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21st District News
We Delivered Strong Message to the NJ Legislature



Sen. Thomas Kean, Jr. - Westfield
Asm. Jon Bramnick - Westfield
Asm. Eric Munoz - Summit

ABCDICTIONOPQRSTUWXYZ



Diction Deception

I Tried to be Careful Mr. Jones; Thank You Santa for Understanding

When I was a young boy, admittedly a long time ago, Christmastime was a time of great joy, wonderment, warmth and merriment. True, Santa Claus was on my mind. I thought I'd been good most of the year and that Santa would be good to me.

He'd understand that when I broke Mr. Jones' window with the foul ball that it was an accident. I was sure Santa would also understand that when we heard the shattering glass, there was a moment of panic. Yes, we all ran and even thought we'd get away with it - undiscovered.

Our mothers knew about that broken window before we even got home. A stern lecture and direct orders to go over to Mr. Jones and confess that I did it - that's what I got. Mr. Jones tried to be very stern and asked if I'd rake and weed his garden to help pay for it. I did. He then thanked me for owning up and asked that I be more careful next time. I think he even smiled, now that I look back on it.

It must have been the right thing to do because

Santa did get me the Lionel train that I had so longed for. And next year I got the red Western Flyer bicycle.

Christmas then was also such a happy time of the year - everyone smiled and wished all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. For a moment at least, there was "Peace on Earth and Goodwill Towards Men."

I didn't understand political correctness back then. The only thing I believed was that "Merry Christmas" was the warmest possible greeting that one person could give to another. It was only pure good in the intent.

We'll, after all those years I might have broken a few other windows since - but I always owned up. I tried to be careful Mr. Jones. And thank you Santa for understanding.

I still think it's okay to say "Merry Christmas." In the warmest sense, Merry Christmas everyone - and Happy New Year!

Reprinted from December 26, 2002 edition of *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*.

We wanted to thank all of the concerned citizens who contacted us over the past few weeks regarding several pieces of education-related legislation that were introduced and listed for voting consideration by both the Assembly and the Senate. We appreciated your patience as we worked hard to gather current and relevant information on such bills as the CORE proposals, which included a county school superintendent with local veto powers (S10/A4) and the countywide administration pilot program (S7/A8). As you know, these measures were rewritten and re-introduced without the benefit of public discussion or legislative committee consideration.

We are pleased to report, however, that both measures failed to garner enough support in the Senate on Thursday, December 14. Senate bill 10 was never called for a vote, and S7 was posted for a Senate vote but was pulled by the sponsors after the measure failed to receive the required amount of votes to pass. Senator Kean was among the 20 senators who cast a "negative" vote on S7. As the bills were not released from the Senate, the Assembly did not vote on the revised measures yesterday. However, both Assemblymen Munoz and Assemblyman Bramnick cast negative votes

- 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. Zax - An instrument for trimming roofing slates
 2. Valise - A small suitcase
 3. Phocine - Relating to seals
 4. Spreaghy - Cattle stealing
- RHEXIS**
1. In medicine, the rupture of an organ or vessel
 2. An early stage or beginning
 3. A swift deerlike animal of southeastern Africa
 4. A mild form of smallpox
- LAMPAEDROMY**
1. A large dolphin of the North Atlantic having few teeth
 2. A torch in honor of Prometheus
 3. A catfish native to the River Nile
 4. An electric eel
- SPOOR**
1. The tracks of a wild animal
 2. To skin or scale, as with fish
 3. An organ stop producing a thin, reedy sound
 4. The trimmings of skins and hides, used for making glue
- MATANZA**
1. A slaughterhouse
 2. An outside staircase
 3. A concealed dungeon with a trap door at the top
 4. A trap, snare

State and County Control of Our Education is a Hijacking

This letter is to express my surprise and concern over the current legislation pending in the NJ State Senate regarding an experiment in reworking how local public schools are funded and controlled.

If put into law as written, and Union County is selected to be the victim of this experiment, it will be state sponsored hijacking of our public school funding and control. It will have an immediate and direct negative impact on every family in Westfield and the surrounding towns.

