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www.goleader.com

(908) 232-4407
press@goleader.com

SIXTY CENTS

Voters to Decide School Taxes, Mountainside BOE Race Tuesday

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE and JESSICA JASKULA
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Voters will head to the polls Tuesday to decide the fate of school tax levies and vote for mostly unopposed members of local school boards. Only Mountainside has a competitive school board race among towns covered by *The Westfield Leader*.

In Westfield, voters will decide on a \$75,086,661 tax levy, a 4.59 percent increase from last year. Property taxes on a home assessed at \$183,448 would increase \$324 if the tax levy passes. The total budget is \$86,585,234.

There are three more budget presentations, open to the community, prior to vote day: tonight, Thursday,

April 10, at 7 p.m. at Wilson School and at 8:15 p.m. at Roosevelt School, and Monday, April 14, at 7 p.m. at Edison School. The public can also go online at westfieldnj12.org and tune in to Channel 36 for more information on the budget.

Running unopposed for re-election to the board of education are incumbents Alice Hunnicutt, a former professional musician and currently employed by Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN); Gary McCready, a computer systems manager with Sumitomo Mitsui Bank in Jersey City, and Ann Ormsby Cary, a former senior vice president with the United Way.

Mountainside will vote on a \$12.2 million tax levy, which would in-

crease taxes \$156 on a home assessed at \$162,700, to fund total expenditures of \$15,865,990.

Voters will decide which two of the three candidates should fill open seats on the Mountainside Board of Education (BOE). Lauren Emblad (the daughter of current board member Carmine Venes), Cathy Jakositz and Carolyn Williams are vying for the two seats. Incumbents John Perrin, BOE president, and Scot Worswick are not seeking re-election.

Ms. Emblad was raised in Mountainside and attended both Beechwood and Deerfield schools. In 1988, she graduated from Jonathan Dayton High School in Springfield, where high school students living in Mountainside were routed at that time. She has a bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in public administration and a master's degree in behavioral and organizational psychology, both from Kean University. She is certified in student personnel services, kindergarten to grade 8 elementary teaching, and as a substance awareness coordinator.

Ms. Jakositz works part-time as a special education teacher. She grew up in Union, where she attended Catholic school and later graduated from Union High School in 1983. She has a bachelor's degree in teacher of the handicapped, a master's degree in administration and supervision from Kean University and graduate degrees in school counseling and as a Learning Disability Teacher Consultant (LDTC), qualifying her to work on a child study team.

Current Mountainside PTA president, Ms. Williams, was raised in Portland, Ore., and is originally from Syracuse, N.Y. She graduated in 1980 from high school in Beaverton, Ore., and attended the University of Oregon, Portland State and Miracosta College in San Diego, Calif. She studied early elementary education and worked in a pre-school in San Diego.

In Garwood, residents will vote on a proposed \$6,588,420 school tax levy in support of an \$8,256,284 budget. If approved, taxes would increase \$126 on a home assessed at \$100,000. The tax levy is up 4 percent over last year.

In terms of seats on the Garwood

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Mountainside BOE Names Jeanette Baubles as CSA

By LARISSA CURLIK
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

MOUNTAINSIDE — The Board of Education promoted Jeanette Baubles as Chief School Administrator (CSA) at Tuesday night's meeting. The board also announced that the school budget should be available tomorrow or Saturday for the public's viewing, a day after the district's open house is held.

Mrs. Baubles, who was hired as principal of Deerfield School last year, will assume the role of CSA on April 14, and will be paid a salary of \$135,000 per year through June 30, 2011. She will continue her duties as principal of Deerfield School for the remainder of the school year.

Scot Worswick, whose last meeting as a member of the board was on Tuesday night, said that he could not vote for the promotion of Mrs.

MS Mayor Plans to Reduce Spending by \$305,000

By EBONY MCQUEEN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

MOUNTAINSIDE — During Tuesday night's work session meeting, Mayor Robert Vigilanti presented council members with a brief description of what the borough's 2008 budget may look like.

