



DONE!...STILL NOT DONE!...WHY?...The Hetfield bridge in Scotch Plains, top, has been totally completed for some time. The Crossway Place bridge in Westfield, bottom, has been completed but the condition of the road is embarrassing. Oddly, construction on the Hetfield bridge began several months after the construction of the Crossway Place bridge. The plaque shown between the two bridges reads, "Original bridge built by Central Railroad of New Jersey in 1887, Replacement Bridge built by NJ Transit in 1999."

Westfield Y Pulling Out As First Night Organizer

By MICHELLE H. LEPOIDEVIN AND PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

After five successful years, Westfielders may have to find a new venue to ring in the new year following a decision this week by the Westfield Y that it will no longer be organizing First Night Westfield.

Organizers said the decision to no longer run the event was based on an inability to attract a sufficient number of volunteers to man the multi-faceted event and not any lack of interest on the part of the Westfield community. First Night averaged 3,000 to 5,000 attendees each year, most of whom were Westfield residents.

"Unfortunately, the original group of volunteers who initiated this event has dwindled and new volunteers have not stepped forward to replace them. Fundraising has become more difficult. At this time, we feel that the event has run its course," said Julia C. Black, who coordinated First Night Westfield for the Y along with Arlene Bertrand and Barbara Karp.

"The emotional and financial support of The Westfield Foundation, right from the start and throughout

the five years, was an absolute reaffirmation that First Night Westfield was worth every bit of the effort that was put into it," stated Ms. Black, in a detailed letter released last Friday by the Y.

"We always tried to raise approximately \$80,000," Ms. Black told The Westfield Leader.

Fundraising efforts, Ms. Black explained, involve numerous entities such as Westfield houses of wor-

ship, schools and printing facilities, and countless hours offered by volunteers. Temple Emanu-El has also been the site for First Night Westfield's major fundraising event, Taste of Westfield.

"We would spend \$45-\$50,000 on entertainment," she said, "other money would be spent on paper products. We've been very frugal with what we spend," said Ms. Black.

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Mr. Burrell, Ms. Halperin Among Those Leaving Positions at Town Hall

By DEBORAH MADISON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

Major personnel changes are in store for the Westfield Recreation Department this month. Recreation Director Glenn S. Burrell will be leaving to become Recreation Director in Branchburg.

Mr. Burrell has been Westfield Recreation Director since 1993, a position that currently pays \$55,000. Prior to that, he was Assistant Director since 1990.

Mr. Burrell said that he is moving on "for personal and professional reasons." One of the main considerations involved the three hours of commuting he did between his home in Doylestown, Pa. and Westfield. He also will receive a \$5,000 bump up in pay.

In the 10 years Mr. Burrell has served in the department he has seen many changes. In particular, he said that he will miss the staff and dedicated volunteers who he has had the opportunity to work with over the years.

Branchburg, he said, has an established department with a lot of growth in population and a very aggressive open-space program.

"It will be a new challenge for me," Mr. Burrell commented.

The town has contracted the services of Jersey Professional Management of Cranford to hire an interim recreation director until a full-time replacement is hired. They have recommended Laura Botto, who recently retired as Director of the Scotch Plains Department of Parks and Recreation.

Mr. Burrell's last day with the Recreation Department will be Friday, March 16, which also happens to be the day that Allison Halperin, the Program Coordinator for the Recreation Department is also leaving.

Ms. Halperin, who was the first candidate to fill the newly created position of Program Coordinator in November of last year, will become the new Recreation Supervisor for the Scotch Plains Recreation Department.

"I regret this move coming at such a bad time," Ms. Halperin said. Her new position in Scotch Plains will

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Dems Question Legality On How Labor Lawyer Appointment Was OK'd

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

One of the three Democrats on the Westfield Town Council, Carl A. Salisbury, along with the former mayor, Thomas C. Jardim, have questioned the legality of the reappointment of the town's labor attorney at this past January's re-organization meeting.

