

WF Council Proposes Ways To Help Generate Revenue

By MICHAEL J. POLLACK
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD - Heading the call from Finance Policy Committee Chairman Sal Caruana to enhance revenue and cut expenses, two town council committee chairmen have proposed concepts in which the town could realize savings.

Public Works Committee Chairman Jo Ann Neylan is recommending a resolution, to be read at next week's public meeting, to codify a new proposed policy regarding sidewalk assessments.

As it stands now, the town and a homeowner have a 50/50 payment

arrangement for sidewalk-improvement costs; the new policy would assess a homeowner 100 percent of the costs.

"While it would be wonderful to be able to provide these improvements without any cost to the homeowner, this policy still gives the homeowner the cost benefit and convenience of having the town provide the contractor, do the scheduling and work, and give the resident a three- to five-year period to pay," Ms. Neylan said.

She added that the "well thought out and decisive action by this committee would help the town deal with the financial situation that it now finds

itself in."

Mr. Caruana called the idea a "great contribution."

Under his Code Review and Town Property Committee Report, Councilman Jim Foerst proposed a "user-based" approach to utilizing the services of the town planner. He said applicants utilizing the planner's services should reimburse the town.

"You're using the benefits and the services that the Town of Westfield provides... Why should the Town of Westfield foot the bill for one particular person's benefit?" Mr. Foerst asked.

In addition to examining cost-saving measures, the Code Review Committee discussed how to tackle new COAH (Council on Affordable Housing) obligations.

First, regional contribution agreements (RCAs) have been eliminated. In an RCA, a town such as Westfield can satisfy a portion of its COAH obligation by giving money to a neighboring town, to establish affordable-housing stock in the region.

Assembly Bill 3857 says RCAs have "proven not to be a viable method of ensuring that an adequate supply and a variety of housing choices are provided in municipalities experiencing growth."

The bill calls for the establishment of a "Neighborhood Preservation Nonlapsing Revolving Fund," to ensure that funds are "utilized in a fair and efficient manner to promote the availability of affordable housing throughout the state."

In addition to the elimination of RCAs, under a new proposal, the formula for calculating the amount of necessary affordable units would change.

Currently, for every eight new market-rate units built, a town must provide one affordable unit. That arrangement could soon be doubled; if the proposal passes, a town would have to supply one affordable living unit for every four new market-rate units.

First Ward Councilman Frank
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Rahway's Pelissier Resigns As RVSA Commissioner

By WAYNE BAKER
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

RAHWAY - Rahway's current Business Administrator Peter Pelissier has resigned from the Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority (RVSA). Last year, Mr. Pelissier, who also serves as a consultant to the Rahway redevelopment agency, was ordered to repay \$330,000 in pension payments after state officials had discovered he retired to a 23-acre Montana ranch but was receiving almost the same income as a consultant to the redevelopment agency. He then returned to New Jersey.

The Westfield Leader contacted Mr. Pelissier for comment for this story but had not heard back by press deadline.

In a front-page story on November 22, 2007, The Westfield Leader reported that Mountainside commissioner Clark Landale took issue with Mr. Pelissier's efforts to push through privatization of the RVSA.

After Mr. Pelissier accused Mr. Landale of violating a government-ethics law, Mr. Landale said the positions Mr. Pelissier held "create a conflict, or the appearance of a conflict, in his duties as a member of this authority."

Other commissioners and authority employees had taken issue with Mr. Pelissier's previous efforts at privatization of RVSA's wastewater treatment facility.

An authority employee, engineer Anthony Gencarelli, had criticized the efforts to privatize the facility, telling the newspaper that he feared doing so would bring "opportunities for corruption at the expense of the ratepayer."

Documentation provided by Mr. Gencarelli showed that Weiner-Lesniak, serving as RVSA's counsel, made more than \$600,000 in 2007. Senator Ray Lesniak (LD-20), a partner in the law firm, is a long-time Democrat state senator from Elizabeth.

"I see that as a conflict," Mr. Gencarelli said. Joan Papen of Scotch Plains, who earlier this year was named the 2008 chairman of the RVSA's board of commissioners, said in a November 1, 2007, letter to the newspaper that she "can't help wondering what is the rush [to privatization]. Who is going



HATS OFF TO THE GRADUATES... After four years of hard work, over 450 members of the Westfield High School graduating class threw up their caps on June 19, in celebration of their achievements. For more, see goleader.com/photos.

'08 Graduates Look to Future, Bid Farewell to Westfield HS

By LAURA MORTKOWITZ
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD - Over 450 members of the class of 2008 graduated from Westfield High School on June 19 amid horns, cheers and the occasional beach ball. The ceremony featured speeches from students, Senator Tom Kean, Jr. (LD-21, Westfield), and interim principal Dennis Fyffe during his last year as principal.

The class of 2008's future path was the central topic of the evening, beginning with Class President Rachel Gant's speech.

"For the past few years our lives have been ruled by routine and familiarity," she said.

She added, "Now, as we graduate,

our lives are changing. A new chapter has begun. We are about to enter a world filled with the unknown."

Rachel addressed the age-old, over-asked question of, "What do you want to do with your life?" with the simple understanding that the graduates still have time to decide.

As her speech drew to an end, Rachel thanked all the people who helped push the graduates. While thanking the teachers for the challenges they put to the students, she joked, "Even if at the time the challenges seemed more like a pain."

James Seip, student council president, followed Rachel with his own take on what the graduates can expect in the future.

"We must live our own life," he said, "despite what my mother thinks of that."

