



HONORING OUR VETERANS...Wreaths are placed at the Korean War Memorial at the annual Westfield Memorial Day Parade; MARCH ON...Washington Elementary School Cub Scouts participate in the day's festivities; SINGING A MEDLEY...Kerry Stubbs performs a medley of songs, including "God Bless America" just before the parade begins; A FIREMAN'S SALUTE...Prior to the parade, the Westfield Fire Department honors their fallen comrades in front of the fire station.

Town Legal Expenses

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The *Leader* that in 2004, the municipal attorney logged 660 hours of extraordinary billable hours. In 2005, the number jumped more than one-and-a-half times to 1100 hours.

In an analysis of where the attorney spent his time, the councilman noted three key areas where the number of billable hours jumped. Those areas were tax appeals, New Street and the Temple Emanu-El litigation. Hours billed for tax appeals increased from 74 hours in 2004 to 180 in 2005. Hours dedicated for Temple Emanu-El work rose from 60 to 67 and New Street litigation jumped from 20 to 275 hours. Councilman Bigosinski said his proposal of lowering the hourly rates of attorneys under Mr. Cockren and Mr. Danser would "save the Westfield taxpayers money regardless if we have a heavy or light litigation year. We'll still be paying less." He said that Union County pays at a rate of \$125 an hour for a partner or an associate and offers no pension. According to Councilman Bigosinski, the county, despite the lower rate and lack of benefits, "received 23 responses from firms of all sizes."

"We put road paving and fuel for town cars out to bid," he said. "These are contracts of far less value put out to bid. What you're seeing is the Westfield taxpayer taking a backseat to preserving the status quo."

Councilman Echausse said his committee will review the structure and "if it makes sense, we will consider paying an associate a lower rate." He said his committee will do a "full-blown survey" and "get an update on what each town pays their attorney - do they pay for healthcare? What is their hourly rate?"

When reached by phone for comment, Councilman Bigosinski asked why the town did not need a "full-blown" survey when deciding to not replace a human resource or parking director. "The idea that this decision requires a 'full-blown survey' is ludicrous," he said.

He said that if his proposal were looked at, he would like to see the assistant rate structure changed, the fixed amount lowered and a pension not provided.

Explaining how salary structure exists in the town, Mr. Gildea said that no one besides salaried employees earns a pension. Mr. Gildea said that Mr. Danser is not considered a salaried employee, but a retained employee, earning no pension or benefits.

All other appointed officials (judge, prosecutor, planning board attorney, town attorney etc.) earn a pension but not medical benefits.

Councilman Bigosinski said that making all appointed officials retained would result in \$9,100 in immediate savings.

Councilman Echausse said in terms of comparing pay rates, it's harder to analyze quality. "How do you define quality legal service?" he asked. "We're

lucky to have Bob Cockren. He has so much background in all facets."

"There's a qualitative factor that plays into the end result that's just as important (as looking at quantitative analysis)," he said. "When it comes to professional services, quality weighs heavily into the decision. We get a lot of productivity out of our legal department."

Councilman Bigosinski said he agrees that Mr. Cockren is a "competent, intelligent individual who knows the town well. However, complete strangers are providing 70 percent of extraordinary duties. I guarantee you they couldn't find Westfield on a map. If (all extraordinary duties) were provided exclusively by him (Mr. Cockren), I wouldn't say a word."

Councilman Sal Caruana, a member of the finance policy committee, said, "Mr. Bigosinski's comments are completely unfair," citing that Councilman Bigosinski did not vote to appoint Mr. Cockren as town attorney in January. "When you have an attorney, you have all the resources at his (disposal). In Mr. Cockren's example, he's part of a large nationally known law firm and we expect to benefit from their resources."

Councilman Caruana's main point of contention was the timing of Councilman Bigosinski's proposal, which occurred at the end of the budget cycle. "I wish he was as passionate about the urgency of this issue at the introduction of the budget cycle when he voted against Mr. Cockren for attorney."

"This is a good idea," he said. "I hope we run with it. Frankly, though, I'm disappointed that he didn't bring this up three months ago. That would be a fairer airing of the issue. He did this without respect for due diligence. This is an ambush and he just threw a lamdine."

Mr. Cockren and Mr. Danser did not respond to repeated phone calls.

Westfield Parking Forum

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properly publicize important information regarding parking and that if citizens had this information, they could diagnose the problem more thoroughly.

Everybody at the forum echoed this sentiment; there was a consensus that the town of Westfield must keep its residents and retailers apprised of where they can park and when they must pay for parking.

Matt Palmer of State Farm Insurance said, "Most people don't know that the first ten minutes at a meter are free."

