

## Blaze Destroys Clyne & Murphy, Five Other Businesses in Westfield

By PAUL J. PEYTON and BETSEY BURGENDORF  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD – A six-alarm fire Sunday destroyed Clyne & Murphy Caterers and five other businesses located in a strip of one-level storefronts near the Westfield traffic circle. In addition to Clyne & Murphy, the two buildings were home to The Sound Station, Figaro's Hair Styling, Rocky the Taylor, Cobblers Bench Shoe Repair and Unmasked, a collectibles and comic book store. The buildings wrap around the corner of South and Westfield Avenues.

Authorities have ruled out arson as a cause of the blaze, which fire officials have traced to the dining room

of the catering business. William Root, the owner of the building, told *The Westfield Leader* that a preliminary investigation done by his insurance company, Hartford Insurance, has deemed the cause of the fire to be electrical in nature.

Mr. Root stated that the age of the electrical system varies from store to store. All the stores were closed at the time of the fire, but Clyne & Murphy had been open in the morning filling catering orders, Mr. Root said.

According to Westfield Fire Chief Dan Kelly, the first alarm came in at 3:32 p.m. and Westfield firefighters were on the scene within four minutes.

"There was heavy smoke coming

from the entire roof assembly of the main fire building over all five business establishments," Chief Kelly said. "There was visible fire in the rear dining room of Clyne & Murphy's."

Sixteen of 21 fire departments in Union County were either on the scene or providing backup at Westfield's two firehouses. One hundred and twenty-five firefighters were on the scene, including 30 from Westfield. Six ladder companies and 16 engines, including three from Westfield, were on the scene.

When firefighters arrived they had to force entry into Clyne & Murphy to bring a hose line into the main restaurant area, "where they were confronted by heavy fire up in the ceiling assembly," Chief Kelly said. Firefighters had to exit the building after fighting the fire from inside for 40 minutes when "conditions deteriorated rapidly," the chief said.

Chief Kelly said firefighters had to pump water from three different water mains onto the fire. "We had to shuttle water from the north side of town down through the traffic circle to the fire scene. We shuttled water from as far away as Central and South Avenue by the Tiger Mart...in addition to water mains that were used within the close proximity to the fire scene," Chief Kelly said. At the height of the fire he said firefighters "were flowing over 5,000 gallons per minute onto the main fire building."

Chief Kelly said the fire was brought under control by 6:44 p.m. and that firefighters were on the scene for 27 hours.

He said firefighters worked aggressively to stop the spread of the fire to two adjacent two-and-a-half-story, mixed-use commercial and residential, wood-frame buildings on either side of the strip of stores. Residents were able to get out of one of the structures, while firefighters rescued a dog from the other. The American Red Cross relocated two residents from an apartment, the chief said.

The 60-year-old, one-story, tin-lined shared cockloft structure, which had no firewalls, fire alarms or fire suppression systems, will have to be demolished, the chief said.

Mr. Root said his security alarm went off at approximately 3:30 p.m.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



Courtesy of Rich Mayer

URBAN LEGEND...An illusive fox has been reportedly seen near Orenda Circle in Westfield. This is proof that it actually does exist as he or she came out to take in the snow on Saturday.

## WF Vet Group Seeks to Demolish and Rebuild

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD – The Westfield Veterinary Group, under the RWM Family LLC, located at 562 Springfield Avenue, Tuesday night at the Zoning Board of Adjustment (BOA) special meeting showed plans to demolish the two buildings on its property, the main building and the kennel, and build one new veterinary practice. The plans would not retain the boarding facility.

The veterinary group sought preliminary and final site plan approval with c and d variances to demolish its one-and-a-half story veterinary facility, kennel and parking lot to build a new, three-story veterinary hospital with a new parking area, landscaping, lighting and signage. The hearing will continue at a later date, to be determined at the next BOA meeting, Wednesday, February 15.

The new building's footprint will be expanded to 6,800 square feet, said Site Engineer Thomas Quinn. Currently, the main facility is approximately 3,500 square feet. Parking would increase from 49 spaces to

59 spaces, where 81 are required.

According to plans shown by architect Barbara Vincentsen, the new structure was designed "to have a more manageable scale." The designs depict a pitched roof and a dormer "to give a look that is warmer and friendlier," she said. "It looks like a two-and-a-half story building," she said.

The first floor will hold two waiting rooms, examination rooms would be increased from five to 10 examination rooms, an office, a grooming suite, a lab, a pharmacy, a treatment room, a bathroom area, and a delivery area on the left side of the building.

"I have 10 doctors trying to utilize five exam rooms. It's impossible," said Dr. Richard Maus, owner of RWM Family LLC and owner of Westfield Veterinary Group, who has owned the business since 1985. "For every doctor seeing an appointment, you should have two exam rooms."

Since he took over the veterinary group it has grown from a three-doctor practice to a 10-doctor prac-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



Betsey Burgdorf for The Westfield Leader

VET REVAMP...The Westfield Veterinary Group, pictured above, presented a rendering to the Westfield Zoning Board of Adjustment on Tuesday of the new building with which it hopes to replace its current building on Springfield Avenue.



