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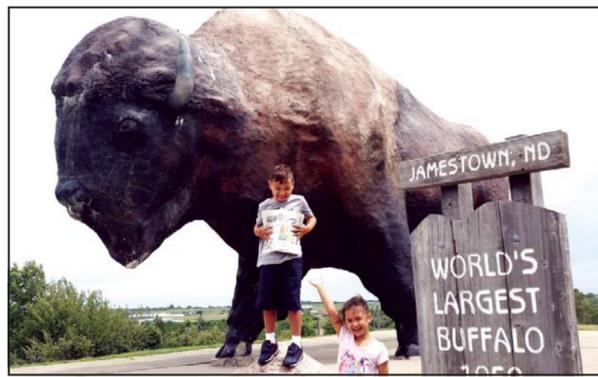


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Courtesy of Eric Wigginton
OH GIVE ME A HOME...Thatcher Wigginton, 7, and his 5-year-old sister Scarlett of Clark pose with *The Westfield Leader* while on vacation in front of "The World's Largest Buffalo Statue" in Jamestown, N.D.

Freeholders Offer \$59-Mil. General-Purpose Bond

By BRIAN TRUSDELL
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

ELIZABETH—Union County freeholders introduced a \$58.9-million general-purpose bond ordinance last Thursday, by far the biggest ticket item on an 11-page agenda that also included the settlement of a third lawsuit involving the prison system in 10 months.

The bond was \$15 million more than a similar ordinance passed last year and the largest amount of what has become an annual summer action over more than a decade by the freeholders, eclipsing the \$49.6-million bond adopted in 2011.

The only details that were included on the printed agenda – and read aloud – were for “various public improvements and the acquisition of new additional or replacement equipment and machinery, new additional furnishings, new communication and signal systems equipment, new information technology and telecommunications equipment and new automotive vehicles...”

The wording was similar to past years. A public hearing and final vote is scheduled for Thursday, August 18.

In other action, a seven-member board, without freeholders Bette Jane Kowalski and Mohamed Jalloh, approved an \$18,000 payment to settle a lawsuit filed by LaQuan L. Kearny, who claimed he suffered “brutal assaults” at the Union County jail in Elizabeth more than four years ago.

Mr. Kearny named the county, two prison guards, a sergeant and a nurse in his suit, claiming \$14 million in damages for a ruptured eardrum, loss of hearing, broken teeth and lacerations that required stitches.

County Counsel Robert Barry, in response to questions from the public, said no criminal charges were filed against the officers identified in the lawsuit and he was unaware of any disciplinary action taken against them, either. He said additional costs related to outside counsel for the officers involved had not been totaled yet.

The settlement follows a \$475,000 payment in December to dispose of a sexual assault claim against a former officer at the Union County Juvenile Detention Center in Linden and \$200,000 in October to the mother of a man who died in custody at the Union County Jail awaiting trial for murder.

Among the other 46 resolutions approved unanimously by the board were \$700,000 to Union County College over a 12-month period beginning this past June to provide “adult, dislocated worker and business services” – essentially job training and

placement — for a minimum of 175 people.

Others included \$150,000 to the Urban League of Union County in Elizabeth for temporary housing for parolees returning to the county; an increase of \$250,824 in funding for the 2016-2018 “Area Plan,” bringing total allocations to \$4.7 million; and an additional \$132,210 to CME Associates of Monmouth Junction, N.J., for engineering services related to the site remediation of the former Lenape Park Trap and Skeet facility in Cranford.

There also was a \$136,000 contract awarded to T&M of Middletown, N.J., for “workplace health and safety compliance and consulting services” and a \$70,000 contract with the Union County Improvement Authority (UCIA) for “strategic facility planning services.”

Mr. Barry explained, upon a question from the public, that the money was allocated – in conjunction with the county’s previous shared-services agreement with the UCIA – to determined physical space needs for “all departments and the feasibility of useful life” of existing space.

He acknowledged that the UCIA had previously agreed to undertake the expense but he said it was evident that outside expertise was needed.

In other matters, Garwood resident Bruce Paterson spent much of his allotted five minutes criticizing several freeholders by name for their previous support of Union County College (UCC) President Margaret McMenamin and challenging the freeholder board as a whole to investigate the situation at the school.

Mr. Paterson read from a published report that mentioned how the American Association of University Professors had sanctioned UCC, one of only seven schools in which such action was taken, for “violating standards of academic governance.”

