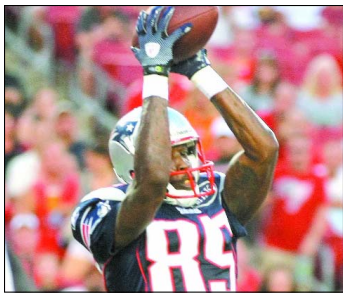


TURNED LOOSE



Pats' starters shine in first chance to show their stuff. p.9

WEATHER



Tomorrow: Partly sunny, slight chance of afternoon shower, highs in low 80s. Details, p.2

WESTERLY
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WESTERLY, R.I. FRIDAY, August 19, 2011

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Teacher union behind blast at RISC leader's home?

■ Harriet Lloyd says explosion from Pepsi can rocked her house in Shelter Harbor in March.

By CHRIS KEEGAN
Sun Staff Writer

WESTERLY — The executive director of the Rhode Island Statewide Coalition told police in March that an explosion outside

her Westerly home may have been a warning shot from the state's largest teacher's union.

But local authorities found no evidence of what Harriet S. Lloyd described as an "explosive device" at her Shelter Harbor home, and the head of the National Education Association of Rhode Island is calling for her to apologize to union members, including teachers in Westerly and Char-

ho. Lloyd backed off claims about NEA involvement on Thursday, saying the March police report was incorrect.

Appearing Wednesday morning on WPRO-AM 630's John DePetro Show, Lloyd described witnessing a 30-foot fireball outside her Donizetti Road home on the night of March 10. A story on the radio program's website, based on her half-hour interview, claims

"Home of Rhode Island 'Good' Government Leader BOMBED."

Lloyd, the daughter of RISC Chairman Harry Staley, said she was watching television with her daughter when the explosion at a family-owned rental property across the street shook her house, blew out four windows and drew neighbors outside.

"I did notice that the dog was starting to bark and growl at

something outside," Lloyd told DePetro. "I did notice a couple of flashlights outside. And all of a sudden a tremendous explosion occurred in front of my home. A fireball probably 30 feet high rose in front of my window."

"Within a period of time, several fire and police responders came," she said. "They told me they had

See BLAST, page 5

WHS cop expected by school opening

■ Police union confident school resource officer will be on the job when school starts Sept. 6.

By DALE P. FAULKNER
Sun Staff Writer

WESTERLY — A police union official is confident a school resource officer will be on the job at Westerly High School for the start of the new school year.

Steve Johnson, president of the International Brotherhood of Police Officers Local 503, the union representing Westerly police officers, said Thursday the union has made arrangements to ensure a school resource officer (SRO) is ready to work when school begins Sept. 6.

The union and town are completing final details of the police contract based on a memorandum of agreement between the two parties approved by the Town Council in June.

"Regardless of whether the agreement is signed or not we have discussed having an SRO in position for the start of the school year," Johnson said.

Delays in completing the agreement, Johnson said, are related to typographical errors and the need

See COP, page 5

LAWYER TO PZC:

Affordable housing law overrides local control

■ Plans for Spruce Meadows, on Route 1 near Rutman's, presented to zoning board.

