

# The Angels came, the Shepherds came, the Wise men came, WILL YOU COME? We invite you this Christmas to worship HIM with us.

**St. Bartholomew the Apostle Church**  
 Very Rev. John J. Paladino, Pastor/Dean  
 2032 Westfield Avenue, Scotch Plains, New Jersey 07076  
 www.stbartholomewchurch.org  
 (908) 322-5192



### MASS SCHEDULE

**Christmas Eve**  
 3:30 pm, 5:30 pm,  
 7:30 pm, 12:00 Midnight

**Christmas Day**  
 8:00 am,  
 10:00 am, 12 Noon



**NATIVITY SCENE...**The Presbyterian Church in Westfield makes the nativity scene come alive for the community on December 2. Along with the nativity scene, young live animals were on the great front lawn for children of all ages to feed and pet. Two tiny kid goats stole the hearts of the little girls and boys.



**FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS...**Mayor Andy Skibitsky addresses the attendees at the annual Menorah lighting in downtown Westfield on Sunday afternoon, the second night of Chanukah, as Rabbi Levi Block looks on. A group of around 70 gathered in the rain for the celebration, which also was attended by Councilmen David Haas and Sam Della Fera. All three addressed the attendees with warm words of welcome and Chanukah messages. Robert Kuchner of Westfield also shared a D'var Torah with everyone. Following the lighting, everyone danced to the live music and enjoyed delicious Chanukah doughnuts and chocolate gelt.



**MEETING THE PLAYWRIGHT...**At the fundraiser for Liberty Live at Kean University on December 7, Westfield dignitaries meet E.M. Lewis, playwright of the one-act play *Liberty Live: Talking to Westfield*. From left, Superintendent of Westfield Schools Margaret Dolan, Westfield Mayor Andy Skibitsky, Kean professor and curator of the Westfield Historical Society Stanley Lipson, Mr. Lewis and President of the Westfield Historical Society Nancy Priest. See story on page 20.

## WF Council Sets Sewer Fees At Last Year's Rates

By LAUREN S. BARR  
 Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

WESTFIELD – During Tuesday night's meeting, the last of 2012, the Westfield Council unanimously approved another year of sewer fees for residents, along with settling a lawsuit that has been ongoing since 2009.

Next year, 2013, will mark the second year that Westfield will charge residents for sewer usage. Under the ordinance, fees will remain the same as in 2012: single-family homes will be charged \$170 per year, while condos and townhouses will be charged \$135 per unit. Commercial and industrial properties will be charged \$315 per year and apartments will be charged \$100 each for sewer usage. Sewer bills will be mailed by February 20, 2013 and will be due no later than April 1, 2013. The fees are being used to offset Westfield's bill from the Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority, which totaled \$3.6 million for 2012 and is expected to rise in 2013.

Former councilman Ken MacRitchie commented on the ordinance, saying that the ordinance, "creates a differential between condos and apartments" while their size may not be different. He also noted that Wychwood Gardens is a "cooperative," which is not mentioned at all in the ordinance.

Third Ward Democrat Councilman Dave Haas said that he would "prefer that we were basing the sewer fee on usage," but that he was pleased the council was only putting the fee forward for one year, and not creating something permanent.

Resolutions were approved establishing the meeting dates for all of next year's council meetings and setting the annual reorganization meeting for Wednesday, January 2, at 7 p.m.

Following a closed session with former town attorney Robert Cockren, the council approved a resolution allowing the mayor to sign a settlement agreement regarding Sunnyside versus Town of Westfield.

In 2009, Sunnyside Senior Housing of Westfield filed a lawsuit against the Town of Westfield and the Westfield Planning Board, alleging that its attempts to develop 1.5 acres at 206 Springfield Avenue in Westfield was "rebuffed" by the defendants. Steve Needle and Ray Rodgers are the owners of Sunnyside.

The suit was considered a "builders remedy" lawsuit, as the town did not have a fair housing plan approved under the regulations set forth by the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH). While the original proposal was for 60 housing units, the settlement will allow construction of 24 units, with four to be designated as affordable.

