

Westfield Leader Scotch Plains Times Editorial
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Generator Gate, Bid Rigging, Failures That Plague Society

Over the last few years, there has been a lot of news on the ethical lapses of some government workers as well as a lack leadership from those in senior government positions.

The Union County Prosecutor's Office has been investigating allegations that generators were taken home for personal use by county employees during Hurricane Sandy when much of the county was in the dark.

This follows an investigation by the Union County Police Department into missing equipment from the county parks department. According to a Star-Ledger article in the summer of 2012, Patrick J. Scanlon, Jr., the stepson of now former Freeholder Deborah Scanlon, was among those employees questioned as part of the investigation. The paper reported that Mr. Scanlon resigned his county job just days after the county police began their investigation. We have yet to hear if the county police determined if there was any wrongdoing in the case.

The New Jersey Attorney General's Office has brought charges against a civilian employee of the State Police who allegedly used her position to garner a generator from two out-of-state contractors, which she gave to a relative who then sold it to someone else for a profit. That case is headed to a state grand jury where the employee, Marcella Friedman, faces three to five years in state prison and a fine of up to \$15,000.

In 2011, the Union County Prosecutor's Office found the 2010 Union Country MusicFest, which cost \$1.1 million to run, was "poorly executed." They found there was a "lack of records" on expenditures from This Is It! Concept and Event Production (TIIP), which managed and produced MusicFest — and the Union County Performing Arts Center (UCPAC), which booked most of the talent except the headliners. The prosecutor's office did not find, though, that criminal charges were warranted.

There also is the recent case of ex-Westfield Board of Education business administrator Robert Berman, who pleaded guilty to taking part in a bid-rigging scheme involving the district's engineer and outside vendors. Mr. Berman was charged with second degree bribery for accepting over \$13,000 worth of windows and doors installed at his home by a vendor in return for recommending that the Westfield BOE appoint the company as the district's contractor.

These examples unfortunately are a microcosm of the ethical failures that plague society, business and government upward through state and federal levels. Whether it's the Secret Service in Columbia, the State Department in Benghazi or a local Generator Gate, when there is no top down leadership, failed standards — no insistence or examples for ethical behavior, what do we expect the little guys to do?