By LESLIE ROVETTI
Sun Staff Writer

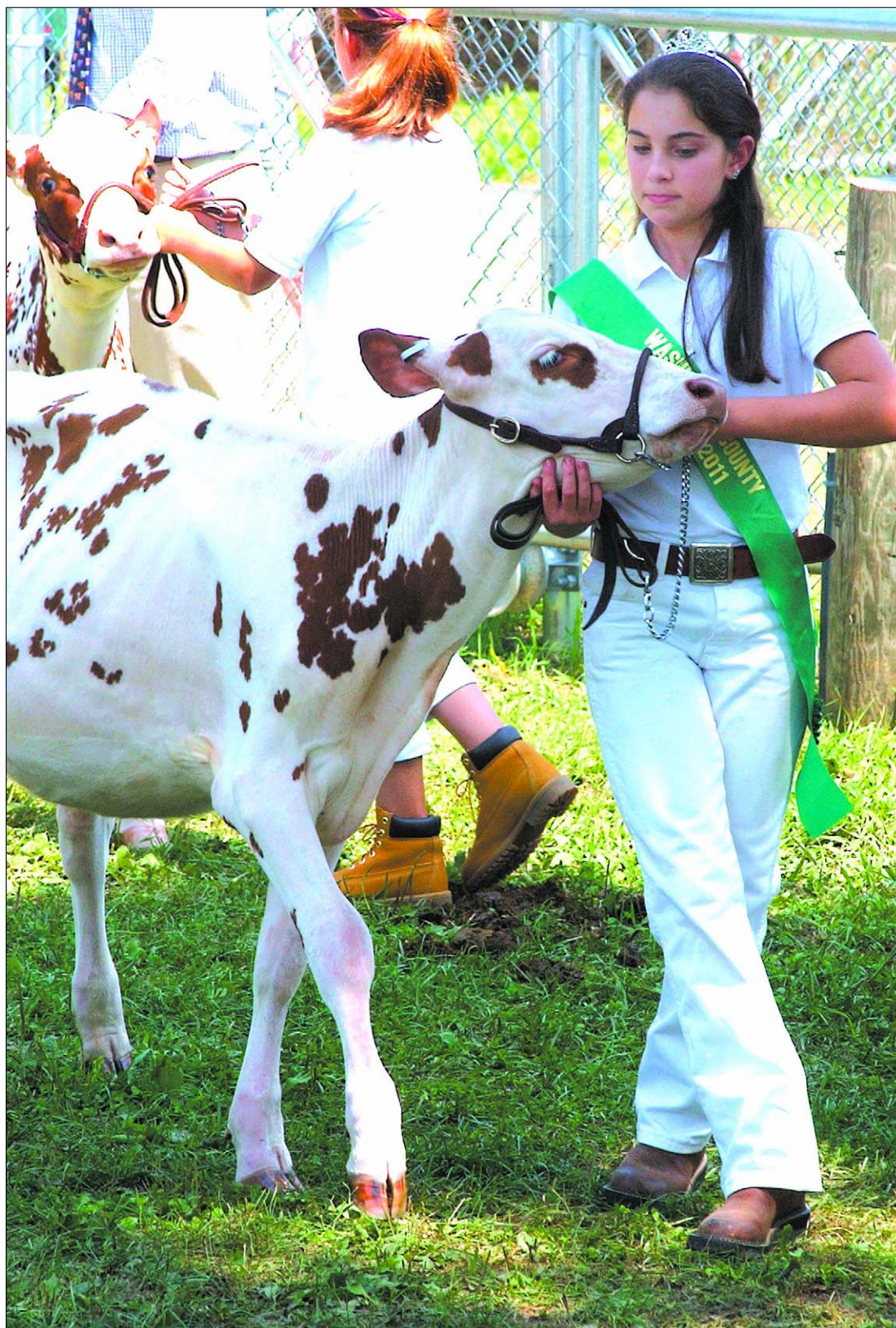
STONINGTON — An affordable housing development proposed for Stonington cannot be denied even if it fails to meet zoning regulations.

Attorney Timothy D. Bates informed the Planning and Zoning Commission Tuesday that Spruce Meadows, a mixed-income, mixed-use, multi-family development can only be denied for health and safety reasons. The reason, he explained, is that state statute 8-30g forces towns with less than 10 percent affordable housing stock to accept affordable housing developments, regardless of whether they meet the towns' zoning regulations. A Planning and Zoning Commission can only deny an application for health and safety reasons.

Bates referred to 8-30g as "a zoning override statute."

