

Christie Wins GOP Primary Over Lonegan; Bramnick, Munoz Win

By LAUREN S. BARR, PAUL PEYTON, JOHN MAGUIRE and RAYNOR DENTIZIO
Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader

AREA — Tuesday night's gubernatorial primary brought celebrations for former U.S. Attorney Chris Christie and Incumbent Governor Jon Corzine, who will now face off in the November General Election.

A gracious Mr. Christie, 180,630, thanked his primary challenger, former Bogota Mayor Steve Lonegan, 138,515, "for being a worthy opponent." He invited Mr. Lonegan and his supporters to join the Christie campaign to "take New Jersey back."

Mr. Christie told hundreds of supporters at the Hanover Marriott in Whippany that while he believes that Governor Corzine is a "good man and

well intentioned," he is "simply wrong for this job." He said that he understands that the people of New Jersey are hurting with unemployment at a 15-year high.

"I know you don't want government to hold your hand; you just want them to get out of your wallet," Mr. Christie said. He expressed the need for smaller government in Trenton, and called for an end to "petty politics" in favor of good ideas. Mr. Christie said he would work to make New Jersey more affordable for both residents and businesses, and end the influences of special-interest groups in Trenton.

Mr. Lonegan addressed more than 100 supporters, including former Scotch Plains Mayor Martin Marks at the East Brunswick Hilton, thanking them for their support and encouraged them to join Mr. Christie in his campaign for governor.

"We must have one common cause. We need to beat Jon Corzine," Mr. Lonegan said. "I will do everything I can to move the Republican Party to victory in November," he said. By capturing 42 percent of the light voter turnout, Mr. Lonegan argued that conservative values still matter to many New Jersey voters.

Incumbent Governor Corzine, who garnered 77 percent of the vote to squash his three little-known primary opponents, was joined by Vice-President Joe Biden for a campaign rally at the Richard J. Codey Arena in West Orange.

Mr. Biden's speech emphasized the economic bona fides of Mr. Corzine, the former chief executive officer of Goldman Sachs. He said that during the transition period following the election, he reached out to Mr. Corzine for advice on how to tackle the nation's economic crisis. "Literally, the first call I made for advice was Jon Corzine," Mr. Biden said. "I called him because he's the smartest guy I know in terms of the economy and finance."

The Vice-President said the nation cannot recover from the recession without New Jersey serving as "an engine." He credited Governor Corzine for helping to craft the nation's economic stimulus plan and for "creating the first economic recovery program in the country."

With the outcome of the Republican Primary still unknown as he took the stage, Governor Corzine focused his attacks on the party as a whole. He criticized Republicans for their stances on social issues, including gay marriage, and for their lack of support for President Barack Obama. He also blamed the Republican Party for the nation's current economic situation.

"While Republicans talk, Democrats and I delivered," Mr. Corzine said. "Come to think of it, the only things Republicans have delivered is the longest, deepest economic recession in 80 years."

A recent Quinnipiac University Poll shows 53 percent of registered voters disapprove of the governor's leadership. The same poll shows Mr. Christie leading Governor Corzine by a seven-point margin for the November election.

In addition to the gubernatorial race, there were Primary races Tuesday for the State Assembly in both Districts 21 and 22.

Assemblyman Jon Bramnick, 9,055, told supporters outside 16 Prospect Wine Bar & Bistro in Westfield that he predicted "a very large and landslide victory" for him and his running-mate, Assemblywoman Nancy Munoz, 8,554, over GOP challenger Bruce Meringolo of Long Hill, who received 2,546 votes. Long Hill Mayor George Viturera, who dropped out of the race, received 1,750 tallies.

Mr. Bramnick, seeking a fourth term in the General Assembly, said he hoped that "we will continue to provide to you that same attention, representation that we've had in the past."

Assemblywoman Munoz, who is seeking to retain her late husband Eric Munoz's Assembly seat, said she believed voters "saw that I am very experienced...and capable and confident to fill some very large shoes."

"I take it very seriously, this job," she said. "I will continue the work that Eric did and work with Jon."

Mr. Bramnick and Mrs. Munoz will face Democrats Bruce Bergen of Springfield and Norman Albert of Cranford, who were unopposed Tuesday, in the General Election in November.

In the 22nd Legislative District, Assemblywoman Linda Stender of Fanwood, 4,450, and Assemblyman Jerry Green of Plainfield, 4,127, easily defeated Rick Smily, 1,962, of Plainfield in the Democratic Primary. They will now face former Scotch Plains Mayor Marks and Bo Vastine, also of Scotch Plains, in November. Mr. Marks and Mr. Vastine were also unopposed in the Republican Primary.

