



MEETING WITH AN ASSEMBLYMAN... State Assemblyman Jon Bramnick (LD-21, Westfield), center, receives a Westfield Leader polo shirt during an interview with The Leader on Friday afternoon. With him above are Leader interns Beth Budnick and Martin Sweeney. See the interview at goleader.com/video.

Bramnick Wants Spending Audits, Less Leg. Benefits

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD – Assemblyman Jon Bramnick (LD-21, Westfield) discussed a number of issues, including serious crimes committed by illegal aliens, the high cost of living in New Jersey, to reducing benefits of legislators and unannounced audits on government from the state down to local towns, during an interview at The Westfield Leader office last Friday.

On a recent lawsuit filed by state Republicans seeking the release of a report on the potential to privatize New Jersey's toll roads, Mr. Bramnick said, "If you were simply doing policy discussions with or among your cabinet, and you were not spending hundreds of thousands of dollars then I could understand why the Governor would not divulge the discussions that were happening within his administration until he had a plan.

"But once you start to spend almost a million dollars of taxpayers' money, you've gone past planning, and now you've gone...towards the policy." Media reports say that \$800,000 had been paid to the consultant to generate the report.

He said the GOP asked the administration to provide details "of what you are spending taxpayer money on" but that Governor Jon Corzine "has refused to deliver the report."

"I think it's a mistake [by Mr. Corzine] – not only a real mistake but a political mistake," he said.

On another issue, the assemblyman said he would officially introduce legislation when the Legislature reconvenes in November to require county prosecutors to forward cases of illegal immigrants when such individuals are charged with violent crimes.

"I was under the impression that would have already been done. And, to me, it is common sense. If someone committed a violent crime who is here illegally, there are two strikes against the person. One that they violated the law, but more importantly, the fact they are now a potential danger to society," Mr. Bramnick said.

He said state Attorney General Anne Milgram has issued a directive to law enforcement officers that they question all people stopped for motor vehicle violations or other crimes as to whether they are in the country legally. The attorney general's directive includes first-, second- and third-degree crimes and drunk driving. Mr. Bramnick said the directive "goes far beyond my proposal."

"My concern is that if you ask the county prosecutors to notify the feds or ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) of all of these potential illegal aliens then you may be giving the name of a person with a third-degree drug offense at the same time you're giving a notification of someone who is charged with aggravated assault and, to me, I think there should be some priority there," Mr. Bramnick said.

He said the state's policy should keep in mind that the federal government is "undermanned," and thus, New Jersey should make sure "that we do get at least a response."

On the high cost of living in New Jersey, which has led to thousands of residents leaving the state in the last few years, Mr. Bramnick said the state needs to conduct "unannounced performance audits to find out whether there is a tremendous amount of waste."

Mr. Bramnick said audits ordered by the Governor "have shown a tremendous amount of waste" in state spending. The legislator said the unannounced audits should be done at the local, county and state level, as well as by government agencies.

As a part-time legislator, Mr.

Bramnick said he is paid \$49,000 and receives a pension that equates to \$18,000 after 12 years in the Legislature.

"I put in a bill saying why would part-time people, such as legislators, get a pension to begin with?" he said. "Government has become a monster. It is too big. There is no one really watching the pot," he said, noting that he favors a 401K system instead. He also said he finds it "just amazing" that legislators additionally are eligible for health insurance. He said he started accepting that benefit after health benefits in the private sector (he has a law practice in Scotch Plains) cost him upwards of \$20,000 annually. "I feel somewhat guilty about that."

Of the high cost of living, Mr. Bramnick said: "We have a crisis and, unfortunately, unless we drastically cut spending and drastically look at the monster of government, I have great concerns about New Jersey and its future because you cannot tax the people out of this state. It doesn't work."

In addition, he said the state must treat businesses the same as everyone else to keep them in the state. "If they leave, the crisis spirals down," Mr. Bramnick said. "[Governor Corzine] needs to address this issue as a crisis."

Mr. Bramnick said he favors an opening of the health insurance market to more companies to increase competition instead of allowing trade associations to pool together to purchase insurance at lower premiums. He also wants health-insurance companies to "open all of their books so that we as the public can see where all of the money is going to."

On the issue of property taxes, the assemblyman said not enough proposals were fully thought out, such as that of a state comptroller whom the Governor would appoint. He said the individual should have the power to conduct unannounced audits. Mr. Bramnick favors an elected comptroller who would not be elected the same year as the Governor.

