

Mayor Kalnins Discusses Flood Projects, Birchwood

Avenue, 60 of which would be "affordable" housing units, the mayor said he assumes a court date on the township's appeal "is still months away." Cranford Development Associates (CDA) had sued the township via a Builder's Remedy Lawsuit, and in December of 2011, Judge Lisa Chrystal decided in favor of the developer. Cranford is appealing the court ruling as well as permits issued to CDA by the DEP.

"We think we have some really good issues (in the township's appeal of the Birchwood development) as opposed to some of the other development that is occurring downtown," he said, citing the Riverfront development on South Avenue across from the train station and 555 South Avenue, located within a half-mile of the train station. "You know that's where development belongs — in the downtown, where people can walk to the train, walk to the restaurants, walk to the stores. Birchwood doesn't make sense to put four stories, 360 units in the middle of a single-family, residential neighborhood secondary, tertiary streets (with) no real stores."

The mayor said the Birchwood development would result in its residents having to take their cars to go into town, thus utilizing what he called "ill equipped" streets "and on top of that it is in a flood zone."

"You couldn't have picked a worse spot," he said.

Speaking of the Riverfront development, he said the township's new engineer, Maser Consulting of Red Bank, is looking at plans associated with the development, following recent flooding there after heavy rain deluged the area in June.

"That area has always been a chronic flooding issue. So they are going back, making sure the development was built to the

specs and, assuming it is, come with some recommendations on how we can improve on that situation as well as several other locations where we've had much more severe chronic flooding," he said, citing Cranford's intense thunderstorms that have occurred over the past few months.

The township has asked Maser and the Department of Public Works to see if the flooding is because of a maintenance issue such as clogged storm sewers or if it is caused by design issues, which would require "a longer-term fix."

Also, PSE&G will elevate its equipment at its South Avenue substation above flood levels that resulted during Hurricane Irene in 2011, a storm that caused severe flooding in Cranford. The mayor said he also hopes that some of the substation's infrastructure will be upgraded.

The township has allocated \$4 million in its capital budget this year to focus on deteriorating roads in the township that have not been worked on in a number of years. He said the money will be used for both resurfacing as well as drainage improvements. Mayor Kalnins said road improvement projects approved over the past few years are being worked on this summer, with the 2014 roads projects expected to begin in September.

Speaking on the UCC athletic complex, he said Cranford "fully supports" the college in its efforts to build the athletic complex for its soccer, lacrosse and track programs at Oak Ridge Park in Clark after the college opted not to construct the complex at its Cranford campus following heavy opposition from the township and neighbors. He said details of UCC's plans at Oak Ridge still have to be worked out.

"I have not heard anything that would lead me to believe that

they (UCC) are coming back to Cranford," he said.

The mayor said Cranford has settled contracts with all six of its employee unions, which include police, firefighters, public works and white-collar unions. He said all the contracts were settled within the state's 2-percent cap on salary increases.

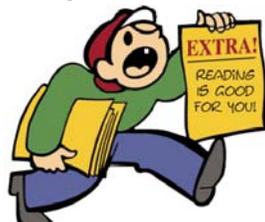
"I think it was fair. We made some headway on some of the insurance issues," he said. He said the township was able to get some concessions on the cashing in of sick days and duplicative coverage.

He said he hopes with a new chief financial officer in place that Cranford can begin to do some longer-term financial and debt planning, "where we can look ahead and continue some of these capital programs so that this (the 2014 \$4-million capital budget) is not a one-time shot that we spend [a lot of] money and fix the streets and don't do anything for 10 years and end up in a worse spot than we are today."

Mayor Kalnins said the goal is to "maintain a decent capital program without driving taxes up."

On Cranford's downtown, he noted that the township's vacancy rate "remains extremely low" at below 3 percent, noting that storefronts at the Riverfront have been leased including to a new Italian grocery store, Starbucks and Subway, which moved from North Avenue.

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CR, GW Seeks BOE Candidates

Mr. Shaw said board members and residents should question and challenge issues including unfunded mandates, the operation of public schools and the role of standardized tests.

"We have different challenges and the solutions are not always the same," he said. "I would like to see us communicate a little better as a district with parents and families."

Mr. Shaw has lived in Cranford since 2001 with his wife and two children, who are both in the school system.

Lisa Carbone, Daniel DeMarco and Jacqueline Carr are also seeking seats on the Cranford board.

Serving on the Garwood board since 1991, Linda Koenig said four generations of her family have lived in Garwood. She has no children, but other members of her family are currently in the school district.

"The school district here has done well for us, so it is my turn to give back," she said.

Ms. Koenig explained that due to cuts in funding, Garwood schools had to limit some of their local programs, including less lan-

guage and AP courses. She said the school also has to charge for student participation in sports and other activities.

"The students are getting less and the taxpayers are paying more," she said. "We're trying to make things better here and cutting expenses without cutting programs."

Ms. Koenig is also involved in education on a county and state level, serving on the Delegate Assembly of the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA). She said she handles issues including teacher evaluations and superintendent salary caps.

After attending enough educational programs, she said she became a master board member this past year.

Aaron Watkins said he has served on the board for the last three years because he loves Garwood and its residents. A resident for the past 18 years, he said he enjoys serving his community.

"Garwood is a beautiful town, and I know a lot of good people," said Mr. Watkins, who currently teaches social studies and religion in Elizabeth. "That's why I'm a school teacher and love education."

Mr. Watkins emphasized communicating with the students and continuing to improve education and making the schools more "pro-child" as his reasons for running for another term.

Aside from serving on the board, he volunteers at soup kitchens with his church and is an officer at Knights of Columbus.

Also running are incumbents Christine Guerriero and Kimberly Ficarra.

Mountainside Board of Education incumbent Dante Gioia is the only borough candidate to file his candidacy as Cathy Jakositz did not file for re-election.



MORAVIAN COLLEGE

Moravian Announces

Dean's Honor List

BETHLEHEM, Pa. — Moravian College announced that Genevieve Chaleff, Class of 2014, from Cranford earned Dean's Honor List standing for the Spring Semester of the 2013-2014 school year.

Students who carry three or more course units during a fall or spring term and attain a QPA for the term of 3.50 or higher are placed on the Dean's Honor List.