

EDITORIAL

Election Format Should Change

It was heartening to see people show interest in running for a school board seat in East Aurora and Iroquois. East Aurora had three people seeking two seats and Iroquois, at one point, had five looking for two open spots.

Those are not easy jobs - first of all, they are all volunteer positions. And they involve long hours of work and people only notice around budget time. It's probably why too often we see no challengers and incumbents are kept in place. Or, as has been the case at Iroquois recently, a challenger only stepped forward as a write-in candidate when no one else was running. Seeing people pay attention and take an interest to be a part of the process is a good thing.

Still, there was one negative in this year's Iroquois school board election and it's something that should be changed now.

The Iroquois district is set up where people choose which seat they want to run for, targeting in essence the candidate or seat they think they have the best chance to win.

Compare this with East Aurora where people simply say they want a seat on the board, and the people with the most votes get to fill those spots. It's the same for town board elections, and it's something Iroquois should adopt.

As we noted, it's not easy to get people to run for a school board seat. Suddenly this year there were five people going for the two seats that would be open as the incum-

bents were not seeking re-election. But because of the district's election process, voters were going to have to pick three people for one seat, and two for the other. So there was still an aspect of choice there, but this setup showed its failure when at the end of April, candidate Greg Kwiatkowski withdrew his name from the ballot. At the time he and Robert Barry were the only ones running for an open seat. When Kwiatkowski stepped back, no one else stepped forward and Barry was essentially guaranteed his spot. Voters were then only left to choose among the three other candidates for a single seat. This is not against Barry's win, but the process as it is.

Residents of a school district are represented by everyone on a school board, not specific people for regions of the district. If Iroquois changed it to match the East Aurora school board or the towns of Elma, Marilla and Wales, candidates could still team up and say they want to get a couple of seats at one time, but it would allow the public to determine how they want the board to look. Maybe one person in a team-up is worthwhile and the other is in essence a filler, just another person to sit on the board. The change could help promote diverse opinions and show those with the top votes that they are who should be on the board. As it is, though, the targeting of seats at Iroquois can lead to situations like last week and mean the choice for voters is restricted. Change should be made.

READERS' OPINION

Remember Veterans on Memorial Day

Dear Editor,

Memorial Day is here. We must remember those heroes who gave their all so that we Americans can live in a free nation. It is a special day for all veterans as they remember their buddies with whom they served. Many are not with us anymore.

Most Americans know the true meaning of this day and in their way will honor our deceased veterans. There is a dangerous anti-American movement hurting this country. We, as Americans, must firmly show our patriotism to our beloved America. One small way is to talk to your family, friends and especially the kids. Tell them how strongly you feel about our nation. On Memorial Day explain to the kids what this day is all about. Take them on a trip to a Veterans Memorial

park for a few minutes. Amid the solemn surroundings, tell them of the sacrifices of our veterans. Or visit the local cemetery where the graves of our military men and women are decorated with American flags. Tell them they live in a free country thanks to these veterans. Remind them of the many children in this troubled world who don't have the freedoms that we enjoy here in America.

The American Legion wishes all a pleasant Memorial Day, but remembers those who made it possible. Fly your flag that day and make clear to the children what this day should mean to all Americans. They are our future Americans. Remember, patriotism is contagious.

Gene Blamowski

Orchard Park American Legion Post 567

Thanks for Support in School Election

Dear Editor,

When I first decided to run for a position on East Aurora's Board of Education, I knew that I could count on a strong response from my family and friends. This couldn't have been truer, or more appreciated. What I wasn't prepared for, though, was the engagement and support from so many people I had never met before, leaving me humbled and even more inspired to take on this role.

Years ago, I attended my first school board meeting for the same reason most people do. I was there to let the Board know I was unhappy with a decision they had made. It was only then that I realized how much I had to learn about what happened in that room, who the participants were and what they were tasked with doing. Sure, I still told them how I felt, but I also made a commitment to go to the meetings and soon realized the benefits of being there. Not only did I get to hear the conversations firsthand and learn many details about the operations and finances of the district, but I also developed meaningful relationships with the members of the Board, administration and staff. I gained a level of appreciation and trust that could only come from taking the time to learn.

I look forward to attending a lot more school board meetings in the future, now as a school board member, and hope that more people will take time to attend school, village and town board meetings to listen, learn, contribute and get to know the people elected to serve the community.