Mr. Bramnick said he is working on multiple pieces of legislation to allow for unannounced audits of government books, to require motorists to stop for pedestrians in the crosswalk and to create endowments so persons could give donations to their former public high schools. He is also working on legislation to create a position for a person who would "watch tax dollars down in Trenton and to report directly to the public when that individual sees the use of tax dollars in any legislation."

Looking ahead to the fall election, Mr. Bramnick said he sees the GOP having a better chance in the Senate, where Democrats have a 22-to-18 majority, than in the Assembly, where the Democrats have a 50-to-30 advantage. Mr. Bramnick said it would be difficult for the GOP to capture both houses until 2011, when districts will change as a result of the 2010 census.

"Unfortunately in our system today, if you don't have the money to get your message out it is very difficult to get your message out," he said. "And that's why we are moving towards clean elections and public financing. Why should one side have a greater access to the public than the other side?"

On the potential run for the U.S. Senate seat now held by Frank Lautenberg, reported by njpolitics.com, the legislator said, "I haven't ruled anything out...Obviously I am concentrating on running for re-election to the assembly."

"If I could serve more people and do more for society, I would do it," he said, although he admitted making such a run would be a "daunting task."

Watch the full interview at goleader.com/video.

Dolan Becomes Superintendent

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board meetings aren't well attended but that night two intermediate school-teachers were being honored so there were a lot in attendance [at the meeting]. When the board said they wanted to make a special announcement and announced my name for superintendent, all the teachers stood and applauded. It was a great feeling to have such a response," she said.

Many of her goals are the same as Mr. Foley's, she said. "The primary goal is academics. We've been successful in the past and want our students to do well, a perfect example sitting right in front of me," Ms. Dolan said. "But the world is changing so we need to work with that...we have to make sure [we] prepare students for the global village. Technology is

also something we have to work on" in this area she said. She also added that the curriculum is something that always has to be revised and revisited.

Ms. Dolan said one of her biggest challenges, "in a good way," is the September 2008 opening of the early childhood center in the former Lincoln School. "This is a great opportunity but we've never done anything like this before, so there's a lot of work that needs to be done."

Mr. Foley, who will officially retire on August 31, has eased Ms. Dolan into the position. "The transition couldn't be any smoother. [Mr. Foley] and I have been working together for years so we already have a strong work relationship," she said. "He's been there to talk to me about things I'm not familiar with; there's definitely been a lot of mentoring going on."

"I'm definitely excited [about the job], and just as students and teachers who may be starting this year in the district may be nervous, so am I. I know I am going to meet new challenges but I am familiar with the needs of the town and district," she said.

On September 4, Ms. Dolan will speak with all the teachers in the district at Edison Intermediate School. Prior to the September 11 board-of-education meeting, there will be a meet-and-greet with Ms. Dolan open to the entire community.

When asked if becoming superintendent was something she ever envisioned for herself, she said, "Certainly not starting out anyway. My focus then was being a good teacher but as my work in education continued, the desire evolved from that."



Caroline Koellhofer for The Westfield Leader
SCHOOL'S OUT... Westfield Board of Education President Ginny Leiz presents retiring Superintendent of Schools William Foley with a special resolution on Tuesday night, thanking him for 11 years of service.

NJ Division Captures Gator

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The chief said, "The last couple of days, all the kids in town found out about the alligator. So, they came to the pond and had pieces of string with chicken bones. We then called the Division of Fish and Wildlife because it was becoming a nuisance."

He said, "Now the alligator goes to a specialist place to assess its health. Then, my understanding is that it is transferred south to an alligator farm."

Ms. Yuhas, in response to the chief's comments, said, "That certainly could be an option we would explore. We do have custody of it and are looking to find it a home out of state."

Bob Rimkus, who lives at the end of Woodmere Drive, spoke to The Westfield Leader about the Brightwood Homeowners Association, which privately owns the pond.

The association, established on April 13, 1949, has a number of committees. Now retired, Mr. Rimkus serves as the chairperson of the pond committee. A resident since 1973, he told the newspaper, "Neighbors said there's an alligator in the pond. I thought it was a branch from a tree floating."

Before the alligator's capture, he had said, "If it does go on land, I won't hesitate to grab it and call the

ASPCA."

Historically, this is not the first alligator sighting in Westfield. According to the Nonindigenous Aquatic Species Fact Sheet, "In Union County, an 'A. mississippiensis (Mississippi alligator) was collected from Lake Mindowaskin, Westfield, in 1942 (Mikkelson and Mikkelson, 2001)."

Mountainside Rotary Inducts Aloupis

MOUNTAINSIDE – The Mountainside Rotary Club inducted Constance Aloupis as its newest member at a regular Monday meeting on August 20 held at Famous Dave's Restaurant on Route 22 in Mountainside.

