



Benjamin B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader

**OPERATION RED SHIELD...**Last Friday, Westfield Mayor Andy Skibitsky, Salvation Army Coordinator Scott Shepherd, Congressman Mike Ferguson and Dianne Gorbaty met at the Westfield Library to support the next NJ National Guard troop deployment to Iraq. For the fifth year, the Salvation Army will be making toiletry kits for the troops that will be deployed. More than 7,000 kits have been distributed to date. For more information and to assist, please contact Tricia Pellegrini at (908) 851-8227 or visit [salvationarmynewjersey.org](http://salvationarmynewjersey.org). Pictured, left to right, are: Mayor Skibitsky, Mr. Shepherd, Mr. Ferguson and Mrs. Gorbaty.

## School Taxes

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BOE, incumbent Christine Guerriero and former BOE member Linda Koenig are unopposed for two of the three seats up this year. Officials said if no write-in candidate emerges for the third slot, the BOE would advertise for the vacancy and interview candidates to fill the opening.

Ms. Guerriero is seeking her second consecutive term. She previously served on the board from 1990 to 1993 and was re-elected in 2005. She is currently vice president of the BOE. Ms. Guerriero holds a bachelor's degree in nursing from Seton Hall University and is a nurse at Somerville High School.

Ms. Koenig, a freelance writer, previously served on the BOE from 1992-2001 and 2004 to 2007. She also served on the Clark school board. She

is a graduate of Union County College and has a bachelor's and master's degree in English from Rutgers University.

Cranford residents will vote on a tax levy of \$42,965,510, which school officials said is 3.34 percent over last year. A homeowner with an assessment of \$180,933 would encounter a \$154.67 increase in school taxes. The total spending plan for 2008-2009 is \$51,808,533, an increase of 4 percent over 2007-2008.

Running uncontested for re-election to the Cranford board of education, among the nine board members, are JoAnn Boyle, Jill Brown and Michael Caulfield.

Scotch Plains and Fanwood residents will cast ballots on a \$67,753,660 tax levy, including debt service of \$2,343,994. The total school budget is \$77,775,487.

If approved, school taxes would increase \$153 per average home in Fanwood (an increase of 2.80 percent) and \$271 per average home in Scotch Plains (an increase of 4.29 percent).

The district's total school budget this year is \$77,775,487, an increase of \$3,013,818 from the 2007-2008 school-year budget.

Incumbent board of education members Warren McFall and Donald Parisi, representing Scotch Plains, and Fanwood resident Sasha Slocum, are running unopposed for board seats.

Mr. Parisi is general counsel to Rider Insurance Company in Springfield. He graduated from Rutgers in 1978, and Rutgers-Camden Law School in 1982.

Mr. McFall is a member of the technical staff with Bell Labs, Lucent Technologies.

Ms. Slocum is a social studies teacher at Plainfield High School in the alternative program. She has worked as a fourth and fifth grade teacher, as well as a teacher for special-needs children in Westfield, New Mexico and Massachusetts. She holds a master's degree in education policy from Harvard University and a doctorate in politics, with a focus on education policy in New Jersey and France, from Brandeis University.

Mr. McFall is a member of the technical staff with Bell Labs, Lucent Technologies.

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## WF Planning Board

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the façade and dental molding to the roofline.

He plans to use a brick veneer with a basket weave pattern on the front wall, a continuous canvas awning across the front. He also said the building is not constructed to support additional floors.

"I think the design is boring," said board member Francis Smith.

Michael Blancato, owner of Vicki's

## Garwood

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stuff that drives families to live in this town," Mr. Sluka said. "That's what makes Garwood Garwood."

In other business, the council learned on Tuesday that the roof of the firehouse is in need of repairs. According to Councilman Anthony Sytko, the estimated cost of the repairs is \$9,925. The borough will draft a resolution for this expenditure during a later meeting.

The borough also passed an ordinance to amend its land use codes. The ordinance amends regulations regarding certificates of compliance and the duties of the borough's zoning officer. Prior to this year, certificates of compliance for the borough were handled by Cranford.

