

COMMENTARY

The Hour

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Officer's story an argument for the shelter

The rhetoric concerning relocation of the Norwalk emergency shelter seems to have toned down, and cooler heads seem to be looking for a way that will allow the move and still calm residents' fears.

The "Open Door," a publication of the shelter, makes a powerful case for the value of the shelter. It carries the story of a Norwalk family, dealing with the father's terminal disease and the need for housing once his treatment ended.

The shelter provided that temporary home and helped the family find a suitable apartment eventually.

The crisis was compounded after the father's death with the death of the mother when the two sons were teenagers.

The shelter's executive director, Carole Antonetz, stepped in and persuaded the landlord to allow the boys to remain in the apartment.

Today one of them, Craig Bergamo, is a Westport police officer. An anonymous donor had stepped in and offered to pay for their college educations.

As the officer said, he didn't know where the family would have wound up if it wasn't for the Norwalk shelter. There is a vital role for it in Norwalk, to be sure.

Calorie count bill gets the deep-six

As Gov. M. Jodi Rell and leaders of the General Assembly continue negotiations — if, indeed, they are actually happening — with a news blackout imposed on the talks, the governor has been exercising her veto pen.

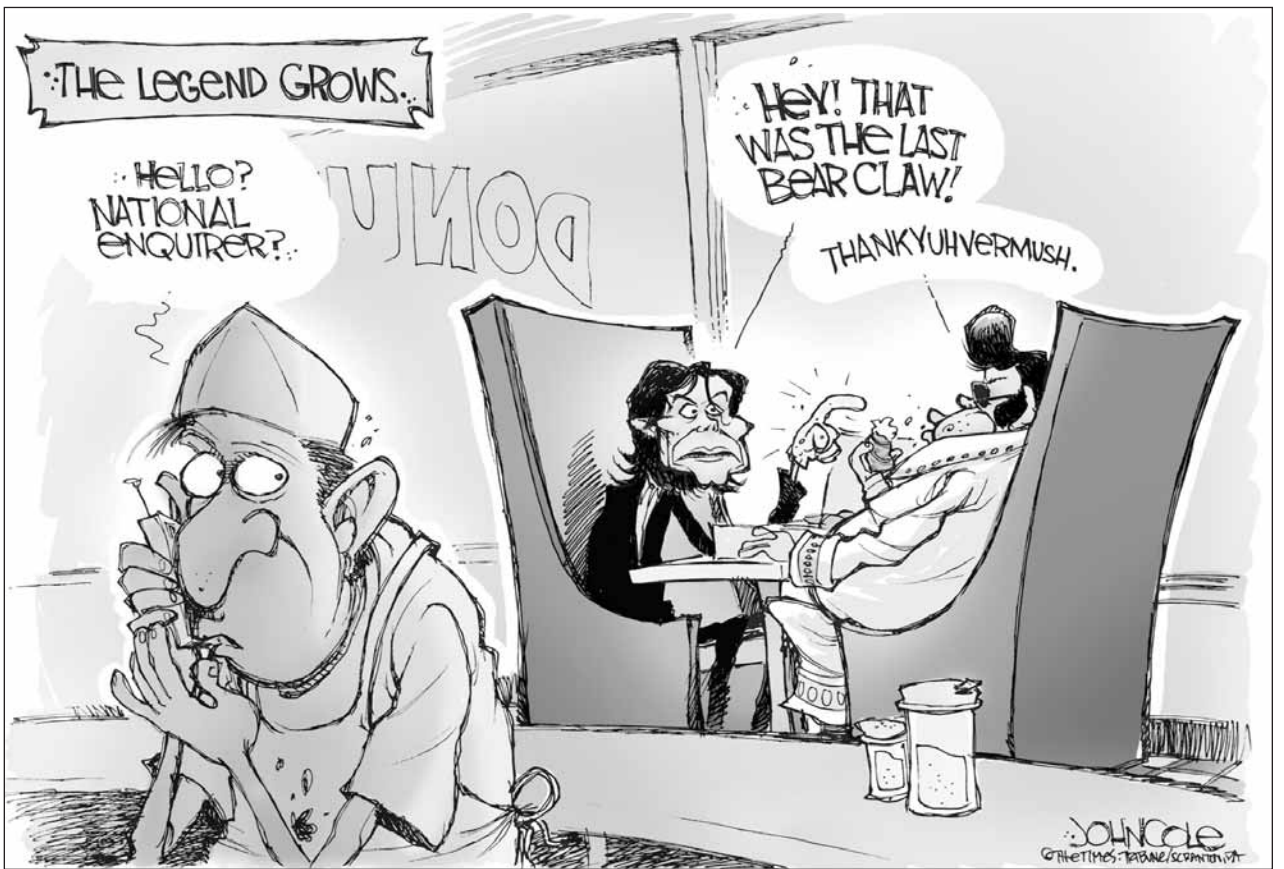
A number of proposals have been vetoed on the grounds that, while meritorious, the state just can't afford them. Others border on the frivolous and deserved to be dumped.

Among the bills vetoed was one requiring fast food outlets to post calorie counts of all items on their menus.

Its defenders argue that consumers need this information before they order that double cheeseburger with a big shake and french fries. We doubt if they would read the information and even if they did, would they alter their choices?

The governor had a telling comment to support her veto — "Does it come as a surprise to anyone that a vegetable salad is healthier and more nutritious than a bacon cheeseburger?"

Just get on with the budget business.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Who will follow Salvatore Corda?

To the Editor:

An open letter to Norwalk's Board of Education on the single most pressing issue they face in the year ahead.

It's July here in town and school is definitely out for summer, but as usual the Board of Education and our entire school system has a full agenda ahead of it.

