

## Rapuano, Foerst Debate Merits Of Land Use Task Force's Report

By MICHAEL J. POLLACK  
*Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader*

WESTFIELD - Tuesday's town council meeting morphed into an hour-long discussion on the merits of the town's Land Use Task Force's (LUTF) recommendations to control over-development. A contingent of developers and builders attended the meeting, and Ralph Rapuano gave voice to a number of their concerns. For more than a year, the LUTF, formed in 2006 by Mayor Andy Skibitsky, reviewed current land-use ordinances, evaluated emergent land-use issues and formulated recommendations for change. The mayor charged the group with evaluating

how best to "allow revitalization while accommodating various interests and to protect private-property rights without sacrificing community quality of life and valued community resources."

Among the changes suggested in the LUTF's final report, the taskforce recommended implementing a "sliding-scale model" to determine height. The proposal would mandate that homes could range from a maximum of 32 feet in smaller zones to 35 feet in larger ones.

The recommendations also lower the number of allowable stories from three to 2.5.

Mr. Rapuano, a realtor, builder and Westfield resident, said many people

do not have a full understanding of what is taking place. He said those who wish to renovate or put on additions "don't have a clue" how the proposed changes will impact their projects. Mr. Rapuano said the goal of attempting to restrict "McMansions" was noble, but he feared that "too many residents are going to be negatively impacted" by the taskforce's recommendations.

He said many new homes being built would also need variances because of the proposals.

In addition, he said people buy starter homes in Westfield with the intention of expanding them; once the LUTF's recommendations are final, according to Mr. Rapuano, "the potential [of adding to homes] is gone."

He said residents are "not aware of how badly they will be affected; if they all knew what the changes were, there would be more questions." As a resident of Hyslip Avenue who is attempting to put on an addition, Mr. Rapuano said, "I would be one of those residents."

Mr. Rapuano said the "decreased potential" for people to add to their homes would amount to the "decreased value" of their homes.

He also predicted that the proposed changes would have a negative impact on property taxes. Mr. Rapuano said he wondered where the town would "compensate" for revenue lost due to both the slowdown of the housing market and a possible decrease in the number of additions. He said the new rules would "constrict" builders and owners, while making a greater number of houses non-conforming.

Mr. Rapuano specifically took issue with how the proposed changes calculated height and floor-to-area ratio (FAR).

Jim Foerst, fourth ward councilman and Code Review and Town Property Committee chairman, said the "collective wisdom" of those who took part in the process, including builders and developers, was to view the solution to over-development as a puzzle. "You can't simply take one piece away and expect to have the full pic-

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WHERE'S THE PROSPERITY?...Steve Longan, former mayor of Bogota and executive director of the New Jersey chapter of Americans for Prosperity, speaks Monday before the Fanwood Republicans.

## Longan: NJ Must Look to World's Economic Successes

By ERIC NIERSTEDT  
*Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader*

FANWOOD - Steve Longan, former Bogota mayor, spoke at a Republican-organized Grassroots Taxpayer Action Seminar in Fanwood at the Forest Road Park building on Monday night.

Mr. Longan, executive director for the N.J. chapter of Americans for Prosperity, a group represented in 21 states, spoke for nearly an hour and a half on the current condition of New Jersey's economy and how the state has fallen away from capitalism. To make his case, he cited examples of how different countries had moved to free-enterprise systems in order to improve their economies.

Mr. Longan began the evening by relaying his publicized arrest, in Cape May, at Governor Jon Corzine's town hall meeting on his financial-restructuring and debt-reduction plan, saying that "seven officers" arrested him and had removed his "dangerous wallet."

Mr. Longan then moved on to a discussion of America's past, saying that Americans have a long history of individualism and that, "We loan the right to govern to the government."

He also added that, "If they are reckless and irresponsible, we have the responsibility to take it back." Mr. Longan said that he felt the state government had "become reckless and irresponsible."

Mr. Longan then moved on to how America was the first country to operate under an economic system of capitalism. However, Mr. Longan said that he would prove that the state had shifted away from a free-capitalistic market and was suffering for it. He began by showing the examples of capitalism through "Reaganomics," which, he said, led to "probably the most prosperous period the nation's ever seen."

Mr. Longan furthered his case through discussions on government changes in other countries, beginning with Chile. He explained that in 1978, Chile was the poorest nation in South

America. However, after a government coup, the new leaders adopted the capitalistic workings of America through a man named Milton Friedman. In 1980, Chile set up a privately held Social Security system, in which a worker could choose from one of six plans. He said Chile is now the wealthiest nation in South America and the fifth wealthiest in the world.

He then discussed the economic history of New Zealand, which he said had a collapsing economy during the 1980s. A new conservative government was elected to deal with the failing agriculture, a major source of income, as well as a failing communication network.

The government sold off the country's one telephone company in order to bring competition to the country. As a result, New Zealand now has seven phone companies and one of the world's best communications systems. The new government also ended regulations on agriculture, leading to New Zealand becoming the world's number one source for dairy products and among the top three for meats, Mr. Longan said.

Mr. Longan continued his world discussion with Ireland. He talked about how it overcame the economic problems it had in the 1980s. When a new conservative government was elected, the first thing it did was cut taxes and eventually cut the government by 40 percent. As a result, Mr. Longan said Ireland currently has the number one economy in all of Europe.

He explained that these countries had success under the American model of capitalism because officials understood its principles. Mr. Longan described these principles as personal choice, voluntary market exchange, freedom to enter and compete and protection of people and property.

He gave an example of corruption in New Jersey by discussing State Senator Joe Vitale's (LD-19, Woodbridge) proposed universal health insurance program.

