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## Council Adopts Ordinance For 73-Unit Apt. Plan

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

**GARWOOD**—The borough council adopted an ordinance on second reading for the South Avenue II redevelopment plan at Tuesday night's meeting. The plan proposes 73 rental units. The council, while cognizant of a court-ordered timeline, has acknowledged the planning board will further seek borough resident interests during the site-plan review.

"I will not support this," said Councilman Joseph Sarno.

Mr. Sarno said a more detailed overview was not presented to the council before governing body members weighed whether to approve a 52-for-sale townhome redevelopment plan or the approved redevelopment plan for 73 rental units for the property which also is known as the Casale/Petro site.

Mr. Sarno held a binder providing an apparent detailed South Avenue I redevelopment plan overview, which will include one building with 298 apartment units and 19,366 square feet of retail space. Mr. Sarno said "for whatever reasons" a detailed overview was not provided for South Avenue II before decisions were made.

Councilman Marc Lazarow said the court-ordered affordable-housing timeline exposing the borough to builder's remedy lawsuits creates an "imperative to not roll the dice" by challenging the timeline.

Councilwoman Jennifer Blumenstock said she acknowledged resident feedback being more in favor of the rental unit option, thus she supports the ordinance.

Ms. Blumenstock said she was more comfortable with the lesser three-bedroom count proposed for the rental unit redevelopment option versus three times the three-bedroom count in the stacked townhome option. Ms. Blumenstock said three-bedroom layouts promote more school-aged children, possibly burdening borough resources such as the school district.

Councilwoman Sara Todisco said it is important to note Russo Development, the developer of both the South Avenue I and II redevelopment projects, offers a for-sale redevelopment option, reduces the three-bedroom count, and provides more municipal parking when asked again by borough leaders.

Both redevelopment options for South Avenue II were presented to the public at a town-hall formatted meeting held at Lincoln School on December 5. Russo Development's Ed Russo responded to questions and concerns the public had on either redevelopment plan.

Borough redevelopment attorney William Northgrave said he does not expect borough financial advisors to find Russo Development making an "undeniably high" profit after conducting more comprehensive financial models on the development.

Both Councilwoman Ileen Cuccaro and Councilman Sarno voted against the South Avenue II redevelopment ordinance. The planning board is refining an ordinance to de-incentive future developers from constructing less than seven units, stated planning board member Bill Nierstedt. The affordable-housing guidelines suggest affordable units are mandated for construction when more than seven units

are developed, Mr. Nierstedt said.

Mr. Nierstedt said the ordinance will require developers to provide financial compensation at an undefined compensation rate to a borough affordable-housing trust fund even if less than seven units are constructed. Mr. Nierstedt also said the ordinance will stop legal loopholes such as LLC changes denying developers affordable-housing requirement responsibility.

The borough would still be responsible for its court-mandated fair-share affordable number for new development, while borough resources would be drained by unaccounted developers, Mr. Nierstedt added.

In other business, Councilwoman Blumenstock said any residents who experience heating problems can take refuge in Borough Hall to alleviate exposure to cold temperatures during daytime or nighttime, as the building is a warming station.

Mayor Charles Lombardo promoted Allen Tweedle to fire chief. Mr. Tweedle has served on the borough's volunteer fire squad for more than 20 years.

"Be prepared," said Mr. Tweedle, offering two words of advice to fellow firefighters.

John Scalzadonna will serve as assistant chief while Lenny Spina was promoted to the rank of fire official.

Pat DiFabio is still Garwood's longest-serving firefighter. He has been serving the borough for over 68 years. Mr. DiFabio started his tenure in 1950, holding the title as longest-serving firefighter in the entire county. Mr. DiFabio is still an active volunteer at age 90.

Councilman Louis Petruzzelli participated in his last council meeting.

"Councilman Petruzzelli has diligently served Garwood for nine years, and I want to express my deepest gratitude (to him)," Mayor Lombardo said.

Mr. Petruzzelli will continue as a volunteer firefighter with the borough. "When Garwood needed someone to act like a project manager of the recreation complex construction project, it was Lou that spent countless hours on the phone or at meetings with contractors," Councilwoman Todisco said.