Beyond filling the four vacancies they face in the fall, with Sal Corda having announced his resignation, the newly configured BOE must also identify and recruit an outstanding new superintendent of schools.

This is a very big job indeed. The superintendent is critical because she or he is the systems educational leader, executing the board's vision and setting performance standards and best practices for all students and staff. The superintendent is also largely responsible for encouraging and promoting a positive and rewarding culture across Norwalk's public schools, all of which affects the entire Norwalk community.

Among the variety of tasks required in finding and hiring the next superintendent, we would recommend the board first pause

and take stock to identify what's working and what's not, noting where the system excels today and where it needs improving.

The obvious overarching goal must remain maximizing student learning and raising achievement across the district. And to do these things, to actually have an impact and get things done, the board must attract and appoint the most capable superintendent possible. One who shares the board's mission and the community's call for educational excellence for all of Norwalk's students, and can join this perspective with a bias for action and results that always puts the children first.

Easy to say of course, and difficult to argue with, and yet very, very hard to do; not because it can't be done but because the Norwalk school system as we know it — with its many, many successes — needs to evolve and embrace the necessary change to better serve our children.

Among the urgent next steps we see ahead to compile the best possible list of candidates, the Board of Education should outline the process and a timeline for selection: Ensuring both transparency and the participation of

the community at large. Transparency should include clear and timely communication with the public. Community participation could be in the form of public conversations or involvement in the candidate interview process itself, with an explanation of how this involvement is weighted and used the decision-making process.

While we would guard against looking back and have everyone focus on the future, a good first step in this regard would be an orderly and impartial evaluation of the prior superintendent's tenure.

But most importantly, the board must establish and publicize clear and meaningful selection criteria for the next superintendent.

We look forward to the forthcoming dialogue on these important issues with the current Board of Education members and the slate of candidates put forward by both political parties. That's what's on our minds, what do you think? Please let us know at www.norwalkeducation.org. We look forward to hearing from you.

Lauren Rosato
 executive director
 Norwalk Education Foundation

Boucher looks forward to supporting Bill Brennan

To the Editor:

I could not be more pleased and grateful that Bill Brennan and his lovely wife Kathleen and family have made the decision to continue his contributions to our community by running for the position of first selectman once again. There is so much that I could say about Bill's efforts to improve the quality of life of our town. Some of these efforts are evident every time we enter Wilton Center and look around at the new sidewalks, trees, lamp-posts and flowers. Another is the massive Route 7 widening project that has tested everyone's patience but is making significant progress.

When completed, it will not only alleviate congestion on one

of the busiest thoroughfares in the state but will also improve safety, add pedestrian walkways and extensive plantings of trees and shrubs. Bill has worked extremely well with me, town boards and commissions, the Department of Transportation, the governor and area chief elected officials to resolve major transportation and rail issues. He has testified with me in Hartford at numerous public hearings on issues vital to our community. He has worked very hard and effectively with our neighboring communities.

The list of his accomplishments is endless; the task is demanding, time consuming and very often thankless. But, it bears repeating that already Bill's enduring gift

and legacy will be our beautiful downtown and the major improvements to the Route 7 corridor in Wilton. Finally, we should also thank him for his responsible leadership during one of the worst economic crisis in our lifetime. His foresight has kept Wilton on a sound financial footing that has resulted in four town budgets with each consecutive year — a lower mill rate increase than the previous year. We thank his family for sacrificing his time with them for the benefit of our community. I look forward to supporting Bill in an exciting campaign this fall.

State Sen. Toni Boucher
 26th District
 Wilton

Get behind East Avenue plan

To the Editor:

It is our responsibility as a community to get behind the East Avenue improvements proposed for the area between exit 16 in the north to the area of Winfield Street in the south. These improvements will not only help to alleviate traffic bottlenecks and help traffic flow, but it will also increase pedestrian safety with improved crosswalks and signals.

Commuters and other vehicles tend to avoid the congestion of East Avenue and speed on our other residential streets. Improvement to traffic flow on East Avenue throughout this area will help keep traffic on East Avenue and off of these other streets, reducing the danger to pedestrians and property.

This area of East Avenue is used for many destinations, both north and south, including the exit and entrance ramps of I-95, the East Norwalk RR Station, many businesses and

churches that rely on traffic moving in and out, regular traffic plus special events in the Calf Pasture Beach area and Veterans Park, and all the commuters and residents who live in the area. During the In-Water Boat Show at Cove Marina, traffic has been known to be backed up onto the I-95 northbound at exit 16 causing a dangerous situation on the Norwalk River bridge.

This project, which includes the widening and raising of clearance of the Metro-North Bridge by the state DOT and the widening of East Avenue for alignment to the bridge by Norwalk Public Works, is for the good of the entire city of Norwalk. Public input in the development of this project has been exhaustive over several years and the majority of Norwalk residents are behind it.

David W. Park
 Norwalk

Letter Guidelines

We welcome readers' views, but retain the right to reject any letter and to edit for length and clarity. All letters are subject to editing. We require your name, address and phone number, to help us verify the authenticity of letters. Preference is given to letters offering fresh perspectives on timely topics. Keep letters at a reasonable length. Letters that run too long will not run in a timely manner and may not be printed at all. We do not publish: Anonymous letters, poetry, form letters generated by advocacy groups or letters published elsewhere. Send to letters@thehour.com, fax to 840-1802 or to 346 Main Ave., Norwalk CT 06851. Please submit by only one method.

HOUR POLL

Do you plan to attend the Battle of Norwalk re-enactment on Saturday?

Yes	No	Unsure
32.91%	50.63%	16.46%

To vote visit www.thehour.com