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It's April Fools Day

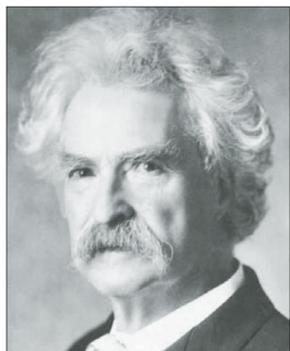
"The first of April is the day we remember what we are the other 364 days of the year." — Mark Twain.

Sunday, residents will be careful about believing what they heard or saw because of April Fool's Day. They don't want to get hooked by a prank.

The April Fool's Day tradition is thought to have started in France around 1582. Prior to that, the New Year was celebrated for eight days, beginning on March 25 and ending on April 1.

Charles IX changed the calendar then. The Gregorian calendar was introduced, and New Year's Day was moved to January 1.

However, news back then traveled by foot, and many did not learn of the calendar change for several years. Others refused to accept the new calendar and continued to celebrate the New Year on April 1. The populace labeled these people as "fools" and subjected them



Mark Twain

to ridicule. They were made the butt of practical jokes.

This tradition of pranks on the first day of April spread to England and Scotland in the 18th century and was then introduced to the American colonies.

For the most part, April Fool's Day is supposed to be a funfest where some carry out their brand of humor at the expense of others. Pranks on April Fool's Day range from simply saying, "Your shoe's untied!" or perhaps setting a roommate's alarm clock back an hour.

Whatever the gag, the trickster ends it by yelling to his victim, "April Fool!"

Were Samuel Langhorne Clemens alive today, he might revise his statement — "The mid of April is the day everyone remembers the IRS, that residents are fools to be taxed 365 days of the year."

Marijuana Sales Highlighted in State Budget Deliberations

N.J. Governor Phil Murphy has proposed a \$37.5-billion budget for the 2018 fiscal year state budget, a nearly \$3-billion increase over the previous year. Critics lambaste the Governor, saying the state is near bankrupt now and is unable to pay its bills. The burden will fall on the property owners. The Governor counters by increasing taxes on the rich and legalizing the sales (and taxing) of marijuana.

Wealthy residents are abandoning N.J. for relocation to Florida to sidestep burdensome state taxes. Florida has none. As example, the Trenton Thunder baseball team has recently concluded a relocation agreement with the City of Naples. In response, the Governor plans a \$33,100 per person "Escape Tax" to lessen the budget blow as a result of migration, according to informed sources.

The legalization of marijuana sales in N.J. remains controversial and leaves many open questions as to the benefits and revenues. Many opportunities exist for "weed" purveyors and for business innovation. One such area for innovation is in the newspaper industry. Westfield Leader Publisher, also a chemical engineer, has perfected integrating marijuana formulations into newsprint. This innovation will allow premium subscribers to the newspaper to "roll their own" upon completing reading of the news. This will also enable everything in "pretty colors" for the subscribers.

This newsprint innovation, called "Facebunk" has been tested at a pilot plant in Mile High City, Colo.,

and will go into production, tentatively planned for an opiate drug manufacturing plant in Paterson, N.J. An online version of Facebunk is planned to avoid the sales tax. The computer server will be maintained in a homeless shelter in L.A.

The Governor has still to reveal how he plans to gloss over the \$80-billion deficit in the funding of teacher retirement benefits. Gov. Murphy, formerly of Golden Sax stated that he plans to work with Jon Corzine, also formerly of Golden Sax, to manipulate the investment portfolio to improve the appearance of the pension funds. He also intends to remove pensions from the state budget and force municipalities to pay the yearly cost of teachers' benefits that up until now are not paid by anyone. If so, this would increase the property tax by an acceptable 37 percent, he said.

Former Governor Corzine could not be reached for comment as he was vacationing in the Dominican Republic with Senator Menendez, neither of whom were in jail as of this time.

