

Opinion

Northfield Cemetery

The sale and subsequent demolition of the Northfield Baptist Church has led to numerous problems, most glaringly, a large vacant lot at the corner of South Livingston Avenue and East Northfield Road. After the purchaser abandoned plans to develop the property, the site has been the topic of much consternation among residents.

Since the dissolution of the Northfield Baptist congregation and the death of its pastor, the Rev. Peter Picos, in 2022, an ancillary question has arisen as to who is now responsible for the maintenance of the nearby Northfield Cemetery. The historic burying ground on West Northfield Road, dating to Colonial times, had been established by Northfield Baptist Church, and was formally deeded in 1811 to the church by the congregant who owned the land. For more than two centuries, the congregation has taken care of the cemetery. Now, the graveyard – the final resting place of many notable Livingston settlers – is in limbo.

This issue was first brought up in 2021, when some residents and town officials noted that they were unsure who would care for the cemetery after the church was demolished. At that time, some in town offered to pick up the mantle. When the *Tribune* wrote about this development, however, Pastor Picos wrote the paper to say that, while the sale of the church property was used to help fund buildings for two Bolivian congregations, Northfield Baptist still had a practicing congregation that would maintain the church. That was nearly two years ago, however, and, following his passing last year, the question of who will care for the cemetery is once again at the forefront.

At a meeting earlier this month, Council members discussed the matter, unsure of who is currently caring for the property. If there is nobody left to contact about it, the town should designate a community organization to take on the maintenance. Perhaps this would be another Livingston congregation, the Livingston Historical Society, or one of the town's many service organizations or scouting groups.

The Northfield Cemetery is an important piece of this community's history, and it deserves to have some basic upkeep at least once per season. We expect, should the town formally request it, that there would be no shortage of people, groups, and organizations willing to step up. Hopefully, this can be done soon.

Board of Education

Last week, Fang Gong became the first resident to throw her hat in the ring for the open seat on Livingston Public School's Board of Education, which is up for election this November. We are thrilled to see a resident step up and mount a campaign. From what we hear, she will not be the last to do so, but as of press time this week, the Essex County clerk's office said that Gong is the only person that has filed a petition to seek a three-year term on the Board.

Still, we hope to see at least one more qualified person enter the contest. Those interested still have until 4 p.m. on Monday, July 31, to file a petition. The forms can be downloaded and printed by going to www.essexclerk.com. For information on what is needed to file, see the New Jersey School Boards Association's candidate kit at www.njsba.org. The kit also includes details about nominating petitions, legal qualifications for school board candidacy, the role of the school board member, and information about the New Jersey School Ethics Act.

All Livingston residents benefit from the exceptional quality of the township's schools, whether it's the top-ranking education their children receive or the increased value of their homes because of the outstanding education that is offered. Since all residents benefit from our schools, not just the families of students who attend them, it is worth mentioning that any residents may run for the position, not just parents of students in the district.

As it is for any public office, running for the Board of Education is not a decision to be taken lightly. Qualified candidates need to be involved and should be up to speed on what's happening in the school district. A candidate should understand that the responsibility is not to administer the schools, but to work with the professional staff to see that the schools are well run and fiscally responsible. A successful Board member must listen to opposing views and be able to explain the board's philosophies. There is no pay for the position, which requires a significant time commitment.

The legal requirements to be a member of the Board of Education are minimal. One must be able to read and write; have citizenship and one year's residency in the district; have no contract with or claim against the Board; not hold office as mayor or member of the Township Council; and be a qualified, registered voter in the district. That should cast a net wide enough to include most adults in town.

We have said it before: we believe there is great value in having a contested election. When there are multiple candidates vying for positions, the dialogue produced can help educate the public about issues facing the school district. Forums such as the League of Women Voters' Candidates' Night – which is not held if there is an uncontested election – provide an opportunity for members of the community to express their opinions, ask questions, and get answers to issues that concern them.

In a matter of days, we will know exactly who will be seeking a spot on Livingston's Board of Education. For the benefit of the community, we hope this election is not decided before it even begins.

NOTICE CONCERNING NEWS AND ADVERTISING
News and advertising deadlines are noon on Tuesday for the same week's issue. News and copy should be typewritten or computer generated, double spaced, on one side of each sheet. News should be timely and related to Livingston people and events. Items may be submitted by mail, e-mail, fax, or in person.
There is no charge for the timely publications of any news article, including engagements, weddings, club news, promotions or any other article, nor for any photographs used with news articles. Photographs may be either glossy or matte finish; wallet size, 3x4 or 5x7 prints are adequate.
No unsigned letters will be published, nor will the name and street name of the writer be withheld. The writer's telephone number must be submitted with a letter to the editor for purposes of verification, but will not be published. Letters must be from Livingston residents, and are limited to 500 words. Letters of political endorsement may be used only as excerpts and no letters will be accepted by e-mail. We reserve the right to withhold publication of letters to the editor at our discretion.
Obituaries are published free of charge, provided the deceased was a current or former resident of Livingston. Free obituary articles are written according to the newspaper's editorial style, and contain basic information regarding the deceased's life and funeral services, without the inclusion of photographs, informal or "flowery" turns of phrase, and grandchildren's names. Obituaries containing additional information, photographs, or phrasing of the family's choice may be published as paid advertisements at open display advertising rates.
The *West Essex Tribune* reserves the right to edit or reject any items submitted for publication.
All Notices of Hearing must be approved by the applicant prior to publication.
The newspaper is not responsible for errors in advertisements not corrected by the advertiser immediately following the first publication of the ad. Liability for advertising errors is limited to a "make-good" ad in the amount of space occupied by the error. A schedule of advertising rates and requirements is offered in the current rate card, which is available upon request. Call (973) 992-1771.

