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Bramnick Announces GOP Caucus Leadership

TRENTON—Assembly Minority Leader Jon Bramnick (R-21st, Westfield) has announced the caucus' leadership for the 216th legislative session.

"These top leaders represent a vast array of experience and diversity," Asm. Bramnick said. "We are fortunate to have talented representatives from all parts of the state lead the Republican caucus."

The list is as follows:
 Republican Leader Jon Bramnick - District 21; Conference Leader Dave Ribble - District 30; Republican Whip Scott Rumana - District 40; Deputy Conference Leader Mary Pat Angelini - District 11; Republican Budget Officer Declan O'Scanlon - District 13; Deputy Republican Leader Anthony Bucco - District 25; Deputy Republican Leader Amy Handlin - District 13; Deputy Republican Leader Dave Wolfe - District 10; Deputy Republican Leader Nancy F. Muñoz - District 21; Parliamentarian Michael Patrick Carroll - District 25; Appropriations Officer John DiMaio - District 23; Assistant Republican Leader Caroline Casagrande - District 11; Assistant Republican Whip Erik Peterson - District 23; Assistant Republican Whip Jack Ciattarelli - District 16; and Policy Co-Chairs Brian Rumpf - District 9 and DiAnne Gove - District 9.

Dems Make Committee Chair Changes

TRENTON — Assemblywoman Sheila Oliver (D-34th, East Orange), who served for four years as speaker, will sit on the Commerce & Economic Development and Transportation committees but will not have a leadership position on either, *The Star Ledger* has reported.

Assembly Speaker Vincent Prieto (D-32nd, Secaucus) has replaced her as speaker. Assemblyman Gary Shear (D-36th, Passaic) will chair budget committee. Assemblyman John McKeon (D-27th, West Orange) will head the judiciary committee.

Assemblyman Ralph Caputo (D-28th, Belleville) will chair the Tourism and Gaming Committee while Assemblyman Reed Gusciora (D-15th, Trenton) will lead the Regulatory Oversight committee. Assemblyman Craig Coughlin (D-19th, Woodbridge) will head the Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee with Bob Andrzejczak (D-1st, Cape May) leading the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee.

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Cranford Committee Discusses Hiking Pool Fees, New Police Department SUVs

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

CRANFORD - At the Cranford Township Committee's workshop meeting on Monday, the governing body discussed raising pool fees, received an update on the zoning board's master plan and heard a proposal from the police regarding the purchase of new SUVs for the department.

Steve Robertazzi, operations manager for the township pool and fitness center, asked the township committee to vote to raise pool fees for 2014. He said pool fees have not been raised since 2011. He asked to raise the fees \$25 across the board, except for seniors, who would see a \$15 increase. A majority of the members are summer members only, of which about 1,800 are residents and 700 are non-residents.

Robert Hudak, zoning officer, gave an update on the codification of the Master Plan, and said he expects to have a redline version of the code and bring it to the committee within two weeks.

Police Chief Eric Mason and Lieutenant Edward Davenport presented to the committee the police department's proposal to add new police vehicles to its fleet. The traffic division of the police department employs a two-year cycle on the purchase of its frontline police cars. Every two years it purchases six vehicles and trades in six of its older models for new vehicles. This year, the department is asking to purchase SUVs-Ford Utility Police Interceptor-known as the Ford Explorer - as opposed to sedans. The cost would exceed the line item budget by \$4,225, Lt. Davenport said. The budgeted amount is about \$68,000.

The department in 2012 switched to the Dodge Charger after the Ford Crown Victoria had been discontinued in 2011.

The Charger has had brake and rotor problems, Lt. Davenport reported. He said the SUV has a fuel efficiency rating that is 16, where the Charger was 18, and the Crown Victoria was 16. The Interceptor uses "32 percent less fuel than the Crown Vic when idling," Lt. Davenport said.

More than half of the towns in Union County have switched to the Interceptor, Lt. Davenport said. He said the Interceptor would provide much more needed space for the 15 pieces of equipment needed for each police car.

