

## Freeholders Reappoint D.C. Gov. Relations Firm

By PAUL J. PEYTON  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

COUNTY — The Union County Freeholder Board last Thursday passed a number of resolutions including approving a \$138,000, one-year agreement with Washington, D.C.-based Winning Strategies. The firm has worked for the county for a number of years.

According to its website, the company was founded over a decade ago "as a solution to the one-size-fits-all D.C. government relations firm." Donna Mullins, listed as the firm's managing partner, previously was chief of staff for the late Rep. Dean Gallo and Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen, both Republicans from New Jersey, and more recently Senator Jeff Chiesa, also a Republican, in 2013. Michael Merola, founding partner, previously worked for former U.S. Senator Robert Torricelli, a Democrat from New Jersey.

Pat Moschetti of New Providence questioned the expenditure, asking what the county was receiving for the money.

He said the firm gives information to the county about federal programs, noting the firm gets this information before the general public and helps the county go after federal grants and "opportunities that are beneficial to our residents and obviously the county and municipalities."

Among the issues with which the firm has assisted the county is the Pilgrim Pipeline, a proposed project consisting of two adjacent 179-mile pipes which would carry unrefined oil via one pipeline from Albany, N.Y. to the Bayway Refinery, located in Linden. Mr. Reyes also said Winning Strategies has helped get legislators to be part of the Union County Means Breakfast series.

He said the company also "provide us access to our legislators on a yearly basis when we go and meet with our senators and sit down with them and discuss issues that pertain to Union County and our municipalities." Mr. Reyes said the firm assists the county with issues on the state and national level.

"Without them we literally would have to do a lot of leg work and go through a lot of hoops when they are the ones that can provide the information and guide us through and give us a helpful strategy," Mr. Reyes said.

In other business, Mr. Moschetti said he felt the \$160,000 being spent on the Code Blue program was "a very good, generous offer" and was a "worthwhile thing to do." The county works with non-profit agencies to offer homeless persons shelter in extremely cold weather.

He also commented on the county spending \$600,000 on postage. "Just off the top of my head, it sounds like a lot of money," he said. He asked when the last audit was done on the purchase of postage, noting that there might be "a certain amount of fraud and abuse going on."

Norman Albert, director of administrative services, said the county's mail cost is done through the mail room and not the individual departments. He said the county spent \$529,000 on mailings in 2014.

"A large degree of the mailings is required. We certainly can look into it (the cost)," Mr. Albert said, noting that the county monitors county postal costs.

Mr. Moschetti called the funding of legal defense for the county in four lawsuits listed on Thursday's agenda, totaling \$70,000, "a complete waste of money and time."

One of the cases was for representation of former Union County Juvenile Detention Center officer Sherrie Brown-Braswell in a lawsuit entitled Shiquon Fowler versus County of Union, at a cost of \$20,000. The guard has been charged with sexually assaulting a teenage boy at the facility and the boy's family is now suing the county. The board also approved a resolution to increase funding to \$40,000 to represent the county in the same case.

Another case, Barbara Eggar versus Union County, is a class-action lawsuit against the county whereby 43 employees have alleged the county failed to pay overtime over a three-year period for employees at Runnels Specialized Hospital. Runnels was sold in December to a private nursing home operator. The board approved increasing funds by \$20,000 for outside counsel in the case for a total appropriation of \$40,000 to date.

Tina Renna, president of the Union County Watchdog Association, again questioned the board on recent employee raises. She said 117 employees received raises totaling over a half-million dollars over a three-week period.

County Manager Al Faella said last month that the raises were "based on recommendations and evaluations from department heads and division heads" while Freeholder Chairman Mohamed Jalloh said the raises were "inclusive" of the 2-percent cap on salary increases.

At the February 19th meeting Mrs. Renna responded to Mr. Jalloh that "the numbers obtained from public records clearly point out that your statement was not true." She said many of the raises ranged from \$6,000 and up. "Something is wrong with these raises. Someone in authority needs to look at what happened here and how it related to your campaigning."