Ms. Aloupis is a retired schoolteacher who looks forward to working on club projects involving local schools.

The club awards two scholarships each year to graduating students from Governor Livingston High School, and also presents two achievement awards to graduating students from Mountainside's Deerfield School.

The Mountainside Rotary Club meets each Monday for lunch at 12:15 p.m. at Famous Dave's Restaurant, and regularly has programs by guest speakers.



ROTARY INDUCTEE...Mountainside Rotary Club Inducting Officer Judy Burt, left, and Glenn Mortimer, club president, induct retired schoolteacher Constance Aloupis, center, at Famous Dave's Restaurant in Mountainside.

DWC Discusses Events

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"The time to start this is in September, so they can plan to have it in their budgets every year," said Jim Gildea, town administrator.

For more on the 5K race, see story on page 2.

Other events this summer have also been successful, according to board members. There are two more Tuesday jazz nights left this summer. "This has been a highly successful event," Ms. Cronin said.

There are also two more movie nights planned. Harry Potter and the Order of The Phoenix will play on Saturday, September 15, in the South Avenue lot; Night at the Museum will play at the Elm Street field on Friday, September 21.

The board is in the process of planning an auto show for the fall of next year. It will seek sponsors to help fund the event.

The board finished filming a 30-second commercial for Downtown Westfield that will be featured on HDTV for Bravo. The DWC will present a TV-36 special on the filming of the commercial.

Local stores, such as Lord & Taylor, supplied apparel for the commercial. "This is a different push for retail in downtown Westfield," Ms. Cronin said.

The DWC will next meet on Monday, September 17 at 7:30 p.m..



A HOT ACT...Magician Ben Lipman performs a fire stunt for children and adults during last Thursday's Scotch Plains Village Green concert series at Augustine Park.

POLICE BLOTTER

Westfield

Monday, August 20, Ronald K. Counts, 40, of Westfield was arrested at Plainfield police headquarters on two outstanding criminal warrants, one from Westfield with \$411 bail and the other from Garwood with \$309 bail. He was held in lieu of bail and transported to the Union County jail pending a court appearance.

Tuesday, August 21, police responded to a burglar alarm at a residence on the 1100 block of Lawrence Avenue, where they discovered evidence of forced entry and signs of a theft. A wooden jewelry cabinet and various pieces of jewelry were taken from the residence. The value of the missing items was unknown.

Wednesday, August 22, Lisa R. Moore, 44, of Westfield was arrested on the 700 block of Central Avenue pursuant to a Piscataway traffic warrant during an investigation following a motor vehicle stop. She was transported to Westfield police headquarters and released after posting \$99 bail.

Thursday, August 23, Mark Boyle, 20, of Westfield was arrested on the 500 block of Sherwood Parkway on an outstanding Westfield traffic warrant with \$750 bail. He was committed on default of bail to the Union County jail.

Thursday, August 23, property damage was reported at the state Motor Vehicle Inspection Center on the 400 block of East North Avenue. The damage consisted of a cracked Plexiglass window on an employee booth in the Windsor Avenue parking lot.

Thursday, August 23, a Cranford resident reported the theft of her silver Schwinn Prelude bicycle with blue and black trim from a bicycle rack on the 200 block of Clark Street. Also missing were the lock and chain used to secure the bicycle to the rack.

Friday, August 24, Randy Coleman, 49, of East Orange was arrested at East Orange police headquarters pursuant to a contempt of court warrant that was issued by the Westfield Municipal Court. He was transported to Westfield police headquarters and released after posting \$350 bail.

Saturday, August 25, Christopher Cho, 30, of East Brunswick was arrested at Central and Sycamore Avenues and charged with driving while intoxicated (DWI). He was released on his own recognizance to a responsible individual.

Sunday, August 26, Brian Mills, 47, of Plainfield was arrested at Westfield police headquarters on an outstanding Westfield traffic warrant. He was released after posting \$99 bail.

Sunday, August 26, Jonathan E. Best, 23, of Roselle was arrested on an outstanding Elizabeth traffic warrant with \$580 bail following a motor vehicle stop at South and Windsor Avenues. He was released on his own recognizance per the Elizabeth Police Department.

Sunday, August 26, Colleen Shea, 31, of Middlesex was arrested and charged with DWI following a motor vehicle stop at South Avenue and Drake Place. She was released on her own recognizance to a responsible individual.

Mountainside
Sunday, August 21, Elaine C. Warner, 49, of North Plainfield was stopped for having an expired registration and was later arrested for an outstanding Warren township warrant in the amount of \$89.