See CONTROL, page 5

Fair-y princess



DANIEL HYLAND / The Sun

Elizabeth Salisbury, Washington County Fair princess, was busy Thursday morning showing her Ayrshire dairy cow (she won second place in her class). Below, the fair queen, Maggie Spencer, helps out with the mini prince and princess contest Thursday. The fair runs through Sunday. Visit thewesterlysun.com for more photos.

Something for everyone at county fair

By MICHAEL SOUZA
Sun Staff Writer

"On your mark. Get set. Milk!" said the announcer.

On that signal, 9-year-old Robert Andrade reached down along with three other children and started milking, something he had never tried before. Sixty seconds later he was declared winner of the heat and eligible for the final round.

Looking toward his mother he beamed with pride with the kind of innocent joy only a child can have.

In the last round, family members spurred on their fa-



vorite finalists. He didn't win, but Robbie earned a ribbon and mother Bonni Sousa hugged him, a victory no matter how you look at it.

"I've been coming here since I was two," Sousa, now 39, said. "Except for the eight years I was in the service, I've come every year. My uncle

Jerry Briggs used to run the barrel races so it's always been a big part of our family."

Andrade was awarded his ribbon by Fair Queen Maggie Spencer, 16, of Coventry and Princess Elizabeth Salisbury, 15, of West Greenwich, much

See FAIR, page 5

State wants I-95 tolls in Hopkinton; town upset

■ Town hopes to put brakes on plan to erect tollbooths north and south between exits 1 and 2.

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
and SUN STAFF

PROVIDENCE — Rhode Island transportation officials are seeking permission from the federal government to charge tolls on Interstate 95 near the Connecticut border.

The Department of Transportation filed an application in June asking for tollbooths between exits 1 and 2 on both sides of the highway in Hopkinton. No tolls are proposed at the Massachusetts border.

Transportation officials say they need the toll revenue to pay for replacing the Providence Viaduct bridge, building a new highway interchange off of I-95 in North Kingstown and ongoing maintenance and repair work on I-95 and Interstate 295. The viaduct replacement and new highway interchange are expected to cost \$215 million.

Donna Hoyle, a Hopkinton resident, said she's concerned about people driving on Hopkinton's back roads to avoid the tolls.

"That's ridiculous. It's just going to back up traffic. If people are going to the beaches by 95, they'll take the back roads like Route 3 to avoid the tolls. It's just a small town, and we're going to get all this horrible traffic coming through."

William McGarry, Hopkinton town manager and interim police chief, is also concerned about the likelihood of increased traffic on Route 3.

"The first I heard about it was when I had a call from [state representative] Brian Patrick Kennedy. Anything north of the border before exit 3 would cause people to jump onto Route 3 to circumvent that toll booth, and pick up 95 at Hope Valley," McGarry said. "Everybody's concern is that the DOT request for these toll booths went to the FHA [Federal Highway Administration] and they've been discussing this since June, and no one in town knew about it."

Hopkinton businesswoman Georgia Ure, owner of Ure Outfitters, was as critical of the way the toll situation came to light as she was of the idea itself.

"I think there's a lot of things in Rhode Island we've got to do to help ourselves, but I don't think that toll booths is the answer," Ure said. "I don't know what they're thinking. They're not thinking."

See TOLLS, page 6

VOLUME 119,
NUMBER 11



Calendar
Classified
Comics
Crossword
Dear Abby
Editorial
Religion

14 Media & Arts 13
18 Local 3
12 Lotteries 2
19 Nation/World 7
16 Obituaries 6
4 Sports 9
17 Sunbeams 2

inside

NATION

Pope Benedict XVI laments modern society's "amnesia" about God. p.7

PAGE 3

Rhode Island's unemployment rate unchanged in July but jobs added.

FALL FILMS

From J. Edgar Hoover to the Muppets and vampires, variety is the only theme. p.13

thewesterlysun.com



Check out this feature and much more online.

★ Blast

from page 1

heard this explosion miles from my home. They had had calls from people in really remote areas calling saying, 'Did you hear that? What was that explosion?'"

