

## County Mg. Releases \$436.8 Mil. Budget; Taxes to Jump 6 Percent

By PAUL J. PEYTON  
*Specially Written for The Westfield Leader*

ELIZABETH — Union County taxes will jump \$15.4 million under a \$255.3 million tax levy unveiled by County Manager George Devanney last week. The tax levy accounts for 58 percent of the county's total revenue stream to fund a \$436.8 million spending plan. The overall budget is up \$22.4 million over last year.

County taxes have risen from \$150.1 million in 2000 to \$255.3 million this year — an increase of \$104 million over an eight-year span. Mr. Devanney told reporters at last Thursday's freeholders meeting that the average county taxpayer would pay \$82 more in county taxes this year.

He said county employees' health insurance, up \$2 million, pensions, up \$6 million, \$9 million in salary increases and an ongoing \$2-million operating deficit at Runnells Specialized Hospital represent some of the biggest increases in the budget.

"We are trying to make Runnells, once again, self-sustaining within two years," Mr. Devanney said.

He said Runnells is being transformed from an acute rehabilitation unit to a subacute facility for such medical procedures and conditions as joint replacements, hip fractures

and strokes.

"These changes are not expected to significantly change the hospital's financial status this year, but will permit a planned expansion that will allow Runnells to become totally self-sustaining by 2010," Mr. Devanney told the freeholders in his budget message.

He also cited a combined half-million-dollar loss at Union County's three public golf courses — Ash Brook in Scotch Plains, Galloping Hill in Kenilworth/Union and Oak Ridge in Clark — as contributing to the budget increases.

Mr. Devanney said state officials

leases and concession agreements to improve efficiencies at the county's golf facilities. He said the county would look to maximize usage of the courses, seek private investment to enhance the quality of its golf facilities and strive to increase attendance and community participation.

The county manager said he is requesting that non-union employees increase their contributions for health insurance by "as much as 1.5 percent of their salaries." These same employees will have their raises delayed until July 1. Mr. Devanney said that health insurance payroll deductions and delaying raises would produce \$1 million in savings. He said county employees have had payroll deductions for health care for 10 years.

In response to December's escape of two prisoners at the Union County jail, the county manager has recommended that a county department of corrections be created whereby the jail director would report directly to the county manager and the freeholders. Currently the jail director runs the division of correctional services and reports to the county's public safety director.

In addition, 51 corrections officers would be hired this year to improve the jail operations, as well as reduce overtime costs. Additional cameras have been installed and razor wire has been added along the jail's perimeter and on sub-roofs.

Under questioning by reporters, Finance Director Larry Caroselli said eliminating the tax increase this year would require significant budget reductions.

"There would have to be widespread layoffs," he said. The county has 3,000 employees.

"We would have to make significant cuts in our benefits costs," Mr. Devanney said, adding that the county would have to get concessions from its employee unions during labor negotiations to cut hospital coverage in health insurance premiums.

Mr. Devanney added that, "There would not be a department or service that would not suffer" if significant reductions occurred.

"[There] would be a lot of pain and heartache," Mr. Caroselli added. The county manager said he would meet with Freeholder Al Mirabella, finance committee chairman, to schedule budget meetings, with the goal of introducing the budget in April and adopting the spending plan in May.



**COUNTY BUDGET...**The Union County freeholder board will soon begin budget and county tax deliberations. Members of the freeholder board are shown as they took office in January.

have recommended the county look to management contracts, operating

## WF Council Votes to Refer Historic Pres. Ordinance

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

WESTFIELD — The town council, under the direction of acting mayor Mark Ciarrocca, voted last Wednesday to allow the historic preservation ordinance in its current form to be sent to the planning board and historic preservation commission for review. A resolution formally referring the matter will now be placed on the next public meeting's agenda.

The historic preservation commission and former town planner Judith Thornton had sought to bring the ordinance, dating back to 1984, "up to code" and align it with current state statutes.

On Wednesday, during his Code Review and Town Property Committee report, Councilman Jim Foerster turned the discussion to the overarching recommendations of the commission.

