

Westfield Board of Ed. Considers \$78-Mil. Budget, Tax Increase Limits

By MARYELLEN PALERMO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD - The board of education on Tuesday night reviewed budget options amounting to more than \$78 million for the 2007-2008 academic year. A new state law restricts school boards from increasing taxes by more than 4 percent.

"The state has been so focused on property tax relief," said board member Beth Cassie. She said \$180,000 would have to be cut for every tax point the tax levy is reduced for the public taxpayer to see a reduction in tax bills.

Business Administrator Robert Berman provided assistance, explaining the numbers of the budget that has been revised from \$78,232,188 to \$78,341,332. As such, it reflects a tax increase of about 3.5 percent over last year, he said.

Board member Richard Solomon responded to Ms. Cassie's concerns by saying that the state budget cap allows an increase of 15 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation, while the BOE's outlined budget proposes an increase of 13 cents, which he said meets the board's goal of limiting the tax increase from 14 cents to 13 cents.

He said the increase remains low without compromising the program.

Superintendent of Schools William Foley said Westfield High School has not changed the number of trainers to facilitate the athletic department and, due to the large number of student athletes, he recommended hiring a part-time athletic trainer contracted on an hourly pay rate for fall and spring seasons.

Mr. Foley discussed the elimination of one community service advisor position, which has been dormant for several years. WHS does not have a community service requirement, and there are "numerous" groups - such as the Key Club and Young Optimists Club - available to students interested in servicing the community, he said.

In regards to placing community service on the "chop block," Mr. Foley said, "Maybe one advisor combined with other opportunities would be a compromise."

On another matter, last year the board attempted to transfer students from Wilson Elementary School to Franklin Elementary School to diminish the problem of overpopulation in the classroom. This year, Mr. Foley said the board plans to redistrict 30 students, creating an additional first-grade section at Franklin and allowing Wilson to accommodate an additional kindergarten section.

The districts Citizen's Advisory Committee developed a system of course options that included Mandarin and Robotics to entice parents from the north side of Westfield to enroll their children in Edison Intermediate School. Parents expressed excitement towards the science technology option, officials said, but out of the 69 students from Tamaques, McKinley and Jefferson Elementary Schools to communicate interest, seven students made a tentative commitment to the program.

Mr. Foley said the balance of enrollment by course choice is not an effective option. He said it is too difficult to ask parents to make the decision of forsaking the friendships

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Planning Bd. OK's Doctor's Office, Stirling Subdivision

By WAYNE BAKER
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD - The town's planning board Monday night approved an enlarged entryway at a new doctor's office on Central Avenue, an addition to the rear of a downtown building on Prospect Street and the subdivision of a property on Stirling Place.

The changes to the doctor's office site at 433 Central Avenue include the enlargement of the rear entryway on a previously approved project. Roger Winkle, applicant Thoracic Holdings LLC's architect, said the need for an enlarged doorway was discovered after the board's approval of the original project. He said it was necessary because the existing stairway failed to meet current commercial standards. He said the other proposed change - the addition of an elevator - would enable disabled patients and emergency services ready access to the space.

Mr. Winkle said the addition would add 187 square feet to each floor. The change of plans moves the entryway size from 10 by 19 feet to 16 by 23 feet. Town Planner Judy Thornton said the additional space would not affect the more demanding parking space requirements based on usage. Board members unanimously approved the changes.

The board granted approval to Diddell Properties for an addition to the building at 10 Prospect Street. The application proposed a two-story addition to the rear of the building, which currently houses an orthopedic device and shoe business and an advertising agency.

On the first floor, the addition will create workshop space primarily for the adjustment and repair of artificial limbs. Board member Robert Newell noted an issue with the drawing of the front facade related to revisions to lighting and signage. Robert Algarin, the applicant's architect, agreed to provide the board with a revised drawing.

The board granted approval to Mark Marotta for the subdivision of the property at 634 Stirling Place. The two properties created will each be



PANCAKE TIME...Members of the Westfield Rotary Club prepare pancakes at the club's annual event Saturday morning at Westfield High School. The Rotary Club holds the breakfast as a fundraiser for its scholarship funds.

Greg Ryan for The Westfield Leader

Westfield Lacrosse Club Seeks More Time on Fields

By MARIA WOEHRR
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD - Representatives from the Westfield Lacrosse Club asked the recreation commission Monday night for more time on the fields.

"We would like two nights, preferably Tuesdays and Thursdays, to play games. Right now soccer has the fields 72 percent of the time and we have the fields 28 percent of the time, even though soccer has 800 users and we have 600 users," said Rich Werner, president of Westfield Lacrosse.