Lloyd said she found suspicious material several days later, describing "melted plastic and debris that would have been associated with an explosive device." Her daughter turned over a charred Pepsi can believed to be the source of the explosion to Westerly Police Detective John Riley on March 14.

"I never have expected to find out who did it," Lloyd said. "These things are done by people generally, I would think, that take good care not to be detected. There was a car that sped off after the explosion and so I'm quite sure that whoever did it was still there when the explosion went off."

Lloyd said a similar explosion was reported near RISC President James T. Beale Jr.'s house on Ocean View Highway that same night. Police incident logs, however, note that gunshots heard in the area of Kimball Avenue and Shore Road were investigated several hours before the reported explosion, but were unfounded.

"I find it's troubling that you're finding the debris and the Westerly police weren't out there doing a more extensive investigation," DePetro said. "This is not someone finding a salute, or a bunch of kids lighting off a bottle rocket. This is an explosion so severe that people hear it miles away and strong enough to blow out four windows."

"The fire department told me they were expecting to find that a furnace had exploded and a house had blown up," Lloyd replied.

WARNING SHOT?

Police reports released Wednesday by Westerly Police Capt. Edward St. Clair indicate that Lloyd told authorities on March 12 she suspected that a member of the NEA-RI was behind the explosion, though the name offered to police has been redacted.

According to the report, "Lloyd explained that she is suspicious of the act because she is part of RISC and they had a small encounter with the NEA earlier this week," wrote Patrolwoman Kristin Kyhos. "She is afraid that maybe it was a warning from them and that it may have been some type of act of violence towards her."

Based on call records, St.

Clair said police received no additional reports of an explosion on the night of March 10, though Kyhos reportedly heard it from Dunn's Corners. Officers later recovered two pieces of an unknown, melted substance that were turned over to the Rhode Island Bomb Squad on March 28, he said.

"It was investigated thoroughly," St. Clair said of the incident. "Obviously we take anything like that seriously. We found no evidence of an explosion. We searched the area."

"Ultimately it ended up where the Rhode Island fire marshal's office took control of the evidence we took from the scene and investigated it further," he added. "I don't believe there was enough evidence to point towards anyone or anything."

Dunn's Corner Fire District Chief Michael Frink agreed there was no evidence of a bomb explosion on Donizetti Road; the department only received one call — from Lloyd — reporting it, he said.

"We looked around," Frink said. "There was no evidence of anything. I wouldn't say it was a bomb or anything ... There was nothing suspicious that we noticed."

The Office of the State Fire Marshal deferred comment to state police Major James Pereira, who did not return phone messages on Wednesday and Thursday.

CONCERN BELITTLED

Lloyd said she also called the Rhode Island State Police to report the incident, but her call was refused.

"They said the local police in your district would call us if they felt they needed help," she said. "I said, 'Well my concern is that this might have happened in other places. I'm in uncharted territory here. Can you help me?' And they basically said that they wouldn't, so I was then forced to call the alcohol, tobacco and firearms federal department [the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives]."

Lloyd said ATF officials responded to Westerly several days later.

"They look for things like shrapnel in the side of your house, they look at the distance between the original explosion and where the debris fell," she said. "They wanted very much to test the explosive material to find out what kind of explosion had been used. The problem with that was that, because they had not contacted the bomb squad immediately that night, the materials had been compromised by rain and fog."

"After extensive testing they were not able to determine exactly what kind of explosion [it was]; it could have been dynamite, it could have been something more complicated than dynamite," she added.

Jim McNally, an ATF spokesman in the Boston office, confirmed that investigators responded to the Lloyd's property, but that the federal agency wasn't contacted until three weeks after the incident.

"Because of the length of time, there was nothing there for us to confirm or deny something happened," he said, noting that the ATF is not involved in any local investigation.

