

## County Taxes Going Up In 19 of 21 Municipalities

By PAUL J. PEYTON  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

ELIZABETH — County taxes will increase in 19 of the 21 municipalities in Union County under a \$390 million budget introduced last Thursday night by the Board of Chosen Freeholders.

A total of \$216,332,767 will be raised in county property taxes to support the spending plan, an increase of \$12.5 million over last year but a \$1 million lower than was proposed in County Manager George Devanney's executive budget unveiled in January.

An additional 19 positions were added in the budget for increased public safety efforts in the county police and sheriff's departments, the prosecutor's office and the office of emergency management, totaling around \$500,000, according to Freeholder Daniel Sullivan, Chairman of the board's finance committee.

Freeholder Sullivan said fixed costs such as contractual obligations for the county's various collective bargaining units, insurance and Social Security costs make up a good portion of the budget.

The board passed a resolution, endorsing a state constitutional convention to address the property tax issue. "The property tax system is the most regressive tax we have," Freeholder Sullivan said.

Mr. Devanney added that, "Somebody's ability to pay taxes should not be based on the value of the home."

"There is no state that relies on property taxes the way New Jersey does," he said.

The amount of taxes to be raised in Westfield will rise to \$21,881,537, and increase of \$1.2 million over 2004. A home assessed at \$180,000 will be taxed \$2,117 for county services, an increase of \$119 over last year. Scotch Plains homeowners will pay \$12,384,213, an increase of \$1,030,839 over 2004. A resident with a home assessed at \$120,000 will pay \$1,527, an increase of \$127.

### Golf Date Set for June FOP Benefit

AREA — The Whitney Weldon 2005 Golf Invitational to benefit FOP Research will be held at the Trump National Golf Club in Bedminster on Monday, June 6.

Businesses and individuals are sought to become involved. By doing so, proceeds will go to the Stephen Roach-Whitney Weldon Fellowship at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School to help find the FOP gene.

The FOP gene will help scientists learn how to turn bone on and off. This discovery could help millions of people with bone ailments. But most of all, you will be helping Whitney and the 400 FOP patients around the world.

For more information, please contact Joe Huchko at (908) 429-8688.

The Fanwood county purposes tax will rise \$191,000 to \$3,399,402, with the owner of a home assessed at \$83,000 paying \$1,269, a hike of \$63. A total of \$5,843,972 will be collected in Mountainside, bringing the average property tax bill on a borough home assessed at \$100,000 to \$1,935, a jump of \$194.

The county purpose tax for Garwood will be \$1,980,972, an increase of \$142,114. An average homeowner will pay \$1,105 in county taxes, an \$81 increase over last year.

Tina Renna of Cranford accused the county of not doing enough curtail costs, especially salaries. She said Mr. Devanney is the third highest paid top county administrator in New Jersey. While Deputy County Manager Elizabeth Genievich is tied for the highest salary in her position.

She said the county is also "top heavy" with administrators earning \$70,000 or more. She said over 64 employees now earn in excess of \$100,000.

Bruce Paterson of Garwood said the county accused the board of "back pedaling" on projects such as the \$20 million expansion of the Union County Vocational-Technical School in Scotch Plains and the juvenile detention center in Linden.

"The numbers just don't add up when they come from the county," said Mr. Paterson.

The board approved a resolution to appropriate \$500,000 to the county's Open Space, Recreation, and Historical Preservation Trust Fund for the county's "Preserving Union County" grant program, bringing the total for the program to \$1 million. Towns will be able to apply for matching funds for the installation of new lighting and improvement of existing lighting for playing fields.

Another \$50,000 was approved for the "Greening Union County" matching grant program, bringing the total funds allocated to \$350,000. The program, also funded through the Open Space Trust Fund, pays for the planting of trees countywide.

The board increased the Kids Recreation Trust Grant Program by \$900,000 to \$1,892,600. The program funds scholarships, equipment, and field/recreation center improvements for children. The program was established in 2004.

### Port Authority Speeds Rail Development

AREA — The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PA) will invest an additional \$141 million to accelerate by two years the development of its rail program at Port Newark and Elizabeth-Port marine terminals. This work is scheduled for completion between 2007 and 2009. It will allow approximately one million containers a year to be handled by rail through these facilities.

The PA previously authorized approximately \$310 million for the port rail program. Rail volume is growing an average of 17 percent per year.



