

WF Confirms Two Cases Of MRSA at High School

By MICHAEL J. POLLACK
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — The Westfield Leader received word from Westfield High School (WHS) on Friday that there have been "two confirmed cases" of MRSA (Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus) at the school.

In the e-mail (see page 4), dated February 7, WHS nurse and Health Services Coordinator Margaret Teitelbaum informed parents and guardians of the bacterium's existence at the school but emphasized that a physician has treated the children and cleared them to return.

Ms. Teitelbaum wrote, "The high school has implemented aggressive cleaning and disinfecting protocols for all gym and athletic equipment." Last November, after receiving unconfirmed reports about the existence of MRSA at WHS, The Leader investigated the topic in a story published on November 8.

At that time, Ms. Teitelbaum acknowledged that there was a "rumor going around that a student had been diagnosed with MRSA."

However, Ms. Teitelbaum, at that time, said, "No student that I know of has it (MRSA). There have been no documented cases at this time." Reached last Friday, Ms. Teitelbaum again reiterated that there were no documented cases last November.

Megan Cornish, the public health nursing supervisor, also confirmed the two cases at WHS; she added that

both students were "asymptomatic" at the present time and pose "no threat" to others at the school. She said it is uncertain if the two cases are connected.

"We are not sure at this time if the two students received it from each other," she said.

Explaining that MRSA is spread through direct contact with an open wound, she stressed that it is not "airborne."

She said after the media's coverage of a Brooklyn student who died as a result of contracting the bacterium in October 2007, "people get worked up" when they hear the term MRSA.

Ms. Cornish stressed that the disease has been around for years.

"It's nothing to panic about," she added. "It's not that we're seeing it more, it's just being diagnosed more frequently."

In previous MRSA coverage by The Leader, Westfield Health Officer Robert Sherr said MRSA is "not usually passed in a normal class setting," he said.

He termed MRSA "serious but not quite what's being played up in the media."

He said that the existence of MRSA is more critical in a hospital or healthcare setting.

"It's more virulent because [patients'] immune systems are already compromised," he said.

In order to prevent MRSA, Mr. Sherr said, "The biggest key is hygiene...and adequate cleaning."



WINTER'S HANDYWORK...Snowfall became heavy Tuesday night, causing traffic and commuting problems. Schools were delayed in their opening Wednesday. A few inches of snow and sleet are shown on the sidewalks in downtown Scotch Plains.

Delayed School Openings Cause Some Confusion

AREA — Early Wednesday morning, area officials delayed school openings in Westfield, Scotch Plains-Fanwood, Mountainside and other towns — causing some confusion among parents due to the short notice. Icy roadways developed from Tuesday night's snow. By noon Wednesday, light rain turned the snow into slush.

A Westfield parent told the newspaper that there was a level of confusion and a possible level of disconnect between school administration and the townspeople. He said, "Wednesday morning may have been made a bit smoother for parents of Westfield schoolchildren if the board of education had made a better effort to more fully notify parents of the delayed school opening due to the weather. As a Roosevelt Intermediate School parent, I'm normally notified of alerts, including ones regarding delayed openings, via e-mail, but received nothing."

He did see the news on the Westfield BOE website but "only after a number of Roosevelt Intermediate School parents, who apparently didn't get that message, pulled up to the school at 8 a.m. and saw a deserted campus. Several kids milled about in confusion in the rain before the word spread that school wouldn't be opening for another 90 minutes."

Lorrie Korcek from the Westfield Public School Community Relations office said the community was notifi-

fied of the delayed opening through multiple mediums.

"It was on the BOE website (Westfieldnj12.org), and a message was up by 5:45 a.m. I checked the site, and between 5:45 a.m. and 6:45 or 7 a.m., there were 750 hits. So, people definitely checked the website."

She said it is the school's policy on closings and delayed openings to announce the information on the website, TV-36, NJ 101.5 and Channel 4 NBC TV.

"On the school calendar that every parent gets it says the school's hours of operation and the hours if there are delayed openings and where to locate announcements," she said.

She said on delayed openings, the start times are staggered — 10 a.m. at the elementary schools, 9:45 a.m. at the intermediate schools and 9:30 at the high school — "intentionally" to avoid traffic jams.

Students in the elementary schools are notified of delayed openings by phone.

"Once they leave the elementary schools, calls are not made," she said. "They're expected to check one of four locations. The message did go out."

She said at this point, there is no "automatic-message system" in place. She noted that there has been talk about implementing such a system.

"For now, we ask parents to check one of the four locations," she said.

County Prosecutor Discusses Crime

brag about it.

