

## letters



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## Town in need of manager

We presently have seven members of the Town Board, all proficient within their respective professions, but unfortunately, no one has the experience to run a \$150 million corporation.

Thus, they are not able to fulfill their promises when running for office, to cut costs and taxes. At present, the town has self-contained units or departments. Each department takes care of its own purchases, payroll and accounts payable/receivable. This then results in having more people than what is required to run a \$150 million corp. Also, the

present system lacks checks and balances.

Thus, it appears changes to a 21st century system of centralized purchasing, payroll and accounts will only come about either with the assistance of consultants or hiring a professional town manager.

**Roger LeGoff  
Hunters Lane  
Amherst**

## Homestead option is unfair to seniors

Once again, the Amherst Town Board is waging another tax assault on its senior residents — seniors who made the prudent

(Please turn to page eight)

## Primary provides pundits with points to ponder

We're less than three weeks away from the primary elections of some truly intriguing battles that will help to determine who will serve as Western New York's representatives in Washington and Albany.

As we are all well aware, there is much information to peruse when it comes to the candidates jockeying for position for a spot on the ballot in the general elections in November.

So with Sept. 9 circled in bright red on our calendars, I'm going to provide you with various news nuggets, factual tidbits and my own personal opinions on some of the races I'll be closely watching in the next few weeks.

Here are some talking points, a few random thoughts and other items of interest as we head toward crunch time:

- I have to start off with my favorite quote of the primary campaign season, which comes to us courtesy of Leonard Roberto, founder of the "Primary Challenge" organization and a candidate for the Republican nomination for the 142nd state Assembly District.

During a recent radio interview that featured a discussion of the state's well-documented fiscal woes, Roberto made an interesting observation about Gov. David Paterson and his "view" of New York's eroding financial situation.

"A guy that's legally blind is the only one in Albany who can clearly see what's going on," quipped Roberto.

Ain't that the truth. Well said, Lenny.

- Color me skeptical of Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos following his comments about knowledge he acquired from Joseph Bruno on what to expect as the top elected official in the state Legislature.

Skelos, the first Greek-American to serve as leader of the Senate, said he learned a lot from Bruno, who spent more than 13 years in that post before resigning in June. Skelos was quoted as saying he learned from Bruno about "the importance" of allowing his fellow senators to be "heavily involved in the legislative process" and how crucial it is "not to turn over too much power to unelected staff members."

Allowing others to be involved? Was Skelos on some sort of long-term leave of absence during

the infamous "three men in a room" tenure of Bruno, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and former Gov. George Pataki?

- More on Skelos: I don't get why he got his nose so bent out of shape when Paterson stated in his calling for a special session of the Legislature to deal with the state's fiscal crisis that he was "going to end the legislators' vacations."

Skelos made it a point recently to tell members of the press that Paterson, after visiting with Skelos to discuss the new Senate majority leader's ideas on how to deal with the state's budget gap, apologized for the vacation remark.

"I just said it was unnecessary," said Skelos. "We all misspeak from time to time, and I think he realizes that he did."

Whatever, Dean. It's called thick skin. Look into how it can be developed and/or acquired.

- The three-way battle for the Democratic nod in the race to replace retiring Republican Rep. Tom Reynolds is piping hot, with supporters of both Jack Davis and Jon Powers taking turns blasting one another on various

Internet message boards and blogs, with the online attacks portraying the no-love-lost between the two camps.

Alice Kryzan has been noticeably quiet in the weeks leading up to Sept. 9, which has me thinking that her campaign's approach is of the "no news is good news" variety, in light of the campaign controversies that have recently crept up on both Davis and Powers.

- I'm very curious to see if Joe Mesi accepts an open invitation to appear on a future episode of "Hardline With Hardwick" on WBEN 930-AM radio. Kevin Hardwick, a Canisius College political science professor who hosts the politically based talk show each Sunday morning, has invited Mesi, Dan Ward and Michelle Iannello to spend an hour discussing their three-way battle for the Democratic nomination for the Senate seat of Mary Lou Rath.

My money is on Mesi not showing up.

(Daniel Meyer is a columnist for the Weekly Independent Newspapers of Western New York. Comments on this column can be sent via e-mail to: meyersmusings@gmail.com. Opinions expressed here are those of the author.)



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Political Columnist

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## Senate measures provide tax relief

It's clear that homeowners are struggling to keep up with the ever-increasing burden of property taxes and need relief as soon as possible. That is why the Senate recently passed measures to provide help for school districts that are dealing with rising costs that force property taxes to increase, including mandates, rising pensions and energy prices.

Measures that are part of the Senate's legislation address the following issues:

**Pension Costs** — In order to provide school districts relief from increasing pension costs, the state would take over increased costs above 4 percent. However, no school district shall receive more than 40 percent of the total funding. One million would be provided in the 2009-10 state budget to offset increased costs above the 4 percent cap.

This proposal is similar to the cap on local Medicaid costs that has saved counties hundreds of millions of dollars.

**Energy Savings** — In order to help school districts with rising energy costs, the legislation includes the following measures:

- Each school building would be required to undergo an energy audit that would include recommendations for alternative energy plans. Schools that implement these recommendations would receive a 65 percent reimbursement for costs through building aid.

- Additional incentives could be offered for the construction of "green" school buildings and the use of alternative energy sources and authorize school districts to construct joint facilities with other municipalities and public benefit corporations.

In addition, the legislation provides school districts with more flexibility in providing trans-

portation services to help them save money.

Currently, school districts are restricted from extending transportation contracts beyond Consumer Price Index growth. However, CPI is not reflective of true transportation inflation, especially with escalating fuel costs. Allowing schools to use an adjusted transportation CPI will help school districts decrease their contractual costs by allowing them to renew their transportation contracts without going through an expensive bidding process.

**Mandate Relief** — The legislation includes several measures to limit the ability of the state to impose mandates that lead to increased costs and taxes, including:

- A ban on unfunded mandates on localities or school districts that will cost more than \$1 million, except in emergency situations, or for federal compliance; delaying until the next school budget year the effective date of any regulation that has fiscal implications and is adopted after school budgets are voted on; eliminating numerous required reports that are no longer relevant to help schools reduce paperwork; and establishing a Blue Ribbon Commission on Mandates to determine costs associated with mandates, create alternative solutions to costly mandates, identify mandates that could be consolidated and determine the true savings of mandate relief proposals.

These tax relief measures proposed by the Senate majority would provide immediate relief to local taxpayers.

I look forward to working with the Assembly and the governor to turn the measures into law as soon as possible.



**MARY LOU RATH**  
New York State Senator