

County to Acquire Reservoir For \$1 From Clark Township

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

ELIZABETH – The Union County freeholders are set to officially take ownership of the 142-acre Clark Reservoir for the price of \$1 at its meeting tonight.

County Manager George Devaney said Clark officials approached the county, saying the town was unable to effectively maintain the property, which lies in both Clark and Scotch Plains.

"It would be our goal to provide some passive activities," he told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*, citing activities like canoeing and a walking path.

Vicky Durbin Drake, director of the county's open space, recreation and historical preservation trust fund, said Clark obtained the property from the Middlesex Water Company on December 31, 1996.

Freeholder Al Mirabella mentioned the county's interest in the property in his first speech as board chairman at the January 2006 reorganization meeting.

"After much examination and study, it has been determined that the county is the best entity to take over the property, which has long been neglected due to the size and resources required to maintain it," he said at the time. "The reservoir will be restored to reflect its natural beauty, and public access should be developed so that county residents may utilize this area for passive recreation."

The board raised questions as to why the New Jersey State Historic Preservation (NJSHP) had gotten involved in the approval of a dam replacement project at Nomahegan Lake in Cranford.

County officials said a new requirement by NJSHP to make the new structure stone-based instead of concrete has driven up the price of the latest contract \$11,000—from \$14,500

to \$25,500.

County Engineer Tom Mineo said professional services dating back to 1995 have cost \$70,750. The state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has also made requirements on the project.

Freeholder Adrian Mapp noted that the latest change order is "almost 100 percent of the original contract."

Mr. Mineo said the county had thought "it would be a simple replacement of a concrete dam" but state officials' involvement has hiked the price.

Freeholder Dan Sullivan said, "What's annoying is that you have another state office" involved in a project that will result in "an additional cost" for the county. "(The NJSHP is) not in the business of efficiency...but only (interested) on what the dam looks like."

"It has nothing to do with how the dam will perform," he said of NJSHP's requirements.

Freeholder Nancy Ward asked Human Services Director Frank Guzzo to provide information on the process for trying to identify unclaimed, indigent and unidentified deceased persons.

New state mandates require counties to provide burial for such persons "who resided within the borders of Union County" at a cost of \$1,550 per burial, according to last Thursday's freeholders agenda. The cost of the two-year program would not exceed \$60,000.

On another matter, Mr. Guzzo said he wants to combine two separate contracts into one legal agreement that would cover medical services for jail inmates and detainees and the juvenile detention center, as well as the transportation of inmates to area hospitals.

The board is scheduled to vote tonight to approve a \$4.2-million contract with Verona-based Correctional Health Services, Inc. for the medical services agreement.

The detention center currently sits near the county jail in Elizabeth but will be relocated to Linden in September.



LOOK WHAT THE STORK BROUGHT...Despite the school snow day called for February 26, Westfield enjoyed a break from the colder temperatures later in the week. Last Thursday this grey stork basked in the sun by the creek in Mindowaskin Park, nearly undetected to cars passing.

Actavis Promotes Boothe to Executive Vice Pres. for U.S.

WESTFIELD – Doug Boothe of Chester, formerly of Westfield, has been named executive vice president of commercial and administration in the United States for Actavis.

Mr. Boothe joined Actavis in 2005, following the acquisition of Alpha, as vice president and chief operating officer for Actavis U.S.

He will be responsible for all sales and marketing activities in the U.S. market. Prior to Alpha, Mr. Boothe was vice president of U.S. sales channel development and Internet operations for Pharmacia, had held several general management roles at Xerox Corporation and served as a management consultant at Mars & Co.

He holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Engineering for mechanical and aerospace engineering from Princeton University and a Masters of Business Administration from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

Mr. Boothe is the son of former Mayor Bud Boothe and Gail Boothe of Westfield. He graduated from Westfield High School in 1982, where he was a co-editor of the *Hi's Eye*, and from Princeton University in 1986. He recently concluded a five-year term as president of his Princeton class.

Mountainside Website Seeks Borough Photos

MOUNTAINSIDE – Mountainside's website is seeking photographs from borough residents for its new section, "Images of Mountainside." Adults and children are asked to contribute current photographs of local landscapes and buildings. A selection of photographs will appear on the website in the coming weeks.