The other issues the forum dealt with were employee parking and the "rampant" ticketing of vehicles by the parking enforcement officers of the Westfield Police Department.

A majority of the people at the forum said that they believe employees of stores in Westfield must not park in the same place as shoppers

Memorial Day Parade

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rent soldiers.

"We have asked a lot of the soldiers and their families," he said. "I urge all of you to use your gifts to assist current and former soldiers. Prayers are important, but actions are more important."

Once Mayor Skibitsky finished his speech, Mr. Hogaboom called upon Mr. Cuzo to begin the parade.

The Westfield Police Department led the parade with a caravan of cars, trucks and motorcycles. Next came the Westfield Town Bell, which has been restored and maintained by the Westfield Historical Society. The bell has survived since 1869 and is a part of the Memorial Day Parade every year.

The honorary car carrying the

Grand Marshal came after the town bell, as well as Mayor Skibitsky, the Westfield Fire Department and the Westfield Rescue Squad, respectively.

"You become a part of the ceremony as the Grand Marshal," Mr. Britt said. "It is very humbling. This is at the top of the ladder of things I will forever remember."

Parade participants marched from the World War I Veterans Memorial Monument at the corner of East Broad Street and North Avenue to Fairview Cemetery, a length of approximately two miles. At Fairview Cemetery, the Westfield Veterans of Foreign Wars hosted a ceremony.

Officer Claims Innocence On Sleeping Charge

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boring district. Believing the call was not in his district, Officer Kasko said he returned to the cemetery. He placed the mileage at three-tenths of a mile.

About nine minutes after returning to the cemetery Officer Kasko said he heard a door slam and realized it was a supervisor's vehicle.

"I was sitting back with my head up," Officer Kasko said. He rolled down the driver's-side window waiting for Sergeant Earl to arrive. The sergeant knocked on the passenger side window.

In terms of radio transmissions, Officer Bob Reilly, a witness for Officer Kasko, said it is not uncommon for the first part of a radio message to be cut

off.

Lieutenant Thomas Tyrrell, also called to testify for Officer Kasko, said he "periodically" receives calls from officers saying they did not hear the beginning of a call. He said, however, that he did not receive any problem radio calls on January 29.

Mr. Neals said both charges should be dropped, noting that testimony showed Officer Kasko started to respond to a call. He also said that, "Sergeant Earl cannot be 100 percent sure that Officer Kasko was sleeping."

"I think it is an honest misunderstanding that was sleeping," said Mr. Neals.

Captain David Wayman, who prosecuted the case for the police department, said he didn't believe there was "any basis" to drop the charges. He said testimony showed there were no reports of radio problems on January 29 and that Sergeant Earl was sure of what he had seen. He said it didn't matter whether the officer was sleeping for nine minutes or an hour.

"His (Sergeant Earl's) testimony was sincere and credible," Captain Wayman said.

Throughout the hearing he said the case was about the "credibility" of Officer Kasko. He has asked for an audiotape of an interview he conducted with Officer Kasko to be reviewed by Chief John Parizeau, who served as hearing officer during the proceeding, as part of the evidence against the officer.

Chief Parizeau said he hopes to make a decision on the case within a week.

Officer Kasko was the subject of disciplinary hearing in March on charges that he was "arrogant and disrespectful" towards Town Administrator Jim Gildea and former Police Chief Bernard Tracy. He faces a four-day suspension if found guilty of those charges.

SP Man Faces Charges

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visiting the country.

"I know there is no way he could be involved in what they are charging him with," he said.

Ms. Salerno learned about her brother's arrest from his church. She then called the U.S. embassy and State Department to fill them in on Michael Chemidlin's arrest. Andrew Chemidlin said his father had signed a waiver not to release information because "he did not want anyone to know of the (initial) arrest."

State Department spokeswoman Janelle Hironimus told *The Leader/Times* that the waiver does not enable the department to release information to the press regarding the case.

She said the U.S. consulate is "providing all possible assistance" to Mr. Chemidlin.

Andrew Chemidlin said the three Sierra Leoneans arrested with his father, an evangelical Christian, were likely from his church and had picked his father up when he arrived in West Africa. News

reports state that the elder Chemidlin met the men while serving with the National Guard in Iraq last year. Two of three nationals were charged along with Michael Chemidlin for espionage.

Andrew said he, his wife and his brothers, Nathan and Mark, had to come up with \$6,000 over a weekend to pay legal expenses for his father's second arrest. Michael Chemidlin was released on bail May 24.

Soon after learning of the release, his family heard reports that Michael Chemidlin was suffering from malaria.

Andrew Chemidlin said there were three options the court could take: they could decide there wasn't enough evidence to support the claims and he could be released, he could be tried in a lower court or he could face a trial in Sierra Leone's major court.