To the Editor:

Listen to Student Voices

Dear Editor:

First of all, I would like to congratulate the *West Essex Tribune* for helping to preserve the rights of the Livingston High School salutatorian who wished to speak at graduation. The newspaper allowed space for her voice to be heard in the pages of its newspaper, and by doing so, its staff has demonstrated the validity of a few major concerns that I have read about in several publications.

The first issue is the dwindling supply of local news sources, with many local and regional newspapers going out of business. How else would the people of Livingston know about this deserving student and her desire to be heard, especially after the administration had told her to examine her own motives for wanting to speak – which, in and of itself, is a rather sinister method to silence her voice – rather than assisting her and guiding her and teaching her to stand up for those things in which she so strongly believes, and by doing so, instructing her in ways to fight fairly for her principles? Thank you to the Livingston faculty who helped her.

The second issue is related to the hazing that has taken place at Northwestern University's football program, and how the dogged persistence of the student newspaper is responsible for exposure of such activities and the removal of their head football coach for fostering a culture where hazing flourished. Again, the voice of the students was responsible for addressing these issues.

And though the policy now seems to have changed regarding the selection of speakers at graduation, I do wonder if the opinions of the students will be considered in selecting the third speaker who will represent the student body.

Again, there is a glaring gap in how we want these young people to think and to express themselves if they are not considered and if their opinions are not actively solicited in every facet of life in the Livingston Public Schools, we will be missing those opinions and ideas that may be of paramount importance, but we may never know if we try to silence them.

They have a voice, and it matters.
William Ehrlich
Mounthaven Drive

Letters Contain Readers' Opinions

The *West Essex Tribune* has a policy of opening its Opinion page to allow the community to express its opinions on a wide variety of topics. We do not edit the letters. While many of those who take the time to write Letters to the Editor are informed and write based on fact, some of the letters contain statements that may be inaccurate or erroneous.

The *Tribune* encourages its readers to evaluate each letter independently and not to assume that the author's statements are totally accurate.

Additionally, we reserve the right to not print letters to the editor that we feel may be harmful in any way to the newspaper.



Well, Hello There!

To the Editor:

Cannabis Ordinance

Dear Editor:

As I write this letter, the Livingston Town Council is in the active process of finalizing town ordinances that would permit the cultivation, manufacturing, wholesaling, distributing, and delivering of marijuana, followed by selling of marijuana in Livingston. Perhaps you will read multiple reasons why this decision would result in a catastrophe for our town.

Having left Manhattan two years ago, and now residing in Livingston, I can personally attest to the sleazy nature of most workers in this industry. Speaking honestly, would you want your son or your daughter engaged in anything related to cannabis? You can also bet that many of the citizens visiting marijuana "headquarters" in Livingston would be equally sleazy. And you can bet your boots that once marijuana comes to Livingston, it will never leave.

Make no mistake: marijuana is a dangerous drug. An article in the *Wall Street Journal* (July 8, 2023) states that "several studies have shown that chronic cannabis use is linked to a higher incidence of schizophrenia among men in the early 20s." A 26-year longitudinal study in Denmark (1995-2021), involving 6.5 million people, that "people diagnosed with cannabis use disorder were almost twice as likely to be diagnosed later with clinical depression." The Denmark study "...is still eye-opening due to its sheer magnitude."

Although a statewide referendum in New Jersey approved the sale of marijuana, a specific Livingston referendum (restricted to 30,000 town residents) was never offered, a serious omission. Although an Ad-hoc Livingston Cannabis Subcommittee considered business ordinances in our town, a broader, more significant Ad-hoc Livingston Cannabis Subcommittee to deal with whether we should even introduce this drug to town was not formed.

There also exists religious inter-

pretation to this issue. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, the greatest decisor in the 20th century, ruled in 1986 that the growth, distribution, or sale of marijuana is strictly forbidden (Igrot Moshe, Yoreh De'ad 3:35). Rabbi Feinstein objected on several grounds: people on drug use usually acquire a strong habit, leading to physical and/or psychological dependence. Using this drug makes it impossible to concentrate on prayer. Using marijuana can distress parents, violating the commandment "honor thy father and thy mother." Rabbi Feinstein also pointed out that the deity is holy, but the indulgence of marijuana results in an unholy state for humans.

