

More Letters to the Editor

Freeholders Refuse to Be Held Accountable for Sale of Runnells

Freeholder Bruce Bergen, quoted in the May 22nd issue of *The Westfield Leader*, when asked about the sale of Runnells Hospital, called it: "an unfortunate situation which was not caused by us (Union County Freeholders)." He went on to pass the blame for the closing of Runnells onto the state citing declining Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements. His comment is as laughable and believable as when a mother catches her child doing wrong and the child tells the mother he/she didn't do it, someone else did it. Can't you just hear the words roll of the child's mouth: 'I'm sorry mom you just have to believe me that it's just an unfortunate situation not caused by me?'

Well if that be the case, then how does he explain why five companies, with years of experience in running nursing homes, knowing the above and that when the hospital's financials were finally revealed it was disclosed to be losing upward of \$13.5 million per year, answered the county's RFP for the sale of the hospital? Why would any astute businessman wish to take on these hurdles and the terms of sale that would also require the new owner to: 1) keep the same level of patient care, 2) same level of food service, 3) same number of beds, 4) now have to pay city, county, and state taxes on the property, and 5) and if by chance it should show profitability the profits must be shared with the county? His reasoning defies commonsense. The only thing to presumably have changed would be the management. The reality that the facility now has to be sold is exclusively due to the county's mismanagement of the facility attributable to too many patronage jobs with

salaries/benefits not in-line with the private sector; which in my book equates to mismanagement on the part of the county.

But if by chance mismanagement is not the reason then I put forth that maybe it needs to be sold in order to pay for the new Galloping Hill Golf Course banquet hall/learning center/driving range and 2016 NJ Open quality golf course or the bond payments for the bankrupt Tioga Energy Solar fiasco that the entire county is on the hook for.

Jim Buettner
Cranford

Trademark Seal

government, this not being the first. A 2012 indictment and court hearing from the Union County prosecutor to make Ms. Renna divulge names of county employees who took home county electrical generators during Superstorm Sandy. As an investigative journalist consistently exposing issues with the county government, she came into information from a whistleblower and noted the employee "borrowing" in an Internet article. The county was embarrassed at this public revealing of "borrowing" generators, and instead of investigating internally they used this issue to pursue her. However, this investigative journalist fought the case to reveal the names and source. The judge ruled she did not have to divulge any information.

Maybe "they" want a strong government. Fortunately, the people are stronger.

Bruce Paterson
Garwood

** A Matter of Governance **

On Wednesday, May 28, 2014, at the Garwood Planning Board meeting, I was disturbed to see that the meeting was run by the board attorney and not by the board chair. The attorney sat on the dais and directed all actions including re-framing testimony of speakers, cross examining witnesses, dominating discussion, collaborating directly with applicant's attorney and drawing conclusions to his own choosing.

He steered the outcome. He even suspended the rules of the board that calls for adjournment at 11 p.m. - whereby matters then are ordinarily continued at future meetings.

I appreciate that planning and zoning boards require detailed legal review of applications thus considerable attorney involvement may be required. However, for the attorney to actually run the meeting is inappropriate in my view.

As with council meetings and as to how business is conducted in other towns, attorneys are hired as advisers to provide advice when requested by the officials. They do not run the meetings.

Horace Corbin
Garwood

Editor's Note: See the Garwood article in this edition. Mr. Corbin is publisher of the newspaper.

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Probitas Verus Honos



AND THEY'RE OFF...The Centennial Village Velocity 5K Race on Sunday morning in Cranford draws a large crowd of runners. The race is sponsored by the Centennial Village Group, which works to beautify and revitalize Cranford's Centennial Avenue business district.

Paul Lachenauer for *The Westfield Leader*