Lloyd acknowledged Thursday it was the Rhode Island Bomb Squad, not the ATF, that responded to her home in the days following the reported explosion.

RISC AND UNIONS

Lloyd's appearance on DePetro's show follows a string of conflicts between pro- and anti-labor union advocates, including the trial of John Leidecker, an NEA-RI assistant executive director charged with cyberstalking a former Democratic state representative endorsed by RISC last year; and a verbal confrontation between Democratic Rep. John Brien of Woonsocket and NEA-RI Secretary Lou Rainone in the courthouse where Leidecker's trial is being held.

RISC, a self-described "voice of the taxpayer and business," branded Rhode Island AFL-CIO President George Nee "enemy number one" during state budget hearings earlier this year.

Lloyd said her talk show appearance was designed to draw awareness to the issue of alleged bullying by organized labor at the Rhode Island Statehouse, where she said a "culture of intimidation" exists.

"It's not always a comfortable place to be," Lloyd said. "We've had situations where people have been passing out fliers with a picture of my father with very uncomplimentary comments made. Frequently, when we're testifying, we have a camera right in our faces. That's a video camera being held by someone in the public sector union group ... It's very intimidating."

Lloyd named Pat Crowley, NEA-RI's government relations director, as the most aggressive union member, and DePetro later characterized the March explosion as "another layer, another level."

"They've gone to another

level now setting off bombs in front of good government homes," he said, after fielding a call from the founder of Ocean State Tea Party in Action, Lisa Blais.

Crowley did not return phone messages on Wednesday or Thursday.

Robert Walsh, NEA-RI's executive director, called on Lloyd to apologize to the union's nearly 12,000 members.

"To give Ms. Lloyd the benefit of the doubt, I would be greatly surprised that she would make such a serious and potentially slanderous allegation," he wrote via e-mail. "While I do not know Ms. Lloyd, I have always maintained a cordial relationship with Mr. Staley, and while the R.I. Statewide Coalition does not share many of our organizational values, they have the same First Amendment rights to present their points of view as any other organization does."

"If it turns out that Ms. Lloyd actually made such an allegation to either the Westerly police in March ... and/or on the John DePetro show, then she should immediately retract her statement and apologize to the almost 12,000 members of NEARI," Walsh wrote. "Such wild and unfounded accusations are beneath her and her organization, and are the types of behavior that ultimately contributed to the failure of organizations such as hers."

Lloyd backed off the charge on Thursday, saying she never implicated the NEA-RI in the explosion.

"I didn't accuse them of it," she said, calling the Westerly police report by patrolwoman Kyhos inaccurate. "I only answered a question of who might be hostile toward RISC [or] who might be hostile toward me. I never made such a statement."

"I certainly have no knowledge they're behind it," Lloyd added. "I never would say that they were behind it, and I hope they aren't. I can't imagine anyone would want to find out something like that is true."

Lloyd's interview with DePetro can be heard in its entirety at 630wpro.com.

ckeegan@thewesterly-sun.com

★ Fair

from page 1

to the delight of his mom.

And that's just one of the many moments continually happening at the Washington County Fair, the state's largest agricultural festival that runs through Sunday.

The sights and sounds are unmistakable. The revving engines of the heavy equipment roar over the seemingly endless miles of nylon rope at the entrance. Teens scream as the amusement ride spins them in a tempest, sunlight reflecting off the chrome. Multi-colored pennants dance in the wind to the sound of the Wurlitzer. Rows of tents offer the best in food and clothes while a pair of "clackers" crack rapidly in the distance. And that's just a brief sample of the atmosphere.

In some ways the fair defines Washington County. The food vendors are largely non-profit organizations such as volunteer fire departments, granges and ambulance companies. From Slocum to Westerly, their workers are volunteers looking to raise money at one of the biggest events of the year.

Milling through the midway are teens, families, children and new parents pushing strollers, taking in the carnival atmosphere on a warm summer's day. Many head toward Kid-land, where rides feature cartoon characters and games always offer a little toy just for playing.