In a local race, Mountainside incumbent Republican Councilman William Lane, 415 votes, and Robert Messler, 421 votes, easily defeated a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



LD21 GOP PRIMARY VICTORS...Asm. Jon Bramnick of Westfield, right, and Asw. Nancy Munoz of Summit pose with Sen. Tom Kean, Jr. of Westfield Tuesday night in Westfield at 16 Prospect St. Wine Bar & Bistro during their Primary Election victory party attended by more than 100 supporters from the region.

Freeholders Reverse Course On \$600,000 Dog Park

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader

ELIZABETH — The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders last week decided to scale back plans on some \$600,000 in improvements that had been planned for the county's dog park at Echo Lake Park in Westfield/Mountainside.

Freeholder Deborah Scanlon, chairwoman of the board's Open Space, Recreation and Historic Trust Fund Committee, said she sent a letter to County Manager George Devanney last Thursday requesting that the county "delay action on the current plan while we complete our research."

"We have and I have been reading the media reports and reviewing public input with regard to this proposed renovation of the dog park with interest and with concern," Mrs. Scanlon said. She said the plans were developed two years ago "under a significantly different economy."

"Clearly, the renovation is important and has great merit and would be a tremendous public attraction," she said. "Now, given the current economic climate, we get that the timing is not ideal."

In her letter, Mrs. Scanlon said she asked Mr. Devanney to have the county "take a few steps back and examine other options such as phasing in elements or using existing staff to complete some of the required work."

She said the board encourages "constructive public input" on improvements. "We are going to continue to work on it," Mrs. Scanlon said, noting that she has requested that the

county's parks staff increase maintenance of the dog park.

Freeholder Chairman Al Mirabella said the board has recognized that there is a "significant need to do something there," but should be less costly and extravagant than first proposed.

A group of residents attended the meeting to oppose the \$600,000 in proposed changes and agreed to work with the county on a less-expensive improvement plan.

Donna Madison of Rahway said the dog park is "a great facility as it is," although she hoped it could be made "a little safer for dogs."

Hillside resident Janice Feldman said she had concern of the "elaborate plan" for the park.

"No one ever consulted anyone who actually uses the park when those plans were drawn up," Ms. Feldman said.

Ms. Feldman, and other speakers, also questioned a \$1.5-million contract the freeholder board approved with J.A. Alexander, Inc. of Bloomfield to construct a new driving range at Gallopping Hill Golf Course in Union.

"Everybody is focusing on the money for the dog park, but nobody is focusing on \$1.5 million for a driving range in this economy. Is that really necessary?" Ms. Feldman questioned.

Mr. Devanney said it is estimated that the new driving range will attract more golfers to the county and generate an additional \$600,000 per year into the county's coffers in its first year of operation. "And that's why the county has decided to move for-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



VICTORIOUS...Republican gubernatorial candidate Chris Christie thanks supporters at a Primary Night victory celebration at the Hanover Marriott in Whippany. Mr. Christie defeated former Bogota Mayor Steve Lonegan to win his party's nomination to face Governor Jon Corzine in November.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



PROM SATURDAY...Students pose for photos before the Saturday evening Westfield High School prom. Pictured, from left to right, are: Ezra Margolin, Alyson Moskowitz, Kyle Barry, Mairead O'Boyle, James Hughes, Emily Budnick, Mike Abbattista, George Wharam, Briana Goncalves, Dan Russo, Grace Hanley, Adam Kavalin, Allie Lowenstein, TJ Mruz, Casey Reimlinger, Chris Yeager, Liz McCarthy, Mike Foley, Michelle Ball, Josh Perlman, Amanda Simmons, Kiran Patankar, Julie Yee, Max Sugarman, Annie Re, James Chu, Daryl Garfinkel. More photos will be published next week.

WFBOE Discusses Enrollment; Residents Address Layoffs

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Superintendent of Schools Margaret Dolan said at Tuesday's board of education meeting that Governor Jon Corzine has announced that schools will receive further cuts in state aid. The district was not notified yet of the dollar amount, but Ms. Dolan said it would be based on a sliding scale, determined by a district's wealth, and that the minimum cut would be 20 percent. She wrote a letter to the editor on the topic, see page 4.

The board of education had already approved many cuts in positions, including teachers and support staff, to meet school budget caps. Community members came out to speak about saving an elementary school teacher and a high school library secretary.

Emily Snitow, library coordinator at Westfield High School (WHS), spoke in favor of saving the library's secretarial position and stressed the importance of the position and how it correlates with higher test scores, achievements and reading levels. She said the library used to be manned by five staff members, but after an earlier layoff and the recent cut, it is now down to three librarians, without any support staff. This void in support, she said, would cut services such as inter-library loans and the library being closed before and after school.

