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## Haas Kicks Off Listening Tour to Start Mayoral Bid

WESTFIELD – Westfield mayoral candidate Dave Haas officially kicked off his campaign last Wednesday with a “listening tour” that included stops in Downtown Westfield, at the Sunrise Assisted Living Center, and a meeting with students who are members of the Westfield High School Young Democratic Club. Mr. Haas started his tour at Starbucks where he listened to residents talk about their concerns.

In Starbucks he was asked about Mayors Against Illegal Guns. Mr. Haas explained, “It’s a bipartisan group of over 800 mayors from big cities and small towns like Westfield, which work together to develop rational approaches to curbing gun violence. I think it’s critical for Westfield’s mayor to be engaging in that conversation.”

During his tour of downtown, Mr. Haas heard concerns expressed by residents and shop owners about the lack of parking, about a perceived decrease in the number of shoppers doing business in Downtown Westfield, about overly aggressive parking enforcement and the health of the town’s trees.

For his second stop of the day, Mr. Haas visited the Sunrise Assisted Living Center, where his 91-year-old father, Felix, and his stepmother, Margaret, live. Mr. Haas’s father fought in World War II for democracy and against Nazism. Mr. Haas’s son, Jacob, who is an officer serving on a destroyer in the Pacific, accompanied his father. In a meeting with more than 20 seniors, Mr. Haas was applauded when he spoke of the need to make Westfield as “seniorfriendly” as it can be.

“People like my Dad who fought for this country deserve our love and respect,” he said.

Lastly, Mr. Haas headed home to meet with members of the Westfield High School Young Democratic Club. Mr. Haas praised the teens for wanting to get involved. He urged the students to be pro-active with the causes of the day and not to give-in to cynicism.

About his first day of campaign-

ing, Mr. Haas said, that it was “wonderful greeting and listening to so many residents of our town. Young and old, and everyone in-between, Westfield’s residents are the best,” Mr. Haas said.

Mr. Haas has served on the Town Council for the last eight years representing the Third Ward. He has a Ph.D. in electrical engineering from the University of California at Berkeley and now teaches electrical engineering at the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT). He has lived in Westfield with his wife, Dana Stevens, for 21 years. His son is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and his daughter is a student at New York University.

## FW Man Charged With Shooting at Motorist

FANWOOD – A Fanwood man was arrested and charged last Friday with attempted homicide in a road rage shooting that occurred on Interstate 78 in Lower Saucon Township, Pennsylvania, according to *The Morning Call*.

Lee E. Kish, 65, was also charged with aggravated assault, carrying a firearm without a license, reckless endangerment and criminal mischief. According to the newspaper’s report, Kish allegedly shot at a 39-year-old woman’s car at 3:45 p.m. on Wednesday, March 13 after she blew her horn at him for driving 40 mph next to a tractor-trailer. The speed limit on that section of I-78 is 65 mph. The woman told police that Kish flashed his middle finger at her before speeding up and pulling into the right lane. She told police that as she passed him she heard a loud bang and saw Kish speed off. She later found a bullet in the woman’s passenger’s side rear door. The woman gave police a description of Kish’s vehicle and that he had a New Jersey license plate, according to the report. No one was injured in the shooting, *The Morning Call* reported.

Kish was taken to the Union County jail in Elizabeth where he was to await extradition to Pennsylvania to face the charges.



LISTENING TO VOTERS...Westfield Democratic mayoral candidate Dave Haas, accompanied by his son Jacob, greets Janice Siegel, chairwoman of the Westfield Democratic Committee, and other residents downtown on one stop of his “listening tour” last week.

## WF BOE Adopts \$96.4-Mil. Budget; Taxes Up \$1.7-Mil.

By DELL SIMEONE  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD – The Westfield Board of Education last Thursday approved a school budget of \$96,402,166 and accompanying tax levy of \$86,360,678 following a public hearing in the Westfield High School auditorium.

A power point presentation was shown and narrated by district Business Administrator Dana Sullivan. The tax levy represents a \$1.7-million increase from last year. State aid of \$3,832,316 is the same as 2012.