In order to assist police in apprehending suspected gang members, police cars in 17 Union County towns are equipped with computers that feature a program called "Infocop." When police officers enter a suspect's indicators, a photo appears.

"It's state of the art," he said. Mr. Romankow said wiretapping is "highly used" in his operation. He said, recently, Union County was rated as the fifth-highest wiretapped county in the country.

At times, his office interfaces with the federal justice department, Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), state police and the FBI. In cases involving drugs, his office interacts frequently with other agencies. He said wiretapping is also used as part of the nation's war on terrorism. He said the FBI works mostly with his office in organized-crime cases.

Mr. Romankow said there are many other types of crime his office prosecutes, including child molestation, sex crimes and human trafficking. As an example, in 2002, a Plainfield ring of Mexican women enslaved into prostitution was busted. Massage parlors with ties to prostitution were closed down recently, including some in Springfield. He said laws requiring these parlors to be regulated have been passed in numerous towns. Mr. Romankow said New Jersey has more "go-go" establishments than any other state.

He said each year, his office receives more than 500 reports of children molestation in Union County. These consist of children 13 and under. Crimes involving those older than 13 are categorized as sex crimes.

Human trafficking is an "enormous problem," with 15,000 to 17,000 people being trafficked into New Jersey each year. In many cases, women brought into this country illegally are sold into prostitution. Mr. Romankow said human trafficking is the third-largest crime problem worldwide.

When asked about identity theft, he said his office is not equipped to deal with this issue on a large scale and that the issue is a worldwide problem. Informing citizens about how to protect themselves on the Internet is what he hopes to do to

WF Schools Observe Presidents' Birthdays

WESTFIELD — The Westfield Public Schools will be closed Monday, February 18, and Tuesday, February 19, in observance of the birthdays of Presidents Washington and Lincoln. On Tuesday, February 19, teachers will report to school for staff in-service.

GW Planning Board Votes Down St. Anne's 'Manor'

By KATHY MARQUES
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD — At the January 30 planning board meeting, the board unanimously voted down the age 55-and-over, 47-unit, three-story condominium complex, dubbed "The Manor at St. Anne's."

James Ward of Ward and O'Donnell Management continued his presentation from the January 9 meeting to the planning board, requesting a use variance to construct the complex at the former St. Anne's School on Second Avenue.

Mr. Ward told The Westfield Leader, "The outcome is something I have to digest. I really wanted to construct the building."

He said he had not made a decision whether he would redraft his proposal and submit a new application to the board of adjustment. He had requested a use variance to allow the site to be used for residential construction; the formal site-plan application would have come later, if the use variance was approved.

Mr. Ward's attorney, Glenn Kienz from Weiner Lesniak LLP, said the project would have brought in \$400,000 a year in tax revenue for Garwood. The plan was to sell the units to Garwood residents, age 55 and older, at \$100,000 less than the cost to non-residents.

The complex also would have included an underground parking garage for 94 cars, with a monthly maintenance fee of \$198.

The 35-foot-high proposed project, if built, would have been larger than the St. Anne's School.

"Everyone seemed to like it, they just thought it was too big," said Mr. Ward.

More than 70 residents turned out for the meeting, voicing concerns over the building density and the additional traffic a condominium complex could create. Numerous residents stepped up to the microphone to address Mr. Ward. Some were in favor of the project but asked him

to scale down the project from 47 units to between 20 and 30.

"It's a great idea but not on Second Avenue," said resident John Bartolick, receiving a round of applause for his comments.

Resident Linda Koenig presented a petition with more than 85 signatures of residents who were in opposition of the construction. However, Mr. Kienz said, by law, they could not accept a petition for a use-variance grant.

"It's a nice building but too big for our town. Everyone keeps talking about its closeness to the train station, but not that many trains stop through here," said Ms. Koenig. "It's just too big of a project."

Resident Bruce Paterson called the project "monolithic" and "castle-like, with no break in the roofing outline. Something less dense would be better."

Previously, some residents were concerned about selling units to families, under the age of 55, with children. They thought the abundance of children would be a hardship to the school in that it could not handle the extra enrollments.

The board clarified that a state-mandated deed restriction would have put the seller in breach of condominium-association rules if he was to sell or lease the unit to anyone under 55.

Mr. Bartolick said, "The innuendo [that] 'children moving into Garwood is bad' is rather disturbing. Where would we be without our children?"

After about a two-hour meeting, the planning board unanimously voted to deny the use variance for the construction.

Board members agreed that the density of the building, traffic in the area and the citizens' concerns influenced their votes.

Board member Robert Pender told Mr. Ward to "not give up" because the site does need to be redeveloped. "It's a nice project, aesthetically beautiful, but I feel you're trying to squeeze too much into a building."