What kind of legacy does this leave with the incumbent Town Council members; they brought a dangerous drug to town. I also question whether the members of the Town Council can face their children in the eyes and say, "I was the one who brought the drug to Livingston."

What can be done? Several proposals: stop the ordinance process which would establish cannabis in Livingston; appoint another Ad-hoc Subcommittee to discuss whether Livingston should even be in this business; hold a town wide referendum on this issue; give this issue the attention it deserves.

If you ultimately vote on this marijuana proposal, can you look yourself in the mirror?

Gary Laveman
Pointe Gate Drive

Correction:

Hatzalah MetroWest

An article about a fire in the July 13 edition of the *Tribune*, Hatzalah MetroWest was incorrectly identified by a different name. The Livingston Fire Department was also on scene helping with evacuations during that incident. The *Tribune* regrets the error and any confusion it may have caused.



To the Editor:

Construction in Town

Dear Editor:

I believe most of the people on the Planning Board must have been farmers. And they are allowing contractors to construct condos or townhouses on a 13.87 acre site to Livingston Corporate Park Association.

This is adjacent to the ACC and Regency Club on Passaic Avenue. They are developing this property now with a four story, 166 unit multi-family residential rental complex. The Regency Club has about 350 townhouses. Have you driven behind the Joseph Kushner Academy on South Orange Avenue? You need to drive there and see what has been constructed there. Somebody is making a lot of money in this town.

You know the saying, "money talks and BS walks?" That's what is happening here. Many years ago when we had a very good manager Robert Harp, construction of new homes could not be more than two stories. Today anything goes.

Livingston is no longer a township, it's Livingston City. You won't see any preservation of land here.

Prior to the construction of the Regency Club, this area is coded in black, indicating "flood zone." This wetland served to cleanse our groundwater and control flooding. Construction would destroy all this and would also be a threat to our drinking water, which we seem to have now.

With all the new construction going on, we will need more police departments, more fire departments, and more schools.

As it is now, if you bought a house in a neighborhood that you wanted your child to go to, you may have to be bused to a different school where your child will have to go because the classroom is already filled. That just happened to my grandson.

When you have time, residents of Livingston, take a ride and see what has developed behind Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy on South Orange Avenue.

Maria T. Dietrick
Passaic Avenue

To the Editor:

Korean War Ceremony

Dear Editor:

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the Korean War Armistice, which was signed July 27, 1953.

Korea is often called "the Forgotten War," but for us veterans, it is never to be forgotten.

In South Korea, we stopped communism! Our country has a great history, in particular, the wars that we fought.

On June 27, 1950, the Security Council of the United Nations acted quickly and called on member nations to come to South Korea's aid. In time, 19 member nations contributed arms or troops. American troops made up 80 percent of the UN force.

The war lasted three years, with many major battles over the years. The Armistice was signed on July 27, 1953. Over the three years, 54,246 Americans were killed. It is estimated that 406,000 North Korean soldiers were killed. Also, an estimated 902,000 Chinese were killed and wounded.

In Livingston, two residents were killed in action: Edward C. Schneider and Allan M. Shadis.

At 10 a.m. On July 27, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, and Jewish War Veterans will conduct a ceremony at War Memorial Park at the Oval. In case of rain, the ceremony will be in the library. Please join us!

Brian Boyle
Member, Livingston
Veterans of Foreign Wars
And American Legion
Crossbrook Road

The *Tribune* welcomes news of Livingston residents. Send items to P.O. Box 65, Livingston.

The *Tribune's* mascot and chief morale officer

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Tribune
of LIVINGSTON

Published every week in the interest of the people of Livingston. Also available on microfilm at the Livingston Public Library.
All communications should be sent to Jennifer C. Cheuk, Publisher, West Essex Tribune, 495 South Livingston Avenue, Post Office Box 65, Livingston, NJ 07039-0065.
Emails may be sent to: westessextribune@gmail.com

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Information concerning advertising rates may be obtained at the publication office, 495 South Livingston Avenue, P.O. Box 65, Livingston, N.J. 07039-0065. Telephone (973) 992-1771. Fax number (973) 992-7015. Entered as second class matter, November 22, 1929, at the Post Office at Livingston, N.J. 07039; redelivered as Periodicals Class matter July 1, 1996. Permit No. USPS 675-340, under the Act of March 3, 1897. Periodicals Class postage paid at Livingston, N.J. 07039.
Subscription \$32.00 per year in Essex County; \$36.00 per year in New Jersey; \$39.00 elsewhere in the U.S.; other mail rates on request. Newsstand price 75 cents.
Postmaster: Send address changes to West Essex Tribune, P.O. Box 65, Livingston, N.J. 07039-0065.

July 20, 2023
www.WestEssexTribune.net

NJPA
NEW JERSEY PRESS ASSOCIATION