The Governor said that budget deficits will be largely ignored, as in the past by elected officials, immolated within the rampant affordable housing statewide scam, and will not come to pass until after his term expires.

The Governor concluded the interview by quoting the well-known nuclear power plant control room idiom, "Will the last one out the door, please turn off the lights."

Letters to the Editor

New Plans Set to Be Unveiled For Tamaques Park

By LAUREN S. BARR Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD - Touting it as their first bipartisan effort Mayor Shelley Brindle and the entire council are set to unveil their new plan for Tamaques Park on Sunday, April 1.

The plan calls for a 34,000-square-foot, six-story structure to be built in the center of the 106-acre park. Within the structure will be two stories of parking to accommodate 322 vehicles on the lower floors. The new structure will eliminate the need for cars to park on the grass and current unsafe conditions during peak field usage.

On the four upper floors will be a state of the art athletic center, including a rooftop driving range. The rest of the interior will feature an Olympic-size swimming pool, two regulation basketball courts, batting cages and four indoor turf fields for soccer and lacrosse; along with a full service gym and spa.

The mayor and council say that this solves the problems with lack of fields and the need for lighting. As the new indoor facility can be used year-round, there will also be no games canceled due to poor weather conditions or field issues.

The project is estimated to cost \$35 million, which officials were quick to point out is \$21 million less than the proposed "Mind and Body" complex proposed in Roselle. Officials added that with Westfield's excellent bond rating it is a good time to borrow large sums of money.

A rough calculation by The Westfield Leader shows the actual cost of the project will likely total a mere \$86 million with compound interest.

More information on this story will be reported as it becomes available, or when pigs fly over the Statehouse, whichever comes first. April fools dear readers!

Mayor Smith, 'It's Really Happening In Scotch Plains'

On Tuesday, March 20, 2018, the Township Council made history by voting unanimously to declare a significant portion of our downtown as an "area in need of redevelopment." This is a major first step to bring Scotch Plains' downtown into the 21st century and to help stabilize our taxes.

The Township Council acted on a Planning Board recommendation that 45 of the 63 properties studied in the first phase of our redevelopment area qualify to be included as an "area in need of redevelopment." The 45 properties consist of 51 percent publicly owned land, and 49 percent privately owned land.

With this public property, the township can lead the public/private endeavor to redevelop this designated area. See the link below for the properties included in the study and information on downtown redevelopment. https://www.scotchplainsnj.gov/departments/downtown-redevelopment-committee/

I would like to thank my colleagues on the Township Council for this historic bipartisan vote, and the members of the Planning Board, especially Chairwoman Paulette Coronato and Vice-Chairman Joe Doyle for their experience and leadership. And of course, I would like to thank all the Township, business, residential, and volunteer members of the Scotch Plains Downtown Redevelopment Committee (SPDRC) for their work

and support. This accomplishment would not be possible without them. A special shout out to the Business/Landlord Subcommittee and its Chairman, Steve Goldberg, for the work communicating with businesses and landlords during the process.

The SPDRC has been tasked with creating one or more redevelopment plans for this phase. I expect that SPDRC recommended plan(s) will be available for the Township Council to review and adopt in the next few months. The redevelopment plan(s) will specify our town's vision for this phase of redevelopment including modern, efficient facilities for our first responders, new mixed-use commercial and residential development including affordable housing units to provide the "critical mass" necessary to sustain and grow our current and future businesses, and most importantly ample parking and infrastructure to support this essential public/private endeavor.

Once the Township Council approves one or more redevelopment plans, it will issue a request for proposal (RFP) for developers to give the Township their proposals to make our vision a reality.

When it comes to downtown redevelopment, it's really happening in Scotch Plains!