Richard Marsden, township engineer, gave an update on the pedestrian improvements plan for the North Avenue Plaza, located in front of the train station and at the light there leading into Alden Street. The township re-

ceived a Municipal Aid 2011 Transit Village Program grant in the amount of \$500,000 and the township is to bond for the remainder of the cost for the project. The total cost of the improvements is estimated at \$813,000.

The plan is to make the area safer for pedestrians and provide better traffic flow of NJ Transit buses. There will be a turnaround area for the buses, added fencing by the crosswalk areas and new curbing and pavement, as well as lighting.

Mr. Marsden said the state Department of Transportation has been holding up the start of construction because it is asking for more detailed plans and documents than what was submitted.

The elevation of the river has been lowered in preparation for the desilting of the Rahway River. The committee urged residents to not go on the ice, warning it is unstable and dangerous as it is hollow underneath. The desilting should not take more than a month, and must be complete by Saturday, March 15, for the restocking of trout to the river.

Union County College (UCC), on Gallows Hill Road, is planning to construct a lacrosse and soccer field near where the tennis courts are. Mr. Marsden confirmed that large trees are coming down. Commissioner Thomas Hannen, Jr. asked to make UCC aware of the township ordinance that requires a three-to-one replacement of trees that are removed.

Mr. Marsden said UCC is doing a stormwater retention basin.

"It drains into the Gallows Hill Brook," resident Barbara Krause said of Gallows Hill Road. "It is so waterlogged there and it is the lowest point," she said of the spot where the field is to go.

Mr. Hannen also asked if UCC is planning on putting down astro-turf or grass. Mr. Marsden said he was not sure.

Mrs. Krause also said there is a problem with NJ Transit trains being lined up and parked in Cranford. She said doors on the parked trains are being left open and was told by the owner of Il Gabbiano that kids were congregating there in the trains. She also asked about when the World War I flagpole's marble base will be repaired and when the missing tops of some historic lamps will be replaced.

In other news, Township Administrator Terrance Wall asked to move the construction office that is downstairs to the main level where there is an empty office. "The construction office is split up - part upstairs, part downstairs. Customer service would improve geographically," he said.

Mr. Wall also asked to get a count of the open permits in the township. "We are sending out 10 violations per week," Mr. Wall said. "We are targeting items that are more substantial, additions, things of that nature, where they should have been closed out," Mr. Wall said.

Additionally, Mr. Wall asked to paint the upstairs hallway below the chair rail where there are scuff marks.

In an effort to expedite movement in abandoned properties, Mr. Wall is beginning to call owners of properties who have yet to move forward. He said he spoke to the owner of Swan Cleaners on North Avenue and told him that, "Their current status is not acceptable to the residents of Cranford."

Mr. Wall also is working to make enhancements to the website.

Mayor Andis Kalnins said he will attend the Mayors Council Rahway River Watershed Flood Control meeting on Thursday, February 6. He said he expects the Army Corps of Engineers study to be submitted in a few days.

He said he met with lobbyists on getting funding and the "time frames are disheartening." Should the Army Corps give the green light, construction would begin in 2016 and, "there are still steps we need to take before Army Corps would start," Mayor Kalnins said.

Congressman Leonard Lance told the mayor that the township is to receive another \$117,000 to finish work on the Corps' study.

Commissioner Mary O'Connor proposed developing a subcommittee composed of two representatives of Centennial Village, two from the Downtown Business and Economic Development Office and two from the Chamber of Commerce to talk about different initiatives within the groups to see if there are any cross purposes and ways to help each other out.

Commissioner Robert D'Ambola said the Department of Public Works (DPW) salted roads for four hours on January 25. The DPW also poured four tons of asphalt on West Holly Street for potholes, he said.

Mr. D'Ambola asked people to not park on the street when a snowstorm is coming to make way for plows to get through.