Wednesday, August 22, the owner of home on Wyoming Drive said a .38 caliber handgun was missing from his home following a fire that partially destroyed the home.

Thursday, August 23, someone tipped over soccer goal posts on School Drive, removed ground sleeves then tossed the sleeves into a stream, police said.

Thursday, August 23, Police are investigating an incident in which a white male in his 20s was seen watching a child riding on a bike on Corrinne Terrace. The victim took down a license plate number and reported the incident to her mother. The suspect was described as wearing a black tee shirt and a black or blue baseball hat.

Saturday, August 24, Carlo Tsai, 35,

of Hoboken was arrested after a motor vehicle stop for an outstanding warrant under the alias name of "Carlos Rodriguez," whose Social Security number matched that of the suspect's.

Saturday, August 24, Robert A. King, 40, of Newark was arrested at the Essex County jail for an outstanding Mountainside warrant. According to police, the suspect is being held without bail until his court appearance.

Saturday, August 24, Iraidia L. Baeza, 23, of Elizabeth was arrested for driving with a suspended license and for outstanding warrants out of Garwood for \$120 and Roselle Park for \$165 after being stopped for a loud muffler.

Friday, August 24, someone removed a nine-foot weeping cherry tree from the front yard of a vacant house on Robin Hood Road.

Friday, August 24, a bicycle was reported stolen from Old Tote Road. The bicycle was described as silver colored, Haro Back Trail X2.

Saturday, August 25, A Pembroke Road resident reported fraudulent charges in the amount of \$1,763 were made to her credit card through a Radio Shack in Kannapolis, N.C. The credit card's fraud services department is investigating the incident.

Monday, August 26, Irene Dasilva, 40, of Mountainside was arrested at her residence for outstanding warrants totaling \$2,750.

Scotch Plains

Monday, August 20, a resident of Westfield Road reported that she was verbally abused by her neighbor over the last several weeks at all hours of the day and night.

Thursday, August 23, a resident reported that while his car was parked in a township park, someone removed cash from the inside of his vehicle.

Friday, August 24, Dwight Simms, 22, of Scotch Plains was arrested following a motor vehicle stop for a violation and charged with an outstanding warrant.

Saturday, August 24, a resident of Plainfield Avenue reported that someone cut the phone line leading to her house.

Saturday, August 24, a custodian at a township school reported that someone spray painted graffiti on several walls.

Sunday, August 25, a resident of Raritan Road reported that while his vehicle was parked in the driveway, someone broke a window with a rock.

Monday, August 26, a manager of a Route 22 store reported that someone removed \$15 worth of merchandise from the store without paying for it.

Fanwood

Tuesday, August 21, Michael R. Rafferty, 28, of Linden was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on Hetfield Avenue for numerous outstanding Linden warrants.

Wednesday, August 22, Herbert Gipson, 54, of Plainfield was arrested for an outstanding Plainfield warrant after a motor vehicle stop on Terrill Road.

Wednesday, August 22, sometime during the period between noon and 6 a.m. on Thursday, August 23, a bicycle belonging to a Scotch Plains resident was stolen from the north side train station.

Wednesday, August 22, sometime between the hours of 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., a resident in the 200 block of Martine Avenue reported that someone damaged the driver's side rear-view mirror of his/her vehicle while it was parked on the street.

Thursday, August 23, Ofelia Castrejon, 42, of Rahway, was arrested on an outstanding Bloomfield warrant after a motor vehicle stop on South Avenue.

Friday, August 24, a Paul Place resident reported that someone smashed the rear window of his pick up truck, while it was parked in the street during the period between 5:30 p.m. and 8 a.m. on Saturday, August 25.

Sunday, August 26, a gas station in the 300 block of South Avenue reported that a black male in his 20s stole approximately \$50 from a cash register and ran before he could be apprehended. According to police, the incident is under investigation.



SIGNS OF THE TIMES...Last Wednesday, Westfield introduced new municipally owned parking signs. Above, from left to right, Claude Shaffer, superintendent of Public Works; Beth Brenner, Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC) executive assistant; Councilman Mark Ciarrocca; Westfield Police Officer Gary Moore; Richard Edge, public works employee; Sergeant John Rowe, parking director; and Sherry Cronin, executive director of the DWC, install a sign in the lot behind the Rialto Theatre.



IT'S ALL IN THE WRITING...Deerfield School teacher Thomas Conroy addresses the Mountainside Board of Education on the district's new language-arts course during Tuesday's night's BOE meeting at Beechwood School.