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Letters to the Editor

By [Times Review](#) | May 11, 2011 in [Letters to the Editor](#), [Opinion](#)



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BAITING HOLLOW

On offensive guest column

I find it disconcerting that Janet Bidwell’s News-Review Guest Spot (“Why a school bond is so hard to swallow,” May 5) rallies against a 1.26 percent school budget spending increase while her own profession is in the habit of charging homeowners six percent for the sale of a house. If Ms. Bidwell is so interested in really helping community members, perhaps she can look within and offer a zero percent charge for her own services. What? Does it seem insulting to suggest that one’s hard work, knowledge, and experience is not

worth financial acknowledgement? Does it seem ridiculous to offer a valuable service to the community without compensation? You bet it does.

You know what else seems ridiculous? Ms. Bidwell's proclamation that since Riverhead is not an affluent town, that the district is undeserving of being on par and "in line" with other districts such as in her native Dix Hills. To call for a reduction in services based on a town's average income level smacks of elitism and, honestly, is quite offensive. Do the children of Riverhead deserve less qualified, less respected, and less compensated educators than the rest of Long Island?

The bottom line is this, educators are quite cognizant of what is for the "greater good" of a community, and we make daily silent concessions, great and small, that benefit our students and their families. Educators across Long Island, including myself, have overwhelmingly voted in favor of multiple freezes in our own pay and benefits. Despite being middle-class taxpayers themselves, educators spend hundreds of dollars of their own money each year to make the magic happen in their classrooms. People are unaware of our shared sacrifices because it somehow just never makes it to the front page or Guest Spot of any newspaper.

Teachers are not looking for glory, but we have every right to seek dignity, respect, and compensation for our services to the community. It is worth thinking very carefully about how the blame game is being played these days and just who the fat cats of the nation are. I can assure you that teachers are not the wizards behind the curtain orchestrating a very dangerous and a very rapid national race to the bottom.

Catherine Carella-Dean

Editor's note: Ms. Carella-Dean is a teacher in the Middle Country Central School District.

SHOREHAM

Status quo just won't do for schools

Our current education model is unsustainable in terms of revenue needed to meet our exponentially increasing expenses. With the state in a deficit, we have little likelihood of state aid increases across the board, and taxpayers cannot bear a greater burden. So if revenue stays stagnant, the only other thing to do is reduce expenses. Sadly, the only group in this equation without a "contract" to protect them are our kids, and their elective educational programs and activities become at risk. Almost all our expenses are controlled by state mandates, and therefore cannot be avoided.

The only categories to attack to preserve the educational experience our children deserve are:

- relief from unfunded mandates;
- permitting districts to consolidate administrative functions and contracts for services;
- and aggressively negotiating outside vendor contracts, such as legal counsel and busing.

Mandate relief is absolutely essential to the implementation of a tax cap. Our elected officials are aware of this and working hard to come to consensus in Albany. Because this issue now affects every district, Senator John Flanagan, as chairman of the education committee, is taking extraordinary steps to reinvent education requirements. Senator Ken LaValle and Assemblyman Dan Losquadro have solicited school districts' help in defining and quantifying the impact of these mandates, so that they can most effectively pinpoint where change can have the most impact. Education and its funding are about to change as the result of necessity. All projections show entirely unsustainable growth in the immediate future.

I ask for my community's support in the May 17 election so that I may help to formulate the changes necessary to protect children and taxpayers alike. I urge voters in Shoreham-Wading River and neighboring districts to support similarly minded candidates who will find ways to share administration and services with their neighbors, while maintaining the independent districts we all cherish.

John Zukowski

trustee candidate, Shoreham-Wading River Board of Education

WADING RIVER

Your vote is important

Thank you for your coverage of the [Meet the Candidates night](#) Monday at Shoreham-Wading River High School. The SWR community has no responsible and unbiased print newspaper, so often it is hard for clear information to be disseminated. You responded to our request for coverage at the meeting and it is greatly appreciated.

This year's school board election in SWR is possibly more important than the budget vote. The current board is interviewing candidates for a new superintendent. The community will most likely not have input on this decision. What we can choose is the people elected to the Board of Education. This year, more than ever, it matters who is sitting on that board.

After the meeting last night, I can strongly endorse John Zukowski, Bill McGrath and Steven Offutt. They are not running together, but as individuals. Each carries a sense of level-headedness and responsibility toward the role of school board trustee. Mr. Zukowski will make getting our district's fair share of state school aid a priority, and has the understanding and contacts to achieve this. Mr. Offutt showed Monday night's audience how well informed he was on the issues, such as unfunded mandates and specific curriculum improvements. He has clearly done research, followed the issues and spoken face to face with residents about what concerns them. Mr. McGrath is an incumbent who has a long history in education and experience on many committees within the district, yet has not grown cynical or complacent. He shows an understanding of the complexity of running a school district, as well as the issues we face due to state mandates and the upcoming property tax cap. You can find all the candidates' bios on the Shoreham Wading River website, swrschools.org.