POLICE BLOTTER

Westfield

Sunday, February 3, Justine Quarataro, 31, of Rahway was arrested on the 100 block of Windsor Avenue and charged with disorderly conduct, after police responded to a report regarding an intoxicated woman. Quarataro allegedly became loud and uttered profanities as police attempted to get her medical treatment. She later was released on her own recognizance.

Tuesday, February 5, John Byrne, 24, of Elizabeth was arrested in a Prospect Street municipal parking lot and charged with possession of less than 50 grams of marijuana. He was released on his own recognizance.

Wednesday, February 6, Miguel Saucedo, 21, of Cranford was arrested on the 400 block of Central Avenue on an outstanding no-bail Union County Sheriff's warrant. He was turned over to the Union County Sheriff's Office.

Wednesday, February 6, Hurlston Richardson, 35, of East Orange was arrested during a motor vehicle stop at the North Avenue and East Broad Street plaza. He was charged with possession of cocaine, possession of cocaine with intent to distribute, possession of cocaine with intent to distribute in a school zone, possession of marijuana, possession of marijuana with intent to distribute, possession of marijuana with intent to distribute in a school zone, possession of drug paraphernalia and possession of hollow point bullets. He was released on his own recognizance.

Thursday, February 7, two people were arrested during a motor vehicle stop just over the town line on South Avenue, East, in Garwood, at the intersection of Maple Street. The driver, Dennis Kinney, 29, of Laurence Harbor was arrested on a contempt of court warrant from Aberdeen, with bail of \$350. Jamie Bohnenberger, 28, of Cranford was arrested on a contempt of court warrant from Union, with bail of \$1,000. Both posted bail and were released.

Friday, February 8, Mariella Amjadi, 23, of Westfield and Rachel Margolis, 23, of Edison were arrested on the 700 block of Central Avenue during the investigation of a motor vehicle accident. There were no injuries.

Each of the women was charged with possession of less than 50 grams of suspected marijuana. Margolis additionally was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia. Both were issued summonses and released on their own recognizance.

Friday, February 8, Brian Bednarek, 49, of Woodbridge was arrested at Central Avenue and Clifton Street and charged with driving while intoxicated (DWI). He was released to a responsible individual.

Sunday, February 10, Michael DeRosa, Jr., 34, of High Ridge was arrested and charged with DWI following a motor vehicle stop at North Avenue, West, and Tuttle Parkway. He was issued summonses and turned over to a responsible individual.

Mountainside
Friday, February 8, a resident of Summit Lane reported that someone obtained her credit card information and attempted to make \$15,000 worth of unauthorized on-line purchases from a Home Depot. According to police, the credit card company denied the charges and no further unauthorized purchases have been attempted.

Friday, February 8, Ian Austin, 37, of East Orange was arrested at the Essex County jail for an outstanding warrant in the amount of \$190.

Saturday, February 9, Craig S. Burns, 43, of Plainfield was arrested at headquarters for an outstanding warrant in the amount of \$250.

Saturday, February 9, Desiree V. Thomas-Moodie, 39, of Hackensack was arrested for soliciting without a permit on Longview Drive.

Scotch Plains
Monday, February 4 a resident of Raritan Road reported that she received several calls from someone asking about her personal business and then hung up.

Tuesday, February 5, a Route 22 business reported that a former customer had been repeatedly calling the business and then hanging up.

Wednesday, February 6, a Route 22 gas station reported that someone ordered \$6 worth of gas and fled without paying.

Thursday, February 7, the owner of a Park Avenue restaurant reported that someone entered the restaurant through the unlocked rear door and removed cash from a desk. It is unknown at this time how much cash was removed, police said.

Sunday, February 10, Sean Fuller, 21 of Dunellen and Mathew Stolz, 21, of Easton, Pa., were arrested and charged with simple assault. According to police, after responding to a report of a disturbance, police found the two fighting in the street.

Fanwood
Thursday, February 7, Ralph A. Guzzardo, 28, of Maspeth, NY, was arrested on outstanding Roselle and Scotch Plains warrants after a motor vehicle stop on South Avenue.

Thursday, February 7, Michal A. Cichon, 18, of Fanwood was arrested for shoplifting from a North Avenue convenience store and possession of a controlled dangerous substance (CDS). He was transported to headquarters where he was processed and released, police said.

Saturday, February 9, Antonio Decastro, 44, of Plainfield was arrested for driving while intoxicated (DWI) after a motor vehicle stop in the 100 block of South Avenue.

Saturday, February 9, Carlos M. Bueno-Diaz, 25, of Rahway was arrested for an outstanding Carteret warrant after a motor vehicle stop in the 100 block of Paterson Road.

