



Letters to the editor, Aug. 16



Stop wasting food

Recently there has been considerable publicity about the fact that Americans waste 40 percent of the food grown in our country while over 42 million Americans are food-anxious. We know that in other parts of the world, many people are downright hungry.

Why is this? We live in a land of plenty, and many middle-class people buy food that never gets eaten. Experts advise people to plan their eating more carefully and not overbuy.

Another reason is that restaurants often serve a preposterous amount for one serving. My husband and I, blessed with similar food tastes, now typically order one menu choice for the two of us. We find waiters and waitresses quite willing to bring two plates with one meal. Usually we are then quite satisfied, but at one restaurant I find myself stuffed afterward.

I raise most of our vegetables year round in our backyard, and am thus not tempted to waste food at home. I put what I expect each person to eat on their plate at the beginning of the dinner, and they eat it.

My garden often yields more than we can eat and I am glad to donate to Toni's Kitchen, which feeds the poor and provides me a tax deduction. It is in the back of St. Luke's Episcopal Church on South Fullerton Avenue, and its parking lot opens onto Union Street. They accept donations happily Thursday, Friday and Saturday mornings after 9:30 a.m.

Individuals cannot prevent the overstocking of stores and restaurants, but we can encourage and perhaps donate to organizations that pick up excess food from such places and donate it to food banks and places like Toni's Kitchen. It had such a collector for a while, but recently has been searching for someone willing and able to bring food from nearby stores and restaurants.

Experts warn us not to overrate "sell by" dates and "use by" dates, but to smell our food to see if it is still

good. Most which isn't can go to a compost heap so it isn't completely wasted. Americans need to waste less food.

Pat Kenschaft

Montclair

New liquor license not all it's cracked up to be

So here we are, about to award an astounding 13th liquor license in Montclair, wow! As your article from July 25, "Population Increase Means Another Liquor License for Montclair," says, we've been "teetering on the brink" for years. Actually it's been two decades.

I suppose we're now to get excited because the town is expecting a "windfall" of more than a million dollars. Call me unimpressed because I find the perpetuation of the current system a little like a guy at the racetrack losing his paycheck one two-dollar bet a time in the hopes of hitting the trifecta.

Let's break down all the reasons the current system is untenable. First off, can anyone explain what the rationale was in 1947 for apportioning licenses by population? Why every 3,000 residents? Why not every 5,000? Or every 427? If we can't, then why do we continue to allow the system to continue?

Second, the eye-popping increase in the value of these licenses has occurred only in the last two decades. Ten years ago liquor licenses sold for around \$10,000 in Montclair. Last year, Dai Kichi sold theirs for \$1.25 million – an increase of 125 times. You wouldn't have gotten that return by buying Apple or Google at their lowest point.

Third, the current system benefits no one but the holders of the licenses. Somehow we've become used to the idea of a "windfall" every couple of decades, but at what cost? A small handful of restaurants can count on significant profit thanks to liquor sales while others struggle to get by. There's an old adage in the restaurant business – you bring people in with food and you make money on alcohol.

Let's break this down. Does anyone really think that allowing a pizzeria to sell beer would hurt anyone? Of course it wouldn't. But the pizzeria might make a thousand more dollars a month and hire another worker, and pay more taxes.

Does anyone really think that the high-end restaurants would fold if a small place selling kabobs or sandwiches was allowed to sell beer? Of course not. But the small places would make more money, and enjoy a little more success.

The point is, the current system benefits only those lucky enough to have bought in years ago, or those rich enough to do so now. It doesn't encourage more restaurants to open. Or generate profits for small struggling restaurants. Or provide a sustainable revenue source for the town.

If we end the current system, and pass the reform measure that's been languishing in Trenton, then everyone benefits. And we won't take anything away from the current license holders. In fact, the generous tax breaks in the bill would be more than enough to compensate those 13 restaurants, while giving countless entrepreneurs and restaurateurs an equal footing, and generating larger, more sustainable revenue for the town.

Maintaining the current system will do nothing more than ensure stagnant growth in new businesses, employment, and tax revenue. Isn't it time we ended a system that benefits a handful of people, in favor of one that benefits us all?

George C. Simpson

Montclair

Vote on Nov. 6

If you're not happy with the direction our federal government has taken since January 2017, there's something you can do about it. On Nov. 6, vote.

Even better: make sure your friends and family, especially college students and people who recently moved, are all registered and planning to vote. If they haven't registered, urge them to do so ASAP. They can get the information they'll need for New Jersey at state.nj.us/state/elections/voting-information.html. The registration deadline is Oct. 16.

College students who want to vote in their home districts will need absentee ballots, which they can get via that same web page. Absentee ballots must be received by 8 p.m. on Election Day, Nov. 6. To register in another state visit usa.gov/register-to-vote.

Sharing memes on Facebook won't solve our problems. Laughing at late night comedians won't solve our problems. Groaning with your friends won't solve our problems. You need to vote. Do your part—make it happen.

Michael Laser

Montclair

Patience needed with Lackawanna Plaza

The Montclair History Center has long-considered the Lackawanna Terminal site one of the most historic in our town, not only for the notable design and construction of the station but for the transformative role trains

played in Montclair's development into the town we recognize today.

The redevelopment process for this site is clearly grueling, the meetings numerous and lengthy, and stakeholder frustration is evident. We urge the residents, mayor, council, Montclair Planning Board, Historic Preservation Commission, and developers to persevere to deliver the thoughtful design, smart adaptive reuse, and attention to the details that embrace and respect the site's legacy as well as the contemporary needs of the community and property owner.

Please hang in there. Listen to and work with each other to revitalize this historic property so it can continue to be integral to the neighborhood and the entire township far into the future.

Helen Fallon

Montclair

The writer is the vice president of the Montclair History Center Board of Trustees.