Fourth Ward Councilman Jim Foerst said that the settlement is an "equitable result."

Councilman Haas said that while Councilman Foerst praised Mr. Cockren, the town engineer and the town planner in closed session, they deserved public praise for their assistance in brokering this settlement.

During the public-comment portion of the meeting, resident Pamela Orbach was critical of the department of public works, specifically what she characterized as the lack of priority the department gives to leaf pickup in areas near Westfield schools that do not have parking lots. "I know they work hard, but I believe they need guidance," she told the council.

She also said that the "perception in the community is that it's unsafe to be a pedestrian." Ms. Orbach suggested that the police give warnings and ticket violations such as failure to signal, in order to better

educate drivers.

In other business, the council approved resolutions setting the meeting schedule for 2013. The new schedule will have conference sessions and regular meetings on the same nights, with conference sessions beginning at 7:30 p.m. and regular meetings at 8 p.m. Meetings will be held twice a month, with the exception of July and August, when the council will only meet once each month.

At the end of the meeting, Mayor Andy Skibitsky thanked council members for their hard work and presented them with their \$1 paychecks.

The council will meet next at its reorganization meeting on January 2.

## Freeholders

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not had an increase is inaccurate, noting that county employees received lifetime health benefits the past few years. The benefit was first offered to unionized workers in exchange for zero wage increases a few of the years within their union contracts. The benefit was later offered to non-union workers. Mr. Buettner said the benefit has cost the county over \$100 million.

The freeholders also passed a resolution authorizing that raises for non-contractual employees be increased based on the Consumer Price Index of 1.7 percent. Mr. DiRado said the board had not increased the CPI percentage for raises since 2006, with the board last authorizing non-union raises at the end of 2007 for 2008.

Summit Councilman Tom Getzendanner explained that Summit does its salary adjustments annually. "We don't let them bunch up for five or six years and we do so on a much smaller amount than 1.7 percent," he told the freeholders.

The freeholders also approved a resolution to accept a \$1,350,000 state Green Acres grant for development of Oak Ridge Park in Clark. Mr. Graziano said the money is a matching grant, meaning the county will have to spend the same amount of county funds for a minimum project total of \$2.7 million.

Mr. Faella said Mr. Graziano and Mr. Zuber have just started meetings to discuss final plans for Oak Ridge, a former golf course that was closed after posting a \$400,000 deficit. The county has hired Pinnacle Consulting & Construction Services to look at the various concepts in the Union County Parks Master Plan and produce a final construction plan. A parks master plan has proposed \$38.7 million in improvements, including \$16 million for a year-round ice-skating rink.

"As discussions take place and we have various plans, obviously that will be shared with the public (and) with the board in terms of what we are looking to do and what the costs will be," Mr. Faella said.

The freeholders also passed a resolution authorizing the Oak Ridge Sportmen's Association to remove deer at Ash Brook Reservation during the permit shotgun season from January 5 to February 9, 2013. The hunt is part of the county's Deer Management Plan.



Happy Holidays!

## GW Council President Sluka Concludes Two Terms

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE  
 Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

GARWOOD – The council passed resolutions Tuesday acknowledging the time served by Council President Keith Sluka and Councilman Timothy Hak on the governing body.

Democratic Committee Chairman Charles Lombardo presented Mr. Sluka with a gavel, which Mr. Sluka later tested out jokingly when the mayor said a few words about his service on the council.

Mr. Hak was out sick Tuesday. Each council member made remarks on Mr. Sluka's commitment to the council and the residents. Many acknowledged how his humor helped to lighten the serious discussions that had taken place at the dais.

Mr. Sluka highlighted a few actions that took place while he served on council.

"Not everybody agreed, but we did get the Athletic Field Complex...passed, which was a long, long journey," Mr. Sluka said. "I do think that is going to be a game changer." "It did take Governor Christie to help us get our budget under control. Any Democrat doubts that they are just towing the party line. I think it was important for us," he said.

He noted that shared services, which are still under review, would help the borough save money.