"This is unprecedented.... This isn't just a one-time half a million added to our tax (base), but this will be a recurring half-a-million expense compounded annually," Mrs. Renna said. She said Mr. Faella has refused to give her the "written justifications" from department heads for the raises. "I haven't ruled out filing a lawsuit to gain access to them."

### Bramnick to Perform At Stress Factory

WESTFIELD — Assembly Minority Leader Jon Bramnick (R-21st, Westfield) will open for comedian Rich Vos at the Stress Factory in New Brunswick on Thursday, March 26.

Mr. Bramnick has held the title of the Funniest Lawyer in New Jersey for 20 years after going undefeated at Rascals Comedy Club.

"It is an election year and I will take the night off for a few laughs, I hope," Mr. Bramnick said.

Mr. Vos has been producer and star of Women Aren't Funny on Netflix, Last Comic Standing, Comedy Central, and has written for the Oscars.



**NEW BUILDING CODES...**At the request of the New Jersey State League of Municipalities (NJLOM), a meeting was held at NJLOM headquarters in Trenton on February 18th to discuss new proposed building codes with several executive board members of the New Jersey Building Officials Association (NJBOA), and any issues that may relate to light weight construction and the recent fire at Avalon Bay in Edgewater. Pictured, from left to right, are: Ed Purcell, staff attorney, and Michael Darcy, assistant executive director, both with NJLOM; James Zaconie, immediate past president, and Larry Scorzelli, treasurer, both with NJBOA; seated, John Scialla, chairman, New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Building Subcode Committee, and Robert LaCosta, construction official and president of the NJBOA.

## Groups Push for Funding of Transportation Trust Fund

TRENTON — The Transportation Trust Fund, which covers the costs of maintenance, repair, and expansion for New Jersey's road, bridge and transit infrastructure, will run out of money July 1, 2015. For years, many groups have highlighted the impact of an insolvent transportation fund and the burden of debt on the economy of the state.

In advance of Governor Chris Christie's budget address last on February 24, groups have come together to call on the governor and the State Legislature to find a new, sustainable and long-term revenue source dedicated to the Transportation Trust Fund. They say this revenue source should be adequate to support a more robust capital program than has been enacted over the past 10 years, a figure estimated by many to be closer to \$3 billion annually; a current proposal would raise \$2 billion annually. Currently, spending levels hover at \$1.6 billion a year.

While this dire situation has drawn massive attention by policy makers, advocacy organizations, trade unions and other groups spanning the entire spectrum of interests in the state, most of the dialog has been around

funding sources and not funding priorities.

"Restoring solvency to the Transportation Trust Fund will address only half of the problem; how the state spends these funds is the other half," said Veronica Vanterpool, executive director of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign. "Reducing the backlog of deficient bridges, improving pavement conditions on roadways, and investing in bus, rail, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure must be funding priorities for a replenished and revamped TTF."

With the governor and the Legislature expected to adopt a final funding solution to identify increased funding for the Transportation Trust Fund in the coming weeks, the Campaign says it is imperative that those funds be used to address New Jersey's most pressing transportation needs. The groups listed the following funding priorities: Focus on "fix-it-first;" transit expansion projects, especially cross-Hudson; identify dedicated funding stream for NJ Transit's operating needs; investment in freight rail; and increase investment in projects that support bicycling and walking.

## Lance Announces 2015 Congressional Art Contest

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Rep. Leonard Lance (R-7th) is inviting high school students in the 7th Congressional District to participate in the 2015 Congressional Art Contest.

Mr. Lance's contest is free and open to all high school students in grades 9 through 12 who reside in the 7th Congressional District of New Jersey. All artwork must be original in concept, design and execution.

The Congressional Art Contest began in 1982 to provide an opportunity for members of Congress to encourage and recognize the artistic talents of their young constituents. Since that time more than 650,000 high school students have been involved in the competition. The winning art work will hang in a corridor in the United States Capitol Building

for one year along with art from similar art contests held in congressional districts across the country. The winner will have the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C. and see the art on display during a special ceremony.