Frederick Danser, 3rd, has served in the post for over 15 years, including the previous four years under Mr. Jardim. The Democrats brought the

issue to light over the minutes to the January meeting, which were on the governing body's agenda for approval Tuesday night.

The former Mayor has charged that the appointment of the Labor Counsel, which is done by the Mayor with the consent of the Town Council, was essentially illegal since the appointment was actually done by a council member and not by Mayor Gregory S. McDermott.

A resolution appointing Mr. Danser was put forth by Second Ward Councilman Matthew P. Albano, Finance Committee Chairman.

Mr. Jardim said that according to the Westfield Town Code, the appointment can only be made by the Mayor or the Acting Mayor, in this case Third Ward Councilman Neil F. Sullivan. Thus, he reasoned, Councilman Albano had no authority to make the appointment.

He stated that he believes Mayor McDermott abstained on the resolution vote due to a possible conflict over the professional relationship between Mr. Danser and the Mayor's father, Frank X. McDermott, a founding member of Apruzzese, McDermott, Mastro & Murphy. Mr.

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Westfield Board of Ed. Grapples With Budget, Tentative Calendar During Regular Meeting

By MELISSA BETKOWSKI
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

On Tuesday night, the Westfield Board of Education held its regularly scheduled meeting with the task at hand being further discussion of the 2001-2002 school budget.

The projected 2001-2002 school budget currently stands at \$60,050,992. The spending plan would be supported by a tax levy of approximately \$51 million, to be voted on by residents in April.

Numerous concerns were raised by board members over academic programs that are currently part of the second question to be put to the voters.

Mrs. Rogers Drops Out Of BOE Race

By MELISSA BETKOWSKI
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

Westfield Board of Education President Darielle Walsh announced at Tuesday night's board meeting that school board candidate Marcee Rogers has chosen to halt her campaign for one of the three available seats on the board.

Mrs. Rogers, currently recovering from bronchitis, said that now wasn't a good time, and she hopes to run again in the future.

Her decision to drop out of the race has left three remaining candidates for the three seats: Lisa Alter, Virginia (Ginny) Leiz and Richard Solomon.

The open seats are those being vacated by Mrs. Walsh, Budget and Finance Committee Chairman Michael J. Kessler and Long Range Planning Committee Chairwoman Eileen Satkin.

"I have a real problem with academic programs being in the second question with no cuts in (the athletic budget)," Curriculum Committee Chairwoman Annmarie Puleio said.

Board President Darielle Walsh noted that it is not the board's position to micromanage the athletic department budget, but that if board members feel strongly about the need for cuts in the athletic budget, Athletic Director Ed Tranchina should be asked to bring proposed reductions to the board.

Board Member William Wallace reminded the board that it is charged with the task of deciding what items belong in the base budget and which of those belong on a second question.

Board Member Kimberly O. Rhodes, also concerned about academic programs in the second question raised the issue of keeping the elementary school foreign language in the base budget.

Noting that there are a lot of value judgments to be made, Ms. Rhodes suggested taking the Ad-

2001-2002 Tentative Calendar	
September Days of Instruction: 15 Days Omitted: 4 for Labor Day, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur	February Days of Instruction: 18 Days Omitted: 2 for Presidents' Weekend
October Days of Instruction: 22 Days Omitted: 1.5 for Columbus Day and Parent Conferences (Grades K-5)	March Days of Instruction: 16 Days Omitted: 5.5 for Staff In-service and Spring Vacation
November Days of Instruction: 18 Days Omitted: 5.5 for Teacher Professional Days, Thanksgiving Recess, Parent Conferences and Curriculum Planning	April Days of Instruction: 22 Days Omitted: 0
December Days of Instruction: 15 Days Omitted: 6 for Holiday Break	May Days of Instruction: 22 Days Omitted: 1 for Memorial Day
January Days of Instruction: 21 Days Omitted: 2 for New Year's Day and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	June Days of Instruction: 15 Days Omitted: 0

Last Day for Students: Friday, June 21
Graduation: Monday, June 24

vanced Learning Program (ALP) from the base budget to the second question in place of the elementary school foreign language program. Ms. Rhodes did concede that this would not be a dollar for dollar trade as is required by the budget procedure. She then suggested putting the second grade portion of the foreign language program in the second question, but leaving the third, fourth and fifth grades in the base budget.

