

Cranford Republicans Petrucci, Bilger Want To “Keep Progress Moving”

By **CHRISTINA M. HINKE**
Specially Written for *The Westfield Leader*

WESTFIELD — Road repair and controlling taxes are at the top of residents' concerns, Republican candidates for township committee Barbara Bilger and Michael Petrucci told *The Westfield Leader* Saturday.

“Hopefully we are moving in the right direction right now. We have so many great improvements in town...along with Michael, I feel the two of us together we could continue this progress,” said Ms. Bilger, director and treasurer of the chamber of commerce.

Ms Bilger was selected in September to fill the seat of Lisa Aduabato, who resigned to become a Superior Court Judge, and is now running to fulfill the unexpired two years left on the term.

Ms. Bilger said taxes in the township in the last two years “combined have been less than the previous years”. In her talks with senior citizens, Ms. Bilger said they were concerned about taxes, and she would be “an advocate for our senior citizens”.

“It is important to keep that progress moving...and important that Cranford keeps its character while providing the essential services we require in this day and age...,” said Mr. Petrucci, who is a planning board member.

Mr. Petrucci is challenging incumbent Democrat Tom Hannen for a full-three year term while Ms. Bilger faces Democrat Patrick Gilbin for Ms. Aduabato's seat.

Messrs. Hannen and Gilbin sat down with *The Leader* earlier for an interview.

In response to future downtown development, “There are some concerns about the vacancies there...[The committee needs to] work closely to make sure our redevelopment plans and designations are appropriate for Cranford, and we give the power to various boards to get improvements done...,” Mr. Petrucci said.

When asked why they see the approximately \$750,000 expenditure for improvements to the North Avenue side of train station as the right decision after the bids came in above budget, “We have to act like a designated transit village...it is also in the name of safety...North Avenue has become more congested...we need to have a safe area for these busses to come in for passengers to embark and disembark...,” Mr. Petrucci responded.

The state department of transportation chipped in \$500,000 in the way of a transit village grant in 2011, which is on top of the money the township borrowed.

The safety aspect of the fencing to direct pedestrian traffic to the crosswalks and to deter pe-

destrians from crossing in the middle of North Avenue was one reason Ms. Bilger cited.

In response to the lost parking spots that will result from the improvements there, Mr. Petrucci noted the township was “proactive” in leasing additional parking, available now at the MDTV building next to Marino's Seafood. In regard to adding permit parking since there is a wait list, he said there needs to be discussions on how to better utilize the parking deck at Cranford Crossing and to revitalize the lot that is in disrepair on the north side of the train station.

Partnering with other municipalities, Union County and state and federal government were at the forefront of getting flood control projects in Cranford moving forward, both candidates said.

When asked why they feel the township's decision over a year

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It's Not About What Party; It's About What Garwood Wants

I recently attended the “packed clubhouse” at the Pointe condominiums on North Avenue in Garwood this past Thursday to hear the debate which included Democrats Bill Nierstedt, Carol Kearney and Republicans Ileen Cuccaro and Joe Sarno.

I have to say that it was VERY clear to me that Ileen and Joe's platform is all about what's right for the people of Garwood and not a dictatorship which seems to be what council has been in the past, i.e., decisions made behind closed doors without input from the residents, etc. etc. Both Ileen and Joe in their opening statements said more than once that they are standing up for the residents. I would ask the town of Garwood to put your

party aside and think about the transparency, honesty and integrity that Ileen Cuccaro and Joe Sarno will bring to this town....a town that has lost its trust in council.

My vote will be for the team (Ileen Cuccaro and Joe Sarno) who WANT to work for their town residents and have verbally said they want to be our advocate for “change”. I would not vote for someone who says openly in front of residents attending the debate, that he doesn't want to attend council meetings anymore, whatever his reasoning. Perhaps that's an indication to step down.

*Kathleen (Kat) Patterson
Garwood*



Brian Trusdell for *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times*
SMILING IN THE END...Garwood council candidates Republicans Joe Sarno and Ileen Cuccaro, left, pose with Democrats Carol Kearney and Bill Nierstedt, right, after Thursday's debate at The Pointe.

Taxes, Spending Sparks Garwood Candidates Debate

By **BRIAN TRUDELLE**
Specially Written for *The Westfield Leader*

GARWOOD – Rancor over the athletic field complex – nearly one year after it opened – spilled into the Garwood borough council candidates debate last Thursday, with Democrat incumbent Carol Kearney and Republican challenger Ileen Cuccaro trading accusations face-to-face.

In a largely civil exchange before a standing-room-only crowd at the fieldhouse of The Pointe condominium complex, the most contentious moment came during a discussion of taxes.

Ms. Cuccaro derided the Garwood Sports and Recreation Complex in the southeast corner of town as a “\$3 million vanity project,” saying the residents didn't want “Giants Stadium in Garwood.” To rein in taxes, she said, council had to stop spending.

She then added that the complex didn't “belong to Garwood” because grant money received from Union County restricted its

use.

Despite a format that gave each of the four candidates two minutes to answer questions in rotation from Pointe moderator Bill Connolly, Ms. Kearney, seated immediately to Ms. Cuccaro's left, turned to her opponent and challenged her assertion that the town didn't own the complex.

“May I ask, who owns the complex?” Ms. Kearney said.

“Well, it's funded by Green Acres, so do you really think Garwood has control?” Ms. Cuccaro responded.

“I don't know what strings are attached,” Ms. Kearney said.

“Garwood doesn't own that complex,” Ms. Cuccaro countered.

“We're not supposed to be going back and forth,” Ms. Kearney said.

“Then why did you say it to me?” Ms. Cuccaro shot back to laughter from the audience.

A second uneasy moment came during Council President Bill

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