"No matter what the state does, we cannot spend any more money," Mayor Vigilanti said. "When we don't get money, we have to get it through taxation, but that does not give us the right to spend."

Mountainside is one of the small towns with populations under 10,000 that might be affected by Governor Jon Corzine's significantly reduced state number in the proposed state budget.

The borough has to cut \$305,000 from last year's budget numbers. The only areas the mayor is considering an increase in are gasoline, natural gas, electricity and water. Last year's budget was \$10 million which in-



CENTRAL CRASH...Two cars collide early afternoon on Tuesday in Westfield at the intersection of Central and North Avenues. Police redirect traffic as rescue squad members and fire department personnel place the injured person on a stretcher for transportation to the hospital.

Horace Corbin for The Westfield Leader

Westfield Council Agrees To Introduce \$37.9-Mill Budget

By MICHAEL J. POLLACK
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — The Westfield Town Council, at Tuesday's meeting, agreed to introduce a \$37.88-million municipal budget, an increase of \$1.86 million over 2007, at next week's public meeting. The budget could then be formally adopted on May 20.

Approximately \$22 million of the \$37.88-million budget (58 percent) will be supported by local property taxes.

The tax levy represents an increase of 9.38 percent from last year. The 9.38 percent is made up of town expenses capped at 4 percent, as the state mandates, plus 5.38 percent in state-mandated expenditures, such as library costs and pension payouts.

The proposed 2008 municipal budget will represent an approximate jump of \$180 a year to the average

Westfield home assessed at \$183,500.

In what First Ward Councilman Sal Caruana, finance policy committee chairman, called a "landmark budget," spending will increase 5.15 percent over 2007.

Mr. Caruana noted that while spending jumped more than 5 percent, the portion Westfield could control only rose 1.68 percent. Mandated costs, including the Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority (RVSA) assessment

(\$340,000), library (\$173,000) and pension costs (\$740,000) comprised the bulk of the increase.

Speaking to the newspaper after the meeting, Mr. Caruana reiterated that the portion of the budget the town can control is "very limited."

To account for all state-required expenses, which went up \$1.59 million (12.45 percent), and more than a half-million in salary increases, as

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Garwood Council Defends Recreation Budget Increase

By RAYNOR DENITZIO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD — Borough Council members on Tuesday night defended an increase in the recreation commission's budget amid questions from two residents.

During the public portion of the meeting, resident Bruce Paterson questioned the necessity of the recreation commission's budget, which he said should be significantly reduced.

"I find this to be a travesty, financially," Mr. Paterson said.

According to Mr. Paterson, the recreation commission spent around \$41,100 in 2007, and its proposed budget in 2008, is around \$46,500. Mr. Paterson said that although the programs offered by the commission were "nice," he did not believe it is the place of the government to provide entertainment at the taxpayers' expense, particularly during times of financial hardship.

"We're looking at bus trips and pizza parties on the taxpayer dime," Mr. Paterson said. "We're hurting financially."

Mr. Paterson said that the recreation commission should cut down on the number of programs it funds to two large events a year and that the rest of the programs should be self-funded.

Resident Anne Leonard also voiced concerns about the recreation com-

mission, saying that the commission should focus on recreation for children and eliminate some of the fully funded programs for adults.

"As far as I'm concerned recreation is for the kids," Ms. Leonard said.

Council President Kathleen Villaggio said a majority of the recreation budget goes toward salaries for counselors for the different programs the commission runs, and that a majority of the increase is associated with minimum wage and contractual increases, as well as hiring additional staff for the summer programs.

Councilman Stephen Napolitano, the liaison to the recreation commission, said the commission is looking for ways to cut costs, including charging for programs to offset expenses. Mr. Napolitano also said that although these programs are taxpayer-funded, it is also the borough's taxpayers who use them.