Contributors should e-mail their photographs in digital format to alieb@mountainside-nj.com. Include the photographer's name, photograph title and date and a short description. For more information, call (908) 232-0015 or visit mountainside-nj.com.



Doug Boothe

Corrections Overtime A Concern to Freeholders

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

ELIZABETH – Overtime costs in the county's correctional facilities, nearing \$7 million for 2007, continue to be "of concern" to county freeholders as they review the proposed \$415-million county spending plan.

During last Wednesday's freeholder fiscal affairs committee meeting, Freeholder Al Mirabella, who chairs the panel, said he was "frustrated" that overtime costs continue to be a high number in the public safety department's budget.

"Every year we have this conversation...Because it (overtime) is typically a quarter of the total (corrections salaries) budget," Mr. Mirabella said.

The total corrections salaries included in County Manager George Devaney's executive budget are \$20.3 million, with an additional \$6.8 million projected for overtime. Corrections accounts for \$39.05 million of the public safety's \$48.02-million budget. The public safety department also includes weights and measures, the medical examiner, consumer affairs, office of emergency management, health division and county police.

Mr. Mirabella asked officials to check with surrounding counties on their overtime corrections budgets.

Correctional Services Director Frank Crose said corrections are down 30 positions. He said mandated vacation days and medical leaves, including maternity leaves, have impacted the need for overtime.

Freeholder Dan Sullivan asked whether hiring additional officers would be less expensive than continuing with high overtime cost.

Mr. Crose said he wants to have corrections take over the current detention center in Elizabeth when the new facility opens that he would need additional staff.

Director of Labor Management Relations Joseph Salemme said starting corrections officers make \$28,000, which increases to \$70,000, not including benefits, after nine years.

Human Services Director Frank Guzzo said the new 75,500-square-

foot juvenile detention center is expected to open September 1.

Mr. Crose said the county jail's 48-bed medical facility handles 57 patients at present. He said many inmates have mental health problems. "(It's) very busy; it's very chaotic," he said.

"Our medical unit is becoming like a MASH Unit," he said.

In terms of the high cost of corrections facilities, Mr. Sullivan said: "If the (state) ever wants to help counties out they would take over the entire operation. But I don't think they would go for it because the cost is astronomical."

Mr. Mirabella asked officials to include improvements to the county's fire academy in Linden in this year's capital budget. The freeholders recently extended the lease on the property.

During her budget overview, Director of Administrative Services Elizabeth Genievich said her department has opened a new Automotive Services Excellence (ASE) 15-week training course to employees in the county's motor vehicles division. The course is being offered at Union County College (UCC) in Scotch Plains at \$900 per student, a reduction from the normal \$5,000 charge. The course is a cooperative program between UCC and the Union County Vocational-Technical Schools; UCC faculty will teach it.

Ms. Genievich said the remaining spots in the class would be offered to municipal employees as a shared-services initiative. She said the county would pay \$450 as a 50-percent match for each municipal worker. ASE certification is being offered for brakes and steering.

"I think it's going to be very popular. It's the right thing to do," Ms. Genievich told *The Leader/Times*.

The 72-employee administrative services department's proposed operating budget is \$8,073,617, a \$140,000 increase over 2006. In addition to motor vehicles division, which maintains the county's 639-vehicle fleet, including police vehicles, the department includes personnel management and labor relations and purchasing.

Undersheriff Joe Cryan reported that four million people passed through the doors of Union County Courthouse last year. His department's \$14.8-million budget is down slightly from last year. The overtime budget is set at \$772,000, the same as last year.

He estimated that the municipal prisoner transport program conducted by sheriff's officers resulted in a savings to municipalities. In addition, he said the Sheriff's Labor Assistance Program completed 8,439 workdays for participating municipalities last year.

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GW Mayor McCarthy Holds Saturday Hours

GARWOOD – Borough Mayor Dennis McCarthy will hold his monthly Mayor's Saturday from 10 to 11 a.m. on Saturday, March 10, in the municipal building at 403 South Avenue.

Residents are invited to stop by to discuss any concerns they have, or they can just stop by and say hello and meet Mayor McCarthy. For more information, call (908) 789-0710.

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