Even if another county is selected to be the subject of this experiment, it will set a terrible precedence and leave Westfield and other towns vulnerable to this type of hijacking in the future.

Our families and our children deserve better treatment than this, and they deserve to live their lives and educate their children without this type of threat looming over them.

Without the benefit of analysis, debate, public scrutiny and exchange of ideas, this legislation appears to be a cowardly extreme grasp for power by the sponsoring state and county politicians.

If this legislation does not pass the Senate and is not put into law, we can view this as an attempted hijacking and should mobilize to protect ourselves from this type of threat in the future.

Jeffrey Paul Westfield

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Why Do I Love the Westfield School Bond up for Vote in January?

I monitored the recent work by the BOE and the Citizens Advisory Group on Enrollment, to devise an equitable, cost efficient and proactive solution to the school crowding issue. The part of the plan that requires our yes vote in January is a construction and renovation bond.

Why do I love the bond?

I'm greedy. Since I became a Westfield homeowner and taxpayer, the increase in my home equity has run about quintuple my tax bill. If I could own enough Westfield real estate I could retire today. As a realtor, I know first hand that our property appreciation is closely tied to our reputation for educational excellence. To keep my investment humming, I am delighted to pay an annual \$80 charge to preserve and enhance that excellence.

I like twofers, lagniappes and baker's dozens. The lion's share of the bond is devoted to renovating Lincoln School into a town wide, state of art K and special ed pre-K building. That one inspired maneuver delivers all these benefits:

- It creates classrooms in all the elementary schools to solve enrollment overloads. It keeps our class sizes at levels proven to foster the excellence we demand of our system.
- It eases the prospect of chronic redistricting of elementary schools, as different schools burst with overpopulation in different years.
- It facilitates a synergistic, cost efficient kindergarten locus whose program will elevate our education reputation ever higher. It makes possible dedicated art and music rooms in elementary schools, correcting a week spot in our regional educational standing.

The Latest Christmas Bashing Du Jour

The latest version is in the form of Charlie Sheen, the actor. His character took a well-loved hymn of the Christmas season ("Joy to the World") and changed the lyrics to celebrate his hopes of sexual satisfaction. Don't denigrate a secular song like "White Christmas" or "Frosty the Snowman." No, take a church hymn and pervert it real good so that more people can be offended in this time of peace and goodwill.

But don't worry Mr. Sheen and all you who produce that worthless program, you will not suffer the same fate as the late Dutch movie director, Theo Van Gogh. His artistic freedom could not be tolerated by some religious radicals. You're in America.

Christianity defends and supports your right to say the kinds of things that are not tolerated in other places. You're simply a modern version of the Bethlehem inn-keeper who sent a couple in need on their way - a modern day Herod who did the unthinkable for his own narcissistic purposes.

Our prayer is that you will see the light someday. At the risk of offending your enlightened sensibilities, I wish the cast and crew of *Two and a Half Men*, a Merry Christmas.

William Page Scotch Plains

Letters to the Editor

Historic Preservation Comm. Opposes Subdividing Wychwood Gatehouse

The current application by the owner to subdivide the "Little Gatehouse" property at the South Gate to Wychwood (200 Canterbury Road) so that a large new home can be added to this site has aroused serious concerns among many Westfielders. The planning board hearing for this historic Canterbury Roadside will be held on Thursday, January 4, at 7:30 p.m. in the municipal council chambers.

Wychwood is a development created in the 1920s by the developer, Arthur Rule, to fulfill his vision of creating a pastoral suburban enclave. The South Gatehouse and the "Little Gatehouse," sitting across Wychwood Road from each other, share common materials and were meant to complement each other visually to form a picturesque entrance to the community.

The importance of the South Gate and the pair of distinctly different, yet harmonious, gatehouses to the designers and developers of Wychwood is captured in their own description: "Here is the portal to a community that is dedicated to a spiritual and physical health not often encountered in this day; where a hurried cash reward for their enterprise is not uppermost in the thoughts of its founders. Neighborhood standards of tradition, charm, and love of nature, are thus inspired which will naturally preserve the spirit of Wychwood, long after its present sponsors have ceased to exert a direct influence."