He said a major court trial would be "a worse case scenario."

"I don't know how they (could have sufficient evidence for a trial) because he has nothing to do with this," Andrew Chemidlin said. "I believe he was at the wrong place at the wrong time."

Michael Chemidlin served last year in Iraq with the Westfield-based 250th Signal Battalion of the National Guard, with which he has served for 20 years. He was awarded the Army Achievement Medal in 2002.

He grew up in Fanwood and has resided in Scotch Plains for 15 years. A call to Rep. Mike Ferguson's office, whose seventh district includes Scotch Plains, was not returned.

POLICE BLOTTER

Westfield

Monday, May 22, Condi Thiam, 22, of Westfield and Steven Braco, 21, of Warren were arrested outside a North Scotch Plains Avenue address on multiple charges.

Each man was charged with manufacturing, distributing or dispensing of a controlled dangerous substance (CDS) identified as lysergic acid; possession of lysergic acid; manufacturing, distributing or dispensing of marijuana; possession of less than 50 grams of suspected marijuana; dispensing, distributing or possessing a CDS (two counts) within 500 feet of a public park and possession of drug paraphernalia. Both were being held in lieu of bail.

Tuesday, May 23, Robert Smith, 19, of Cranford was arrested at a business in the 100 block of North Avenue, West, and charged with receiving stolen property. Police identified the stolen property as two DVDs worth \$46. Smith was later released with a summons.

Thursday, May 25, Melissa O'Brien, 20, of South Amboy was arrested at North and Central Avenues and charged with driving while intoxicated. She was later released to a responsible individual.

Friday, May 26, Miguel Aponte, 31, of Scotch Plains was arrested during a motor vehicle stop at South Avenue and West Broad Street on an outstanding \$225 criminal warrant issued by the Perth Amboy Municipal Court. He was released after posting bail.

Friday, May 26, Bogumila Brzezinska of Union was arrested and charged with shoplifting a pair of sunglasses worth \$32 from a North Avenue store. She was transported to Westfield police headquarters and later released with a summons.

Friday, May 26, Kimberly J. Basile, 42, of Westfield was arrested at Westfield police headquarters on numerous outstanding traffic warrants issued by the Westfield Municipal Court, with bail totaling \$1,600. She was released after posting bail.

Saturday, May 27, three men were arrested on multiple charges pursuant to a motor vehicle stop at South Avenue and Downer Street. Police confirmed there also were two children in the vehicle at the time.

Ahman Elliot, 26, of North Plainfield, Lavan Thompson, 33, of Newark and Farod Holman, 26, of Richmond, Va. were each charged with unlawful possession of a weapon (a handgun); possession of hollow point bullets; possession of a defaced firearm; two counts each of endangering the welfare of a child; possession of CDS/under 50 grams of suspected marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia, according to police.

Police said Holman additionally was charged with possession of CDS/ecstasy (third degree), while Elliot and Thompson were also charged with certain persons not authorized to have weapons. Elliot received numerous motor vehicle citations as well, including failure to use child restraints for the children.

Police said it was later learned that a motor vehicle warrant and a criminal warrant had been issued for Thompson by Belleville, with bail totaling \$1,899, and a motor vehicle warrant had been issued for him from Warren, for \$865. Holman also had an outstanding traffic warrant issued for him by the South Plainfield Municipal Court, with bail set at \$177. All three suspects were being held at the Union County

Residents to Attend Meeting at Hillcrest

WESTFIELD - Union County Education Services Commission Superintendent of Schools Ed Hartnett, the principal of Hillcrest Academy, Westfield School Superintendent Dr. William Foley and town council members will meet with concerned citizens on Monday, June 5 at the academy.

The meeting will be held at the academy (the former Lincoln School), located at 728 Westfield Avenue, at 7:30 p.m. The meeting is an opportunity for residents to discuss with officials their concerns over the recent arrests of four Hillcrest students as well as other related instances in the surrounding neighborhoods. All residents are welcome to attend.

See Memorial Day Photos on the Web

For additional photo coverage of local Memorial Day festivities, visit www.goleader.com/photos.

jail on \$25,000 bail each.

Scotch Plains

Thursday, May 25, an East Second Street resident reported that someone entered her unlocked apartment and removed two bottles of liquor.

Thursday, May 25, a resident of Plainfield Avenue reported that while visiting a friend she was hit by someone she did not know who was also at the house. The victim did not require medical attention, police said.

Saturday, May 27, Sean Phillips, 30, of Edison was arrested following a motor vehicle stop and charged with driving while intoxicated (DWI). Phillips was arrested and transported to headquarters where he was processed and released.

Sunday, May 28, a resident of Front Street reported that someone removed \$300 from her purse, which was left unattended on her front porch.