Councilman Keith Sluka also said that the recreation commission represents only a small portion of the borough's budget, and that these programs are "very popular." He added that having a strong recreation program for children and families is one of the things that attract families to Garwood.

"The kids love it, and that's the

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BOE CANDIDATES...The incumbent candidates for the Westfield Board of Education are running unopposed. Pictured, left to right, are: Alice Hunnicutt, Gary McCready and Ann Ormsby Cary.

Board Approves Irrigation Pond at Echo Lake Club

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — The Westfield Planning Board heard three applications with variances at Monday night's meeting. Echo Lake Country Club, at 515 Springfield Avenue, was approved as proposed to include dredging of an existing decorative pond and construction of an irrigation pond to replace it, realignment of pathways and construction of a 576-foot utility building. Chris Carson of the club's greens department said the current irrigation system was built in 1966 and is beyond its lifespan.

"To be environmentally sensitive, we have to put in an irrigation pond," he said. There will be a berm and greenery to hide the utility building, which serves as the pump house for the irrigation system for the entire golf club.

"It is our intent that the building not be visible at all," Mr. Carson said.

Robert Lions, civil engineer and expert witness for the country club, said the design of the pump house is made up of cinder block with insulation, covered by grey, cedar-shake style vinyl siding, and an insulated roof to reduce noise. "There should not be any noise on the property line because of these improvements," he said.

He added that a 12-foot berm with five- to six-foot-tall plantings would block the view of the pump house, which is 15 feet, six inches high and, at its peak in the roof, is 18 feet. The plantings, a mixture of deciduous and evergreen shrubs and shade trees, at their maturity will reach 30 feet high with branch leaves starting at the ground level, according to landscape architect for Echo Lake, Brian Clemson.

Mr. Lions also said that the club has received general permits from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection to dredge the existing pond and install the new irrigation pond.

The pond will be fed water by existing wells at a rate of 1,800 gallons per

minute as required, Mr. Lions said.

Developer Irwin Ackerman will also see his site plan realized for two businesses at 21 East Broad Street. The board unanimously approved the variances requested: the town ordinance requires 16 parking spaces by zone and 42 spaces by use requirement, the applicant will provide two spaces; the ordinance requires one off-street loading space, the applicant is providing none; the ordinance requires a driveway width of 20 feet, the applicant is supplying 10 feet; the ordinance restricts signage mounting to a maximum height of 12 feet, the applicant will have the signs at a height of 15.5 feet. Other variances dealt with access aisle and parking space dimensions.

Mr. Ackerman is the same developer of One Lincoln Plaza Condominiums created above the PNC Bank across the street from this proposed application.

A few years ago, Mr. Ackerman was approved at the same site to construct a three-story building with apartments above a store. "We changed direction due to market conditions," he said. His new plan is for a one-story building with two businesses.

A franchise restaurant, Five Guys, serving hamburgers and fries, hot dogs and veggie burgers is planned to occupy 2,500 square feet of the 4,800-square-foot building.

FedEx was in negotiations with Mr. Ackerman to occupy the other space, but nothing was finalized at the time of the board meeting.

Vince Soutelle, owner of G.O. Kellers dry cleaning service that is adjacent to 21 East Broad Street, had an attorney, David Pierce, represent his opposition to the variances requested.

Michael Goldsmith is the architect of the building and had made changes to his plans based on the town's architectural review board's suggestions to add an awning, use brickwork on

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IRRIGATION PLANNING...Chris Carson of Echo Lake Country Club presents an irrigation plan to the Westfield Planning Board on Monday night.

Christina Hinke for The Westfield Leader



ANGLING AT THE PARK...State Senate President Richard Cody releases trout into Echo Lake in Mountainside on Wednesday, April 3, as part of the state's stocking of streams and lakes prior to the opening of trout season last Saturday. All trout were raised at the state Pequest Trout Hatchery in Warren County.

Benjamin B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader

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