Ms. Gialanella voted against this year's operating budget and, more importantly, neither of them offered an alternative budget.

They merely positioned themselves so they could claim that they wanted a zero tax increase, but neither of them actually proposed anything to get there. Making vague statements about cutting taxes without any specifics is a typical politician's tactic.

Ms. Nix suggests that Mr. Glover and Ms. Gialanella voted against this year's capital budget because they objected in principle to adding \$1.5 million to the town's debt. Neither of them said any such thing before the vote. Mr. Glover and Ms. Gialanella had no problem adding over \$3 million in debt last year.

Scotch Plains will shortly be presented with the question of whether to spend over \$4.5 million on The Shady Rest. I doubt they will stand on these newly disclosed principles by voting "no" to the debt needed to renovate The Shady Rest. Ms. Nix and her Democrat colleagues have as their primary campaign tactic this year an attempt to distract voters by referring to the "tea party." "Oh that evil tea party!" they say. "They're mean and nasty people! Some of them carry around copies of and actually read - wait for it - the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution! The horror!"

Give me a break. The reality is that by attacking the tea party, Democrats hope to get people riled up so that they do not think about the real issues. (I'm sure they will send mailings to some voters in town this fall linking the Republican candidates to the tea party, just as they did last year.)

These attacks are geared towards the ill-informed and are designed solely to elicit an emotional response among certain voters. These attacks insult and demean the voters they aim to reach, and that's shameful. If this is the best Democrats have, they're surely in very bad shape.

Democrats are forced to rely on emotions and lies concerning the tea party because significant majorities

of Americans agree that the federal government is too big, spends too much, and ought to have a balanced budget, politicians are unresponsive to the people, free markets and personal responsibility are to be encouraged, crony capitalism favoring special interests is unfair to the middle class and bad for our economy, and taxes are high enough already. Independent voters and even the Occupy Wall Street movement share many of these views. In fact, far more Americans agree with these traditional values than those who agree with the Democrat progressive agenda.

Many people do not know what our Constitution says nor do they know why it says what it says. Would they have learned more in school about the Constitution and the political theory underpinning it then they could resist the manipulations of people like Ms. Nix, Ms. Stender and other progressives. Their natural suspicion of Democrat progressive schemes and the all-encompassing nanny state would solidify into the certain knowledge that the progressive trend over the last 100 years, forced on them by progressive Democrats, our schools and the popular culture, is dangerous and antithetical to traditional American values.

Lately, thanks to Mr. Obama, many are finally appreciating the failings of big-government progressivism and its tendency to despotism and tyranny.

Ms. Nix, you really should be grateful that the tea party is out here fighting for you to keep your voice in government. The politicians in Washington would love to dictate to the town council how many parks to have, what equipment has to be in them, that 24/7 closed circuit television monitoring is needed in the parks, what roads have to be paved each year, how many police we need, how much to spend on senior programs, etc. That doesn't sound as far-fetched as it might have six years ago, does it? If Washington, D.C. made all those decisions, no one would care what you or I thought, would they?

Rich Fortunato
Scotch Plains

Bramnick Supports Fulop Re: Cop Killer

TRENTON — Assembly Minority Leader Jon Bramnick (R-21st, Westfield) issued the following statement:

"Despite the *Star-Ledger's* criticism of Mayor Fulop's decision to remove a memorial to the Jersey City cop killer, there comes a time that we as a society must respond to actions that violate the basic principles of a civilized society. Mayor Fulop acted as a leader. End of story."

Michael Bielen Introduces Himself as Westfield BOE Candidate

My name is Michael Bielen and I am running for a seat on the Westfield Board of Education in November. My wife Helen and I have lived in Westfield for the past 15 years. Together we are raising our twin daughters, Elizabeth and Caroline, who attended McKinley School until this past June and will be starting sixth grade at Edison Intermediate School in September.

Westfield has been a wonderful place to raise my family, and my daughters have received a great education. As a parent myself, I want to help ensure that they and all Westfield students continue to have the resources, instruction and physical environment to excel academically in a rapidly changing world. Our children are our future.

I hold a Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science from DeSales University and a Master's Degree in Interactive Telecommunications from NYU. In my professional life, over the past 25 years, I have been a driving force behind the use of new technology to provide my clients with business and marketing solutions. For the past 10 years I have worked for a healthcare IT solutions provider, helping the organization's businesses across the country work more efficiently and

collaboratively. My resourcefulness has enabled me to identify the most cost-effective solutions to meet the needs of any project.

I have always shown a willingness to work with others and have put my time and talent to work for Westfield in the past. For example, I worked with various town departments to identify content and help the town restructure the town's website. I helped establish the town's social media strategy on Facebook and Twitter before other area towns considered social media to communicate with residents. This was especially helpful during the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy where I worked directly with local officials and emergency responders to disseminate information via Twitter, the town's website and paper flyer distribution.

I look forward to bringing my background, creativity and problem solving experience, together with fiscal prudence, to the Board of Education for the benefit of our students, teachers, school administrators, and ultimately for all Westfield residents. I humbly ask for your support to work on your behalf.

