

Salary, Wage Ordinance Adopted in Garwood

By ANNA GITHENS
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD—An ordinance to amend the salaries and wages of certain Garwood officials and employees was adopted at Tuesday evening's meeting. Previously, the motion was tabled due to a lack of votes needed at the last council meeting.

The following represents some of the changes made in certain official salary ranges: the accounts payable clerk position goes from a full time salary range of \$32,000 to \$38,000 to a part-time hourly wage of \$10 to \$15 an hour. The six council member positions go from a \$1,800 to \$2,400 range to a fixed \$2,000 salary; the position of mayor changes from a range of \$2,100 to \$2,800 to a fixed \$2,400 salary; the librarian's range, previously \$34,000 to \$39,000, is now \$36,000 to \$40,000; the municipal clerk's range increased \$2,000 to \$52,000 to \$58,000; the police chief's salary range increased \$3,000 to \$80,000 to \$86,000; the superintendent Department of Public Works (DPW) remains the same at a salary range of \$57,000 to \$62,000; and the tax assessor's salary rises \$1,000 to a range of \$9,000 to \$12,000.

During the workshop session of the meeting, the council discussed a recommendation made by the planning board for the possible re-development of the La Belle Cleaner site. Attorney Robert Renaud has been requested to put together a resolution regarding this matter.

Councilman Victor DeFilippo asked Mr. Renaud if this is a matter of eminent domain. Eminent domain is the right of a government to take or control property for public use.

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"We're taking the right of the owner and we are telling him that we are going to designate it as a re-development area, so they have to say in the matter and will have to get out," said Councilman DeFilippo with concern for the owner of La Belle Cleaners.

Mr. Renaud said that the borough has not used eminent domain in any re-development area. "They absolutely get notified and they will have to come to the planning board and attend a hearing," said Mr. Renaud.

Mayor Dennis McCarthy said that the council would refer back to the planning board for more in-depth information.

During the meeting's regular session, the council noted that a new Ford pick-up truck arrived and will be used by the (DPW) for snow removal. A backhoe will be delivered next week and will be used for leaf pick up. The truck and backhoe was purchased with grant money, Councilman Schadewald said.

The Garwood Fire Department will receive a free automatic external defibrillator from the State of New Jersey Division of Fire Safety, Council President Walter Tucker stated during his fire report. A new fire truck is expected to arrive at the end of October. Fire Prevention Week is October 9 to the 15.

The 2005 tree maintenance program is almost complete. The DPW tended to 30 trees this year, according to a report by Councilman Damian Mitchell. The DPW planted 16 Maple and Oak trees at various locations around town and an additional 10 trees will be planted in the fall. A total of 17 trees were planted on East Street, Spruce and Myrtle as part of the Department of Transportation (DOT) project, according to Councilman Mitchell's report.

The Garwood PTA urges everyone to participate in National Walk to School Day on Wednesday, October 5.

Decision Awaited on Mayor McWilliams Party Switch

By PAUL J. PEYTON, CAROL E. DAVIS AND MICHAEL POLLACK
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

PLAINFIELD—As *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* went to press yesterday, Union County State Superior Court Assignment Judge Walter Barisonek was to hear arguments from attorneys about whether Mayor Al McWilliams should be allowed to run as a Republican for re-election in November.



Mayor Al McWilliams

Judge Barisonek stopped printing the ballots for the city's mayoral contest last week until he rendered a decision in the case. Legal briefs were filed Monday by Union County Counsel Robert Barry, Attorney General Peter Harvey and the Union County Democratic Committee.

Mayor McWilliams was bounced from the county's regular Democrat organization line in May and replaced by Plainfield Board of Education President Sharon Robinson-Briggs. The mayor ran off the line but lost by 325 votes.

County GOP Chair Phil Morin said Union County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi declared Mayor McWilliams ineligible based on a state statute that makes a candidate running in a primary for a particular office ineligible for running under a different party banner in November for the same office.

Mr. Morin argues that Mayor McWilliams could have legally chosen to run for the Plainfield City Council, the State General Assembly or even the county freeholder board.

Mr. Morin said as of February of this year, there were 18,900 registered voters in Plainfield. Of that to-

tal, 11,000 were either unaffiliated voters or registered Republicans.

Mr. Morin said the current statute unfairly discriminates against voters who could not vote in the primary without changing party affiliation to Democrat.

Mayor McWilliams' name was filed with the county clerk's office on September 20. Ms. Rajoppi notified the GOP on September 21, a half hour before the deadline to switch primary elected candidate, that the mayor was not eligible to run per the state statute.