Please vote on Tuesday, May 17, at SWR High School. Vote YES on proposition Nos. 1, 2 and 3 and support John Zukowski, Bill McGrath and Stephen Offutt. Your vote is important.

Nicole Fanelli-Burke

WADING RIVER

Can these guys be trusted?

Riverhead Town officials say they are investigating whether the town's chief accountant, Bill Rothaar, may have been involved in a situation where town government equipment was used for private business.

According to news reports, Mr. Rothaar was an official of the failed Republican congressional campaign of Christopher Cox; Mr. Cox's father is the New York State Republican chairman.

Taxpayers need an independent investigation into whether public resources and the public trust in Riverhead were abused. The fact that Mr. Rothaar is tied to well-connected Republicans, and that the Republicans control the Town Board, means that any internal probe cannot be trusted because of — at the very least — perceived conflicts of interest. And the outside labor council retained to look into the matter has done work for the town in the past. Can he be truly unbiased?

We do not know whether the “private business” involved had anything to do with Republican politics, and that's an issue that needs to be addressed in detail.

We need to hear publicly from Supervisor Sean Walter on allegations that alleged abuses were happening right under his nose. We also need Mr. Walter himself to call for a truly independent investigation before this letter is forwarded to our Democratic district attorney. It's a question of leadership and it's a question of trust.

Daniel Hilton

Editor's note: Mr. Hilton is a member of the Riverhead Democratic Committee.

MATTITUCK

Saving Sound Ave.

The North Fork Environmental Council thanks Tim Kelly, Beth Young and the entire staff of Times/Review Newspapers for its wonderful recent coverage of the NFEC.

Thankfully, there are many good things always happening on the North Fork that require valuable newspaper space. The NFEC appreciates the space you have dedicated to us in recent issues and the important issues we've been bringing to the public's attention. We are particularly thankful for the coverage of our upcoming "SOS" event, or "Save Our Sound Avenue," to be held at Martha Clara Vineyards on May 13.

Beginning on Route 25A in Wading River and going out along Sound Avenue to Park Road, there are four major developments proposed that could have dramatic impact, in a negative fashion, all the way out to Orient. When visitors come from the west for pumpkin-picking, farm stands, wineries and more, they travel along scenic and bucolic Sound Avenue.

Currently, open vistas abound and are part of the attraction for folks to drive out during the spring, summer and autumn to various sights and sources of pleasure. I can't imagine these same folks continuing to come out to the North Fork if the proposed commercial developments are allowed to be built and Sound Avenue looks like Route 25 or 25A in western Suffolk.

The NFEC was started in 1972 to help fight the proposed Jamesport nuclear facility and the widening of Sound Avenue to a four-lane highway. Today, the fight continues to preserve this rural corridor, as changes on Sound Avenue will affect all of us, from Wading River to Orient.

We ask all concerned residents and business owners to come out to Martha Clara on May 13, have a good time, speak to our elected officials and listen to them and help the NFEC "save what's left."

Ken Rubino

president, NFEC

ROCKY POINT

We'll quiet when the shelter is fixed

In response to last week's letter by Richard Park, ("Let's move on already," May 5) Mr. Park, I feel your pain. I, too, am sick of it. I am sick of taking time off from work and time away from my family to attend Town Board meetings and plead with town officials. Sick of people in authority with their own personal agenda who fail to do what is right. Who claim to be willing to make the tough decisions but don't. Who promise change and deliver nothing. Sick of civil service workers who lie and take advantage of the system and union leaders who defend them, all at the taxpayers' expense. Sick of misfeasance. I am sick of writing emails and letters to the editor.

But most of all, I am sick of a town whose abandoned animals and wildlife are the victims of ignorance and disregard.

Your suggestions have all been tried and all have failed. Privatization failed because the town ignored the only viable proposal that was submitted. Kent (which does great work) is not in a position to assume responsibility for a shelter full of hard-to-adopt pit bulls. Brookhaven has 200 dogs and is not interested in housing Riverhead's 17.

The main reason this topic appears week after week is because years have passed, the problem goes unresolved and people have chosen to voice their concern. It's called freedom of speech and freedom of the press. And it is the one recourse we have to influence our elected officials to take action. Would you deny it?

The supervisor gives the same lip service by saying, "We're working on it," but nothing is ever accomplished. So, if you want the stories to stop, tell Mr. Walter and the Town Board to fix the problem and implement a humane shelter with a caring staff. It's not too much to ask for. And then you can go back to reading your paper.

Sue Hansen

SOUTHAMPTON

Animal advocates should be thanked

As a resident of Suffolk County for 30 years and a part-time Manhattan resident for work reasons, I resent the aggressive and ungrateful tone of Richard Park's letter to the editor ("Let's move on already," May 5). Yes, I'm an animal advocate. I don't like the word activist, certainly not the way Mr. Park used it. That he would criticize people from other places who give money and time to Riverhead's animals, which clearly badly need it, is sad indeed. One dog has been adopted since January, I understand. The town shelter's euthanasia rate is low because members of a rescue organization, RSVP, help get most of the dogs adopted. I've gotten homes for three Riverhead dogs, including one to a respected Riverhead resident, Vince Taldone.