Ms. Sullivan said the district’s goals this year are to continue funding for literacy and technology initiatives, to continue funding for the STEM program, to continue funding for mandated programs, to maintain curricular and co-curricular programs, to maintain existing class size, to provide sufficient resources for enrollment increases at the intermediate level, to maintain facilities and to increase support for counseling services. No one in the audience had any questions about the budget at which point the board voted to adopt the spending plan.

Prior to the public hearing on the budget, the board honored the Westfield High School Championship girls’ and boys’ swim teams as well as the cross-country team.

Board President Richard Mattessich said, “First, I’d like to congratulate Lexi Borr, a WHS senior. In 2009, Lexi was a semi-finalist in the state single’s tennis tournament. In 2010, she was a finalist and led the WHS girls’ tennis team to its first ever Tournament of Champions title. Then in 2012, she held an unbeaten record and won the Tennis Singles State Tournament. Understandably, she was named to *The Star-Ledger’s* First Team All American and selected to the All American High School Tennis Team. Her career record is an astonishing 85 wins to three losses. Congratulations, Lexi. We will be sorry to see you go. Congratulations to Matt Varhley, her coach.”

Mr. Mattessich also congratulated swim team member Caroline Baldwin, a WHS junior. He said, “Caroline broke the WHS record in the 50 free, and 100 backstroke. She won two events at the Meet of Champions, the 50 free and the 100 backstroke. She is the first dual winner in WHS history and the first winner in over 30 years. She is a member of the record breaking 200 free and 400 free relays.”

Mr. Mattessich also congratulated the entire WHS girls’ swim team for their unbeaten 17-0 record and for earning the Public A State Championship. The fourth consecutive state championship, he said.

“You are Union County Champions and North One Sectional Champions. You totaled the second highest power point total in state history and finished the season by ranking number one overall in the state,” Mr. Mattessich said. He asked for a round of applause for the girls’ and boys’ swim team coaches, Head Coach Jeff Knight, Ashley Westra and Michael Schwebel.

Mr. Mattessich congratulated the WHS boys’ swim team, also state champions this year. He said they have the most state championships in state history. “This year they won the Union County Championship and the North One Sectional Championship with an overall record of 15-2. They finished their season by ranking number two in the state and as the top public school team in the state. Congratulations on these superior achievements,” Mr. Mattessich said.

The next group honored were the boys’ cross-country team. “Out of 20 teams, WHS won the State Sectional Championship and was named Union County Champions. They finished second in the State Group Four Championship and 10th at the State Meet of Champions. They also finished the season by ranking seventh in the state,” Mr. Mattessich said. He congratulated Head Coach Chris Tafelski and Assistant Coach Jeff Perrella. All of the athletes received certificates of appreciation.

## County to Hold Meetings For Together N.J.

COUNTY – Union County will hold the first in a series of five public meetings in support of Together North Jersey, a voluntary initiative aimed at improving quality of life while fostering sustainable economic growth in the region. The meeting is scheduled for tonight, Thursday, March 28, at Kean University. Space is limited and pre-registration is required by e-mailing Union County at TNJIntern@ucnj.org. The four remaining meetings will be held May 7 in Cranford, May 29 in Westfield, and June 26 in Cranford. The date and location for fourth session has yet to be determined.

## WF Seniors Plead Guilty To DWI, Hitting Pedestrian

ELIZABETH – Two former Westfield school crossing guards pleaded guilty last week to drunk-driving and hitting and killing a 68-year-old Scotch Plains woman at the intersection of North Avenue and Tuttle Parkway on January 26, 2012, according to a nj.com report.

Charles Casiere, 85, and John Diaz, 75, both of Westfield, admitted they had been drinking at the Knights of Columbus in Westfield on North Avenue just prior to accident in which they each struck Patricia Currie, a nurse from Scotch Plains.

As previously reported by *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*, Patricia Currie, 68, of Scotch Plains was driving through the North-Tuttle intersection when she grazed a pedestrian, David Kervick, as he crossed the street. Ms. Currie immediately stopped and offered him assistance, attempting to lead him across the street.

As the two walked across the road, a Chevy Cavalier driven by Casiere,

struck the pair propelling them several yards down North Avenue. A second vehicle, a GMC pickup driven by Diaz, then struck Currie, who was now lying in the roadway. Mr. Kervick was transported to a hospital for treatment.