Photo courtesy of Dan Kelly, Sr.

MUTUAL AID...The help of surrounding town's fire departments was required on Sunday when a six-alarm fire ripped through a row of businesses on South Avenue West in Westfield. The fire, which originated in Clyne & Murphy, completely destroyed the buildings, gutting them and rendering them uninhabitable.

## WF Council Discusses Town Clocks, DWC Events, South Avenue Fire

By LAUREN S. BARR  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD – Resident Ralph Rapuano, Jr. asked the town council at Tuesday night's council conference meeting for formal approval to construct a clock at the intersection of East Broad and Elm Streets, as well as another at the South Avenue Train Station.

Mr. Rapuano, who was joined by his father Ralph Rapuano, Sr. and realtor Jayne Bernstein, who formed the group Friends of the Westfield Clocks said that they had met with the Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC) and gained their approval of the projects. He told the council that his group has filed for a 501c3 tax status, but has not gotten approval yet. He said they have raised \$13,000 and have another \$23,000 committed for the projects.

The cost of the clock for the East

Broad Street location would be \$35,000, with another \$5,000 in installation costs and approximately \$450 a year to run and maintain the clocks. He said installation of a clock at the train station might cost twice as much due to other items that need to be moved as well as electrical issues.

Councilman Dave Haas questioned if the council would want to see the group set aside funds for the mainte-

nance and operation of a first clock before the council has approved a second one.

Councilman Jim Foerst said that he did not believe the council had given a definite approval of the locations.

Mayor Skibitsky asked Councilman Foerst, as chairman of the Code Review and Town Property Committee, to add it to the agenda and review all of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

## Westfield BOE Members Discuss New Election Law

By KIMBERLY A. BROADWELL  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD – After a lengthy discussion at Tuesday evening's board of education meeting, members of the Westfield Board of Education (BOE) decided not to take action on the new election law until more public input can be gathered.

Legislative Committee Chairperson Ann Cary gave a presentation regarding the law that was signed by Governor Chris Christie just nine days ago. In her presentation, Mrs. Cary noted

that the new law, which takes effect immediately, "establishes procedures for districts, municipalities or voters to opt to move the annual school election to November and eliminates the vote on school budgets for such districts." This she noted was only if the school budget stayed within the 2-percent cap.

Mrs. Cary also stated that according to the new law, the only way the election could be moved is by either a school board resolution, a town council resolution or by a public vote only if

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

## County Looking to Speed Up Processing of Prisoners

By PAUL J. PEYTON  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

COUNTY – The Board of Chosen Freeholders last Thursday was asked by the county's jail director to move forward with the implementation of a computer software package to help speed up the processing of inmates and reduce the daily prisoner population at the county lockup.

A study conducted by Florida-based Luminosity last year determined that while the number of prisoners being sent to the jail has decreased 23 percent since 2005, the prisoner count at the jail has remained at 900. Altogether, the average jail population averages 1,000 as another 100 inmates in county custody who are nearing the end of their sentences are housed at alcohol and drug rehabilitation facilities in Newark.

Union County Director of Corrections Brian Riordan has said his goal is to reduce the prison population by 10 percent, or 100 prisoners. At last Thursday's meeting, he said the jail was only designed for 520 inmates and now needs major rehabilitation to the kitchen, currently underway, and the showers. In order to complete the work to the showers, 138 prisoners would be moved to the former county juvenile detention facility across the street from the jail.

Mr. Riordan said he hopes to avoid moving prisoners by reducing the in-

mate population, as he would need to either hire additional correctional officers at a cost of \$1.7 million, or increase overtime by \$3 million to cover the additional jail housing during the 18-month jail improvement project. Director of Human Services Frank Guzzo said the county could save on the \$3-million contract the county has with Essex County if it did not have to house 100 prisoners daily at Delaney and Logan Halls in Newark.

A software package, called Jail Population Analysis Wizard, is to be implemented as part of a new \$158,304, one-year contract with Luminosity, which is expected to be voted on tonight, January 26, by the freeholder board. Also included in the contract is for the firm to implement its other recommendations to lower the jail's population. Marie Van Nostrand of Luminosity

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

### Tax Office Open Late

WESTFIELD – The office of the Westfield tax collector will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Wednesday, February 1, for the collection of property taxes.

The last date to pay without a penalty will be on Monday, February 6. Interest will be charged beginning on Tuesday, February 7.

Those with questions should call (908) 789-4051 or e-mail taxcollector@westfieldnj.gov.



RELAXING...After the stress of giving the State of the State on January 17, Governor Chris Christie had dinner in Westfield and stopped into 16 Prospect Street Wine Bar and Bistro for a surprise drink, much to the delight of the crowd. Pictured with Governor Christie are proprietors Tim Boyle, left, and Chris Boyle.

### PAGE INDEX

Regional .....	2-3	Education .....	9, 17-18
Editorial .....	4-5	Sports .....	11-16
Police .....	6	Real Estate .....	11-15
Community ...	6-8	Classifieds .....	18
Obituary .....	8	A&E .....	19-20





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