The proposed subdivision envisions the placement of a new home "in front of" the Little Gatehouse, between it and East Broad Street; the little Gatehouse would be lost behind the new construction.

The October 2002 Westfield Historic Preservation Plan identifies the South Gatehouse and the Little Gatehouse as "outstanding structures" within Wychwood. While the South Gate is not formally designated as a historic landmark, its designation in the October 2002 Historic Preservation Plan requires that the planning board consider its historic

status in evaluating the present application. The plan provides that, "Although not all sites and districts in the plan element have been formally designated, their inclusion in the plan should nonetheless be one of the factors used in decision-making by the planning board, the board of adjustment, the town council and the town administration, other governmental agencies and the general public."

Westfield's rich, diverse historic architecture helps to define the character of our community and has attracted many new homeowners to our beautiful town. Subdividing - and worse yet, demolishing - some of our landmark properties can only result in irreparable loss for everyone.

The Westfield Historic Preservation Commission opposes the subdivision of this unique and architectural treasure and encourages others who share our concerns to attend the January 4 planning board meeting.

Betty List
WHPC Chair Town Historian

Megan, Reporter and Friend, Says Goodbye

I would like to thank you for giving me the privilege of reporting and writing for *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*.

I am proud to say that reporting for your fine newspaper has been a wonderful experience for me, and I particularly enjoyed covering the Westfield Board of Education. Your newspaper is a fantastic asset to this community, and the quality of all members of your staff is both professional and exemplary. I will truly miss writing about and chatting with the people of Westfield.

Please know that you will always be a favorite in my bookmarks.

Meghan Gill Newton, NJ

Editor's Note: Meghan and her husband, Kieran, came from Ireland, made this area their home and have been a delight to us all. With their newly born daughter, Aisling, they found a house in Newton to make their family home. We will miss them. Meghan is an outstanding journalist and a wonderful person.

Thank You for the Beautiful Songs

On behalf of the Westfield Recreation Department, I would like to thank Mr. Thomas Connors and the Westfield Community Concert Band along with Kristine Smith-Morasso and the Edison Broadway Singers for participating in our annual holiday concert held on Wednesday, December 6 at Edison Intermediate School.

We had over 100 people come out and enjoy what was an entertaining evening of beautiful songs and sounds performed by the Community Concert Band and the Edison Broadway Singers. It was a perfect way to begin the holiday season.

Once again, thank you all for an outstanding performance. I look forward to working with you again next year.

Traici Kaster
Program Coord. Westfield Rec. Dept.

WHS Musical Talent is Gift to the Community

I attended the winter instrumental concert at WHS this evening (Tuesday, December 12) as my daughter Victoria is a member of the wind ensemble. The level of musical pieces performed by the two jazz bands, symphonic concert band and wind ensemble were magnificent.

All the student performers and their instructors should be commended for their time, effort and obvious hours of practice that gave way to a very enjoyable performance. It certainly was refreshing to see so many of our young people involved in such a worthwhile and entertaining endeavor.

Once again, thank you to all who participated in the Westfield High School Winter Concert. Keep up the good work!

Linda Attanasio Westfield

Math in Westfield School Bond Debate; Reader Asks for One Good Reason

I really want a reason to support the school bond in the special election to be held on January 23, 2007. However, I am continually disappointed at the BOE coordinated "Vote Yes" campaign. The little things and the big things just don't add up in my mind.

First, the "vote yes group." Citizens for Education (which is coordinated by the Board of Education), is distributing literature that is just plain wrong, and contains a simple math error. Although not a big error, it would be marked wrong on my kids' math tests. If you want me to agree to spend \$10 million, please get the basics correct.

Here are some other equations I've worked out after reading about the bond and attending meetings. Roosevelt School plus \$3 million equals 10 minutes more lunchtime plus a larger library. Also, Roosevelt plus \$3 million equals no increased classroom space.