Ms. Todisco said being a council member can be a thankless job, one where individuals often get attacked personally while trying to altruistically serve their community.



June 29, 2017

**BOTH SIDES OF THE BATTLE...** Authentically costumed volunteers re-create the Battle of Short Hills that took place on June 26, 1777 in the area that is now known as the Plainfield Country Club. History calls this battle a "strategic American victory" in the Revolutionary War.

proposed for two separate buildings, each containing three residences.

The town council introduced an ordinance to set aside \$700,000 for a program of reevaluation that the Union County Tax Board ordered the town to complete by November 2018.

It was revealed at a Westfield Board of Health meeting that Blende Custom Makeup Studio was facing scrutiny from the New Jersey Board of Cosmetology and Hairstyling and Westfield health officers for rendering microblading services. The cosmetology board categorizes microblading as a permanent tattoo.

The school district is planning to transition to a new website platform by September 2018.

### Cranford

Emanuel Nimrud withdrew his application before the board of adjustment to build four apartments at 496 Centennial Avenue, at the corner of Cranford Terrace.

Hartz Mountain said its analysis showed that 130 school children would be enrolled in the Cranford public schools should it develop the 30-acre parcel of land for its proposed 905-apartment complex.

### Garwood

The planning board approved a resolution reverting back to the board's approval several years ago of a nine-townhouse development on Fourth Avenue and Walnut Street. The property, known as the Hidi property, has been the subject of litigation for the past three years after the board initially voted to approve the multi-family development in a single-family neighborhood.

The borough council introduced an ordinance designating the Garwood Mall an overlay zone for possible affordable-housing development. Under court-imposed affordable-housing measures, Garwood is responsible for additional affordable units to be zoned for future development.

### Scotch Plains

Superintendent Margaret Hayes told the board of education that opening-day student enrollment for the district "has remained pretty consistent over the past few years," noting that last year's total enrollment equaled 5,577 and as of September 18, 2017, the district total enrollment equaled 5,586.

The township recreation commission said it would consider a proposal to establish an ice-skating rink through a lease arrangement with Union Sports Arena. The rink would benefit hockey teams and instructional play while possibly being available for use by recre-

ational skaters.

### Fanwood

Patrick Cole, an engineer with H2M Associates, Inc., said the firm inspected about 700 manholes that are owned by the borough. "The manholes are in fairly good shape," he said. The challenges of the borough's sanitary sewer system is that it is aging, and it is at the end of its lifespan, which is typically 75 years, he said.

The borough council entered into a shared-service agreement with the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education (BOE) and the Township of Scotch Plains for the municipal garbage disposal on public property. The three entities accepted the proposal submitted by the Plainfield Municipal Utilities Authority (PMUA).

### Mountainside

After hearing lengthy testimony from

several dozen concerned residents, the borough council voted not to designate Lot 17 as an "Area in Need of Redevelopment," thus deciding not to include it in the high-density, 30-unit housing plan for the section of Mountain Avenue known as the Barnes Tract.

### County

Acting Union County Prosecutor Grace H. Park submitted her resignation after more than four years with the county. She was hired as deputy general counsel and chief litigation counsel for Public Service Enterprise Group, Inc. (PSEG).

The Union County Freeholder Board passed a resolution consenting to the guaranty of bonds for the controversial \$59-million Mind and Body Complex in Roselle.

### Region

Local communities stepped up efforts to raise funds and collect donations to aid the victims of Hurricane Harvey in Texas and Louisiana.

Shoppers said good-bye to the Sears Roebuck store on Route 22 in Watchung, which closed after 52 years.

### OCTOBER

#### Westfield

The Westfield Board of Education's Community Relations Coordinator, Lorre Korecky, announced her retirement after 22 years as a liaison between schools and the community, effective at the end of December.

The recreation commission heard a request from the Westfield Baseball League to replace the outfield fences at Gumbert Park with portable fences that can be taken down during the off season. The commission also received a request from the Jersey Off Road Biking Association (JORBA) to adopt biking trails at Tamaques Park. Jamie Meiselman of JORBA said the group would like to create a family-friendly mountain bike area in Westfield.