Ms. Puleio noted that by cutting the second grade program, the district would be losing a "critical year" for the students to gain fluency in the program.

Ms. Puleio noted that research has shown that second graders are less inhibited and less aware of themselves than third graders.

Robert J. Roth, K-8 Foreign Language Supervisor noted that the elementary foreign language program is not a stand-alone program, but that it prepares students

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Storm of Century Turned Out To Be Dud In Westfield, Borough

By SUSAN M. DYCKMAN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

Dire forecasts of the "storm of the century" put local public works employees and emergency officials on high alert going into Monday.

There was some ice, some snow and some swirling winds, but the storm that actually arrived will have no place in the annals of Union County history.

With news alerts beginning last week, local schools were closed Monday and Tuesday. In addition,

Westfield's downtown business district was shut down almost entirely.

For Kenneth B. Marsh, Director of Westfield's Department of Public Works (DPW), that is a good thing. "My snow budget is shot," he said. "We're only two months into the year with four major storms."

That being said, his people were ready, with one crew on duty all day Monday and the rest on standby. "We salted and sanded all the normal places where we have problems with icing," said Mr. Marsh. The crew also got some parking lots plowed Monday because there were so few cars out.

The department brought in a crew at 4 a.m. Tuesday, and while trucks

continued to plow the snow that fell, no substantial accumulation resulted.

In anticipation of the storm, Captain Cliff Auchter of the Westfield Police Department reported a substantial number of patrol cars were chained and ready for deeper snow to fall.

"We don't normally get busy until we get the first critical call that has to be answered," said Captain Auchter on Monday, who acknowledged the police department works closely with the DPW and other agencies to meet the needs of the public in emergency situations.

Westfield Fire Chief John Castellano reported the department

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TIME CAN MEAN MONEY...This gentleman spends his time viewing stamp collections for possible purchase at the recent Stamp Show at the Westfield Municipal Building over the weekend.

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Municipal Tax Rate Hike Now At 3 Cents, Or \$54, Over 2000

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD -- The Westfield Town Council is expected to introduce a \$26 million budget this Tuesday, March 13, which calls for a 2.9 cent increase in the municipal tax rate, to 72 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation. On a house assessed at \$180,000, that translates to an increase of \$54 for the average homeowner for municipal services.

Noting that the original tax levy contained a 5 cent projected increase, Town Administrator Thomas B. Shannon told *The Westfield Leader* that he shaved another 2 cents off the rate by reducing the line item as reserve for uncollected taxes by \$200,000. The reserve was dropped from \$1,850,000 to \$1,650,000, or 2 percent of the total tax levy.

Mr. Shannon said he feels comfortable that the new figure is sufficient for the town in terms of its obligations. The town had a 99 percent collection rate last year. The administrator revealed that, during slow economic times in the early 1990s, the town collected no less than 98 percent of taxes.

"This is a budget that provides the

full gamut of municipal services," Mr. Shannon told *The Leader*. "So I'm looking forward to its adoption."

Looking at what is now a 2.9 municipal tax hike, Mayor Gregory S. McDermott said, "I think it is being fiscally responsible."

The reduction in the money needed to be raised through taxation puts the municipal tax levy at \$13.3 million.

Finance Committee Chairman Matthew P. Albano, who represents the Second Ward, said he has asked all council members to provide him with a list of questions they have on the budget. The council was scheduled to meet last night, March 7, to complete the operating budget.

"I'm trying to take the politics out of it," the Councilman said, noting that he wants all council members to support the adoption of the budget.