Casiere was initially charged with DWI, failure to yield to a pedestrian in a crosswalk and reckless driving. Diaz was charged with DWI, failure to yield to a pedestrian in a crosswalk, failure to report an accident and reckless driving.

Nj.com reported that lawyers for the Casiere and Diaz would ask the court that each defendant receive probation and no jail time. Under the plea agreement with the Bergen County Prosecutor’s Office, both men face third-degree offenses carrying maximum penalties of five years in jail. The Union County Prosecutor’s Office had recused itself from the case because of a conflict.

Superior Court Judge John Triarsi has scheduled sentencing for Friday, April 26, at the Union County Courthouse.

## DWC Releases '12 Stats For WF Businesses, Jobs

By DOMINIC A. LAGANO  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD – At its monthly Board of Directors meeting this past Monday evening, the Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC), the management entity of the Special Improvement District (SID), provided final year-end statistics for 2012.

According to DWC Executive Director Sherry Cronin, 50 businesses closed in the past year and 42 new businesses were created for a net loss of eight businesses. The four new businesses that were completed or were in the process of expansion are included in this statistic.

Three hundred and eight jobs were lost in town or moved out of town in the past year while 102 jobs were created for a net loss of 206 jobs.

“The major reason for the net job loss is the loss of Deloitte [Touche] in two buildings downtown,” Ms. Cronin stated. Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited is a financial consulting firm.

There was an average 5.34 percent vacancy rate last year, accounting for an average of 37,546 square feet of retail space that was available, Ms. Cronin said. The DWC provided \$10,000 last year in grants to local businesses for signage replacement, enhancement or other building improvements. Seventy-four building rehabilitations were undertaken last year as compared to 43 rehabilitations undertaken in 2011.

The ratio of dollars spent from private funds compared to SID funds was \$1,477 to \$1.

“Westfield’s Special Improvement District continues to demonstrate its vibrancy and [it is a] great place in which to do business. This year alone over \$4 million was privately invested in Downtown Westfield, and over \$81 million has been invested in the last 10 years,” Ms. Cronin stated.

In all, the SID reinvestments, including purchases, accounted for \$14,783,810 last year.

In other business, the DWC board promoted the Westfield Girls Night Out event to be held Thursday, April 18, from 5 to 9 p.m. in the downtown. The event will be held rain or shine. Girls Night Out is held twice a year in

the spring and the fall in an effort to promote the Downtown area, its retailers and its restaurants.

According to Ms. Cronin, 1,038 participants have registered for the event already. Compared to last year, “in total, we had 1,600, so we’re on pace to do that again,” Ms. Cronin stated.

This year the registration site will be at the Turning Point Restaurant, located at 137 Central Avenue. Interested parties can pre-register for the event online at WestfieldToday.com.

In other news, the board announced it has received a \$100,000 check from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs through the Downtown Business Improvement Zone Loan Fund or DBIZ loan.

The DWC applied for the loan in conjunction with the Town of Westfield. Ninety-five thousand dollars will go to the Town of Westfield and will primarily be used for repaving and other improvements for Municipal Parking Lot 4, according to Town Administrator Jim Gildea.

The remaining \$10,000 (\$5,000 is still forthcoming) will be used by the DWC for grants for facade improvements for businesses in the downtown area. The loan is interest free and the town and the DWC will have 10 years to repay the DBIZ loan.

### REPORTERS NEEDED

Current openings for reporters to cover town council, BOE, and recreation commission meetings. We seek community-minded, detail-oriented writers with professional demeanor needed. Must be able to meet deadlines, know how to write a lead, and take an active interest in a regular beat in order to develop news stories. Great for stay-at-home moms, a second income or just for those who love to write. E-mail resume and clips to: [editor@goleader.com](mailto:editor@goleader.com)  
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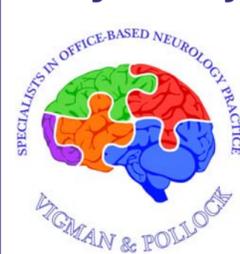
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