He reminded the students that those rules they had in the past would no longer be there to keep them safely in

line. "Our adolescent bubble has nearly popped and we must face the world," he said.

After listing the many policies that they had learned and followed, such as warning bells, he ended with a heartfelt wish.

"Good luck and have a pleasant and rewarding lifetime," James said.

Before moving on to the guest speaker, Mr. Fyffe listed the great academic accomplishments of the graduating class. Among these were 28 National Merit Letters of Commendation, one National Merit Scholarship, 35 Edward J. Bloustein Scholars and 137 National Honors Society members. Furthermore, the following eight students graduated with a 4.0 GPA over their four years at WHS: Jordana Alter Confino, Renee E. Ferio, Evan Kyle Friedman, Tori Lynn Ma, Pratik M. Mehta, Marissa Hannah

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Renovations on Schedule; O'Neal Given Two-Yr. Deal

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD - Robert Berman, business administrator for the Westfield Board of Education, showed photos and gave a presentation about the renovations, which he said are on schedule, going on in the school district during Tuesday night's meeting.

The Early Childhood Learning Center at Lincoln School will have electronic locks with swipe card access on the exterior doors, a security camera and bell on the front door and a secure vestibule. The building was constructed in 1922 and asbestos was used for the pipe wrapping and caulking around the windows.

Last October the pipe wrap was removed and this month the windows were replaced. Workers are beginning removal of the "spongy" soil on the Lincoln driveway for school

buses, and some of it will have an asphalt surface and some areas will have sidewalks, Mr. Berman said.

Also, 20 restrooms were updated with new tile in primary colors, which coordinates with the classrooms and throughout the school. Student orientation is scheduled for September 2, and a ribbon cutting ceremony will be held September 20. Westfield Avenue is also scheduled for repaving this summer.

The board approved a bid award for furniture and equipment supply and installation for Lincoln School at a cost totaling \$144,003.

Roosevelt Intermediate School's library edition is underway and pillars and an archway were installed per the architect's plans, Mr. Berman said. New fire doors were installed and the hallways are planned to have new

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ONE LAST SPEECH... Westfield High School Student Council President James Seip addresses the Class of 2008 at the commencement ceremony on June 19.

Pictures of the Westfield High School graduates will be published in next week's edition of The Westfield Leader as will some Tuesday town meetings.

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Mike Pollack for The Westfield Leader

PROTEST FOR BENEFITS... Representatives of the teachers unions from Roselle Park, Westfield and Summit picketed outside Senator Tom Kean, Jr.'s office in Westfield last Friday. The New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) launched a statewide protest at the local offices of state senators on June 20 against three bills that would change pensions as the State Legislature wrestles with balancing the budget, minimizing layoffs and stemming tax increases.

He's Going to Jail July 29, Christie Says of Sharpe James

By HORACE CORBIN
Specially written for the Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD - U.S. Attorney Chris Christie said, "He's going to jail, July 29" referring to the sentencing of former Newark Mayor, and State Senator, Sharpe James, in an interview last Thursday with publisher, Horace Corbin, of The Westfield Leader and The Scotch Plains-Farwood Times.

"We're asking for ten to 15-year sentencing from Judge [William] Martini who presides over the case," Mr. Christie said. "That sends a message to all other politicians in New Jersey who think they are untouchable."

Unlike in state prison, federal prison inmates are not eligible for parole. 72-year-old James would likely be spending most, if not all, of the remainder of his life in jail.

When asked about James' two Silver Cloud Rolls Royce's, yacht and shore estate, and if the taxpayers will ever see any of their money back, Mr. Christie said, "Unlikely. What we've convicted him of is relatively small in the context of what you're talking about."

The 40-minute interview with Mr. Christie can be viewed at goleader.com/video.

For seven years, Mr. Christie has served as U.S. Attorney with his office located in Newark and branches in Trenton and Camden. He said even his mother confuses his job with that of state Attorney General (AG).

The U.S. Attorney is appointed by the President of the United States, confirmed by the Senate and is responsible for enforcing federal laws. The AG is appointed by the Governor

of New Jersey and is responsible for enforcing state laws.

Mr. Christie said he has a close relationship with recently appointed AG Anne Milgram. They confer once a week. He said she is a true professional and clearly understands the basis of prosecution. They often work together, as exemplified by the James conviction.

He publicly admitted to not always having a good relationship with the AG's office, so referring to those formerly in the position, Peter Harvey and Zulima Farber.

Mr. Christie said his opinion changed when Stuart Rabner was appointed as AG for one year, and now is Supreme Court chief justice, Mr. Rabner had worked for Mr. Christie in the U.S. Attorney's office.

With a 128-0 record of convicting corrupt public officials, Mr. Christie said he is proud of the accomplishments of his office. When asked why he did not press for more convictions, Mr. Christie said his office prepares a case and when they are absolutely sure they can get a conviction, they present the case to a jury.

"An indictment damages a person's reputation, so we want to be sure beyond a reasonable doubt," he said.

Mr. Christie said his office pursues cases regardless of political affiliation, a tactic that helps him to avoid the reputation former governor Eliot Spitzer developed as attorney general in New York, with his aggressive style.

Mr. Christie said he does not believe the state has turned the corner yet on the culture of corruption; however, the issue is foremost on many minds.

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David Samsky for The Westfield Leader

WHO'S GOING TO JAIL?... Westfield Leader Publisher Horace Corbin interviews U.S. Attorney Chris Christie on June 19 in the newspaper's office on North Avenue in Westfield.