

Gw Planning Bd. OKs 2nd Floor on Willow

By MEGAN K. SCOTT

Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD – Borough Planning Board members have unanimously approved a variance permitting a homeowner to build a second-floor addition closer to the front edge of his property than ordinances allow.

Ivan Pacella, of 324 Willow Avenue, is building a suite for his widowed mother-in-law over the left side of his single-family home, which includes the garage. The house is 17.7 feet from the property line instead of the required 25 feet.

"The variance is necessary because part of the existing first floor is closer than 25 feet from the front property line," Mr. Pacella's attorney, Gary Maher, explained at the August 28 planning board meeting. "The applicants want to build straight up above that existing first floor."

After board member Bill Nierstedt expressed concern about "front-yard creep," among other things, Mr. Pacella agreed to three caveats. He must sign a deed restriction that will prohibit him or any future property owner from turning the home into a two-family dwelling; he must reconfigure his two-car driveway into a one-car space, and there will be no further front-yard encroachment.

Mr. Pacella and his wife, Philomena, purchased the more than century-old home six years ago. His father-in-law recently died, and his mother-in-law moved in.

"Basically what we want to do is give her her own little space that if she wants, she can be with us, or if she needs that one day on her own, she can just go and she's got her own bedroom, her own living and her own bathroom," Mr. Pacella said.

The addition also includes creating another bedroom so all of his children can have their own

rooms, he added.

Mr. Pacella said if he had to follow the 25-foot setback for the second floor, he would lose eight feet of the bedroom for his mother-in-law and would not be able to have a separate bedroom for his son. He said the house also would look "ridiculous, with a flat roof in the front and going straight up."

Mr. Nierstedt told Mr. Maher that the property could conform to the requirements and still have a pitched roof. He pressed Mr. Maher to show how granting the variance would be beneficial to the public as opposed to only his client.

"There's really no detriment," Mr. Maher said in response. "The house already is in that space. Certainly it would be a detriment if the applicant had to follow the existing setback and build kind of a setback second floor, which I suppose he could do within the zoning, but it would look hideous."

Architect Arthur Henn testified that the house would be no closer to the street than the houses on either side. He said he considered pushing the second floor addition back, but it would have changed the air flow.

"Basically, we would have had to increase the amount of circulation space," Mr. Henn said. "We have a small little hallway now, thus making the proposed addition a bigger volume than we really need. Keeping it forward would basically compact the second floor and give us the space that we need."

He added that pushing the second floor back could potentially cast shadows on neighboring properties. "Keeping it forward, it falls on the house, and it allows the people on the left some light, especially that morning light, the morning sun," he said.

Mr. Nierstedt also expressed concern about the two-car drive-

way that is in front of a one-car garage, and that while Mr. Pacella is not planning to turn his home into a two-family, the prospect would be tempting for future buyers. It was the impetus for requiring the deed restriction, reconfiguring the driveway to a one-car space and prohibiting any further encroachment toward the street.

In other meeting news, Mr. Nierstedt chastised Mr. Maher for submitting a 30-year-old survey for an application for a parking variance on Center Street. Erminia Savino Livieri is building four apartments above existing retail shops. The survey showed a vacant lot.

"Couldn't you at least have gotten an updated survey?" Mr. Nierstedt asked, adding that he is in support of the project. "Should we even move on this? As far as I'm concerned, the property is vacant."

Mr. Maher apologized. After a 15-minute recess, he asked the matter be postponed to the Wednesday, September 25 meeting. "We feel it is prudent to accept Mr. Nierstedt's very reasonable and probably wise suggestion," he said.

Rosary Altar Society Plans Showboat Trip

GARWOOD — The Rosary Altar Society of the Church of St. Anne in Garwood has planned a trip to the Showboat in Atlantic City for Sunday, September 29. The bus will leave from St. Anne's Church, located at 325 Second Avenue in Garwood, at 11:30 a.m. sharp and will return at approximately 9:30 p.m.

The cost is \$30 per person with a slot return. Interested persons are asked to make their reservations as soon as possible by calling Jennie at (908) 789-0778 or Eileen at (908) 789-0414.

Cranford Bd. Recommends 'Complete Streets' Program

By DELL SIMEONE

Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD – The Cranford Township Planning Board passed a resolution on August 21 to recommend the Complete Streets program be considered by the township committee. The recommendation followed a presentation by Rebecca Hoeffler of Cranford and Ranjit Walsia, a planner from Clark, who said the program would make Cranford more convenient for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and public-transportation riders.

According to Mr. Walsia, the program is part of a nationwide movement to make getting around towns safer and easier. Ms. Hoeffler, who is a third-generation resident, said she became interested in the program after having a very hard time trying to cross Centennial Avenue with two small children in tow. She has gotten 101 people to sign a petition in favor of the program and has written out a policy for making streets easier to negotiate for children, cyclists and the elderly.

Spaghetti Dinner To Benefit Ill Teen

KENILWORTH — A spaghetti and meatball dinner to benefit a 15-year-old cancer patient will be held on Friday, September 27, from 6 to 10 p.m. at the Kenilworth Veterans Center, located at 33 South 21st Street in Kenilworth.

Tylor Collins of Clark has been stricken with Ewing sarcoma, a rare bone cancer. The "Friends of Tylor" are seeking support for him and his family. Tickets to the dinner are \$20. For tickets and more information, call (908) 276-9769 or write to: friendsoftylor@yahoo.com.

The program suggests bike lockers be put at the Cranford Train Station and changes be made in the downtown parking program. Mr. Walsia said he has been advising Ms. Hoeffler on a pro bono basis. He also said new policies, if adopted, may not be one-size-fits all, saying certain policies may be specific to addressing the needs of young pedestrians, senior citizens or the disabled. He suggested making changes where appropriate.

Board member Rita LaBrutta commented, "When I walk around town, there are places that I avoid."

Everyone agreed that the intersection of North and Centennial Avenues is dangerous. Also in recent months a pedestrian was struck by a car while crossing the street near the train station. Parts of the program, if adopted by the township committee after recommendation of the planning board, might include new signage, countdown lights to help persons wanting to cross the street, new paving, curb cuts, and an educational program fostered through the school district and the township TV channel.

Mr. Walsia said the township must prioritize what it wants to do first, perhaps by working with the Cranford Police Department.

"You have to figure out what would be appropriate and feasible," he said. He also suggested that grant money might be available from the state for some projects.

Mayor Thomas Hannen, Jr. said, "We may be eligible for some funding through NJ Transit."

Board member Peter Taylor questioned the need for the program. The rest of the board agreed that there were problem spots in town for cyclists as well as pedestrians and motorists.