



NEWLY ELECTED ...Chairman Joan Papan of Scotch Plains and Vice Chairman Charles Lombardo of Garwood lead the 2008 RVSA Board of Commissioners.

RSVA Sewer Board

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

year member of the Kenilworth Republican Municipal Committee.

Ms. Abram is a life-long resident of Union County, residing in Springfield for the past four years.

She graduated from Northeastern University with a bachelor's degree in political science/law and public policy.

The RVSA is headed by executive director Michael Brinker, Jr. It is an autonomous agency that owns and operates a trunk sewer system and a

wastewater treatment facility in Rahway. The RVSA serves the member municipalities of Clark, Cranford, Garwood, Kenilworth, Mountainside, Rahway, Roselle Park, Scotch Plains, Springfield, Westfield and Woodbridge, and user municipalities of Winfield Park, portions of Fanwood and Linden.

Commissioners serve a staggered five-year term, and the chairmanship and vice-chairmanship of the RVSA rotate annually.

Westfield Town Budget

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

sions of six individuals - town attorney, board of adjustment attorney, planning board attorney, municipal judge, public defender and prosecutor, Mr. Gildea told *The Westfield Leader*.

Mr. Bigosinski said especially during such a "challenging" budget year, the practice of providing pensions to these individuals is "ripe for stopping."

Third Ward Councilman and Finance Committee Vice Chairman David Haas said because the town insisted on providing pensions for part-time salaried employees, he voted for the budget "with great reservations."

Mr. Caruana said while the state legislature has ruled that no new part-time employee shall be enrolled in the pension system, the legislature is "silent" on the practice of supplying pensions to existing employees.

"We interpreted that silence as keeping the status quo," Mr. Caruana said.

He also called the amount contributed, a figure less than \$10,000, a "diminutive sum," when viewed in the context of a \$37.9 million budget.

He said the town has a "sacred moral obligation" to make its pension commitments.

Mr. Bigosinski responded that Mr. Caruana had made an "incredible mischaracterization" of his point. Mr. Bigosinski said that he did not suggest that the town renege on past promises, calling that "ancient history," but end the practice of giving pension credits going forward.

Mr. Haas deemed the awarding of pension credits to part-time salaried employees a "bad fiscal practice" that creates future obligations.

Chamber of Commerce Urges

Westfield Council to Reconsider Fines

WESTFIELD - The Westfield Chamber of Commerce sent the following letter to the Westfield Council in response to town plans to raise fines for parking tickets.

"The Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce urges the Westfield Town Council to reconsider the proposal to raise parking fines in the downtown central business district. The Westfield business community is suffering in the midst of the most serious economic recession in the past 25 years. Vacancies are up; street traffic is down.

We respectfully remind the town council that their historic role has been to provide sufficient and adequate parking to facilitate a healthy economic climate downtown. Over the last 20 years; the town has turned away from their historic mission as the need for ratables caused the continuous granting of parking waivers justified by the anticipated arrival of one or even two parking decks. The town council even increased parking fees to offset the cost of these pro-

posed decks.

Now with the parking deck debacle behind them, the town council appears desirous of increasing parking fines rather than rolling back parking fees initiated to help finance the now-abandoned parking deck. The town council takes the shortsighted view that it will only be the frequent abuser who will be fined. Rather, it is our experience as business people, many of whom are in downtown Westfield, that it is the good customer, who upon receiving the first ticket, abandons Westfield for other shopping options. This is the story today as many of our merchant and restaurant owners share stories of their once-good customers who refuse to return to Westfield as a result of a bad parking experience.

To do what the town council now proposes is precisely the wrong thing at the wrong time and in the wrong place.

We respectfully urge you to reconsider.

Gary Goodman, Chairman
WACC

WF Bd. of Adjustment

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

on North Avenue to advertise its location since it is located at the rear of the building where customers cannot see them from the road. The ordinance permits signage attached to the wall.

Board Chairman William Heinbokel said, "We have a difficult property" in weighing the options. Sherry Cronin, director of the Downtown Westfield Corporation, spoke on behalf of the applicant for the necessity of the sign.

Three applications for a second-story addition were approved.

Dr. and Mrs. James Frost of 5 Raley Court will add on to their 15-by-11.7-foot kitchen and add closet space in the master bedroom over the kitchen. The variance was for a rear-yard setback of 20 feet, where 35 feet is necessary and presently the home has 30 feet.

Arthur and Margaret Debowski will gain a master bedroom, closet and bath on the second floor of their Dutch colonial home at 880 Dorian Road.

The board granted a variance difference of 0.97 percent of maximum coverage by buildings.

