

Westfield School Traffic Safety Discussion Set for January 27

By **KIMBERLY A. BROADWELL**
Specially Written for *The Westfield Leader*

WESTFIELD—The board of education (BOE) held a short meeting Tuesday evening before the start of the snowfall.

Board President Julia Walker said that there will be a traffic safety meeting on Thursday, January 27, at 7:30 p.m. in the Westfield High School auditorium. Residents are invited to attend the meeting on traffic and parking issues that affect the streets near Westfield High School and Edison Intermediate School.

A traffic safety consultant commissioned by the Westfield Town Council will hear from residents regarding their concerns and recommendations.

In addition to Mrs. Walker, Councilwoman JoAnn Neylan, Public Safety, Transportation and Parking Committee chairwoman, will be in attendance, along with other representatives from the school district and the town.

Mrs. Walker announced that in observance of the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., all Westfield public schools will be closed on Monday, January 17. She noted that an interfaith service will be held at the First Baptist Church at 1 p.m.

Preceding the service will be a procession assembling at the Martin Luther King monument on the South Avenue Circle at 12:15 p.m. Students will be given awards for essay, poetry and art submissions during the service following the march.

School Superintendent Margaret Dolan announced that after 45 years of custodial service at McKinley Elementary School, Giovanni Scelma will retire. His last day of employment will be June 30. Mrs. Dolan said Mr. Scelma had “provided service for the McKinley School with as much care as most of us do for our own homes.”

Westfield High School senior Katherine Frega addressed the audience, announcing that January 16 is now the official beginning of NJ Teen Cancer Awareness Week. Katherine stated that last May she was diagnosed with Stage 2B Hodgkin’s Lymphoma. She said that at first, she was misdiagnosed with arthritis. She found comfort in the support of students and teachers, and especially her fellow teammates and friends on the field hockey team.

She was able to re-attend the high school in October, and is “feeling great – emotionally and physically.” She said that she was active in the Tomorrows Children’s Fund at Hackensack University Medical Center, and thanked the council for the chance to promote the NJ Teen Cancer Awareness Week and everyone impacted by it.

Superintendent Dolan thanked Katherine, and noted that by bringing her story and request to honor the new Teen Cancer Week, “it makes us all more aware and helps to bring a quicker diagnosis, which can bring a quicker treatment.”

The next BOE meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 25, at 8 p.m. at 302 Elm Street in Westfield.



MORNING WALK...This deer family takes their morning stroll in the woods at Union Street bordering Garwood and Westfield.

Scanlon Elected Freeholders Chair, Mirabella Vice-Chairman for '11

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

ELIZABETH—Deborah Scanlon took leadership of the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders on Sunday as the board’s chairman for 2011. In addition, Linda Carter was sworn in as the newest freeholder and Dan Sullivan and Bette Jane Kowalski began their sixth and third terms, respectively.

Mrs. Scanlon, a Union resident, is serving her fifth term and was chairwoman in 2003 and vice-chairwoman last year. Ms. Carter, who was elected in November along with Mr. Sullivan and Ms. Kowalski, replaces Rayland Van Blake, who did not receive the Democratic Committee’s endorsement for a second term. Freeholder Carter was previously Plainfield City Council president. Freeholder Al Mirabella of Fanwood was elected as vice-chairman for the year.

Also sworn in to new terms on Sunday were Sheriff Ralph Froehlich, who has served for 33 years, and Union County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi, who has been clerk for 15 years after serving as registrar of deeds and

mortgages for 12 years.

A number of federal, state and municipal elected officials were in attendance, including United States Senator Robert Menendez (D-N.J.), Rep. Frank Pallone (D-6th), Rep. Leonard Lance (R-7th), Rep. Donald Payne (D-10th), state Senator Ray Lesniak (D-20, Elizabeth), Assemblywomen Annette Quijano (D-20, Union) and Linda Stender (D-22, Fanwood), Assemblymen Jon Bramnick (R-21, Westfield), Joseph Cryan (D-20, Union), Jerry Green (D-22, Plainfield) and Albert Coutinho (D-29, Newark), Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr, Cranford Mayor Dan Aschenbach, Westfield Councilman David Haas and Plainfield Councilman Adrian Mapp, a former freeholder.

Sunday’s meeting was held one day after the shootings in Arizona that killed a federal judge and a 9-year-old girl and seriously injured a congresswoman and two members of her staff. Her outreach coordinator also was killed, along with three senior citizens.

Mr. Pallone said it was important

that constituent services events, such as the one Rep. Gabrielle Giffords (D-Ariz.) was holding, continue.

“She was doing constituency outreach...It is really important that continues,” Mr. Pallone said, noting adults and children alike should continue to have the opportunity to meet their elected representatives. “We have to ensure that process continues.”