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SCOUTING THE NEWSPAPER...Cub Scouts from Dens 1 and 5, Pack 177, from Mountainside, visited The Westfield Leader office on Thursday, March 27, to learn how the newspaper is made.



GET OUT THE VOTE...Merry Wisler of the League of Women's Voters registers high school 18-year-olds to vote on March 20 in the Westfield High School student center. Michael Petrow, above, is one of 25 students completing the registration form. Voters will go to the polls on Tuesday, April 15, to decide on area public school budgets and board candidates.

## WF BOE Welcomes First Lincoln School Principal, Audrey Zavetz

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE  
*Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader*

WESTFIELD - The Westfield Board of Education (BOE), at Tuesday night's public meeting, announced that Audrey Zavetz would serve as Lincoln School's first principal, earning a yearly salary of \$109,000.

The early childhood learning school will open this September with approximately 280 kindergarten and 60 special-needs students in pre-K, transitional kindergarten and Leaps and Bounds primary classes (for autistic children).

Ms. Zavetz, a resident of Westfield for 21 years, has taught at Franklin School since 2000. She also was principal at Deerfield School in Mountainside and Glenwood School in Short Hills.

The board later announced that Lincoln School received a gift of \$3,000

from the Westfield Coalition for the Arts, which will be used to purchase a new piano.

The board also awarded a bid, priced at \$24,512, to Tekton Development Corp. to pour concrete, in lieu of plywood, sub-floors at Lincoln School. Business Administrator Robert Berman said, "It's a better surface to lay tile on."

The board also renewed and awarded a bid of \$20,115 to Schutt Reconditioning (formerly Circle System Group) to repair and recondition

athletic equipment in the district's schools for the 2008-2009 school year.

Superintendent of Schools Margaret Dolan presented a summary of the 2007 N.J. report card, a collection of data on the state's school districts supplied by the state. For the complete report, visit <http://education.state.nj.us/rc/rc07/index.html>.

At the budget hearing, on March 19, the board presented a cost-per-pupil figure that was based on 2006-

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PROTECT AND SERVE...Westfield Police Officers undergo training at Westfield High School during the school's spring break on March 25. The training is to help the officers deal with the potential of a gunman being on the loose. Pictured, left to right, are: Officer Jason Carter, Police Chief John Parizeau and Det. Sgt. John Rowe.

## Westfield Police Receive Shooter Response Training

By RAYNOR DENITZIO  
*Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader*

WESTFIELD - With students in the district on spring break, the Westfield Police Department utilized Westfield High School to conduct active shooter response training this past week.

Developed after analyzing lessons learned from the shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado in 1999, active shooter response training is meant to teach police officers tactics for responding to situations such as a shooter in a school.

After the tragedy at Columbine, law enforcement officials realized that standard procedures, such as negotiation and waiting for specialized units to arrive, could actually do more harm than good when dealing with assailants who are intent upon harming other individuals.

"Now the way that these [active shooter situations] are viewed and the way that law enforcement responds to them is different," Westfield Police Captain David Wayman said.

When an active shooter is present, police officers are now trained to assemble into teams and enter the building in order to contain and neutralize the threat to prevent further injuries or loss of life.

Officers undergoing the training first received classroom instruction on tactics to use when responding to

an active shooter. Secondly, they employed hands-on training with the tools and equipment they would use to react to an active shooter. The exercises included practicing door breaching techniques at a specially designed breaching cage to simulate different types of locked doors that officers may encounter.

The officers practiced a number of different scenarios, from room clearing to dealing with wounded victims to hidden and multiple shooters.

Since these situations may present circumstances beyond what police officers encounter on a day-to-day basis, special weapons and tools are necessary. In addition to standard shotgun training that all officers undergo, the Westfield Police Department's Emergency Services Unit is equipped with AR-15 rifles.

The department also recently obtained five sets of breaching tools through a Homeland Security grant. These tools are used to gain entry to locked or barricaded buildings.

In addition, Capt. Wayman said the department has acquired blueprints to all of the public and county schools in the district, and the town and board of education are working on an e-alert system to notify parents of situations at the schools.

All officers in the department will undergo training during the week,

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## Mountainside BOE Adopts Budget at Emergency Mtg.

By KATHERINE EMIRE-NIEVES and HORACE CORBIN  
*Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader*

MOUNTAINSIDE - The board of education (BOE) adopted its budget for the 2008-2009 school year last Thursday night. A total of \$12.2 million would be raised in property taxes to fund the plan. "Today is the last day that we can approve it," Business Administrator Roderic McLaughlin said.

Voters will be asked to decide on the tax levy and select candidates running for the board on Tuesday, April 15.

The board planned to act on the budget on March 25, but its meeting was cancelled. BOE President John Perrin explained, "Our regularly scheduled meeting was unable to occur because we didn't have a quorum." Four of the seven board members are required to attend.

The total expenditures proposed for 2008-2009, according to the Mountainside school district's website, is \$15,865,990. This includes \$3.1 million to send students to Governor Livingston High School in Berkeley Heights, \$1.2 million for special education and \$389,360 for repayment of debt. This is an increase over the expenditures for the current year, shown as \$14.9 million. The expenditures for the previous year are shown as \$13.7 million.

Revenues to pay for the proposed spending plan come predominantly from property taxes, and are augmented by state aid, federal aid, depletion of cash reserves and dissolution funds.

According to Mr. McLaughlin, the 2008-2009 budget will only have \$574,963 (or 4 percent of revenues) in dissolution funds left to pay current operating expenses. The dissolution fund is the result of the breakup of the former county regional school district, which included high schools in Clark, Berkeley Heights, Springfield and Kenilworth. Mountainside and Garwood teenagers also attended schools in the district. Voters passed a referendum in 1996 to break up the district.

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