Several freeholders, including Sergio Granados, Angel Estrada, Christopher Hudak, Al Mirabella and Chairman Bruce Bergen, dismissed the complaints, with a few attributing them as part of management-labor negotiations.

GW Council

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tired in November – under the supervision of Ms. Bruns, who would assume the larger responsibility. The part-timers were favored by the board due to the fact that the positions came without health insurance and other fringe benefits.

“The savings really never amounted to what it was sold to the public in January, as today we’re voting on making someone full time with benefits now to help the CFO,” Mr. Sarno said.

Ms. Todisco said the \$35,000 salary with benefits was actually a reduction in cost from the previous person who held the position, and Ms. Ariemma also spoke at length, accusing council members of “not listening” to the administrative staff and targeting her department for scrutiny.

She also said the municipal building did not have space for two part-time employees, a claim supported by police chief Bruce Underhill, who told council he twice has had to remodel his offices.

“We’re outgrowing this building,” he said.

The debate intensified when Mr. Mathieu supported Mr. Sarno’s contention, and drew Mr. Lombardo into the issue by accusing him of similar misrepresentations during last year’s dismissal of department of public works head Fred Corbitt and subsequent hiring of an eighth Department of Public Works (DPW) laborer earlier this year.

The mention of Mr. Corbitt drew a sharp rap of Mr. Lombardo’s gavel, who accused Mr. Mathieu of being out of order, and the two spoke over one another for several moments.

At one point, Borough Attorney Bob Renaud interrupted the discussion to caution council members to refrain from any discussion of any borough employee’s performance.

In other action, the council approved \$36,500 for the purchase of a fingerprint scanning machine for the police department and 13 breathing apparatus packs for the fire department.

It also awarded a \$114,770 contract – the lowest of two bids – to Cifelli and Son General Construction of Nutley for the milling and paving of Center Street.



Susan M. Dougherty for The Westfield Leader
SWEET SOUNDS...At the Elm Street venue of Downtown Westfield's Sweet Sounds, the Gordon James group entertains. The Tuesday night free concert series sponsored by the Downtown Westfield Corporation continue through the end of August.

Scotch Plains-Fanwood BOE Details Parking Plan

By FRED T. ROSSI
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

SCOTCH PLAINS — Representatives from the board of education briefed the planning board on Monday night about its plans to develop a parking lot for teachers between Park Middle School and School One.

An increase in the number of teachers and, especially, teacher aides for students needing extra attention led to a parking shortage in recent years that resulted in teach-

ers parking illegally in the lot along Park Avenue adjacent to the post office or on neighborhood streets, according to the board’s business administrator, Deborah Saridaki.

At the planning board’s meeting on Monday, engineer Michael Thomas said that the new lot will be situated on a grassy field between the two school buildings, adding the 55-to-60-space lot that will be located parallel to two maintenance sheds was situated “as far away from residences [on Madison Avenue] as possible.”

Most of the existing ball field will remain, Mr. Thomas said, as will the playground for School One students. Mrs. Saridaki said she hopes construction on the 17,000-square-foot lot can begin as soon as state approval is received, but not before the start of the new school year in September.

Mr. Thomas said that access to the new lot would be via Park Avenue for entering cars and via Willow Avenue in front of School One for vehicles exiting the lot. Several planning board members expressed some concerns about the ingress and egress strategy, worrying that traffic on Willow Avenue could be problematic.

Speaking to *The Westfield Leader* after the meeting, Mayor Kevin Glover said that both Scotch Plains and Fanwood were prepared to offer the board of education municipal space for such things as school bus and maintenance vehicle parking if that would help free up existing parking spaces on the schools’ properties.

“The board pushed back on what we proposed,” the mayor said, lamenting that, in his view, with “so much paving” resulting from the new lot, most of the exiting grass field “is gone.”

At the start of its meeting, the planning board approved a resolution allowing the development of an empty lot on Bartle Avenue.

A year ago, the board rejected an application seeking variances in order to develop the lot next to the rescue squad headquarters into what likely would have been a mixed-use building.

In denying the application by Juanita Dinizo, board members had expressed concerns about the impact that tenant and customer parking would have on the two municipal parking lots adjacent to the property and how the rescue squad’s response to emergencies could be negatively affected.