Also passed was an ordinance to establish a cap bank for the year. Under the ordinance, \$45,560 will be placed in the cap bank. Under state law, municipalities are required to limit any budget increases from year to year to either 2.5 percent or the 3.5 percent cost-of-living adjustment. This money can then be used in during the next two years.

See More Information at [goleader.com](http://goleader.com)

## Family Convicted for Bilking Westfield Man, 88, of Savings

**ELIZABETH** — Richard Garcia, 26, and his mother, Janet Garcia, 53, have been sentenced by State Superior Court Judge Stuart Peim to three years in state prison each for bilking an elderly Westfield man out of his life savings. They also made restitution of \$120,000 prior to the sentencing, according to the Union County Prosecutor's Office. Lucia Heinz, 23, Richard Garcia's girlfriend, will be sentenced on Friday, April 18.

The defendants all reside on Pennington Street in Elizabeth. Janet Garcia pled guilty to conspiracy to commit theft. Richard Garcia and Lucia Heinz pled guilty to two counts of theft while Janet Garcia's daughter, Jacqueline Garcia, was also implicated in the crimes. She will have to forfeit her position as a dispatcher for the Elizabeth Fire Department and will be barred from public employment for life.

Stephen Bogart, 89, was a customer of Richard Garcia who is a barber and the current owner of Jersey Cutz Barber Shop on South Avenue in Westfield. In the spring of 2006, authorities said Richard Garcia befriended Mr. Rubin and offered to run errands for him. Assistant Prosecutor Anne Rubin said Mr. Garcia took

advantage of Mr. Bogart's failing sight by offering to pay Mr. Bogart's bills. But, in reality, Richard Garcia wrote the checks made out to himself, his mother and to cash.

Janet Garcia had Mr. Bogart give her power of attorney over his affairs and proceeded to transfer \$225,000 to Richard Garcia's account and \$11,000 to her own.

Authorities said the thefts came to light in February 2007 when Helen Rentoulis, the owner of Vicki's Diner in Westfield, noticed that Mr. Bogart had stopped coming into the diner for his customary two meals a day. She also recalled that Mr. Bogart had told her that Richard Garcia was helping him with his bills. Ms. Rentoulis then called the Westfield Police Department.

A search warrant of the Garcia's home turned up bank documents belonging to the Garcia's and to Mr. Bogart, as well as Bogart's wallet and jewelry, authorities said. A legal guardian was appointed for Mr. Bogart as a result of the investigation.

Mr. Bogart is a lifelong resident of Westfield and once served as the town's tax collector.

## Mountainside BOE

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Mountainside district to serve as superintendent of the Matawan-Aberdeen regional school district. Mr. O'Malley's original resignation date was slated for Friday, May 16. However, his departure has advanced and he has agreed to be available for consultation, school officials said.

Mrs. Baubles said that her focus will be on a "commitment to excellence," and said that it is a "gift to lead" those in the Deerfield and Beechwood schools. The board hired RLF Associates at \$3,200 to conduct a search to fill the Deerfield principal vacancy.

The board also announced an open house at Mountainside schools today, April 10, and said that a copy of the proposed budget for next year should arrive this Friday or Saturday for public review.

In the upcoming election on April 15, three candidates, Lauren Emblad, the daughter of current board member Carmine Venes, Cathy Jakositz, and PTA President Carolyn Williams are vying for the two open seats.

## Westfield Council

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well as declining revenues, the town will use its entire available surplus, \$3.89 million, and pull more than \$326,000 from its sale of assets account to fund the budget.

Responding to a question from Fourth Ward Councilman Tom Bigosinski about the effect of dipping into these accounts, Mr. Caruana said doing so could impact the town's bond rating but, more importantly, means that the town is "depleting two valuable asset accounts."

As another cost-saving measure, by reducing four full-time posts to part-time positions and cutting a full- and part-time job each, the town will save roughly \$95,000. While hesitant to reveal specifics about the cuts, Town Administrator Jim Gildea did tell the press following the meeting that personnel reductions would occur in the areas of public works, administration, police and fire.