All entries must be submitted to Mr. Lance's Flemington or Westfield district office no later than Friday, April 3. Entries will then be formally displayed in a public ceremony on Saturday, April 18, at Merck's Kenilworth facility, located at 2000 Galloping Hill Road, Kenilworth, N.J. 07033.

Students who would like to participate should contact Anna Pellecchia in Mr. Lance's Flemington office for further details at (908) 788-6900 or visit lance.house.gov/services/art-contest.

## BPU OKs Basic Generation Service Auction Results

TRENTON — The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities Board has unanimously approved the results of the state's 14th annual electricity auction for Basic Generation Service (BGS), which will result in slightly lower or stable prices for the electricity supplied to residents and small- to medium-sized businesses supplied by three of the four Electric Distribution Companies (EDCs). The auction determines, in part, the cost of electricity for most New Jersey residents and many businesses for the 12-month period starting June 1, 2015.

"For a seventh year in a row many residents and small- to medium-sized businesses will see lower or stable electricity prices as a result of New Jersey's competitive electricity supply auction, which was reflective of relevant market conditions," said Richard S. Mroz, president of the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities. "While the auctions held over the course of the Christie Administration have resulted in benefits for ratepayers, the board will continue to advocate when appropriate before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and PJM in an effort to continue to drive down energy prices and improve the state's economic competitiveness."

Typical residential and business ratepayers who have not shopped for electricity service supplied by a third party supplier and continue to be served by default service supplied through Atlantic City Electric (ACE) and Rockland Electric Company (RECO) will see further decreases in prices of 2.97 percent and 3.2 percent, respectively. Those ratepayers supplied through Jersey Central Power and Light (JCP&L) will have stable prices with a 0.0 percent change. Prices for ratepayers who receive their electricity supply through PSE&G will be the exception with an increase of 5.1 percent, which reflects an increase in transmission costs factored into the costs of electric delivered into that system.

A component of all the prices, which shows an increase, is the cost of new transmission facilities. New transmission projects are deemed necessary by PJM, the regional transmission organization (RTO) that coordinates the movement of whole-

sale electricity in all or part of 13 states and the District of Columbia, and the resulting transmission rate is approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

PJM submitted the Capacity Performance Proposal to FERC in response to the extremely cold temperatures that sent demand soaring during the 2014 polar vortex while also causing generator outages due to cold weather-related problems. The uncertainty and higher risk of additional costs facing the BGS bidders in response to PJM's proposal to acquire additional capacity may have resulted in a significant number of bidders choosing not to participate in the BGS auction or participate with significantly higher prices.

The board's approval of the BGS results covers two separate descending clock auctions conducted by NERA Economic Consulting over three business days. The auction for Commercial and Industrial Energy Price (CIEP) service used by large commercial and industrial customers began on February 6 and concluded on February 9. The auction for Fixed Price (FP) service used primarily by residential and small to medium sized commercial customers began on February 9 and concluded on February 10. Both auctions secured commitments for as much as \$7 billion worth of purchases covering approximately 8,400 megawatts (MWs) of customer requirements.

The energy secured in the FP auction will meet one-third of the state's residential and small business electric load requirements for the next three energy years, starting Monday, June 1. The remaining two-thirds of customer supply requirements for the 12-month time period beginning June 1 will be met by electric supply secured in the auctions of 2013 and 2014.

The state's four regulated electric distribution companies (EDCs) do not earn a profit on the cost of the electric supply secured in the auctions. These costs are passed through directly to ratepayers.

As of December 2014, approximately 86 percent of the CIEP load is being provided through individual contracts with third-party suppliers.

## Assembly Advances Bill to Protect Assault Victims

TRENTON — Legislation sponsored by Assemblywoman Nancy F. Muñoz (R-21st, Summit) that provides sexual assault victims with protection against their offenders has won General Assembly approval.

The "Sexual Assault Survivor Protection Act of 2015" (A-4078), would allow victims to obtain protection without filing criminal charges.