The GOP wants Mayor McWilliams to replace GOP primary winner Cheryl Arana, who pulled out of the race on September 13, citing personal reasons.

When reached for comment on Tuesday, Ms. Rajoppi said, "You can't lose in the primary and then run for the same position again in the general election."

In past years, judges have ruled in favor of the Democrats when they replaced U.S. Senator Robert Torricelli with Frank Lautenberg and (the late) State Senator Joseph Suliga with Nicholas Scutari after the deadlines to switch candidates had expired. In both cases, the courts ruled that it was more important to ensure that voters had a choice in November elections, rather than technicalities in how political parties were represented on election ballots. Ms. Rajoppi said the difference between the Mayor McWilliams switch and that of Mr. Torricelli and Mr. Scutari is that they "didn't run in the primary and then in the general election. They didn't change parties."

"If we are successful in the end, it is about increasing voter choice," he told *The Times*.

Mayoral Candidates

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working with Town Administrator Jim Gildea and surveying officers for their opinion on criteria for the replacement of former Police Chief Bernard Tracey who resigned earlier this month.

The mayor has been working with the DPW to improve efficiency and customer service through a White Paper report. Qualified consultants have been working closely with the department to improve communication and efficiency between the town and the DPW.

In the event that Senator Jon Corzine is elected governor in November, Mayor Skibitsky was asked if he felt partisanship would leak in at the local level, having an effect on the amount of state funding Westfield would receive.

"I don't think partisan politics belongs at the state level or the local level," said Mayor Skibitsky. "I have no problem picking up the phone and calling them (state officials) to make sure we get our fair share (of state aid)," stated Mayor Skibitsky.

On the topic of tear-downs and McMansions, Mayor Skibitsky said he and the town council are establishing control over what he feels is too much volume relative to neighboring homes by continuing to address height requirements.

Mayor Skibitsky also intends to improve the parking situation by working with the council's public safety parking and transportation committee to create 100 more spaces downtown.

"I have enjoyed being mayor of Westfield and I hope to keep my job for another four years," Mayor Skibitsky concluded.

To watch the interviews in their entirety, please visit www.goleader.com/video.

MS BOE

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Heights BOE and Mountainside is waiting for it to be signed and returned.

"It is my understanding that we are waiting to receive it back in Mountainside," Mr. Perrin said.

Board member Marybeth Schaumburg reported that the president of the Berkeley Heights BOE has been ill and that is the only reason the contract has not yet been signed. "They (Berkeley Heights) are as happy about it (contract) as we are," Mrs. Schaumburg concluded.

A motion to approve the establishment of a substitute nurse's daily rate of \$135 was met with contention from BOE member Pat Knodel.

"I think it is a shame that nurses who don't teach will be making more than (substitute) teachers," Mrs. Knodel said. Substitute teachers in earn \$80 per day within the district.

"We have to establish a competitive rate because you have a much bigger pool for substitute teachers than for substitute nurses," Mrs. Schaumburg stated.

Dr. O'Malley reported that currently the BOE uses Bayada, a temporary nursing placement service in the event that a substitute nurse is required. The daily rate for this service is presently \$55 per hour or \$300 per day.

Dr. O'Malley also reported that Mountainside falls in the middle of the pay scale with Chatham paying \$200, Berkeley Heights paying \$130 and Clark paying \$70 per day for substitute nurses. He also stated that, to date, \$2,000 was paid for a substitute nurse to accompany students on a seven field trips.

Mrs. Knodel suggested the district downsize to one nurse for both schools. "I will never make the recommendation to put kids at risk," Dr. O'Malley stated. "The community wants a nurse in each building," Mr. Perrin concurred.

The motion to approve the rate of \$135 per day was passed with Mrs. Knodel as the lone dissenting vote.



DRIVE-THROUGH BANK...The driver of this car reportedly lost control while pulling into a parking space and drove through the front window of the Commerce Bank on Raritan Road in Clark last Sunday afternoon. The driver, a white male in his upper-sixties, operating a Ford Taurus SEL, was taken to Overlook Hospital by the Clark Volunteer Rescue Squad after complaining of a neck injury. No bank employees were injured. Clark Fire Chief John Pingor arranged for a tow truck, and after several tries, the vehicle was extracted.

POLICE BLOTTER

Westfield

Wednesday, September 21, Brandon Pantano, 19, of Westfield was arrested on Mountain Avenue in Mountainside and charged with possession of less than 50 grams of suspected marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia following a stop for a motor vehicle infraction. He was released on his own recognizance with summonses.