Al Smith Scotch Plains Mayor

Kudos to Everyone Who Got Us Through a Stormy Season

The four nor'easters that pummeled our region in a span of just three weeks tested all of us this month. Wind gusts, sleet and sometimes double-digit snow totals proved extremely challenging, creating treacherous road conditions and bringing down trees and limbs along with electrical wires. Many area residents also had to cope with power outages and school closings.

During tumultuous times, natural or otherwise, our communities unfailingly pull together — neighbors helping neighbors — and this particularly difficult winter was no different. Our towns did their best to keep residents up to date on the storms while providing places where residents lacking power could go to get warm.

Local emergency responders and public works personnel deserve special kudos for their efforts in the midst of the March storms, as well as during previous bouts of inclement weather, as when Arctic blasts buffeted the northeast during the most recent holiday season and early part of this year. The dedicated men and women who form the ranks of our police, fire, rescue squad and DPW divisions logged long stretches battling Mother Nature's fury while coming to the aid of fellow residents, sometimes finding themselves in harm's way. Many of these individuals are volunteers. All deserve our heartfelt thanks.

Our mayors and governing bodies have lauded the collective efforts of local emergency responders, DPW

crews and residents in coping with the storms and their aftermath. Westfield Mayor Shelley Brindle reported that her town sustained the most damage it had seen since Superstorm Sandy from dual storms in the first half of March, as 3,000 homes were left without power and more than 40 roads were closed due to fallen trees and wires. She also noted how local merchants supplied food to responders as they dealt with the storms.

In Mountainside, officials reported that police answered 169 requests for service during the March 8 storm and that fire and rescue squad units also responded to a series of emergencies. In addition to half a dozen motor vehicle accidents, a borough resident had to be hospitalized after being struck by a tree branch while clearing snow.

Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr likewise praised emergency responders and residents alike for helping the borough get through the round of storms. Five local homes were left uninhabitable following one nor'easter, while the borough also wrestled with power outages, a tree limb that fell on a person and a hot wire that came down on an ambulance.

In neighboring towns as well the same community spirit could be seen from every sector. Even local utility companies, which were criticized by many for their response to power outages, deserve praise for working day and night to restore electricity to thousands, with help from utility workers from outside New Jersey.

In a sure sign of spring, the major league baseball season begins today. Soon we'll see the first flowers of the spring when yellow forsythia, always an early bloomer, waken from their winter slumber. It's said that April can be the cruelest month, but after the month we've just endured, anything will be an improvement!

Bill Gottdenker Mountainside

Snow Article Fails to Mention Injuries

I thought The "Mayor Offers Storm Statement" article was remiss in not mentioning the injuries that occurred to some of our residents during the nor'easters earlier this month.

I am not aware of all of the injuries in town, but a dear friend to this community, a business owner, and a good friend of mine, David Weinman, was badly injured when a tree struck his vehicle. David is lucky to be alive. I know that David and his wife, Stacy, are extremely grateful to the Westfield Police, Emergency Medical responders and friends in the community who have reached out to express their concern and support.

We all wish David a full recovery during this very difficult time.

Alicia Barker Westfield

Get Out Of Jail Free Card

In the editorial "It Is Time to Limit Payouts for Lawsuits Against Government," The [SP-F] Times asserts that "payouts against government should be... limited to physical harm caused to an individual by a government employee." As examples of the payouts you would eliminate, you describe one for 60 improper days in jail and one for racial slurs by employees' supervisors.

How would the editors of The Times feel about spending 60 days in jail without proper cause, or being subjected to racial slurs in their workplace. Taxpayers would be right to be unhappy with the payouts you describe. However, the solution is not to deny compensation to the innocent victims, but to institute procedures that prevent government officials from engaging in racial slurs or improper incarceration.

If those in charge receive a "get out of jail free" card for allowing situations like these, they will have no incentive to prevent recurrences.

David Harris Fanwood

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LD-21 includes Westfield, Mountainside, Garwood, Summit and Cranford. LD-22 includes Scotch Plains, Fanwood, Plainfield, Clark and Linden.

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