Saturday, February 9, a 17-year old male juvenile from Scotch Plains was arrested for DWI and refusal to take a breath test after a motor vehicle stop on Nichols Court. According to police, he was issued a summons and released to a responsible adult.

Sunday, February 10, Thomas L. Rowell, Jr., 35, of Piscataway was arrested for DWI after a motor vehicle stop on Terrill Road. According to police, he was processed and released to a responsible adult.

Monday, February 11, Asia J. Hunter, 21, of Plainfield was arrested on an outstanding Boundbrook warrant after a motor vehicle stop on South Avenue.

Mountainside Schools

jecting to contract provisions for him to work part-time.

In other business, the BOE proposed a budget of \$14,830,640, with a tax levy of \$12,595,939, to be presented to the Union County superintendent of schools for review.

Last year's base budget was \$14,565,752, with a tax levy of \$11,694,735. The total budget prior to budget transfers was \$14,953,887.

"I think it is a lean budget. With a lot of uncertainty about what the state is going to do, and taxes, I think this budget is the best that we can do for the students," Raymond Haggard said.

The budget calls for four additional staff members to support state average class sizes. Those positions include two language arts teachers, a special education teacher and a teacher assistant.

Officials said the grand total of employees would then be 120. With the four additional staff positions the budget will be \$6,676,104. The budget also includes funds for the 104 students that receive special education, with tuition, transportation, out of district placement and services.

That totals around \$3.1 million. Other additions to the budget include \$37,000 in tuition reimbursement, \$23,000 in staff training, and \$14,000 in curriculum writing.

WF Bd of Adjustment Decides Fence Variances

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this limit, ranging in height from four feet, 10 inches to six feet.

Four neighbors came out to support the applicant.

"I think the fence is better than what was there before," said Patricia Volini, a neighbor.

"It adds to the style and beauty of our neighborhood," Kimball Avenue resident Thomas Nobile said.

Board member Chris Masciale said the posts were too high. He did agree that it is an attractive design and the fence is not massive in comparison to other variance requests of six-foot-high fences.

The majority of the board members approved the application, with Mike Doherty going on the record with a no vote.

"I would push to comply with four feet. I don't know if the hardship goes with the property. It's a personal hardship," Mr. Doherty said.

Mr. Yates claimed his hardship was the difficult removal process, since the piers are five feet below grade with steel reinforced concrete footings and anchored with permanent anchors.

"The historic [commission] looked at it and approved it," board member Bill West said.

The board also approved nine home additions with variances.

James and Judith Brucia, owners of 15 Stoneleigh Park, another historic district, were permitted to construct a two-and-a-half story addition contrary to the town's land use ordinance, which allows a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 25 percent and the present. The pre-existing FAR is 23.9 percent and the proposed FAR is 28.7 percent, modified from the earlier 29 percent as presented at the board's November meeting.

The applicant's architect met with the town's architectural review board to address design changes. With their suggestions, the architect changed the setback of the new addition to match that of the opposing side's setback, thereby removing a few square feet from the first floor and the finished attic space.

The historic preservation also approved the plan.

"It's of a scale of homes equivalent in this neighborhood," board chairman William Heinbokel said.

Carol and Vincent Clynne of 101 Barchester Way were approved to construct a one-story addition and a two-story addition. The proposed rear yard setback of about 17 feet is over the 40-foot requirement. The board said there was a hardship due to the unusual shape of the property.

Joseph and Mary Beth Doherty will add a second story to their raised ranch style home at 1731 Florida Street, which presently has an existing, non-conforming side yard setback of 8.8 feet, where 10 feet is required.

The board mandated that the owners either remove the non-conforming deck or reduce its size to conform to regulations. The town's ordinance allows a maximum coverage by above ground structures with a deck of 22 percent. The proposed application coverage is 25.3 percent.

Reading Is Good For You!



Westfield School Budget

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in The Westfield Leader, in mid-March once the executive county superintendent evaluates the submission.

In October of 2007, Governor Jon Corzine announced he would nominate 10 executive county superintendents, a new position charged with reviewing and approving school budgets, among other duties. This was part of his agenda on long-term property tax reform.

Union Executive County Superintendent, Carmen Centuolo, can revise, deny, approve and reallocate funds as she sees fit.

The board will have a public hearing on the budget Wednesday, March 19, at 8 p.m. at the Edison Intermediate School, during its Special Education Expo.

Board Chairman Ginny Leiz said the board had no choice but to schedule it on that date, as the state mandated the hearing occur during March 19 through March 27, and since the school is on spring break the week of March 24, and other holidays coincide, it was the only date available.

The school board election and public vote on the budget is scheduled for Tuesday, April 15.