TALKING DEVELOPMENT...On April 28, the Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC) hosted the Union County Economic Development quarterly meeting. After the meeting, attendees toured the downtown. Speakers included councilman Andy Skibitsky and DWC representatives: Chairman David Martone, Director Sherry Cronin and John Morgan.

## Chamber Announces New Westfield Businesses

WESTFIELD — The Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce (WACC) welcomed three new businesses to Westfield on April 30. Mayor Gregory McDermott and councilman Andy Skibitsky joined WACC Chariman Richard Fromkin and Executive Director Allison O'Hara in the ceremonies.

Top Line Appliance Center is a family-owned business for 35 years and will open its newest location on Saturday, May 14, at 576 North Avenue, East, in Westfield. The high-end appliance showroom offers all major brands and specializes in Sub Zero, Wolf, Viking, Thermador, Bosch, Dacor and Kitchen Aid.

Commerce Bank celebrated the opening of its Westfield Branch, located at 560 North Avenue, East, by presenting a \$1,000 donation to Carving Neighbors of Westfield. Commerce Bank also donated funds to the local chapter of the American Red Cross.

The Blair Delmonico Company recently opened a store at 107 Quimby Street in Westfield. This boutique joins

others from the company in New York, Dallas, Boston, Chicago, Lincoln Park, Washington D.C and London. The store showcases resort wear, cashmere, Mod sunglasses, leather goods and Jet-Set accessories.

For more information, please call the WAAC at (908) 233-3021.

### Quote of the Week

"Consider: four years ago this week, Donald DiFrancesco withdrew from the GOP gubernatorial primary, and Bob Franks entered...as replacement candidate. That very night, the Schundler campaign went into the field with a survey, to see what we were up against. The results were, to borrow a phrase, 'disappointing' — we found ourselves down by a margin of 46 to 22 percent, with just nine weeks to go before the primary election. But we all know how that turned out." — Bill Pascoe, Communications Director of Schundler for Governor.

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## Palatucci Accepts New Post; Resigns From GOP Position

By PAUL J. PEYTON  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD — William Palatucci of Westfield has been named senior vice president for business development and general counsel with Roseland-based Community Education Centers, Inc. (CEC).

CEC provides treatment and educational services to correctional facility populations in eight states including Delaney Hall in Newark, the overflow facility for the Union County jail, said Mr. Palatucci. Delaney, which also serves Essex County, currently has 200 Union County inmates at the 750-bed facility.

"Delaney has a great track record," said Mr. Palatucci.

"My job will be to head up the national expansion effort" of CEC to 20 states within the next three to five years, he added.

"Ninety-eight percent of people who go into prison come out," said Mr. Palatucci, noting the importance of the "life" skills provided by CEC. These skills include helping ex-inmates find work by helping them write a resume, interview for jobs including how best to answer the question of their prison record.

Mr. Palatucci said reducing the crime rate especially repeat offenders, reduces the cost of incarceration on government.

He said he will maintain a legal practice with the firm of Dughi Hewit

& Palatucci in Roselle Park. He established the firm's government affairs department into one of the largest lobbying and consulting practices in New Jersey, according to CEC.

"I will continue to be affiliated with the firm but will no longer be a partner," Mr. Palatucci told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*.

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Mr. Palatucci and Mr. Florio were both serving as co-chairmen of the GOP committee.

Also as of May 1, Mr. Palatucci will no longer serve as Republican political analyst with the Comcast Cable TV network.

In addition, he has resigned as finance chairman with the New Jersey State Republican Committee effective May 1, a position he held since 2002. Mr. Palatucci said he will be replaced by Somerset County Republican Committee Chairman Dale Florio until the Tuesday, June 7 primary election has been held.

Mr. Palatucci holds a law degree from Seton Hall Law School in Newark. He lives in Westfield with his wife, Laura, and their three daughters.

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In the State Assembly Serving You  
**Eric Munoz — Jon Bramnick**  
Legislative District 21



District Office  
203 Elm St., 1st Floor  
Westfield, NJ 07090

57 Union Place, Suite 310  
Summit, NJ 07901

Phone:  
(908) 232-3673 (Westfield)  
(908) 918-0414 (Summit)

[AsmMunoz@njleg.org](mailto:AsmMunoz@njleg.org)  
[AsmBramnick@njleg.org](mailto:AsmBramnick@njleg.org)

Dr. Eric Munoz for Assembly, D. McGuire, Treasurer, 225 Ashland Road, Summit, NJ 07901  
Bramnick for Assembly, Dan Connolly, Treasurer, 279 Watchung Fork, Westfield, NJ 07090