Peyton's Peek at the Week In Politics

By Paul Peyton of *The Leader/Times*

Bramnick Not Running For United States Senate

Assembly Minority Leader Jon Bramnick (R-21st, Westfield) has announced that he will not be a candidate for the United States Senate this year. The Senate seat of Cory Booker, who won a special in October to fill the seat following the death of Senator Frank Lautenberg, is on the ballot. Sen. Booker was elected to fill the remaining year of the term. This year's election is for a full six-year term.

"After thoroughly considering the opportunity to run for United States Senate in 2014, I have decided to remain focused on my role as Assembly Republican Leader. I appreciate the support and enthusiasm offered to me by countless party leaders, elected officials, and devoted volunteers across New Jersey," Mr. Bramnick said. "I look forward to continuing to work with Governor (Chris Christie) and the dedicated members of the Assembly Republican caucus to advocate for the hardworking taxpayers of our state."

Pascarelli, Pallone React to State's Termination of Sandy Contract

U.S. Reps. Bill Pascarelli, Jr. (D-9TH) and Frank Pallone (D-6th) released the following statement regarding reports that the State of New Jersey canceled its contract with Hammerman & Gainer Inc. (HGI), a Louisiana firm hired to manage that state's nearly \$1-billion Hurricane Sandy housing recovery programs:

"It's simply unacceptable that it took seven weeks for us to learn that the contract with the firm handling the largest Sandy recovery program had been terminated. The manner in which this information has come to light is concerning and Governor Christie's administration must come forward and explain why HGI was terminated and put forth a plan to execute the RREM program moving forward.

"We fought alongside our colleagues in Congress to secure these Sandy recovery funds in the face of tremendous opposition from the Tea Party and we won't stand for any more excuses as to why so many New Jerseyans are still waiting for much needed help. We have both heard numerous accounts from constituents that critical storm aid has been slow to come, and today's (Janu-

ary 24) news raises serious questions about the efficiency with which the Christie administration has managed this important program. The people of New Jersey deserve a full explanation about the lack of transparency of the recovery grant programs and how this much needed funding has been distributed."

Cuccinelli Says Christie Should Quit as Head of RGA

Former Virginia attorney general Ken Cuccinelli has called on Governor Chris Christie to resign as chairman of the Republican Governors Association following the Bridgegate and Sandy aid probes of the Christie administration, according to media reports.

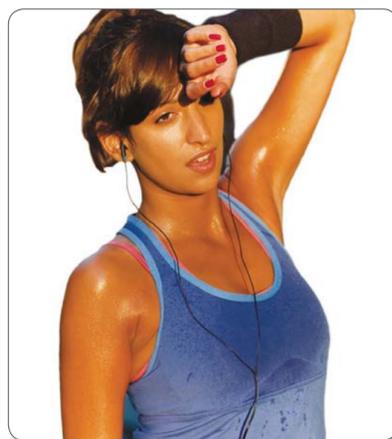
"He does not serve the goals of that organization by staying as chairman," said Mr. Cuccinelli, who ran unsuccessfully for Virginia governor last year. Mr. Cuccinelli made the comments on CNN's *Crossfire*. "From the perspective of setting aside this as an issue in other races, it makes sense for him to step aside," Mr. Cuccinelli said. "That doesn't mean any of the charges political or otherwise are substantive or not, it doesn't matter. Perception is reality."

In response, Christie senior adviser Mike DuHaime said that Mr. Cuccinelli's comments are "disappointing, given the RGA was by far the largest single donor to his losing campaign, giving more than \$8 million — a significant portion of which was raised by Governor Christie," ABC News reported.

Mr. DuHaime said Gov. Christie "has received strong, positive feedback from his fellow governors and RGA donors alike and will remain RGA chairman."

Democratic National Committee Communications Director: Mo Ellefthoe responded, "After the Virginia gubernatorial nominee called on Chris Christie to step down as RGA chair last [week], how did Team Christie react? They expressed disappointment because Chris Christie raised so much money for Cuccinelli. The message? 'We're disappointed because we thought we bought your loyalty.' I should be shocked. But after all we've seen from Christie and his team the past few weeks, this is exactly the reaction we've come to expect."

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