Recently, a Superior court overturned the board’s denial, leaving the planning board to vote on Monday night to comply with the court’s order.

The board’s next meeting will be on Monday, September 12.

Mountainside Adjust. Bd. Delays Alpine Application

By DELL SIMEONE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

MOUNTAINSIDE — The board of adjustment held a short meeting on Tuesday evening, at which members approved two minor applications and postponed the application of Alpine at Mountainside, LLC, 1490-1496 Route 22, West, an inclusionary, multi-family residential site plan with six buildings, until Tuesday, August 23.

The board approved the application of Janice Wojtkunski/Palchik, 1144 Maple Court, who is proposing to erect a new shed to replace what she called the rotting structure there now. Ms. Wojtkunski said she has had surgery on her rotor cuff and other physical challenges that required her to buy automatic heavy yard equipment which is too large to fit in the shed she has now. She said the new shed, measuring 10 by 14 feet, will fit in the same location as the old one.

The board also approved an application by Regina Burchala, of 1141 Corrine Terrace. The applicant is proposing to install solar panels on the back roof of her home. Robert “Bobby”

Jones, of Trinity Solar, testified that the panels, which are considered an accessory structure, would not be obtrusive.

In other business, C.F.G.R., of 151 Wild Hedge Lane, represented by attorney Bruce Bergen, requested an extension of time to perfect a previously approved subdivision concerning plans to erect two homes on conforming lots. Board Attorney Vincent Loughlin said that the ordinance requires them to reapply for a final subdivision approval.

The planning board memorialized an informal presentation which was given at a previous meeting on the improvements to be done at the Watchung Stables.

The board also memorialized the application of Uncle Bob’s Self Storage, 1129 Route 22, and the Stage House Tavern 3 LLC application, at 1099 Route 22. Both applications are contingent on the approval of the New Jersey Department of Transportation, said Mr. Loughlin.

The next meeting of the board will be August 23, at 7:30 p.m., at the Municipal Complex on Route 22.

Conley Sworn In as New Scotch Plains Police Chief

By FRED T. ROSSI
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

SCOTCH PLAINS — Ted Conley was formally sworn in as police chief on Tuesday and pledged to “support 100 percent” his “brothers and sisters in blue.”

A celebratory crowd of more than 150 — mostly township police officers, friends and family as well as law enforcement representatives from throughout Union County — crowded the township council chambers to witness Mr. Conley, an 18-year department veteran, take the oath of office from Mayor Kevin Glover, who said he “could not be more supportive of this well-deserved promotion.”

Township Manager Al Mirabella, who made the decision to elevate Mr. Conley to chief, said that in the five months since he named Chief Conley to serve as officer-in-charge of the department after the retirement of Police Chief Brian Mahoney, he had seen a number of positive changes, including improved morale, increased community policing, teamwork with the county police chiefs and renewed pride in the department.

Chief Conley joined the department in 1998 as a patrolman and was promoted to sergeant in 2006 and then to

lieutenant in 2012.

In February 2015, he was promoted to captain.

Two of Chief Conley’s predecessors, Mr. Mahoney and Thomas O’Brien, attended Tuesday’s ceremony as did Fanwood Police Chief Richard Trigo and former borough chief Anthony Parenti.

Mr. Trigo told the council that the township “couldn’t have picked a better guy” for the position.

Mr. Mahoney said Mr. Conley had been his “right-hand man” during his own tenure as chief and told Chief Conley that, “you’re the man for this job.”

Council members also weighed in, with Deputy Mayor Rose Checchio lauding Chief Conley for having “embraced this community” and Councilman Llewellyn Jones calling him “the right person for this job.”

Councilwoman Colleen Gialanella expressed her appreciation to Mr. Conley “that you value this community” and said she knew “that you’ll treat everyone with incredible respect.”

Councilman John Del Sordi, Jr. called the new chief someone who “cares about the community and cares about the rank and file.”



Fred T. Rossi for The Westfield Leader
COOLING OFF...Hundreds get a break from the nearly 100-degree temperatures on Saturday at the Scotch Plains Fire Department’s “wetdown” celebrating the arrival of its newest pumper truck.



Susan Dougherty for The Westfield Leader
DANCING THE NIGHT AWAY...Dancers and spectators enjoy the music on Tuesday night as part of the Sweet Sounds Sponsored by the Downtown Westfield Corporation.