Roy Mandelbaum and MaryJo McShane will also add a master suite, walk-in closet and bath on the second floor to their 1927 bungalow at 934 Ripley Avenue. Their hardship was an undersized lot and home in comparison to neighbors. The board liked her attempt to retain the architectural integrity of the home.

Mark Doherty, a board member, said he did not see a hardship with an undersize lot as other homes in the area face a similar situation. The board unanimously approved the application.

Two one-story additions were approved for variances.

Risa Lower at 810 Prospect Street will add a sunroom on her side yard, which is an existing non-conforming setback of 5.2 feet, the same as proposed.

Robert and Kristin Winters will construct an expansion of their kitchen to make it a 10-foot, four-inch by 140-foot, seven-inch room on the rear of the property. The board had issues with the side of the house having minimal windows, creating a large blank wall. They required the owner to add a false-corner board at the vertical line where the addition meets the existing house to add an architectural interest.

Nineteen applications were scheduled for the Monday meeting, but time constraints caused the board to move the other 11 to next month.

Candidates Set to Battle for Seats Cranford Committee

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD - Mayor Robert Puhak and Commissioner of Public Safety and former mayor of Cranford, Michael Plick, both Republicans, are not running for re-election to the Cranford Township Committee. The current five-member committee is made up of all Republicans.

Christopher Drew and Mark Dugan are running on the Republican side. Daniel Aschenbach and Kevin Illing will challenge them on the Democratic ticket.

Mr. Drew is currently director of development and alumni relations at Queen of Peace High School in North Arlington. Also, he is in his second year on the Cranford zoning board. For the last two years, he has operated a private investigation and security firm out of Cranford.

In 1999, he retired after 12 years as a police officer of the emergency service unit with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey due to a serious injury that occurred while in the line of duty.

He holds a Master's in Education degree in Administration and Supervision from Seton Hall University. He has been an adjunct professor of criminal justice since 1999 at a number of schools, including his alma mater and Kean and Montclair Universities. He lives in Cranford with his wife and three children. He coaches youth sports such as soccer, basketball and baseball.

Mr. Dugan is an attorney at O'Connor, Morss & O'Connor in Union. He is licensed to practice law in New Jersey, New York, Washington DC and Pennsylvania. He gradu-

ated from Lehigh University in 1980 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business and Economics with a major in Accounting, and received his law degree from Benjamin Cardozo School of Law, in Manhattan, in 1984.

He has held board positions with many charities in the past and currently is a member of the board of the Occupational Center of Union County in Roselle. He is also on the finance committee of the Roman Catholic Church of St. Anne in Garwood, his place of worship, and involved in the Knights of Columbus in Garwood. He has also coached youth sports. He and his wife have three children.

Mr. Aschenbach was a former mayor of Cranford in 1993, 2001 and 2006. He served 15 years on the township committee and was finance commissioner for nine of those years. He is a member of Cranford's Centennial Village committee and the Flood Control Advisory committee, both of which he has held for the last years. He works for a Wall Street firm and covers credit issues, which he has done for 25 years. He holds a bachelor's degree in American civilization and history from Boston University, 1977, and a master's of public administration and finance from Rutgers University, 1983. He earned 48 credits towards a doctorate degree in public administration at New York University. He is president of the Patrick French Foundation and is married with six children.

Mr. Illing is secretary (2006-2009) of the Cranford planning board and was not available for comment.

Town Taxes, State Problems

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

that as property values rise, so, too, must municipal aid to local libraries.

"Maybe we'd rather keep that \$137,000 in our pocket to offset other spending, or maybe use it to provide safety equipment to fire and police," the mayor said, "but we don't have the authority to do that."

Later, the mayor said, "Government treats us like children."

Mr. Caruana said new budgetary rules and obligations from Trenton, combined with declining revenues, led to the \$38-million budget. On top of that, Westfield experienced a 10-percent reduction in state aid.

On the salary and wages side, Westfield started the budget process having to account for a \$440,000 spike.

By the end of the budget process, the portion of spending that Westfield controls rose 1 percent, and overall, expenses increased \$340,000.

Mr. Caruana said Westfield did an "outstanding job" and achieved a "remarkable feat."

To cut costs, the town will reduce four full-time posts to part-time positions and cut a full- and part-time job each, saving roughly \$95,000. Since 2006, the town has reduced headcount by the equivalent of eight full-time positions.

"There will be layoffs," the mayor said. However, he did indicate that no police or firefighters would lose their jobs.

When asked if the town could ask high-salaried executives to take pay cuts, Mayor Skibitsky said, "We don't have many executives. We do have some fairly well paid town employees. You could cut them 10 percent, and at the end of the day, it would not be a big effect."

