

## Lubarsky Details Information On March 11 Bond Referendum

By PAUL J. PEYTON  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

**MOUNTAINSIDE** — Borough voters will head to the election polls this Tuesday, March 11, to vote on a \$19.5-million bond referendum for improvements and upgrades at the borough's two public schools, Deerfield and Beechwood.

The proposal includes \$17 million in work at Deerfield and \$2.4 million at Beechwood. If voters pass the referendum, the state will fund \$7.9 million of the \$19.5-million bond, amounting to 40 percent of the cost per section 5 of the Educational Facilities Construction and Financing Act, with the remainder paid out of local taxes. The local tax impact, according to the district, will be

\$284 per year on a home assessed at \$264,000. The owner of a home assessed at \$264,000 paid an average of \$4,917 in school taxes last year. The total school tax in the borough was \$14,351,445 in support of a budget of \$15,216,333.

If voters reject the question, local taxpayers would pay 100 percent of the costs. The bond will be borrowed over 20 years.

Work at Deerfield will include: conversion from steam and electric heat to a hot water system at a total cost of \$4.2 million; infrastructure improvements totaling \$7.3 million, including replacement of roof gutters and leaders, HVAC replacement for the main office, gym and cafeteria, removal of classroom

carpeting, asbestos abatement, and removal of wood paneling in corridors, replacement of corridor ceilings and lighting, and window replacement; security and lighting upgrades of \$1.8 million, including replacement of a security exterior door and upgrades to the public address and burglar alarm and surveillance and access control systems, as well as ADA and HVAC upgrades and toilet renovations of \$3.1 million and AV/IT upgrades totaling \$749,490.

Beechwood improvements will include roof replacement and rooftop heat exchange replacement at \$1.4 million; security and life safety upgrades, including public address and burglar alarm upgrades for a cost of \$585,338; lighting upgrades of \$61,500, and \$251,550 in AV/IT upgrades and \$103,200 in site work and drainage. The security systems at both schools will include card swipe and identification systems for staff and visitors.

During an interview at *The Westfield Leader* offices on Friday, Chief School Administrator Nancy Lubarsky said the state only released approval letters for the financing per bonding on February 3. "We had planned for at least a three-month campaign; it became a four-month campaign" in the community to pass the referendum. The Mountainside Citizens Action Committee has been attending community events to educate the community on the referendum.

"We really tried to provide them (community) with the specific information that's relevant to them — property values; the idea that a no vote is not going to make this go away. A no vote is only going to create a more expensive project," she said.

"This is an opportunity for the public to bring their taxes that they are paying back to our district," Ms. Lubarsky said.

She said the district had originally planned to utilize a state grant, but the district learned that the grant would

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## Westfield BOE Introduces Tentative 2014-2015 Budget

By DELL SIMEONE  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

**WESTFIELD** — District Business Administrator Dana Sullivan introduced the tentative school budget for 2014-2015 at Tuesday evening's Westfield Board of Education meeting. The board also honored seven high-school seniors who are finalists for the National Merit Scholarship Awards and heard a presentation on virtual technology from Brian Auker, the district's chief technology officer.

The proposed local tax levy for this budget is \$88,967,133. Last year's (2013-2014) was \$86,360,677, an increase of 3.02 percent. The total increase to the average homeowner is \$290, which, according to Ms. Sullivan, is attributable to the 2-percent tax levy state cap on tax levy increases and debt service. The total state aid in this year's budget is \$4,262,535, an increase of \$66,677 with a \$124,000 increase in the operating budget and a \$57,323 decrease in debt service.

Last year's was \$4,195,858. The district does not yet know the amount of extraordinary special education aid. The amount for 2013-2014 was \$1 million. The state aid (without debt service aid) represents approximately 4 percent of the total budget represented by the increase of \$124,000. The total proposed budget for this school year is \$99,519,567. Last year's total budget was \$98,658,532.

Board President Richard Mattessich presented certificates of achievement to National Merit Scholarship finalists Jill Rosenfield, Kristin Hauge and Mark Gillespie. Other Westfield High School finalists who



PANCAKE PALS...Joe Hickman and Ron Swift flip pancakes at the Westfield Rotary Club's Annual Pancake Breakfast at Westfield High School on Saturday morning.

Paul Lachenauer for The Westfield Leader

## Westfield Council Discusses Prelim. Budget; Honors Rescue Squad

By DOMINIC A. LAGANO  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

**WESTFIELD** — At its regular conference session on Tuesday, the Westfield Town Council received a preliminary budget proposal from Finance Policy Committee Chairman Sam Della Fera and Town Administrator James Gildea.