He said he did not run again because, "there are a lot of bright people in this town" and having an open seat gives an opportunity to those seeking to run for council.

The Garwood Council adopted, 4 to 1, an ordinance that fixes salaries and wages of certain officials and employees of the Borough of Garwood, effective as of January 1, 2012. The ordinance lays out the minimums and maximums of salaries and wages of a long list of staff of the borough, including but not limited to, the mayor, minimum, \$1,800, maximum, \$2,200; council, minimum, \$1,500, maximum, \$2,000; planning board attorney, minimum, \$6,000, maximum, \$9,000; public defender, minimum, \$4,600, maximum, \$5,200; and the municipal attorney, minimum and maximum, \$14,495.

Councilman James Mathieu voted against the ordinance because, he said, the cost of raises have gone up from some \$9,000 to \$11,000, and over one-third of the tax increase has gone to employee raises for 2012, as opposed to services.

Council President Sluka said he disagreed with the voting on salaries for 2012 on the last meeting of the year.

"It's unfair to the employees to banter about what the raises will be," he said.

"They should know what they're

working for," he said. "They should know how we value their work."

A special emergency appropriation of \$75,000 was approved through a resolution to fund the costs the borough incurred associated with Hurricane Sandy. Some \$40,000 was related to tree and debris removal, Borough Clerk Christina Ariemma said. There also was damage to the roof of borough hall and sidewalks throughout the borough.

The borough expects to be reimbursed by FEMA aid for most of the costs associated with Sandy, Finance Committee Chairwoman Sara Todisco said.

A groundbreaking ceremony for the Athletic Field Complex will be held this Saturday, December 15, at 11 a.m., Committee Chairman Louis Petruzzelli said.

The council passed, 4 to 1, a resolution for the compensation of police officers in the year 2013. Councilman Mathieu voted against the resolution. "I would love to see everyone receive 1 to 1 1/2 percent less and have another police officer on the streets in Garwood," he said. The borough has been short one police officer.

The council also passed, 5 to 0, the salary for Police Chief Bruce Underhill for the year 2013. The raise reflects a 1.75-percent increase, Ms. Todisco said.

Additionally, the council adopted a resolution regarding the settlement of a tax appeal to reduce the tax assessment of Garwood Associates LP by \$12,637 for 2012.

The Garwood Volunteer Fire Department elected officers for 2013. Fire Committee Chairman Petruzzelli said. Chief Wayne Frew, who served as chief for three years, has resigned from his position, and Michael Tharaldsen will take his place. Leonard Spina was elected assistant chief; Allan Tweedle, captain; John Scalzadonna, first lieutenant, and Jack McGuire, second lieutenant.

A resolution authorizing Buildings and Grounds to sign a service maintenance agreement with Quality Service Associates for a variety of HVAC equipment in the amount of \$6,945 was approved.

The council also passed a new resolution to include a snow removal reserve in the budget to be set at \$2,500 yearly, with any unused funds to roll over to the next year.

Mr. Petruzzelli said that in one recent snowy year, it cost the borough \$7,000 to remove snow from the downtown, and said the reserve would help in the years when snow is abundant.



**SAD FAREWELL...**Garwood Mayor Pat Quattrocchi says goodbye to Council President Keith Sluka at Tuesday night's Garwood Council meeting as he is leaving his council seat after serving two terms.

## Cranford Council

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ernment take them away will be getting notices from the local government informing them of the policy.

From a public safety standpoint, Mr. Campbell said it was important for large tree debris to be removed from the streets so that if a significant snowfall were to occur, snow plows would be able to safely and effectively clear the roads.

The committee on Tuesday approved several resolutions awarding contracts for storm sewer reconstruction work, specifically separating the sanitary sewer line from the storm water sewer, and Deputy Mayor Andis Kalnins pointed out the "importance" of these projects. "We pay our sewer fees to RVSA [Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority] based on the amount of water going into the sanitary sewer," he said. Stormwater runoff going into the sanitary lines raises those fees, so the new configurations at several locales in Cranford will help lessen RVSA fees.