The mayor said with a town workforce of 240, "to make true savings, you have to look at the employees."

Roughly 21 percent of a town tax bill goes to fund Union County government. Though the number is preliminary, the county tax levy is set to rise \$15.5 million, from \$238.5 to \$254 million.

Candidates campaigning for Westfield Town Council last year promised to interface with the county and attend freholder meetings in order to establish a relationship. So far, no Westfield official has done so.

When asked why, Mayor Skibitsky said, "We're probably busy on town business items. Some weeks, the finance committee meets three or five

times." The mayor said the freeholders' budgetary meetings, which included a Wednesday afternoon meeting and an upcoming Saturday morning session on April 19, are "not the easiest meetings to get to."

He did assure, however, that "we are trying to get people there on a regular basis."

Mr. Caruana characterized the county as "totally unresponsive" to the town's needs.

Westfield, along with other Union County municipalities, is "suffering from the abuse of one-party rule," Mr. Caruana added, laying blame on the all-Democratic freholder board. Union County citizens, he said, pay the ninth highest taxes in the country.

Locally, because of state mandates jumping by \$1.3 million and a burgeoning county tax levy, Westfield must find ways to offset the increases. Therefore, the town has voted to raise over-time meter fines from \$20 to \$32.

Mayor Skibitsky said he felt the \$32 charge was "not exorbitant" when looking at neighboring towns.

Mr. Caruana said the town has only three or four areas from which it can generate revenue.

"We're starting with people breaking the law," he said. "We thought it was a logical place to say, 'how can we help the community?' Doing so (raising the rate) allows us to spare the surplus and maintain programming."

Saying that \$11.50 of a \$20 ticket goes to the state, Mr. Caruana said he would not call money collected through parking tickets a "revenue maker."

When asked if the town should simply disband the practice if it becomes a break-even situation, Mayor Skibitsky said the town does not have the "optimal" amount of spaces and "must make sure the system is not abused."

The mayor said the town is "cognizant" of the importance of downtown Westfield and does not "want to be unfriendly. We want to encourage people to come to Westfield."

When looking to future budgets, Mr. Caruana said, "The political culture has to change."

Despite the establishment of a 4-percent cap on annual increases in the property tax levy, when asked if citizens should expect taxes to increase at a 4-percent limit, Mr. Caruana said, "Not anytime soon."

Area Votes on School Taxes And Candidates to BOEs

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

board member, by a margin of 154 to 108, to take the third vacant seat. Borough clerk Christina Ariemma noted that the Union County Clerk's Office will officially examine the write-in votes to determine if they are viable.

Mountainside voters approved a school tax levy of \$12.2 million by a tally of 528 to 302, to fund the total school expenditure of \$15,865,990 for next year. The school tax will increase by \$156 on a home assessed at \$162,700.

Vice President of the Mountainside BOE, Mary Beth Schaumberg, said she was "thrilled" that the budget "passed by a big margin and that the town supports the schools."

In the race for school board seats, Carolyn Williams, 506, and part-time special education teacher Cathy

Jakositz, 440, won the two open BOE seats. Coming in third was Lauren Emblad, the daughter of board member Carmen Venes, with 402 tallies. Incumbents John Perrin, BOE president, and Scot Worswick did not seek re-election. Turnout for the race was 19 percent out of 4,615 registered voters.

"I am very humbled and honored to be elected to the position," Ms. Williams said. "I thank my committee and the community for their support and look forward to getting to work." Ms. Williams, who is the current Mountainside PTA President, said she would "endeavor to rise to any challenges" as a new board member and would "keep the town's interest in mind."

Raynor Denitzio and Larissa Curlik contributed to this story.



ANTICIPATION...Mary Beth Schaumberg, left, of the Mountainside Board of Education and newly-elected board member Carolyn Williams wait for voting tallies Tuesday night outside the borough clerk's office Tuesday night.

POLICE BLOTTER

Westfield

Wednesday, April 9, the Westfield Police Department is continuing its investigation into the theft of lingerie from a store on the 200 block of East Broad Street.

According to police, a man and a woman, described only as Hispanic, asked a store employee for assistance with clothing. The man stayed behind while the woman and the employee went to another section of the store.

The employee then saw the man leave the store, apparently carrying clothing from the establishment, which activated the store alarm. In the wake of the man's exit, the female suspect was able to slip out of the store as well. Shop personnel subsequently discovered 70 pairs of underwear valued at more than \$525 missing from the premises.

Thursday, April 10, two women were arrested on charges of promoting and engaging in prostitution after Westfield police raided a business in a two-story building on the 300 block of South Avenue, East, at 7:20 p.m.