Joe Cassidy

East Aurora

View from Right Field

Rick Ohler



Yellow Fever

There was a lot of rubbernecking last Sunday about 11 a.m. where Routes 78 and 16 North say goodbye to Route 20A West as they pass in front of Schmalz's Grove where a dozen or so folks had assembled, obviously for some sort of event.

Don't feel bad if you're wondering where in the heck Schmalz's Grove is; it remains a well-kept secret to many locals. Nicknamed by Chris Norton of the Knox Road Nortons, it's the pocket park at the west end of town opposite Frantz Furniture and just north of Shore's Circle Inn; I mean, across from Dollar General and adjacent to the Kwik Fill gas station and McDonald's. Times have changed, haven't they?

Motorists passing by that morning must have nearly wrenched a neck vertebra as they struggled to figure what such a rare gathering in the little-used pocket park could possibly mean. They could see what a grand time we were having, and I'm wondering if they were jealous that they hadn't been invited. They could have been there, if only they'd submitted an entry to the second "EA's Grandest Dandelion Contest." They might even have won a bottle of the coveted Lion's Pride Dandelion Wine, 2020 edition, from Woodside Vintners.

The Sunday morning convocation by our traffic circle (DONOT call it a roundabout, no matter what the NYSDOT says) was a reception for the winners of this year's contest. We had promised winners in two categories: Grandest Single Dandelion Plant and Grandest Multi-flower Dandelion Display in a Lawn. But when the photo entries arrived—16 of them—they were all wonderful. Widespread panic ensued among the judges, and we retreated into a secret conclave. When the white smoke rose from the chimney, we had five winners, and even five seemed too few for the quality of the entries. I wheeled an extra bottle of the Pride from the vintner and found a couple from last year that, miraculously, had not been cracked; five it would be.

With a nod to pomp and circumstance, our panel of judges—Nancy Johnson, Ellen Neumaier, Pete Ryan and your intrepid correspondent from Right Field—greeted the winners at Schmalz's. Debby Sullivan's Multi-flower Dandelion Display in a Lawn award for her carpet of yellow on Blakeley Road was accepted by her husband Pat, who read a prepared statement from his wife. "I'm accepting *in absentia*," he read, then added, "I thought she was in Colden."

Four entrants shared the single dandelion award. Greg Engle, resplendent in his family-heirloom lederhosen (to the amusement of his wife and daughter), accepted his



Photo by Rick Ohler

EA's Grandest Dandelion Contest Winners, from the left, include Pat Sullivan, Greg Engle, Conlee Brewer, Rebecca Murray with Roxy.

Grandest Single Dandelion Plant-Height Division for the photo of a 19-inch-tall beauty, verified with a tape measure. Joe McCann, absent through no fault of his own, won Grandest Single Dandelion Plant-Breadth Division for his sprawling, purple-stemmed behemoth. Rebecca Murray's photo, "A Study in Yellow," was a masterpiece of composition—a yellow dandelion, two yellow tulips and a yellow lab named Roxy, who accompanied her to the ceremony. She was awarded the Grandest Single Dandelion Plant—Flora cum Fauna Division.



Photo by Rick Ohler

Winner of the Best in Show award for his photo "The Great Mandala" is six-year-old Conlee Brewer.

Best in Show belonged to young Conlee Brewer, son of Jeremy and Jessica, whose photo of a young dandelion in full fettle (RIP Snake) with an elderly flowerhead of feathery seeds about to be blown to the four corners in the background, won him the Grandest Single Dandelion Plant—the Great Mandala Division. Conlee told us he loved the "jaggedy-edged flowers" and had been taking many dandelion photos for the contest. He decided this one would be the best. He was right. He's only six and in elementary school, though, so dandelion wine is not an appropriate prize. Not to worry; Conlee's dad offered to buy the wine from him for twenty bucks, to which Conlee replied, "I'll ask Nana; maybe she can do better than that." A bright future ahead for the lad. (Note: the winning photos are available on my Instagram page.)

Hard as it may be to believe, there was a purpose to our folderol at Schmalz's. We were making a point, or trying to. As was expressed in a ceremonial limerick that concluded our ceremony:

*There's a plant that lawn owners keep damnifyin',
And onto which they are pesticides applyin'.
They're quick to defoliate;
When better they should celebrate*

The indispensable, the yellow-maned dandelion.

Columnist Rick Ohler invites readers to find past columns and articles on his website, www.rickohler.com.

In a gentle way, with good humor, without malice—no bed-sheet-sized flags flying from the backs of unmuf-

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