"We have a proposed budget," stated Councilman Della Fera. "It's one I know that I am very proud of. The Finance Policy Committee is very pleased to recommend it to the mayor and our fellow council members."

If approved, Westfield's budget for 2014 will be approximately \$38,745,396. Taking into account the town's projected revenue of

\$12,476,246, the tax burden for Westfield residents will be \$26,269,149.

According to Mr. Gildea, the increase in spending for the municipal budget is less than 1 percent. The budget meets the state's requirements of the 2-percent tax levy cap law.

The owner of a home assessed at \$179,850, the average assessment in the Town of Westfield, will see their taxes increased by \$78, or \$6.50 a month.

"We do a lot of good things in this town with this budget," stated Mr. Della Fera. "It continues what has

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## MS Council Discusses Snow Removal Efforts

By KATE BROWNE  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

**MOUNTAINSIDE** — The Mountainside Borough Council tackled a full agenda at its Tuesday night session including an extensive discussion of the recent snow removal efforts.

Since January 2014, the community has spent \$280,000 on snow removal and approximately \$60,000 for salt. Ronald Romak, director of public works, updated the public on his staff's efforts to address the large number of potholes caused by the recent weather conditions. According to Mr. Romak, over the last several weeks more than 4,000 pounds of fill has been used to do emergency pothole repairs.

The council took under advisement a road opening permit request for

1107 Maple Court. The homeowner is unable to operate his family's newly purchased and installed generator because the underground gas line is too narrow. The street was paved in 2011 and is subject to a five-year moratorium on digging.

The smooth operation of the Mountainside Community Pool was a top priority. The council approved the appointment of the members of the summer pool management staff and awarded BandK Corp. the right to operate the pool's snack bar.

In other business, the council approved the appointments of Jeffery Faulks, Troy Jalbert, Andrew Meeks, Casey Olohan and Victor Pereira as volunteer firefighters.

The council's next meeting will be Tuesday, March 18, at 8 p.m.



Paul Lachenauer for The Westfield Leader

STAMP SHOW...Stamp enthusiasts enjoy the selection at the Westfield Stamp Club's annual show at the Community Room of the Westfield Municipal Building on Saturday.

## Cranford Committee Begins Review of Municipal Budget

By LANCE TUPPER  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

**CRANFORD** — The township committee on Monday began its review of the 2014 municipal budget, which will be formally introduced at the end of the month. Spending requests of four departments — public works, fire, municipal court and municipal clerk — were examined, with the majority of the two-hour meeting dedicated to public works expenditures.

Township Administrator Terence Wall told the committee that "consistent with your philosophy" he instructed all municipal department heads to keep their expenditure requests flat. Mr. Wall noted the current economic environment and the increased contractual salary obligations as the primary constraints he had to work with. He said each department is aware that its "mission" is to "make do with less" while still being able to "provide

the services people expect."

Mr. Wall said the "budget process is iterative and ongoing," and that further meetings will be held to evaluate other department spending requests and discuss other specific items, including an update on the current salary negotiations with the unions. The upcoming budget proposal will be Mr. Wall's first since taking over as administrator in November, replacing Joseph Hartnett who resigned last summer.

During the public works discussion, Director Steve Wardell said he kept his spending request "as flat as possible," mindful of the ongoing contractual salary negotiations. Mr. Wardell noted total overtime paid for snow removal was less than the amount budgeted for last year. As a result, a surplus of about \$50,000 can be moved to a reserve account and carried over into this year.

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**TEEN ANGST**...Roosevelt Intermediate School in Westfield will present the musical, *13*, on Friday and Saturday, March 7 and 8, at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, March 9, at 2 p.m. at Roosevelt, 301 Clark Street, Westfield. Tickets are \$8 in advance; \$10 at the door. For ticket information, e-mail Nina at RooseveltTickets@gmail.com or call (908) 789-4560 for box office. This show is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International. Pictured, standing are: Nicole Player, Duncan Cook, Nick Guerriero, Julian Mazzola and Kimmi Zimmermann. Seated are: Lauren Singer, Andrew Zanfagna and Christopher Culhane.



Daylight Saving Time Ends Sunday, March 9, at 2 a.m.

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ONE-SEAT RIDE...Mayors, past and present, jump on board the first one-seat ride from Fanwood to Penn Station in New York City on Monday. Pictured, left to right, are: Scotch Plains Mayor Kevin Glover, Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr and former Westfield Mayor Tom Jardim.

Photo courtesy of Brian Horton

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