Between the initial budget presentation in late March and Tuesday, the town cut its proposed budget by almost \$494,000.

"We had to make the unenviable decisions and find creative ways to cut," Mr. Gildea said. "When you look to 2009, we'll need all the help we can get."

Calling this "by far the most difficult budget" he had tackled, Mr. Caruana said that a \$379,000 drop in revenue, \$200,000 of which was caused by declines in construction, had compounded the issue.

Giving an overall assessment of where the town stands, Mr. Caruana said, "Taxes can take care of the spending...but we have to concern ourselves with the declining revenue," Mr. Caruana said.

"Sadly," he said, "the solution is simple" — the town must cut programs, services and personnel.

To increase revenues, the town will examine all user fees currently in place and increase rates that it can control, including parking fines, "as soon as possible."

Mr. Caruana proposed, and the council agreed to, introducing an ordinance change that would effectively bump \$20 overtime parking fines to \$32 and change the language in the ordinance, capping the figure at \$50.

Mr. Bigosinski cautioned that there are no assurances that the augmented rate would translate into increased revenue. He said the plan did not take into consideration that the proposal might be seen as "too aggressive" and "perceived as hostile to shoppers."

He said if there was some empirical evidence that changing the rate "would create a boon, I'd be less uneasy."

Mr. Caruana handed out a sheet that compared Westfield's \$20 rate to that of 10 other Union County towns. Only Roselle Park, at \$17, charged less.

Mr. Caruana said Westfield is "below market" in terms of its parking fines.

"The bottom line is that these are individuals breaking the law...all we're doing is enforcing the law," he said.

Fourth Ward Councilman Jim

Foerst said, "no one is excited" about raising the fines but did not think the amended rate was "too extreme." Mr. Foerst reasoned that for people who get a \$20 overtime-meter ticket and do not pay it right away, they already pay \$31.

Explaining that the state takes \$11.50 of every \$20 ticket, Second Ward Councilwoman JoAnn Neylan said the move was made as a way to generate more revenue. Westfield is not a "utopia," she said, and is not "exempt" from the difficult budgetary climate that all municipalities are facing.

Third Ward Councilman David Haas, who, along with Ms. Neylan and Third Ward Councilman Mark Ciarrocca, served on the finance committee, agreed with Mr. Bigosinski that the council does not know what the revenue or behavioral impact of ratcheting up the rate will be; however, he supported the move and said his decision was "guided by" seeing rate comparisons with fellow local towns.

Mayor Andy Skibitsky acknowledged that there is "always a risk" when making such a change, but said, "Ideally, maybe, downtown parking would be more dynamic, and more spaces will open up."

Mr. Gildea said, at present, some employees would sooner accept two \$20 tickets a week than pay for a parking permit. Now, that attitude might change, according to Mr. Gildea.

Mr. Bigosinski also sought to make sure that the public be notified of the change, so people are not caught unaware.

Town Attorney Robert Cockren responded by saying the parking fine increase would be "the first of many, many, many increases of this type...to take the position you're taking, Mr. Bigosinski, that there is some sort of due process notice that is associated with every one of the increases set a bad precedent...If we're going on a public campaign of notice for each and every one of them, we're going to spend the entire year doing that and not enacting the increase" that the finance committee deems necessary.

Mayor Skibitsky assured Mr. Bigosinski that through *The Westfield Leader*, the town's website and TV-36, the public would be alerted.

Anticipating a \$200,000 increase in Police and Firemen's Retirement System pension payouts, which will no longer be exempted from the cap, and a \$600,000 jump in RVSA charges, Mr. Caruana forecasted 2009 to be "frightening" from a budget perspective.

He also estimated that after the 2009 budget cycle, the town's surplus could drop from the 2006 \$4.6 million to \$700,000. If the projection holds true, it would represent an 85-percent plunge since 2006. That, according to the first ward councilman, would be a "painful" scenario.