First Ward Councilman Carl A. Salisbury said he has not made up his mind on whether he will support this year's budget.

"We are making Westfield a pretty expensive place to live and move into," he said, eyeing the anticipated tax increases in all three segments of Westfield property taxes—town, school and Union County.

He said the Town Council may have to cut back on services it wanted to provide this year in order to cut the municipal tax rate.

First Ward Councilman Peter Echausse said the council met last Sunday to "fine-tune" the capitals spending ordinance, which will accompany the operational budget when it is introduced later this month.

"They go hand in hand. They have to be adopted together," he said.

He said this year's capital budget is in the \$4.8 million range, a jump from the normal \$2.5 to \$3 million range. He stated that this year's capital budget is being bumped up by the \$1.8 million Memorial Park renovation project.

Third Ward Councilman Neil F. Sullivan said he wants assurance that three additional workers will be added to the Department of Public Works for field and park maintenance.

"I am adamant - adamant about adding people on the field side," he said. He noted they must be "real people with incremental hours." He estimated that this will add 5,000 work hours dedicated solely to field maintenance.



WHAT GENERATION GAP?...Jefferson School Brownie Girl Scout, Anna Marie Graviadei, 6, helps to clear the place of long-time Westfield Jim McLane after he finished his hearty breakfast during last Saturday's Rotary Pancake Day at Westfield High School.

Westfield Board of Ed. Grapples With Budget, Tentative Calendar During Regular Meeting

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for further study of the language. He further stated that the traditional high school program does not produce fluency, but the elementary program does. The keys to success in gaining fluency, he noted, are starting early and

Storm of Century Turned Out To Be Dud In Westfield, Borough

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had completed its regular readiness procedures, laying out chains for trucks and other vehicles, fueling trucks and equipment.

"Once we see it snowing," said Chief Castellano, "we go into gear. It's something we train for and we just do it."

When *The Westfield Leader* spoke with the captain, the department was monitoring the severity of the storm to determine if it needed to bring in people Monday for overtime. For the last storm in February, four off-duty firefighters were called up.

Though the fire department is equipped with its own plow to keep its lots clear of snow, DPW plows are on tap to take over should the firefighters go out on a call.

Mountainside's Acting Director of Public Works Robert Farley said his department was "completely prepared" for the storm that never came.

The DPW has two plows and one spreader that handle the municipal lots, walkways, commuter lots and fire depart-

Dems Question Legality in Appointment of Labor Attorney

Continued from page 1

lutely no political gamesmanship being played, as implied by Tom," Mr. Albano continued. "Rather, an honest mistake was made by the town clerk by his placement of this item under my committee and my making the motion with respect to the same."

Councilman Sullivan noted that, in December 1999, then-Finance Committee Chairman James J. Gruba moved a similar resolution naming Mr. Danser as Labor Counsel, with all governing body members, including Mayor Jardim, supporting the appointment.

Councilman Salisbury said he asked Town Attorney Robert Cockren to look into whether the labor attorney should have been appointed by the Mayor and council, rather than by a resolution by the Finance Committee Chairman. If so, he has asked the attorney to see if the Acting Mayor can serve in place of the Mayor in moving the appointment.

He reasoned that since Mayor McDermott abstained from the vote on the resolution, there needs to be a legal opinion forthcoming on whether Mr. Sullivan can move the appointment as Acting Mayor.

Republicans were not happy with the comments of former Mayor Jardim.

"He (Mr. Jardim) is saying that something was done improper by Greg. That is not true," said Mr. Sullivan.

"It is one thing to say that a mistake was done. It is another thing to impugn the integrity of Greg," Mr. Sullivan stated. "It was a partisan act that had no place in the council chamber."

"Why are we in a continuous campaign of destruction?" Mr. Sullivan questioned.

The former mayor said he has considered taking legal action against the town over the appointment of Mr. Danser.

Fourth Ward Councilwoman Janis Fried Weinstein called Mr. Jardim's comments "political grandstanding."