Monday, May 29, a resident of Farley Avenue reported he had an argument with a friend when he was struck in the face. The victim did not require medical attention. Police are investigating the incident.

Fanwood

Tuesday, May 23, Mariusz P. Cebula, 26, of Clifton was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on South Avenue for an outstanding warrant out of Weehawken.

Tuesday, May 23, Ronald Smith, 42, of Somerset was arrested in the 100 block of South Avenue following a field investigation for an outstanding Fanwood warrant.

Tuesday, May 23, Robert M. Shannon, 51, of Rego Park, N.Y. was arrested on numerous outstanding warrants out of Upper Saddle River and Fairlawn following a motor vehicle stop.

Wednesday, May 24, Victor M. Diaz, 40, of Plainfield was arrested on an active warrant out of Union Township following a motor vehicle stop on South Avenue.

Thursday, May 25, Emanuel R. Sendao, 22, of Scotch Plains was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on LaGrande Avenue for an outstanding Garwood warrant.

Saturday, May 27, Josh Batholor, 60, of Plainfield was arrested and charged with DWI following a motor vehicle stop on South Avenue.

Mountainside

Tuesday, May 23, Larry J. Jones, 24, of Newark was arrested at the Port Authority Police Department Path Command Center on an outstanding Mountainside warrant in the amount of \$1,216.

Thursday, May 25, a Wyoming Drive resident reported he received a bill from a wireless company for service he did not authorize. The incident was turned over to the detective bureau for further investigation.

Thursday, May 25, a resident of Tree Lane reported being the victim of burglary. He reported that at some time overnight someone entered his daughter's unlocked vehicle, which was parked in the driveway and removed her cell phone.

Thursday, May 25, police responded to a 911 call of a vehicle theft in progress. According to police, the owner of the vehicle reported that he was parking a company vehicle in the lot behind his Route 22 business where his vehicle was also parked.

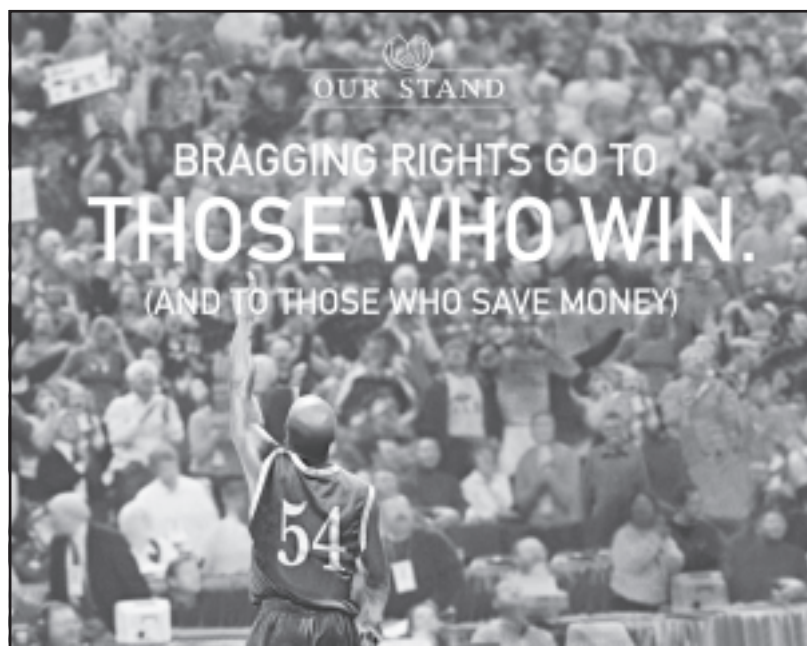
The witness told police that he noticed an unauthorized vehicle in the lot fleeing the scene. The victim then noticed that his driver's side door lock, as well as the ignition of his vehicle had been tampered with. The victim stated that a set of eight, JBL speakers model number Contol 26 CT were missing. The value of the speakers is \$1,200, police said.

Thursday, May 25, a Woodvalley Road resident reported that sometime overnight, someone entered his unlocked vehicle, which was parked in his driveway and stole his radio, wallet and buck knife.

Sunday, May 28, Gilbert A. Gutierrez-Giral, 24, of North Plainfield was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on Route 22 and charged with driving with a suspended license, and operating vehicle without a license. He was also charged with outstanding warrants in the amount of \$1,500.

Erratum

A front-page story in last week's *Westfield Leader* incorrectly spelled the name of a resident who spoke at the planning board meeting. The person was Richard Trabert and not Draper as reported.



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LASTING TRIBUTE...Members of the Mountainside Veterans of Foreign Wars commemorate fallen heroes outside at a veterans memorial on Memorial Day.