Fellow advocate Gail Waller should be thanked for the money she has donated. Instead of Mr. Park's unpleasant frothing at the mouth about intruders in his midst, he should visit the shelter, walk a dog and speak to Councilman Jim Wooten about the changes he's trying to make as liaison to the shelter. And why. Too often the shelter only has one kennel attendant on duty.

That's bad staffing. Some animals, like a dog named Julia, never leave their cages and see daylight, much less get walked by a volunteer. 24/7 in a cage — imagine. And Ray, a volunteer trainer, recently quit until shelter policies change and animals are treated more humanely.

Resident Rex Farr deserves credit for speaking up for Riverhead animals to District Attorney Tom Spota, not to be put down for his actions.

Walk a lonely, abused, frightened and abandoned dog. One might then understand why we care. And why the current management needs to be changed immediately. Mr. Park should be worried about the waste of your taxpayer money, not about "outsiders" who help. Killing raccoons with a hammer or shovel to the head is no surprise. It's time for the changes that Mr. Wooten has been blocked from making. Now.

Pat Lynch

WADING RIVER

It was a privilege to know Gregory Villella

It was with sadness that we read of the passing of Gregory Villella. For our family, for over 20 years, the visits to the Villella Shoe Store on Main Street in Riverhead were always a friendly and reassuring experience. Initially, as young parents we came to rely on his assessment of our infants' feet at their first fitting. He would smile and point out if they toed in or out, whether they had normal arches or flat feet. If

there was a problem, he would suggest a sturdy pair of leather shoes with an insert to correct or mitigate the problem. He was always right on target.

Mr. Villella, his wife, Anna, and their son, Vinny, were always welcoming, friendly and courteous. They would help us select a pair of children's shoes that would fit properly and last. They were part of an era where competence and service provided the customer with value and reassurance.

After we got to know them, Mr. and Mrs. Villella would always ask about the children. A trip to the store was like visiting family where you had confidence that what you purchased was right for you.

Mr. and Mrs. Villella were very good people, honest and competent, and we were privileged to have known them.

Pat and John Hauser

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JanetRB 1 week ago

Ms Carella-Dean would like me to work for free? I would point out that if I don't get results (a sale) that is exactly what I am paid---\$0.

PS. All commissions are negotiable by law.

Like Reply



Hosed1 1 week ago

Mr. Hilton, I give kudos to George Gabrielsen for apparently spearheading the investigation into Mr. Rothaar, and for Jodi Giglio calling for an audit of the town's finances because of Mr. Rothaar. Put the blame where it belongs: directly on Sean. He is protecting his buddy, Mr. Rothaar, which is why this will never be investigated properly. The town's labor attorney is handling the "investigation", and Sean keeps referring to this as merely a potential violation of computer/equipment policy. What? The town's audits were 3 years behind, the budget mistakes were huge, and on top of that, Sean requests more help to complete the audits at a huge cost to the town. How much more did the taxpayers pay for his

incompetence?? Sean blames other factors, then we find out Mr. Rothaar was likely doing his own client work on town time. It all makes sense, but alas, nothing happens to Mr. Rothaar. Where else could someone do all this and keep their job? Of course Sean won't call for a real investigation, because it will show what he knew all the time. Any wonder why Riverhead is a joke..... and I am Republican!!!

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The advertisement is divided into two sections. The top section features the logo for Arthur Edwards Pool & Spa Centre, which includes a blue dolphin leaping over the name 'Arthur Edwards' in a cursive font, with 'POOL & SPA CENTRE' in a smaller, sans-serif font below it. Below the logo, the text 'Click to visit our online shop' is centered. At the bottom of this section, it says 'Long Island Pool & Spa Specialists' and '1-800-870-5445' in a blue font, with decorative blue circles to the left. The bottom section of the ad shows a photograph of two smiling women, one older and one younger. Below the photo, the text reads 'We Help Keep Seniors independent' with 'independent' in a cursive font. At the bottom left is the logo for Comfort Keepers, which depicts a house with a red roof and a person. To the right of the logo, it says 'Comfort Keepers of Riverhead 631-369-6080'.

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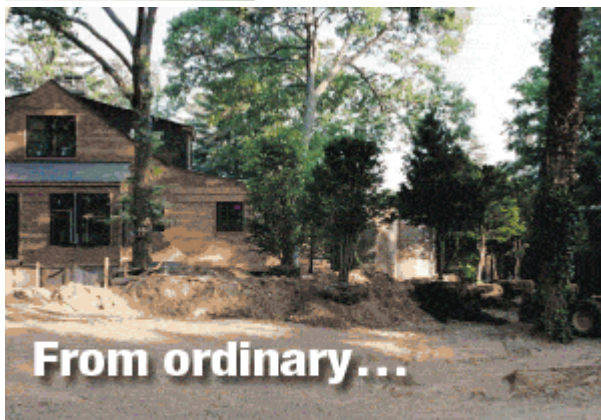


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