The fair is serious business for Charho High School's Future Farmers of America and their presi-

dent Aaron Gathen, a senior from Richmond.

"We have about 40 members and about 20 of them are very active," he said surrounded by classmates.

It's one of three fairs they attend and the only one in which they have a home field advantage. "There are several events that we compete in, such as landscaping and woodsmen, so we look forward to it," he said.

Contests include tractor safety, splitting wood, dairy showmanship, equine and poultry, just to name a few. "I also pull oxen as a hobby," he said.

Not to be underestimated is the fair's educational offerings. The rural heritage museum displays a large amount of agricultural equipment used in the last century, from potato sorters to plows and old grindstones.

Row upon row of long-houses hold this year's contest winners. For anyone who enjoys quality quilting, knitting or crocheting, there is plenty on display. The awards also feature the best in local ceramics, photography and painting. Another building houses the best of this year's agricultural achievements showing virtually every vegetable and flower our region can produce.

The fair also highlights the best in local livestock, including roosters, pigs, goats and sheep. It isn't a petting zoo but toddlers enjoy them just the same.

Renowned for the ability to book the best in country music, the fair this year offers Crystal Gayle, Mark Wills and Chuck Wicks.

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★ Control

from page 1

Only about 4 percent of Stonington's housing stock is in the affordable range, Bates said, therefore, "the fact that it (Spruce Meadows) violates the regs is irrelevant."

The application for Spruce Meadows has not yet been filed with the town's Planning Office, but Bates presented the plans to the commission for a conceptual review.

Plans call for a 45-unit development, housed in two, three-story buildings in addition to a caretaker's house. The 3-acre site is on Route 1, near Rutman's Furniture. The developer, property owner Thomas F. Buxton III, has proposed making the bottom floor of the building closest to the road a commercial property. However, because it is so

difficult to get a business to lease space before a building is occupied, Bates said, the first floor will be residential for the first five years.

"No business wants to be the first tenant in a new building," noted Bates.

Among the remaining residential units, 15 percent will be priced to be affordable to households earning 80 percent of the area median income, Bates said. Another 15 percent will be priced for those making only 60 percent of the area median income. Units will have one, two, or three bedrooms.

The median income in this area has been estimated to be \$81,200 per year, according to the U.S. Department of Urban Development. This means 15 percent of the units will be priced for those making

\$64,960 or less, and the other 15 percent will be for households earning \$48,720. The affordably-priced units will have to remain affordable for 40 years.

Bates said the project will likely go before the Architectural Review Board next month, and he expects the application will be filed in four to six weeks.

He requested feedback from the commission, because although he could force the project through, he said, he'd rather not.

"We'd just as soon work with you than go to court," Bates told the commission. One commissioner suggested that Bates also work with the four or five adjacent property owners.

"I would encourage you to consider your neighbors," said Rob Marseglia.

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★ Cop

from page 1

to change language in the contract to make it consistent. The union's lawyer and executive board as well as police administrators and Town Manger Steven Hartford reviewed the changes. The new contract could be signed as soon as the end of business today, Johnson said.

Hartford told the Town Council Monday that two or three strong candidates have expressed interest in the position.

Town officials had pushed

to change aspects of the contract related to the SRO position, specifically a 5 percent pay premium that they said the town could no longer afford. The union agreed to forgo the pay premium and also agreed to a reduction in the length of the position assignment from two to five years to one to three years. The new agreement also allows for the assignment of SROs to patrol duty as a supplement to regular patrol shifts when school is not in session.

Reinstatement of a bike

patrol, also called for in the new agreement, has already occurred.



Council President Diana Serra said she is pleased to learn of progress on the contract and stressed the importance of having an SRO in place for the start of the school year.

Councilor Brian McCuin, who voted against the agreement, said he was surprised to learn the new contract had not yet been signed.

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