Mr. Caruana described the situation — when factoring in diminishing revenues, a levy cap and declining state aid — as like "playing with 35 cards in the deck."



**SPOT SNARED...**Spot, the three-foot-long alligator, was captured last Thursday in Plainfield during State Police and Plainfield Police raids to arrest 91 street thugs. Also seized were \$18,000 in cash, a dozen handguns, bulletproof vests, a stun gun, heroin, cocaine and marijuana.



## POLICE BLOTTER

### Westfield

Tuesday, April 1, a resident of the 200 block of Livingston Street reported that two of the tires on his motor vehicle were punctured while the vehicle was parked in his driveway.

Wednesday, April 2, Anabela M. Ferreira, 23, of Union was arrested on a Scotch Plains traffic warrant following a motor vehicle stop on the 400 block of North Scotch Plains Avenue. She was transported to Westfield police headquarters, processed and released after posting \$81 bail.

Thursday, April 3, Hamood Rashid, 27, of New York City was arrested at Westfield police headquarters on a Westfield traffic warrant. Rashid was released after posting \$130 bail.

Thursday, April 3, an attempt was made to pass a bad check at a bank on the 500 block of North Avenue, East. The individual who tried to pass the check was described as a white male, approximately 25 years old, five feet, eight inches tall and wearing a wool cap and thick rimmed glasses.

Friday, April 4, James Griffin, 34, of Linden was arrested during a motor vehicle stop at the intersection of South and Central Avenues on multiple outstanding fugitive warrants.

He was turned over to the Plainfield Police Department in lieu of a criminal warrant in the amount of \$7,456. Griffin also had traffic warrants outstanding from East Brunswick, for \$630; Elizabeth, for \$580, and Watchung, for \$500.

### Scotch Plains

Friday, April 4, a resident of Warren Street reported that someone broke the side view mirror on his motor vehicle while it was parked in front of his house.

Friday, April 4, Brian Tinsley, 24, of Newark was arrested and charged with possession of marijuana after being stopped for a motor vehicle violation. According to police, he was processed and released after posting bail.

Friday, April 4, a resident of Tussell Lane reported that someone used his credit card without authorization to order approximately \$700 worth of items.

Friday, April 4, a resident of Scotch Plains reported that someone removed a lawn ornament from her front yard that was valued at approximately \$600.

Saturday, April 5, Eric Henricks, 26, of Plainfield was arrested and charged with hindering apprehension after being stopped for a motor vehicle violation. According to police, Henricks attempted

to give officers a false name. He was transported to police headquarters where he was processed and released after posting bail, police said.

Saturday, April 5, Michael McCrea, 18, of Westfield was arrested and charged with burglary after officers responded to a report of a suspicious male seen breaking into a parked motor vehicle. According to police, McCrea was transported to police headquarters where he was processed and released after posting bail.

### Mountainside

Wednesday, April 2, Daniel W. Gorczyca, 44, of Mountainside was arrested at the Somerset County Sheriff's Office on an outstanding warrant.

Thursday, April 3, Charles W. Thomas, 53, of Rahway was arrested at the Rahway Police Department on an outstanding warrant in the amount of \$915.

Thursday, April 3, at 7:57 p.m., a patron of a Route 22 steakhouse reported that while she was dining at the establishment, someone smashed the driver side window of her motor vehicle and removed a GPS, an iPod and a Hewlett Packard laptop. The value of the window and the items is approximately \$2,350, police said.

Thursday, April 3, at 9:55 p.m., a patron of a Route 22 steakhouse reported that while she was dining at the establishment, someone smashed the driver side rear window of her motor vehicle and removed an I-Mac laptop. According to police, the value of the computer and the window is approximately \$4,750.

Thursday, April 3, at 11:54 p.m., a patron of a Route 22 steakhouse reported that while she was dining at the establishment, someone pried open the door to her motor vehicle and removed her insurance card. Although there were other valuables inside the vehicle, nothing else was removed, police said. According to police, an unidentified person was caught on video surveillance entering the victim's vehicle. The incident is under investigation, authorities said.