Mr. Campbell said the locations approved this week were not the only places where the two systems were merged, but called this week's moves "a big step forward" in addressing the problem. Commissioner O'Malley called the sewer projects "a long time coming" and expressed his hope that they would help "lower our sewer costs."

The township committee voted to table until next year an ordinance regarding the designation of historic districts in Cranford because "some clarification and cleaning up of some issues" is still required, according to commissioner Lisa Aduabato. Last month, the committee enacted an ordinance spelling out the procedures under which a neighborhood can be designated as a historic district by the local historic preservation advisory board. An amendment to the ordinance, which was to be voted on

this week, would give homeowners in any potential historic district the right to object to the designation during a hearing before the historic preservation board, which would then advise the township committee of the objections.

Maureen Strazdon, who heads the historic preservation board, told the committee on Tuesday that the amendment "could lead to some confusion" among residents and said her group would meet with the planning board and other local officials to craft alternative and more clear language.

The committee also approved an ordinance mandating a checklist to be completed by those filing land development applications with the township zoning board of adjustment or planning board. Calling it a "common sense" move that "should have been done before," Deputy Mayor Campbell noted that the push for the checklist came about after an applicant before the planning board failed to fulfill certain requirements and "fell through the cracks," leaving the municipal government without any ways to correct the errors that had resulted.

At the beginning of the meeting, Mayor David Robinson presented proclamations congratulating James Sweeney and Edward Duffy on achieving the rank of Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts of America. The historic murals committee formally presented the township committee with four large murals depicting local history dating back to when the Lenape Indian tribe populated the area. The four murals, which have been hanging on the wall behind the committee dais for a number of months, were painted in the 1930s and were hidden away in storage for many years before being found and restored four years ago.

The township committee's final meeting of 2012 will be on Monday, December 17, at 7:30 p.m.

## Westfield Board of Education

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programs.

As was reported in last week's paper, the high school roof will cost \$4 million. Eighty-three percent of the roof is set to be replaced. Other roof replacements on the referendum included Roosevelt Intermediate School, Washington Elementary School, Tamaques Elementary School, Lincoln Early Childhood Center, Jefferson Elementary School, Franklin Elementary School, Wilson Elementary School, McKinley Elementary School, Kehler Stadium Field House and the board's administration building.

Tuesday's referendum sparked criticism by readers in last week's issue of *The Times*. E-mails were sent to parents by school principals warning that deep cuts in personnel and services would occur if the referendum was defeated. Several letters to the editor and an editorial decried this type of lobbying on the part of school officials. Possible consequences of the bond failure were posted on the district's website.

At Tuesday night's meeting, Mr. Mattesich said, "Regardless of what we learn later tonight, about the fate of the bond referendum, we will work together as a board, with or without the money to replace the roofs. *The Times*' editorial, last Thursday, accused the administration of trying to scare parents into voting for the referendum.

"It is true that principals e-mailed parents concerning the bond, but it was in no way meant to scare them.

E-mails are inexpensive, but we have made those statements to everyone in town." He also said, "The editorial accused us of acting unlawfully, and being guilty of a conflict of interest." He went on to say that all of the efforts of the board have been overseen by bond counsel.

"The public will hopefully speak out today," he added. "It is permissible to bond for roofs; the editorial suggested it is not legal." He also said, "The Westfield school system is efficiently run; we are permitted to go outside the budget." He argued several other points in the editorial and ended by saying, "Putting less than all the facts in a newspaper column in order to skew a vote is certainly wrong."

In other business, the board's auditor, Robert Morrison, gave the district a clean bill of health and complimented the board on its diligence in following efficient financial planning practices.

The board, by resolution, thanked board member Jane Clancy, who is retiring after serving for six years as a board member, for being dedicated, thoughtful and hardworking. After the meeting the board went directly into executive session. The next meeting of the board will be on Thursday, January 3, 2013, at 7:30 p.m. at the administration building on Elm Street.

The polls closed at 9 p.m., and the result of the vote was in the town clerk's office by 9:30 p.m. Board members were not available for comment.