Ms. Dolan said, "There is no doubt they need a secretary to support what they do."

A sophomore at the high school, Cory Lipschutz, said, "I feel it is a duty for the school to provide a quiet environment to complete work," saying the cut would push the library to close for certain periods throughout the school day. He proposed to the board that teachers be assigned on their duty period to supervise the library to "allow for a greater benefit to students."

Resident Jan Elby, teacher Judy McLaughlin, and parents Peggy Oster, Christine Mason and Pamela Orbach also spoke to the need for a support position in the library.

Ms. Oster, a Parent Teacher Student Organization (PTSO), said the PTSO had a meeting earlier in the year, and parents then said they "felt we needed more services at the library." She said that by losing the services that the secretarial position offered, "I don't think the high school would be the excellent system it could be."

The board said it would give the superintendent and administration some time to evaluate the position and its services.

Parent Mari Melao asked the board to consider third grade teacher at Jefferson School Sean Atchison, who was earmarked as one of the seven teachers' cut from the district, for any future openings. She said he is "dedicated to making students succeed." One of his qualities, she said, was he would set up morning study sessions before school on a test day to help those students in need of help.

Ms. Dolan also gave a report on school enrollment as it stands now. The high school will have an increase of 33 students next school year

over the current year. Edison Intermediate School will have a total of 751 students in 2009-2010, and Roosevelt Intermediate will have 779 students enrolled.

First through fifth grades will see a total of 2,547 students with 121 sections and shows a change of negative two.

Kindergarten at Lincoln School has an enrollment for 2009-2010 of 245 students in 12 sections over the a.m. and p.m. classes.

Ms. Dolan noted the first grade Franklin school enrollment in 2008-2009 is high at 23 and 24 and how in the last year the district attempted to attract parents to enroll children at

other schools in the district to help keep down class sizes there, but was "unsuccessful." So far, 2009-2010 shows class sizes there at 21 and 22. However, she said that first grade enrollment tends to increase over the summer.

Overall, general education in grades K-12 will have a total enrollment of 6,122, 35 more students over 2008-2009. With special education included, that number tallies 6,267.

Ms. Dolan said enrollment continues to grow but "not dramatically."

She also said children switching to the Union County Vocational-Technical Schools, where the district pays

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

State Backlog Causes Delay In Town Budget Adoption

By MICHAEL J. POLLACK
Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Because the state has not given its approval, the Westfield Town Council's vote on the 2009 municipal budget will be delayed at least two weeks. The council still conducted an advertising hearing on the budget, and no public comment was offered.

Finance Policy Committee Chairman Sal Caruana explained that state government reviews all budgets and then has the opportunity to offer comments to municipalities.

"We submitted our budget in a very timely fashion, and the state is weeks — if not months — behind getting back to municipalities with comments," he said.

"Our budget is a very simple budget relative to what the state is dealing with this year. You're seeing requests for waivers [to exceed the 4 percent cap]. You're seeing deferrals on pension payments. You're seeing municipalities exceeding budget caps," Mr. Caruana continued.

"Ours conforms to the state's requirements without exception," the chairman continued. "Where ours is

an easy budget to approve, they've decided to take the more problematic ones first...so, we don't have state comments or approval, and we're not in a position tonight to vote on the budget."

Town Administrator Jim Gildea has been in contact with the state on a near-daily basis, according to Mr. Caruana, in order to receive comments before the next public town council meeting on Tuesday, June 16.

Mr. Gildea recognized all department heads, supervisors and firefighters who were in attendance anticipating the budget's adoption.

"It's important to note that they're here," Mr. Gildea said. "They're here to listen. I want to thank employees for coming and listening. The employees and department heads are doing a great job in helping the town have a very sound budget in 2009."

The budget on which council members will eventually cast votes is a \$39.65 million expenditure, a \$1.77 million (4.69 percent) increase in expenses from last year.

The final recommended tax increase in Westfield is 6.12 percent

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



CAMPAIGN BEGINS...Governor Jon Corzine speaks to supporters on Tuesday night at a campaign kickoff at the Richard J. Codey Arena in West Orange with Vice President Joseph Biden at his side. Mr. Corzine will face Republican Chris Christie in November in quest for a second term.

PAGE INDEX

Regional	2-3, 10	Obituary	11	Real Estate	14-19
Editorial	4-5, 10	Education	8-9	Classifieds	21
Community	6-7, 11	Sports	13-18	A&E	22-24