"Sexual assault is physically and psychologically devastating; and victims too often are embarrassed or feel they are in some way to blame for the attack," Asw. Muñoz said. "As a result, only a very small percentage of victims file criminal charges. Unless they report the crime, they cannot obtain a restraining order. This leaves their attacker free to harass or assault them again."

The bill would allow the court to issue a temporary protective order regardless of whether the alleged victim has filed criminal charges. It pro-

hibits the alleged offender from having any contact or communication, including personal, written, telephone or via electronic device, with victims and their family members, employers, and employees.

Under current law, restraining orders are predominately used for victims of domestic violence.

In addition, the measure prohibits stalking, following or harassing, including cyber-harassing, the alleged victim.



# Goods & Services You Need

**Nature's Beauty**  
**Marble & Granite Fabricators**  
High quality wholesale prices on all your marble & granite needs.  
Specializing in kitchen countertops, bathroom vanities & fireplaces.  
"Looking forward to doing business with you. Come in for a FREE estimate or simply fax us your layouts."  
2476 Plainfield Avenue 908-233-5300  
Scotch Plains, NJ Fax: 908-233-5655

**JK's Painting & Wall Covering**  
Interior Painting  
Wallpaper Removal  
Wallpaper Installation  
Plaster & Sheet Rock Repair  
Call Joe Klingebiel  
908-322-1956  
FULLY INSURED FREE ESTIMATES

**OLIVER A HOWARTH PAVING**  
DRIVEWAYS • PARKING LOTS  
SEAL COATING • RAILROAD TIES  
DRAINAGE PROBLEMS  
BELGIUM BLOCK CURBING  
STUMP GRINDING  
"Serving the area for over 50 years."  
Family Owned & Operated  
Fully Insured • FREE Estimates  
908-753-7281

**REMODELING CONTRACTOR Lic. # 13VH07599200**  
BATHROOMS • KITCHENS • SMALL REPAIRS  
**J & S Maintenance, LLC**  
• Interior/Exterior Painting  
• Powerwashing, Deck Staining & Repairs  
• Small Repairs, Installation of Doors & Windows  
• Installation and Refinishing of Hardwood Floors  
Fully Insured  
References Available  
908-789-2324  
908-917-6946  
www.jsremodel.com

**HYDRO-TEK LTD.**  
Lawn Sprinklers  
(908) 276-1062  
www.Hydro-TekLtd.com

Grandfather clock repair  
Howard Miller Certified service technician  
We make house calls • All types of watch and clock repair  
**FREDERIC'S JEWELERS**  
1083 Raritan Road, Clark, NJ 07066-1314  
Phone 732.388.8889  
www.fredericsjewelers.com

**DON'T REPLACE YOUR TILE**  
Revitalize it...and Save!  
**The Grout Guy**  
BATHROOMS, KITCHENS, FLOORS, COUNTERS  
Call for a free in-home estimate  
973-634-7384

**This Space is Available**  
Call the Advertising Department:  
T: 908.232.4407  
F: 908.232.0473  
sales@goleader.com

**RESIDENTIAL • COMMERCIAL • INDUSTRIAL**  
**HE HUNTER ELECTRIC INC.**  
Member of BBB  
20 Years in Business  
908.654.0287 • SERVICE CALLS  
Recessed Lighting  
Service Upgrades  
Phones & Cable Lines  
Additions and Renovations  
Builders & Contractors Welcome  
NJ Lic # 10421

**PAINING**  
**MARINO'S PAINTING**  
"The Neatest Painter Around"  
• Interior & Exterior Painting  
• Expert preparation & clean-up  
• Paper Hanging & Wall Paper Removal  
• Sheetrock & Trimwork - Powerwashing  
• Deck Repairs & Staining - Driveway Seal Coating  
• We Clean Windows & Gutters • Hepa Vacuum Sanding  
Lic. # 13VH01137900  
908-688-0481

**CHECCHIO**  
**BLACK TOP PAVING**  
DRIVEWAYS CONCRETE  
PARKING LOTS BRICK PAVERS  
908-889-4422  
FREE ESTIMATES

**30 Years Experience**  
**Handyman**  
Mr. Reliable  
(908) 462.4755