Police identified the suspects as Meilan Huang, 34, and Longshi Yu, 37, both reportedly of Westfield. They were transported to Westfield police headquarters, where they were processed and released after each posting \$1,500 bail.

According to Captain Clifford Aucter of the Westfield Police Department, the arrests were pursuant to an investigation by detectives over the past several months. He said the business involved was known as Acupressure Therapy Center.

In addition to the arrest of the two suspects, police also confiscated ledgers and credit card bills, as well as approximately \$500 in cash. Captain Aucter said the investigation is continuing.

Thursday, April 10, a Westfield resident reported his silver 2006 Lexus was stolen from a business on the 800 block of Central Avenue.

Friday, April 11, Nicholas Fierro, 20, of South Plainfield was arrested on a Piscataway traffic warrant after the vehicle in which he was a passenger was stopped at Central Avenue and Grove Street for motor vehicle violations. He was released after posting \$106 bail.

Fanwood

Wednesday, April 9, a resident of Cray Terrace reported that someone removed a bicycle from his unlocked shed located in his backyard.

Wednesday, April 9, Joseph Materek, 51, of Westfield was arrested on an outstanding Garwood warrant after a motor vehicle stop on Martine Avenue.

Thursday, April 10, Joseph Barone, 51, of Scotch Plains was arrested on an outstanding Newark warrant after a motor vehicle stop on Martine Avenue.

Thursday, April 10, a resident of 2nd Street reported that his wallet was stolen from his unlocked motor vehicle while it was parked in the street.

Saturday, April 12, Matthew Small, 46, of South Plainfield was arrested on an outstanding Union warrant after a motor vehicle stop on North Avenue.

Sunday, April 13, Jose Salvador, 22, of Laurel County, Md. was arrested and charged with driving while intoxicated after a motor ve-

hicle stop on Martine Avenue. According to police, he was processed and released.

Scotch Plains

Monday, April 7, a resident of Blue Ridge Circle reported that someone threw a rock, breaking the passenger side window of his motor vehicle while it was parked in the street.

Monday, April 7, John Coll, 43, of Berkeley Heights was arrested and charged with simple assault after police responded to a report of a disturbance. Authorities said police found Coll allegedly assaulting another man during an altercation. He was processed and released, police said.

Wednesday, April 9, a patron of a Lamberts Mill Road health club reported that someone removed her purse from her locker while she was working out. According to police, the purse contained several hundred dollars in cash.

Wednesday, April 9, a resident of Sleepy Hollow Lane reported that someone entered his motor vehicle and removed a GPS valued at \$290.

Friday, April 11, Demond Williams, 22, of Plainfield was arrested on an outstanding warrant after a motor vehicle stop. According to police, he was processed and released.

Sunday, April 13, Peter Paulsen, 46, of Millburn was arrested on an outstanding warrant after a motor vehicle stop. According to police, he was processed and released.

Sunday, April 13, a resident of Country Club Lane reported that someone entered her apartment and removed several thousand dollars in cash.

Sunday, April 13, Paige Horn, 40, of Plainfield was arrested and charged with possession of drug paraphernalia after being stopped for a motor vehicle violation. According to police, she was processed and released after posting bail.

Mountainside

Friday, April 11, the owner of a Route 22 tennis club reported that a suspicious white male was seen in the kitchen at the establishment. According to police, a case and a half of beer and two bottles of MD 20/20 were found in the refrigerator. Authorities said the alcohol did not belong to the establishment and the suspect disappeared without being identified.

Sunday, April 13, Russell Murdock, 58, of Lyons was stopped for speeding on Route 22, West, and subsequently charged with driving without a license. He was processed and released with a summons.

Newark Ex-mayor Sharpe James, Mistress Convicted of Fraud

At press time Wednesday, a federal jury convicted former Newark Mayor Sharpe James of fraud for conspiring to rig the sale of nine city lots to his mistress, who quickly resold them for hundreds of thousands of dollars in profit.

James' co-defendant and former girlfriend, Tamika Riley, was also found guilty on all counts. They face between four- and seven-year prison terms.

Both remain free on bail until sentencing, which was set for July 29 at 10 a.m.



COMING TOGETHER...The Mountainside fire and police departments faced each other in a charity basketball game Friday day at a well-attended event held at Deerfield School. Proceeds will benefit a fund for Wayne Cantagallo who is a long-time resident of Mountainside fighting multiple myeloma blood cancer. Donations can be sent to the Wayne Cantagallo Benefit Fund at the Mountainside Fire Department, 210 New Providence Road, Mountainside, NJ 07092.

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