First, he spoke about situations in which the commission seeks to designate a single home as historic. In such cases, "consent" of the individual property owner is needed to advance the process. An owner has "veto power" in cases of individual homes.

In matters of potentially historic zones (districts), the historic preservation commission would send a no-

vice to all houses in the designated area. There would need to be a 75-percent affirmative response from district households before the zone could proceed further.

If the 75 percent were met, the commission would forward a request for review to the planning board, which would carbon copy the council.

The planning board would review the case; if it felt the matter was appropriate, it would be sent back to the council.

At that point, a protest mechanism does exist. If 20 percent of homes in a given zone protest, it "raises the bar for passage," according to Mr. Foerster. If the 20 percent were met, in order for the zone to be designated as historic, the area would need the approval of a supermajority (6-3), not the usual majority (5-4).

During council comments, First Ward Councilman Sal Caruana said he had a "concern" that an individual homeowner can veto the designation of his or her home, but in the case of zone designation, "if 75 percent agree, it's enough to bring the designation to the next level...An individual must be given further recourse [to protest]. I ask the planning board to focus on that aspect of the ordinance."

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## Local Officials Weigh In on Plan for State Fiscal Crisis

By DEBBIE MADISON  
*Specially Written for The Westfield Leader*

AREA — Two weeks after New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine hosted a town hall meeting in Cranford, at Union County Community College, presenting his four-pronged plan to rescue the state from the verge of bankruptcy, state Assemblywoman Linda Stender issued a press release opposing the Governor's proposal to hike tolls on three of New Jersey's major highways.

She said she "is opposed to Governor Corzine's toll hike." While agreeing that "efforts to reduce our state debt and ending the practice of spending beyond our means must be made, it is unreasonable to penalize residents and businesses that solely rely



**DOUGHNATIONS...**Rotary Club President Darielle Walsh and Pancake Chairman Ed Shen mix up a batch of pancake batter to prepare for the Rotary Club of Westfield's Pancake Day. All of the proceeds go to the Rotary Scholarship Fund, the largest scholarship program in Westfield. Pancake Day will be held on Saturday, March 8, from 8 a.m. to noon at the Westfield Senior High School.

## Car on Mt. Ave. Leaves Roadway, Strikes 13-Year-Old Westfield Boy

By MICHAEL J. POLLACK & PAUL J. PEYTON  
*Specially Written for The Westfield Leader*

WESTFIELD — A 13-year-old Westfield boy remains in "serious condition" after he was struck by a car while walking on the sidewalk on Mountain Avenue Monday afternoon, Morristown Memorial Hospital spokesman Rob Seman told *The Westfield Leader* on Wednesday afternoon. He suffered head and internal injuries.

The office of patient information at Morristown Memorial Hospital, Tuesday morning, told *The Leader* that the boy was transferred to the Goryeb Children's Hospital at Morristown Memorial and was in intensive care.

Describing the incident to *The Leader* on Monday, Captain David Wayman said the boy, Michael Fitzhenry, and his friend, also 13, had just crossed Orchard Street and were walking northbound along Mountain Avenue around 2 p.m. when a 2005 Lexus sedan, driven by a 75-year-old Mountaintown woman, left the roadway and struck Michael, dragging him across the 25-foot width of Orchard Street before hitting the curb where the victim was dislodged.

"One boy apparently jumped out of the way, and the other was struck," Captain Wayman said on Monday. "He (the victim) is in the hospital in critical, unstable condition."

The boy was airlifted to Morristown Memorial Hospital. The woman was taken by ambulance to Overlook Hospital in Summit "for precautionary measures," Captain Wayman said.

Reached on Wednesday morning from the hospital, Paul Fitzhenry, the boy's father, told *The Leader* that he is "encouraged" by his son's "improvement."

As of Wednesday morning, Michael was taken off a ventilator and was breathing on his own. In addition, a chest tube, inserted for a collapsed lung, was removed.

"We believe it's a step in his recovery, and we feel good about the progress he has made in the last two days."

Westfield Captain Clifford Auchter said the woman, Nancy Bregman, was

aged electrical and water meters, "which caused water to shoot up in the air."