Speaking on the “rhetoric” of the national health insurance debate, Mr. Pallone said it was important that people think about what they say. He said violence should never be used as a tool to get a message across.

Rep. Lance, who represents 16 of the 21 towns in Union County as part of his Seventh District, said, “Government service is what is at the essence of our Democracy.” He quoted new House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) as saying the shootings were an “inhuman” and “heinous” act of violence.

Mr. Lance also mentioned the shootings of Congresswoman Giffords’ staff, saying that Congress-

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SECOND STORM...Downtown Westfield Wednesday morning is picture perfect after the storm Tuesday night deposited about eight inches of snow.

Developer Relieved of Agreement To Preserve Circa 1785 House

By **LAUREN S. BARR**
Specially Written for *The Westfield Leader*

WESTFIELD – In December the Westfield Planning Board voted 5-3 to allow developer Michael Mahoney to be relieved of having to preserve a circa 1785 house located on the corner of Karen Terrace and East Broad Street.

In 2000, the planning board granted Mr. Mahoney a fully conforming three-lot subdivision, and while it was not required of him, he agreed to move the existing structure, which has never received historic designation, to one of the three subdivided lots and restore the home.

According to reports in *The Westfield Leader*, it was estimated by Mr. Mahoney that the restoration of the house – formerly owned by the parents of former State Senator and current chief of staff to Governor Chris Christie, Richard Bagger – would cost upwards of \$75,000.

In the years since the approval of the subdivision, Mr. Mahoney has constructed two new single-family homes on the property and built a foundation for and moved the former Bagger family home, placing it up on cinder blocks.

In November, Mr. Mahoney came before the board to gain permission to demolish the house, saying that when he had the house moved, at a cost of \$40,000, he discovered that it is structurally “not in good shape.” After consulting with the town’s construction official, he hired engineering firm CEC, Inc. to evaluate the house, which he testified confirmed his findings that the house could not be saved.

Upon questioning by board members, Mr. Mahoney explained he did not get around to moving or fixing the house because he had “seven good years” of construction and there were other projects he was working on. Mr.

Mahoney also admitted to the board that “it was a bad deal” to agree to save the home and is something he regrets.

After the November meeting, the board hired Paul Beck of PBA Engineering, PC to evaluate the viability of the house. Mr. Beck cited a number of areas of the house that were severely deteriorated or broken, including the roof, rafters and second-floor framing. His report concluded that, “The cost to selectively remove the damaged materials, effect repairs to the structural and mechanical systems, and replace finishes will be equal to, or exceed, the existing value of the structure.”

Councilman James Foerst, the governing body representative to the planning board, voted against granting Mr. Mahoney the relief he sought,

along with board members Robert Newell and Mark LoGripio. Mr. Foerst told *The Leader* that while the board was split on whether Mr. Mahoney could have rehabilitated the house, it would likely be more of a replica than a restoration.

Mr. Foerst said that his “no” vote was because, if Mr. Mahoney had not agreed to restore the house when he applied for the subdivision 10 years ago, residents and neighbors would have had other legal options that are not available to them today.

Mr. Foerst also told *The Leader* that, “I don’t think there was anything nefarious” in Mr. Mahoney’s actions, given that he spent the money to move the home and build a foundation for it.

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Board OKs Chipotle For Former Leader Store Space

By **THOMAS S. FORTUNATO**
Specially Written for *The Westfield Leader*

WESTFIELD—The town’s planning board approved an application by Mexican restaurant chain Chipotle Mexican Grille on January 5 for variances involving two properties, one at 109 East Broad Street and the other at 112 Prospect Street, involved with the eventual installation of a Chipotle franchise at 109 East Broad Street.

Both these properties are owned by Westfield-based company, Al Spector LLC. Its managing member, Joseph Spector, testified at the meeting. Mr. Spector previously operated The

Leader Store where the restaurant is proposed.

Specifically, Chipotle, represented by attorney Max Sherman, needed variances for an oversized wall sign at the rear entrance to the building, the usage of concrete curbing in the parking lot as opposed to granite curbing, insufficient parking at both properties and maintenance of lighting fixtures in their parking lot.

According to Chipotle’s plans, the 109 East Broad Street property would be used as the store itself, while the 112 Prospect Street property would

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REORGANIZING...During Sunday’s Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders reorganization meeting, pictured from left to right, Photo 1: Officials, including U.S. Senator Robert Menendez (D-N.J.), far left, and Assemblyman Joseph Cryan (D-20, Union), watch the proceedings; Photo 2: 2011 Freeholder Chairwoman Deborah Scanlon of Union is pictured with her family, and Photo 3: Freeholder Bette Jane Kowalski of Cranford takes the oath of office for a third term from Robert Renaud.



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