"The Democrats have been screaming about the appointment process since Janu-

Lack of Volunteers Causes Y to Pull Out of First Night

Continued from page 1

"The fundraising hasn't been the hardest part, but getting new volunteers to take on a portion of the event has been hard," she revealed.

Two to three years ago, it became evident to Ms. Black, Ms. Bertrand and Ms. Karp that it was becoming increasingly difficult to find a steady staff of volunteers.

"People move away," started Ms. Black, adding that while publicity began to "peter out," she, along with Ms. Bertrand and Ms. Karp, tried to keep generating public relations efforts.

"This event has been so good for families, children, especially senior citizens," she said. "It's just so wonderful for the community due to the agencies, clubs and churches that always get involved."

Ms. Black told *The Leader* that, through last Friday's letter, she notified Mayor Gregory S. McDermott, Town Administrator Thomas B. Shannon, Assistant Town Administrator James Gildea and the Westfield Foundation of the Y's decision not to serve as orga-

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WESTFIELD POLICE BLOTTER

- TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27
- Randall Patterson, 18, of Westfield was charged with operating a motor vehicle with a blood alcohol content of .01 percent while under the age of 21. He was released on his own recognizance. The incident occurred on Park Street.
 - Police reported that someone attempted to enter a motor vehicle in the northside train station parking lot by damaging the passenger side lock. Access to the vehicle was not gained.
- SATURDAY, MARCH 3
- A wallet containing \$50 in cash was reported stolen from an unlocked locker at a local recreation facility.
 - A Cacciola Place resident reported that \$300 was stolen from a pair of pants which he had in his room.
- SUNDAY, MARCH 4
- It was reported that a seven-foot, plywood stock sign was stolen from Marlboro Street.

Burrell, Halperin Among Those Leaving Town Hall

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involve many of the same program coordination responsibilities and will begin on Monday, March 19.

The Recreation Department will be hard hit yet again, losing 15-year veteran Lucy Lettier, Secretary to the Director. Ms. Lettier has been with the Westfield Recreation Department as their chief bookkeeper and purchasing agent, as well as Secretary to the Recreation Commission since 1986.

Ms. Lettier said that it is time for her to retire and as the saying goes, "smell the roses." She said that she will greatly miss all of the wonderful people that she has had the opportunity to work with over the years, especially the children in the recreation programs.

"It was a really fun job," Ms. Lettier recalled. "I served food at the races for the kids for 11 years and I will really miss them."

Ms. Lettier, who lives in Cranford, said that she has many hobbies that she will

Danser is an attorney with the firm.

The three Democrats on the council also abstained from voting on the appointment.

"Mayor McDermott, I presume, did not believe it was legal or wise or correct to appoint his dad's law firm as the labor counsel for the Town of Westfield," Mr. Jardim stated.

"I have nothing against Frank McDermott, nothing against Rick Danser, nor do I have anything against Mayor McDermott," he explained. "But things should be done the right way."

He said the appointment should be done "according to the book and according to the highest ethical standards."

Mr. Albano said the agenda for the reorganization meeting mistakenly placed the labor attorney appointment under the Finance Committee, rather than under the heading of appointments by the mayor with council consent.

"I can assure you that there was also-

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Mary Johnson appealed to the board to support the full-time technician who works with TV-36. Mrs. Johnson noted that TV-36 has recently been named one of the 10 best school television programs in the country.

Also at the meeting, the Policies Committee presented to the board for first reading the proposed 2001-2002 School Calendar.

Three members of the board, Dr. Molnar, Ms. Puleio and Ms. Rhodes voted against adopting the proposed calendar.

Dr. Molnar noted that she did so in deference to the staff, whose concerns over a long stretch of April and May without a day off, she felt were not heeded.

Ms. Puleio and Ms. Rhodes echoed Dr. Molnar's sentiments and also addressed concerns over the number of days off in the fall, which they felt were not previously considered.

The calendar will be up for final reading at the board's regular meeting on Tuesday, April 3.