Roosevelt is without question overcrowded; Edison, however, is not at capacity. Redistricting will happen. The BOE has said it, and the parts of Westfield that will be redistricted to Edison already know it. Why spend \$3 million to solve the problem the school has now (overcrowding), before it is redistricted (presumably to the correct capacity)? Will the lunch schedule change, and will the need for a larger library be the same with a smaller school population?

Roosevelt, like the other schools in Westfield, has facilities/physical plant problems. No one denies this. But what will the bond do for overcrowding at the intermediate school level? The answer appears to be nothing.

Another equation: Lincoln School plus \$6 million equals "Early Childhood Learning Center?" Alternatively, Lincoln School plus \$6 million equals a warehouse to hold special needs students, kindergarten classes and a plan to make it into a learning center to follow. I don't know about you, but neighborhood elementary schools were a draw for me when moving to Westfield seven years ago.

The idea of an "early learning center" seems appealing. But, what will that look like, and can it be accomplished at the renovated Lincoln School? Lincoln School will have 15 classrooms, minus a few set aside for special needs programs currently housed at Edison and other schools like McKinley and Franklin, minus an art room, minus a music room, minus a room or two for newly initiated in-district programs for disabled students. The end result is not very many new classrooms for what is supposed to be the early learning center.

Why transition your child from preschool/daycare, to Lincoln for a year, then transition to your neighborhood school for 1-5th grade? I would suspect many parents would put their five-year-olds in private kindergarten programs (most likely full-day programs), instead of Lincoln School, and then transition them to their neighborhood schools in 1st grade.

Last equation (really more of a proof): Educational decision-making by the BOE for all Southside kids plus 40 ten-year-olds who live on the Northside of Westfield equals enhanced educational elective opportunities for the entire Southside of Westfield. Also, Mandarin Chinese and robotics courses will be given as electives at Edison, if and only if, 40 kids from the Northside agree to take them each year. Thus, Mandarin or robotics equals yes or no? depending on your address.

I thought we paid many people, and elected many others, to make decisions about education in Westfield. It appears, unfortunately, that I am mistaken. Education at Edison, at least, depends on decisions of 40 ten-year-olds. Beyond that absurdity, just wait until they truly understand their real power and make SpongeBob SquarePants required viewing (in Mandarin Chinese, of course) and replace their school song with a track from Green Day or The Killers.

Please give me a reason, just one, to vote Yes.

Ken Sumner Westfield



Happy Holidays War Is Un-Christian

In response to the letter from Michael Chapman of the Media Research Center: There is something profoundly un-Christian about the characterization of the phrase "Happy Holidays" (used as an alternative to "Merry Christmas") as being a "War On Christmas." The "war" term seems rather excessive here; rather, many people make an effort to include those of other faiths in the holiday season. (Dare I say it's a sentiment very much aligned with the true Christian spirit?) Christmas evolved, after all, from Pagan holidays, and every major faith seems to need a celebration of renewal at about this time of year. Despite the presence of a White House resident who believes Jesus talks to him directly, we still allow other religions to be practiced in this country.

The beauty of America and the American ideal is in freedom; at its best, America is the embodiment of a belief that my rights end exactly where they infringe on yours. Because these lines are often blurry, the way we exist as a society is through mutual tolerance. Hence, "Happy Holidays" works for a great many people.

If Michael Alexander or Wal-Mart choose to say "Merry Christmas," they have the absolute freedom to do so. Those who choose "Happy Holidays" are usually trying to be kinder and more inclusive of everyone; one could in fact find it mildly offensive for someone to assume a store's patrons are Christian simply because they're in America. Amazingly enough, Jews, Muslims, Hindus and atheists are allowed to shop and reports have it that their dollars are seemingly as good as those of the assumed Christian faith. Further, some say these people may even live relatively moral and ethical lives. Imagine!

For most of us, good wishes are good wishes. I am truly thankful that I live in a place where I can say and do as I choose.

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Holidays and may we all find ways to live together more peacefully in the New Year.

Travis Hudelson Westfield

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