Michael Bielen
Westfield

Freeholder Chairman Hudak Reports On WiFi Progress in County Parks

As the summer season rolls along, I am happy to report that the Union County free Wi-Fi program is off and running, too. Free Wi-Fi is featured in my Chairman's initiatives for 2014 as part of the Freeholder Board's stewardship mission for the historic Union County parks system.

The Freeholder Board is committed to ensuring that our recreation facilities are up to date and welcoming to a broad spectrum of activities. I hope that the opportunity to use free Wi-Fi inspires our visitors to share their experiences through online platforms, helping to raise awareness of the generous legacy of public parks that we have inherited.

With that in mind, I encourage you to stop by and check out our free Wi-Fi service, which is now available at the Wheeler Pool and playground at Wheeler Park in Linden.

Wheeler Pool is open seven days a week during the summer. You can view schedule details on the county's website at ucnj.org. There is a modest fee for entering the pool area, and there is no admission fee for use of the playground.

Free Wi-Fi service is also now available at the playground area at Nomahegan Park in Cranford. A public restroom is conveniently located nearby. For a change of pace you can take a relaxing stroll on the walking path, which runs along Nomahegan Lake and into peaceful wooded areas.

Also coming this year is free Wi-Fi for the Ulrich Pool at Rahway River Park in Rahway, the Skating Center at Warinanco Park in Roselle, and the Trailside Nature and Science Center at the Watchung Res-

ervation in Mountainside.

The new Wi-Fi at Trailside is especially exciting because it opens up new opportunities to learn about the exhibits and participate in activities. The new service also dovetails with a new technology upgrade that has brought "smart classrooms" to the educational programs at Trailside.

Trailside is open seven days a week all year round, and there is no admission fee to view the exhibits.

Trailside is also just steps away from miles of shaded hiking trails in the Watchung forest. That includes the new Ruth Canstein Yablonsky Geology Trail ucnj.org/geo-hike/ and the History Trail ucnj.org/trails-map. Both have been enhanced with QR code kiosks for learning more about lava trails, a centuries-old copper mine, and many other interesting features you see along the way.

While the free Wi-Fi service and other technology upgrades are new, we have also been working to keep the time honored, traditional activities in our parks up to date and enjoyable. Just a short walk away from Trailside, for example, you can find the newly renovated Loop Playground with a cooling "mister" water feature and a new shaded pavilion.

We have also added popular new fitness activities to our long running Summer Arts Festival and Family Flix series of free outdoor concerts and movies.

For all the latest events, activities and updates at all 36 Union County parks, visit us at ucnj.org/parks, or call (908) 527-4900.

Christopher Hudak
UC Freeholder Chairman

Commentary

Utilities Authority Needs to Clean House After Scandal

The Union County Utilities Authority (UCUA) has reprimanded its executive director and deputy director for taking stipends totaling \$21,000 that were not authorized. Five employees who were deemed not to have done anything wrong will get to keep the stipends they were given. They received stipends of \$3,000 each, paid at a rate of \$500 per month.

Dan Sullivan, a former long-time Union County freeholder, was ordered to repay \$15,000 - amounting to \$2,500 a month - while, deputy director/comptroller has to return \$6,000 or \$1,000 a month. Mr. Brennan was also suspended for five days without pay. The stipends were given between August 2013 through January 2014.

Through a shared services agreement initiated in August 2013 between the UCUA and the Union County Improvement Authority (UCIA) - whereby the UCUA runs the UCIA - has the UCIA paying the utilities authorities \$15,000 per month as compensation for use of UCUA staff, office space, use of office equipment, and utilities. The unauthorized stipends added up to \$4,000 per month, which was for the extra work of running the improvement authority.

The UCUA commissioners did not know anything about the stipends until Tina Renna of the Union County Watchdog Association checked on monthly bills and claims at which time she questioned the commissioners about the payments.

Why didn't any of the commissioners question the payments? Do any of them look at the bills and claims? This is not supposed to be a rubber stamp board.

While we know Mr. Brennan was the comptroller, we question why he was suspended, but Mr. Sullivan was not. Could it be that Mr. Sullivan, after 19 years as a freeholder has more political clout than his deputy director?

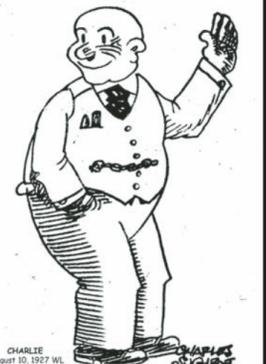
Mr. Sullivan was hired as interim

executive UCUA director in August of 2011 at a salary of \$130,000 and was named permanent director in November 2012 with a bump in salary to \$150,000. In August 2013, the salary increased to \$153,000. Soon after he began taking his \$2,500 per month stipend.

In our view, there needs to be a legal requirement that the position of UCUA executive director is advertised to the general public to apply for and that it must be proven the most qualified candidate - not the most politically connected candidate - gets the job.

We also believe the time has come to clean house starting with the appointment of new commissioners to the utilities authority who will do their jobs rather than be a rubber stamp for management. The board then must terminate Mr. Sullivan and Mr. Brennan and hire new management to run the organization and ensure that it accomplishes the UCUA's primary task of implementing the Union County Solid Waste Management Plan, where county-generated garbage is sent to the county incinerator in Rahway.

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