Captain Auchter said, "Clearly, we are treating it as very serious. We are in contact with Union County (the Accident Investigation Team), Kenilworth and Linden's police departments (the crews who responded). The accident is under investigation."

Mr. Fitzhenry requested that the newspaper mention the work of Thomas Streko, a dentist, and Malcolm Schwartz, a urologist, who tended to Michael and cleared his airway when he was unconscious.

Dr. Streko, whose office was damaged from the oncoming vehicle, came out to help the boy immediately. Dr. Schwartz works across Orchard Street.

"I can't say enough to thank those



**SERIOUS ACCIDENT...**On Monday afternoon, a car driven by a Mountaintown woman on Mountain Avenue near Orchard Street in Westfield left the road, struck a young boy and smashed into the brick wall of the building at 169 Mountain Avenue. The 13-year-old Westfield boy struck by the car was seriously injured.

released Tuesday morning after suffering head and leg injuries.

"She is cooperating fully with the police. We still are in the preliminary stages of the investigation," Captain Wayman said.

Captain Wayman said after hitting the boy, the car continued to advance and eventually struck the lower level of a brick building, which houses a dental office, at 169 Mountain Avenue. The accident occurred across the street from the entrance to Mindowaskin Park.

He said the front of the car went through a basement window and dam-

aged two doctors who treated Michael," his father said. "Their fast response was critical...and key to his recovery."

Mr. Fitzhenry also thanked volunteer rescue squad members for their "tremendous support."

Westfield Superintendent of Schools Margaret Dolan, when reached for comment on Michael, a seventh grader who attends a private school in Short Hills, said, "We were deeply saddened to hear of the automobile accident which seriously injured one of our Westfield children yesterday. We hope and pray for his complete recovery."



**SEEKING SUPPORT...**Seventh District Congressional candidate Kate Whitman, center, and her GOP opponents meet with Westfield Republican Committee members Monday at the home of Assemblyman Jon Brannick (L.D.-21, Westfield). See story on page 2.

## 'Historic' Westfield Moment



Michael J. Pollack for *The Westfield Leader* - December 20, 1984 archives

On Tuesday, December 18, 1984, the then-Westfield Town Council voted, by a 5-4 margin, to establish a "historical review commission" in order to, according to *The Leader* archives, "aid individuals and neighborhood groups in establishing designations of historic zones and landmarks."

According to the newspaper report, the adoption of the ordinance brought about applause from the "full-house crowd."

Mayor Ron Frigerio and Councilmen John Brady, Richard Bagger, Brian Fahey and Tom Quinn voted for the ordinance. Jubb Corbet, Bud Boothe, Raymond Stone and James Capone voted against its passage.

According to the meeting report, Mr. Stone "felt that compliance should be purely voluntary," and Mr. Corbet "asked that consent of 100 percent of residents be required to establish a zone."

## CSA O'Malley Says He Has 'Mixed Emotions' on Leaving

By MARIA WOEHRE  
*Specially Written for The Westfield Leader*

MOUNTAINSIDE — Mountaintown School Administrator Richard O'Malley said while he is sad to leave the borough, he views the Matawan-Aberdeen superintendent's post he has accepted as a career advancement move.

"I have mixed emotions," he said. "I love my job in Mountaintown. I love the people, students and the staff. But from a career standpoint, it's a great opportunity to do things at a larger scale," Mr. O'Malley told *The Westfield Leader* in a phone interview last week.

The BOE announced Mr. O'Malley's resignation at its February 12 meeting. Mr. O'Malley will resign

in June to assume his new \$173,000 post. In the meantime, he will continue his duties in Mountaintown while serving Matawan-Aberdeen on a part-time basis. Mr. O'Malley follows Bruce Quinn, who was in the Matawan-Aberdeen district for five years. *The Asbury Park Press* reported that Mr. Quinn resigned over what he claimed was a "divided" nine-member board of education (BOE).

The Matawan-Aberdeen BOE hired Mr. O'Malley at its February 11 meeting. However, three of the nine members of the regional school voted against Mr. O'Malley's appointment, saying the language of his contract

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