



## Peyton's Peek at the Week In Politics

By Paul Peyton of The Leader/Times

### Governor Vetoes Latest Change Order Granted by SDA

Governor Chris Christie has vetoed a \$1.267-million change order approved on January 6 by the board of the Schools Development Authority for construction of a new addition to the Burlington City High School in the Burlington School District.

Total change orders for the project total \$18.825 million. The original contract price was \$28.7 million, and had the latest change order gone through, the project would have increased by 66 percent to \$47.5 million, according to published reports.

### Linden OKs \$2.5-Million Deal For Coal-Fueled Power Plant

The Linden City Council has approved a \$2.5-million deal to bring a controversial coal-fueled power plant on a 106-acre parcel of land on the banks of the Arthur Kill, the *Star-Ledger* has reported. Under a partnership called PurGen, PurGen may now apply for permits to construct a \$5-billion, 500-megawatt electrical plant.

For supporting the project, Linden will receive payments, beginning with \$350,000 this year, and amounting to \$2.5 million over the next five years. The city also will be funded for the cost of hiring private consultants to monitor the plant.

### Christie Skips Annual Trip to Washington, D.C.

The 73rd annual New Jersey Chamber of Commerce "Chamber Train" to Washington, D.C. went on last week though without Governor Chris Christie, who called the trip an unproductive "use of my administration's time."

"I don't know that it helps the state business climate for the governor to have an adversarial relationship (with the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce)," said Assemblyman John Wisniewski (D-Middlesex), the new state Democratic Committee chairman.

### Lee Solomon Named Head To Board of Public Utilities

Governor Chris Christie has appointed Camden Superior Court Judge Lee Solomon as the state's next head of the Board of Public Utilities.

According to newjerseynewsroom.com, Mr. Solomon headed the South Jersey U.S. Attorney's office when Mr. Christie was New Jersey U.S. attorney. He is also a former Camden

County prosecutor, was a Republican Assemblyman from 1991 to 1995, a Camden County freeholder, and ran unsuccessfully for Congress in 1994.

Senate President Stephen Sweeney (D-Gloucester) praised the appointment. "He simply is a hands-down outstanding pick..." Governor Christie also deserves to be congratulated for adding such a tremendous individual to his Cabinet," he said.

### Trial Begins for JC Dep. Mayor Charged With Accepting Bribe

The corruption trial of Jersey City Deputy Mayor Leona Beldini, 74, has begun. Beldini was one of 45 persons arrested in the largest FBI sting in New Jersey history. She is charged with accepting \$20,000 from a government informant posing as a corrupt developer. According to the *Star-Ledger*, Beldini had agreed to help the informant secure building permits.

Five rabbis, three mayors and two state legislators were among those charged in the FBI sting, although Beldini is the first to go to trial, according to the *Star-Ledger*.

### Sewerage Authority Director's Salary Ripped by Governor

Governor Chris Christie criticized the Passaic Valley Sewerage Authority for paying its executive director, Bryan Christiansen, \$313,000, making him the highest-paid employee in the state's pension system, according to *The Record*.

"If I look envious it's because I am. That's significantly more than I'm making to do this job," said Mr. Christie, who is paid \$175,000 as governor.

A transition report issued for the governor has recommended that pay and benefits at the sewerage authorities follow that of the structured compensation system of state government, the paper reported.

### Obama Cuts NASA Funding for Shuttle Replacement Program

President Barack Obama's proposed federal budget eliminates NASA's Constellation program that aimed to return humans to the moon by 2020 with the creation of Ares I rocket and Ares V cargo rocket, according to phly.org.com.

"The White House wants NASA to concentrate on Earth-science projects such as monitoring climate change and on a new technology research and development program that will one day make human exploration of asteroids and the inner solar system possible," the website reports.



**MAKING THE GRADE...**This photo of the First United Methodist Church in Westfield under construction is believed to have been taken in 1911. Also standing to the left at the time was the second church, in which the Town Clock originally resided. The clock and bell were removed and hoisted into the new tower using either horse or mule power, pictured at left. The second church, standing on what is now the parking lot, was demolished once the new building was completed. At the time, East Broad Street was at grade level. In later years, an underpass was built to carry the Central Railroad of New Jersey tracks overhead. So, East Broad Street was lowered by several feet to allow passage under the bridge. Thus, the church was elevated to an even higher point, where it rests today on the circle.

## Lance Reacts to President's State of the Union Address

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Rep. Leonard Lance (N.J.-7th) issued the following statement in response to President Barack Obama's State of the Union.

"I appreciate that the President's speech focused on the economy. However, freezing federal spending at last year's spending levels - the nation's highest levels in history - is simply not enough to get our fiscal house in order.

### Class Shows Fun Ways To Eat Fruits, Veggies

WESTFIELD - Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Union County is holding a free class titled "13 Ways to Eat More Fruits and Veggies for Better Health," on Thursday, February 25, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Union County offices in Westfield, 300 North Avenue East.

The class will be taught by Karen Enslie, a Rutgers nutrition expert who is the department head of the Union County Extension office. The class covers topics like fun salads and other "stoveless meals," and new combinations of fruit and vegetables.

The class is free but pre-registration is required by contacting Digna Torres at (908) 654-9854 or dtorres@ucnj.org.

"It's certainly a step in the right direction, but I'm deeply concerned that the President's spending freeze isn't strong enough. This is especially concerning given the fact that last year the non-defense federal spending increased by an unprecedented 22 percent - which totaled more than \$513 billion and doesn't even include the massive stimulus package.