### Fanwood

Not available at press time.

### Garwood

Tuesday, April 8, Tatiana Darcy, 22, of Garwood and Brian Gogor, 26, of Union were arrested and charged with drunken disorderly conduct after police responded to a report of a disturbance on the 300 block of Hazel Avenue. Darcy also was charged with resisting arrest. Both were released pending April 14 municipal court dates.

## Council Races Set In FW, GW; Seven Vie for Congress

By PAUL J. PEYTON  
Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader

**AREA** — Council races in Fanwood and Garwood, Primary battles featuring a seven-candidate Republican race for the open 7th District Congressional seat and U.S. Senate battles in both political parties topped Monday's official filing deadline. Assemblywoman Linda Stender of Fanwood is running as the Democrat for the 7th Congressional District seat.

Expected to be a hotly contested race in Scotch Plains, council incumbents Nancy Malool (R) and Kevin Glover (D) seek the office of Mayor in the November election. Richard Samuel (D) and Mary DePaola (R) face off for the open council seat.

In Fanwood, incumbent councilwoman Joan Wheeler has filed for another term. Councilman Bruce Walsh (D) is not seeking reelection. Russell Huegel is seeking a seat as a Democrat. Fanwood Republicans running for council are Joel Stroz and Robert Manduca.

Garwood Democratic incumbents William Schadewald, 3rd and Walter Tucker are not seeking reelection. Running on the Democratic ticket are Jonathan Linken and Louis Petruzzelli. Democrats hold the mayor's office and have a 5-1 majority on the borough council.

Garwood Republicans Timothy Hask and Patricia Quattrocchi are seeking seats on the council.

In Mountainside, incumbents Keith Turner and Paul Mirabelli have filed for reelection to the borough council. Mr. Turner is seeking his fifth, four-year term. Mr. Mirabelli is seeking his fourth term.

The Republican Primary race in the 7th Congressional District features State Senator Leonard Lance (LD-23, Flemington), Kate Whitman, the daugh-

ter of former Governor Christine Todd Whitman; Scotch Plains Mayor Martin Marks; former Summit City Council President Kelly Hatfield, Tom Roughten of Watchung, A.D. Amar of Warren, a professor at Seton Hall University, and Darren Young of Summit, who is running on the ballot line with Senate candidate Murray Sabrin.

In the U.S. Senate race, four-term incumbent Frank Lautenberg faces a Primary challenge from Rep. Rob Andrews (D-1st, Haddon Heights) and Morristown Mayor Donald Cresitello in the Democratic Primary.

The GOP U.S. Senate race includes state Senator Joseph Pennacchio (LD-26, Pine Brook), former Goya Foods executive Andrew Unanue of Colonia and Mr. Sabrin of Fort Lee, a college professor.

Also filing Monday were 14 candidates for county freeholder. Incumbent Democrats Angel Estrada of Elizabeth, Rick Proctor of Rahway and Nancy Ward of Linden face opposition in the June Primary from Carmen Southward of Linden and Carlos Cedeno and Marlene Abitanto, both of Elizabeth and running under the banner "Democratic Change for Elizabeth." Also running are Armando Burgos of Elizabeth, under "The Time is Now" ballot slogan, and Diane Murray of Hillside, running under the "Insure Your Future" name.

Republicans running for freeholder are Roselle Park Councilman Michael Yakubov, John Russitano of Westfield and Joseph Franchino of Berkeley Heights. Krzysztof Nowak of Cranford, Dolores Makrogiannis of Scotch Plains and Jeffrey Payer of Summit seek the GOP nod under the "Constitutional Republicans Protecting the Liberty Platform" slogan with Mr. Sabrin.



Greg Ryan for The Westfield Leader

**DOWNED TREE...**A large tree fell on the house at 249 Munsee Way in Westfield last Saturday morning. Above, the fire department checks the structural integrity of the house and looks for downed power lines. Excessive groundwater may have been a cause for the tree's roof failure.