Wednesday, September 21, Deidre Griffiths, 19, of Mount Tremper, N.Y. and Shawn Spanhake, Jr., 19, of Lexington, N.Y. were arrested at Boulevard and South Avenue. Each was charged with possession of less than 50 grams of suspected marijuana, possession of alcohol under the legal age. Both were released on their own recognizance.

Friday, September 23, a First Street resident reported the unlawful use of her Chase Mastercard, whereupon an unknown amount of purchases were charged to her account.

Saturday, September 24, a Sandy Hill Road resident reported the theft of a silver-and-blue boys' Trek mountain bicycle, which had been left locked at the north side Westfield train station.

Sunday, September 25, Margaret McCrea, 19, of Westfield was arrested in the 400 block of West North Avenue and charged with being intoxicated in public and possession of an alcoholic beverage under the legal age. McCrea, who also was wanted on an outstanding traffic warrant for \$114 from Stafford Township, was released on her own recognizance on the Westfield charges.

Police also arrested Kelan Doyle, 23, of Westfield at the same location on charges of being a disorderly person and obstructing the administration of law. Doyle is alleged to have shouted obscenities at another individual, after which he was twice asked to leave the area by police. He also is alleged to have interfered with the arrest of McCrea. Doyle was released with a summons.

Sunday, September 25, a Colonial Avenue resident reported the theft of a cellular telephone from his motor vehicle, which had been parked out-

side an Elm Street supermarket. The vehicle had been locked but the windows left open several inches.

Sunday, September 25, a Westfield Avenue resident reported the theft of a purple boys' Trek bicycle from his front lawn.

Sunday, September 25, Koo Bae, 31, of Westfield was arrested at East Broad Street and Gallows Hill Road and charged with driving while intoxicated. He was released to a responsible adult.

Fanwood

Wednesday, September 21, Mario Narvaez, 30, of Plainfield was arrested on Martine Avenue on numerous warrants following an investigation.

Wednesday, September 21, Donald Barnes, 45, of Plainfield was arrested at the intersection of South Avenue and Fourth Street on numerous warrants following a motor vehicle stop.

Thursday, September 22, Silvana Orozco, 28, of Plainfield was arrested on numerous warrants following a motor vehicle stop.

Friday, September 23, Miguel Guzman, 28, of Elizabeth was arrested for allegedly volunteering false information following a motor vehicle stop.

Mountainside

Saturday, September 24, a 17-year-old male was arrested and charged with driving while intoxicated after calling police headquarters to report his vehicle was disabled.

Saturday, September 24, Derrick Tillery, 29, of East Orange was arrested for allegedly driving with a suspended license. He was stopped for having fictitious plates and also found to be driving a unregistered, uninsured motor vehicle.

Saturday, September 24, Nelson Molina, 21, of Middlesex was found slumped over the wheel of his motor vehicle while parked on Route 22. The subject was later arrested and charged with driving while intoxicated.

Scotch Plains

A Scotch Plains police representative said there was nothing to report this week.

WF Council Approves Permit Fees, Parking Restrictions

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meters are equipped with a button that provides 10 free parking minutes. The mayor said that this was good "for picking up a pizza or a prescription. Just short-term instances."

First Ward Councilman Sal Caruana thanked the residents and council for

helping with the town's partnership with the Red Cross. He said that the "town-wide effort is going extremely well." He said the Festival initiative coordinated with the local chapter raised over \$68,000. Councilman Ciarrocca also said that there are five open case files because the Red Cross is assisting five victims.

The board listened to a presentation about the restructuring of the Public Works Department. Under the auspices of the White Paper reports, informed citizens volunteered their time and arrived at recommendations to make the DPW more cost effective and efficient.

The DPW, which fields 4,500 calls a year and employs 41 staffers, will undergo a facelift in certain areas. Primarily, the recommendations establish an administrative assistant for the area of construction and maintenance.

In addition, the plan calls for the redesign of the front entry and to designate a receptionist solely for the division. Other suggestions included customer service training programs for all employees, amending the telephone system to direct to the administrative assistant and making e-mail available to contact the DPW.

Resident John Mancini asked, "if more positions are hired by the town, will they be paid positions or volunteer?"

Town Administrator Jim Gildea said that the administrative assistant is a new position, but it will be created by reorganization.

"We will reorganize the staff at no budget impact," Mr. Gildea said. Town Engineer and Director of Public Works Ken Marsh said, "At first, I was a bit skeptical. There are a lot of rocks thrown at us from people who don't know what it's all about. Essentially, we're a good department. We could use improvement, but we don't have the time to analyze our operations."

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