"Regarding nuclear power, I appreciated the President's call for America to rely more heavily on nuclear power as an important clean energy alternative. I hope the President's words calling for more nuclear power will be matched with action."

In the House, Mr. Lance said his main area of focus has been addressing the economy and, especially, the area of debt reduction. Mr. Lance has introduced a package of bills designed to control federal spending and limit the growing national debt and deficits. Mr. Lance also said he opposes raising the debt ceiling without what he described as "meaningful action on reducing federal spending."

He said he has led the effort in the House calling for an up-or-down vote on congressional action to raise the debt limit.

## Demolition Set to Begin at Two Downtown Fanwood Properties

By TED RITTER  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

FANWOOD - Construction crews are expected to start demolition this month in downtown Fanwood, despite the February weather.

Mayor Colleen Mahr, at the borough council's monthly agenda meeting Tuesday night, reported that demolition of the Sovereign Bank building at 246 South Avenue is expected to take place "in the next two weeks...so, that's good news."

The borough is eager to incorporate this property into other existing and planned redevelopment ventures.

Also pursuant to downtown redevelopment, Borough Engineer Joseph Pryor said the asbestos at the Livingston Wilbor site, adjacent to Sovereign Bank, has been safely removed.

Mr. Pryor said the Fanwood Fire Department plans to use the remaining building at the site for training within the next few days, with demolition work set to begin on Monday.

"It should take about a week," he said.

The borough owns the Livingston-Wilbor site and plans to sell it to a developer. Both the Livingston-Wilbor and Sovereign Bank properties are seen as key pieces in the redevelopment of downtown, given their proximity to the train station and other new development.

In administrative business, the governing body discussed a review of borough fees to compare Fanwood's fee levels to those in Scotch Plains and limits set by the state's Department of Community Affairs.

Borough Clerk/Administrator Eleanor McGovern said the last full fees increase came in 2001. She believes Fanwood fees for permits, licenses, and other approvals are less than what Scotch Plains charges and

well below state limits.

Officials talked about whether or not higher fees would discourage permit applications, and if they could support fee increases. "That's something you have to look at," said Borough Attorney Dennis Estis.

Councilwoman Joan Wheeler requested that the borough engineer conduct a "survey" of the borough hall complex, which includes the police headquarters.

"There is a need to look at, I believe, all of the major building systems," she said.

Councilwoman Wheeler pointed to a series of "issues" with the building including plumbing problems, leaky heating and air conditioning systems, and other problems, especially in the police department's facilities.

"What we need is a five-year plan," said Councilwoman Katherine Mitchell, adding that such a plan would help address the most severe problems first.

Councilman Mike Szuch also suggested "this might be a good time to consider going green with the building" if major upgrades are required.

Mr. Pryor, who will begin a survey, noted the borough hall complex dates to about 1978, and he said most of the building's systems "are at the end" of their useful life.

Mayor Mahr said the council this month plans to reauthorize its contract with Jersey Professional Services, which is the borough's shared services coordinator with Scotch Plains. She said the firm reduced this year's contracts by one-third from last year due to the budget hardships faced by municipalities. Scotch Plains will split the \$2,200 contract.

"It's the money well spent there," said Mayor Mahr, who has made it a priority to seek out shared services opportunities.

## Bagger: New Jersey Can Again Be A Home to Growth

ELIZABETH - Richard Bagger of Westfield, chief of staff to Governor Chris Christie, told the Gateway Regional Chamber of Commerce last week that the administration is committed to reducing the size of state government, implementing fiscal restraint and restoring common sense to the regulatory environment that greatly impacts the state's business community.

Mr. Bagger was the keynote speaker at the chamber's 98th Annual Dinner held January 26 at the Renaissance Newark Airport Hotel. He offered the crowd of 400 business professionals a promise of an improved business climate for New Jersey under the Christie Administration.

He said the Christie Administration is committed to reducing the size of state government, implementing fiscal restraint and restoring common sense to the regulatory environment that greatly impacts the state's business community.

"New Jersey can again become a home to growth," he said. "Restoring fiscal sanity is an important step. Another important step is introducing regulatory reform...New Jersey's problems weren't created in a day but we don't have a day to waste in getting New Jersey back on track in making (the state) a home for growth."

Prior to serving 11 years in the state

Legislature, Mr. Bagger was a town councilman and later mayor of Westfield.

The chamber recognized three businesses at its annual dinner. Enterprise Rent-A-Car was named the Large Company of the Year. AmeriHealth New Jersey earned Medium Company of the Year honors, and Villani Bus Company was recognized as Small Company of the Year.

Enterprise Rent-A-Car rents more than one million cars annually and operates 7,000 offices throughout the United States and Europe, yet prides itself on being a local, community-minded company, according to Woody Erhardt, regional vice president.

AmeriHealth New Jersey provides health insurance coverage to employers and individuals throughout New Jersey through one of the largest provider networks in the state and earned top ratings for customer service and quality of care as part of the state's recent health plan performance report.

Villani Bus Company was founded in 1920 as a jitney service for local laborers in Linden and soon established the 44-bus line between the Linden and Elizabeth railroad stations that still runs today.

The Gateway Chamber comprises 13 regional and local chambers, including the Route 22, Kenilworth and Roselle Park chambers.

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Date: Tuesday, February 9, 2010  
Time: 7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.  
Location: The Westwood, 438 North Ave, Garwood, NJ 07027

Please RSVP to: Stewart A. Ritter, Senior Vice President - Investments, 908-789-7802 • stewart.ritter@wfsadvisors.com

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