

GW Freezes Longevity Benefits, Rejects Athletic Field Bids

By **CHRISTINA M. HINKE**

Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD – The borough council on Tuesday for the second time voted 4-2 to adopt freezing longevity benefits for non-bargaining unit employees. Councilman Victor DeFilippo and Councilwoman Sara Todisco dissented.

Last year, the council put forth the same vote, and subsequently Mayor Patricia Quattrocchi vetoed the council vote to approve freezing longevity benefits.

Tuesday night, ordinance 12-02 was passed. It is the same ordinance by definition the mayor vetoed in December 2011. The council voted on two ordinances, 12-02 and 12-03, introduced two weeks ago, to revise the longevity benefits to non-union employees.

Under ordinance 12-02 the borough would no longer provide longevity benefits to any present or future non-bargaining unit employee. Ordinance 12-03 was defeated 4-2. It would have prohibited new employees in the non-bargaining unit hired after January 1, 2012, to receive longevity benefits. Non-bargaining unit borough employees hired prior to January 1, 2012 would continue to receive benefits. Ordinance 12-03 was introduced January 10, 5-1 with Council President Keith Sluka dissenting.

"I'm disappointed with the way it went tonight," Mayor Quattrocchi told *The Westfield Leader*. When asked if she would veto the vote again, she replied, "I don't know."

Longevity benefits activate when a borough employee has been employed for five years.

During the public meeting, Mr. Mathieu reproached Mayor Quattrocchi for having "poor communication" by not putting forth this ordinance, 12-03, last year. "I wonder why this solution was not proposed by you, mayor, last year?" Mr. Mathieu asked. "I think that this points to a larger problem in our leadership."

In relation to personnel, Ms. Todisco proposed an employee evaluation policy for non-union borough employees.

The council also rejected the bids for the Athletic Field Complex Project and authorized Borough Clerk Christina Ariemma to re-advertise for the project.

As a result, the Little League will be having its season at the field, Athletic Field Complex Project Committee Chair Louis Petruzzelli said.



Area Residents Make Dean's List at Wake Forest University

WINSTON SALEM, N.C. - The following local residents were among over 1800 students from Wake Forest University who made the Fall Dean's List:

Joyce Kechner, a resident of Cranford; Allison Sharkey, a resident of Westfield; Robert Ciarrocca, a resident of Westfield; Kathleen Esler, a resident of Westfield.

During committee reports, Ms. Todisco said the finance committee would have a preliminary budget this week. March 9 is the deadline to introduce the budget with adoption on April 20.

School Board Liaison Sluka said Garwood residents would receive a discount to fees for services at the Westfield Area Y location to open in the Washington School. The Garwood Board of Education announced last week that they have agreed to a five-year lease agreement with the Y to use the school for pre-school, day care, after-school programs, a fitness center and other programs.

Board Attorney Joseph Triarsi in the workshop meeting said he expects the litigation with The Pointe to culminate in the spring. The judge assigned to the case, he said, feels she needs testimony in regards to the internal roadways or driveways of The Pointe.

Mary Wolf of North Avenue, who lives on a bend, said her vision of the roadway when exiting her driveway is blocked because of cars and SUVs parked on the street. She asked the borough to have someone come and look at the problem.

"We'll tackle that as well in Laws and License meeting," Mr. Sluka said.

Mark Enz of Cedar Street in Cranford asked the borough to seek more train stops in Garwood on weekends. Mayor Quattrocchi responded that she is currently working with NJ Transit on adding stops.

Probitas Verus Honos

CF Mayor Vows to Block Birchwood Development

By **FRED T. ROSSI**

Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD – Mayor David Robinson said on Tuesday that he personally was "not hopeful" that Cranford would prevail in its bid to have a judge reconsider her December ruling that the controversial Birchwood Avenue housing development could go forward. But he said the township's recent legal maneuverings and efforts were part of the municipality's strategy for "building the best case we can for any appeal" if its bid for reconsideration is turned down. "We want to win," the mayor said at Tuesday's township committee meeting. "We want to prevail." He said the township government will "exhaust any remedy we have" to prevent the development from proceeding.

Last Friday, Superior Court Judge Lisa Chrystal heard arguments from the township and from Cranford Development Associates LLC, the Birchwood Avenue developer, in the latest round of the municipality's opposition to the plan to build 360 housing units in what local officials and many residents see as a severe flood zone. At Tuesday's committee meeting, Township Attorney Phil Morin said no decision was rendered at last week's hearing but that he expects a written opinion "within a short period of time." He expressed thanks to residents who provided input to him about effects of flooding on the Birchwood neighborhood, noting that many comments were incorporated into the township's legal brief filed last week.

Mayor Robinson – in response to a resident's query about the Cranford Board of Education (BOE) possibly weighing in on

the potential impact of 360 housing units on the local school system – said he would be surprised if the BOE did so. Another resident said it was important to make the court aware of the increased costs to the township if the development goes forward.

In other business, the township committee passed a \$1.173-million bond ordinance that Deputy Mayor Andis Kalnins said would be used to fund the various tax appeals that were settled in 2011. He pointed out that the municipal government is responsible for financing all of the tax appeals even though more than three-fourths of local property taxes go not to the local government but to the board of education and the county government. The township committee also introduced an ordinance increasing various swimming-pool utility fees, with a public hearing set for Tuesday, February 28. The committee additionally appointed Robert P. Donovan to provide alternate municipal prosecutor services.

Two resolutions were passed authorizing bids for the refurbishment of the lower level of the municipal building that was severely damaged by Hurricane Irene last August. That portion of the building "took quite a beating," said Commissioner Kevin Campbell. He said a trailer in the rear parking lot is supplying the building's heat. Mr. Campbell said the township's insurance is covering the costs involved with operating the parts of the municipal building that were damaged. But, he added, "we're a bit under the gun" to complete the repairs, because the insurance coverage will not be available next year.

At the beginning of the meeting, members of Boy Scout Troop No. 75 led the committee in the flag salute.