The schedule for the season came out two weeks ago, according to Westfield Lacrosse representatives.

"We didn't know until two weeks ago. We requested more time. These

user meetings should be earlier in the year. I am scheduling games without fields to play on," Mr. Werner said.

According to Bruce Kaufman, recreation director, both lacrosse and soccer had requested more time on the fields. "Lacrosse wanted more time then they received in previous years in Kehler Stadium. It was my understanding that Sandy [Mamary, the Westfield School District's certified trainer] was giving more time to lacrosse this year. Soccer wanted more time also. But soccer was not willing to switch days," Mr. Kaufman said.

"It doesn't seem that the field time is being distributed equally if it is 70/20," said Commissioner Bob Smith. "I think it is too late for

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Benjamin B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader

SEEKING REELECTION...Former Governor Brendan Byrne, third from left, was the guest speaker at Monday night's fundraiser for the re-election bid of Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr, left. Also pictured are supporter Lorryn Gumble, Governor Byrne and New Jersey State Democratic Party Chairman and Assemblyman Joe Cryan (LD-20, Union).

BOE to Hold Community Forum on Superintendent

WESTFIELD - As one of the first steps in initiating a search for a new superintendent of schools, the Westfield Board of Education (BOE) will hold a Community Forum on Wednesday, March 14, at 7 p.m. in the cafeteria at Edison Intermediate School at 800 Rahway Avenue.

The board has retained the services of Hazard, Young, Attea and Associates, Ltd., a search firm that specializes in assisting boards with the identification and selection of superintendents, to facilitate the forum.

"A very important stage in this process is the identification of the characteristics we will be looking for in our new superintendent," Board

President Anne Riegel said. "We invite the public to participate in the identification of these characteristics by attending the forum and also by completing the online Leadership Profile Assessment survey, which can be found on the district's web site, westfieldnj12.org/survey. The deadline for completion of the survey is Thursday, March 15."

The survey results will be compiled by the consultants and presented to the BOE at a public meeting in April. The board is hopeful that it will be able to identify candidates and make a final selection by the end of June, in order to have a new superintendent in place for September 2007.



GRAND OPENING...Cosi Restaurant opened this week at 102-108 East Broad Street in Westfield. Above, guests enjoy Cosi's variety of sandwiches, salads, pizza and s'mores plates at last Thursday's grand opening event.

Wayne Baker for The Westfield Leader

Westfield to Ask County to Pay If It Loses On-Street DPW Spaces

By MICHAEL J. POLLACK
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD - Town Engineer Ken Marsh said at Tuesday's town council conference meeting that he hopes to see the conclusion of the "state-of-the-art" traffic improvements done at Crossway Place, Edgewood and North Avenues by this summer. However, he said the improvements might eliminate all on-street parking for the department of public works (DPW).

During the Public Safety, Transportation and Parking Committee report, Mr. Marsh described the plan's progress as in the "90-percent stage," saying, when complete, it would provide "left-turn lanes in both direc-

tions, lead green (green left-turn arrows), state-of-the-art computerized signals, pedestrian signals and a smoother right-turn movement by widening the road.

"It's a great design," he added. "It will greatly improve traffic flow, and could be constructed this summer."

However, he said there is one "drawback," which affects the DPW facility. "Because of the striping, additional lanes and lane widths, we will now lose all of our street parking on both sides of the street, which means our customers, who we are trying to make our entrance more convenient for, will have to walk a couple hundred feet. I found that unacceptable."

He said both he and assistant town engineer Kris McAloon met with

the county engineer's office. Mr. Marsh suggested "bumping" the curb in eight feet, creating parallel parking. "They seemed agreeable to that. That might be something that's doable."

Committee Chairman Mark Ciarracca, who acted as mayor on Tuesday, said the committee believed that "parking is important for customers going in and out constantly during the day. The White Paper Study (completed last year on DPW and engineering operations) has tried to make that building more customer-friendly. We agree that bump should be made, and we will find it acceptable if the county pays for it."

Mr. Marsh said DPW would lose 10 spaces in front of the building and

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OFF TO THE RACES...Above, race officials and participants examine the cars prior to Saturday's Pinewood Derby for Cub Scout Pack 172 at Westfield's Franklin School. Issac Amador won the derby, and Chris Pettit captured second. Matt Basile took third place after edging out Owen Hein in a run-off. Below, Danny LaMastra and Basile wait for ribbons and trophies to be given out at the end of the Wolf competition.

Wayne Baker and Lauren Vernick for The Westfield Leader



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Spring Ahead!
Daylight Saving Time
Sunday, March 11, 2 a.m.