The board of education was told that improvements to Kehler Stadium will see the facility out of use for at least three months in the spring and summer next year. Business Administrator Dana Sullivan said the turf field, the athletic track and the metal bleachers would be replaced and many other parts of the stadium upgraded, including the bathrooms.

The board of adjustment approved the use of a retail space at 212 Lenox Avenue for the Greater Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce (GWACC) offices.

A lawsuit filed by the owners of the infamous "Watcher House" on the Boulevard in Westfield was dismissed by a state Superior Court judge. Maria and Derek Broaddus, the new owners of the house, claimed former owners, John and Andrea Woods, intentionally hid from them the letter they received from "The Watcher" out of fear they would lose the house sale.

The town council introduced an ordinance to amend the town's snow-removal policy to allow for alternate side of the street parking in certain areas where there is limited off-street parking.

### Cranford

Ryan Greco, a 19-year veteran of the police department, was sworn in as the new chief. It also was announced that Township Clerk Tara Rowley was leaving her post after 17 years with the municipal government, the last 11 as clerk. She confirmed that she would be the new town clerk in Westfield.

### Garwood

The planning board adopted the housing element and fair share plan as part of Garwood's master plan. The review designates the Garwood Mall, a strip mall on South Avenue, as an overlay zone for the borough's affordable-housing obligations should the property become available in the future for development. The total affordable units the borough must zone for has been reduced from 213 to 45.

The board of education terminated employee participation in the State Health Benefits Program and approved an agreement with AmeriHealth/Trust for employee medical and prescription drug plans commencing in January. Garwood Education Association representatives said the teachers union had not been given sufficient notice that their

benefits options were changing.

### Scotch Plains

At a town hall meeting at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School, Mayor Alexander Smith said redevelopment efforts will hopefully start in the first half of 2018, with the focus being on some of the township-owned properties. He expects about 3,000 new overall housing units to be built in Scotch Plains over the next eight or so years, with half of those to be built on the south side of town and at the site of the Bowcraft Amusement Park, and the remainder in the downtown area.

The township council passed an ordinance that makes adjustments to the township's Length of Service Awards Program (LOSAP) for fire department and rescue squad volunteers. The program, established in Scotch Plains 16 years ago to provide some income incentives to emergency responder volunteers, previously tied to a percentage of calls responded to by volunteers. It will now tie to a set number of calls.

Matt Mercurio resigned as Scotch Plains recreation director, a position he had held for a year, to assume the recreation director position in his hometown of Old Bridge.

### Fanwood

An Elizabethtown Gas Company representative told Mayor Colleen Mahr and the borough council that the next phase for replacing gas mains in the borough will be to replace mains and move gas meters to the outside of Elizabethtown Gas customers' homes in the northeast corner of the borough.

### County

The Freeholder Board held a groundbreaking for the new \$8.9-million, 21,000-square-foot Ash Brook Golf Course Clubhouse in Scotch Plains that is anticipated to open in September 2018.

### NOVEMBER

#### Westfield

Shelley Brindle was elected the first female mayor of Westfield, beating out 12-year incumbent Republican Andy Skibitsky. Democrats also swept all four wards for the first time in Westfield history as Linda Habgood in Ward 1, Michael Dardia in Ward 2, David Contract in Ward 3 and Dawn Mackey in Ward 4 won council seats.

Incumbent Peggy Oster, along with newcomers Lynn Benner and Kent Diamond, beat out Anthony Marotta and Simon Cirasa to fill the three available seats on the board of education.

A settlement agreement for the third round Mount Laurel affordable-housing obligation specifies the town's realistic development potential is 62 units, according to the amended order signed by Superior Court Judge Karen Cassidy, the Union County assignment judge.

A board of education survey sought the opinion of townspeople on whether Westfield should provide full-day kindergarten. The program would cost an additional \$290 a year per household.

Town Clerk Claire Gray was given a proclamation during her last town council meeting by Mayor Andy Skibitsky. She served as town clerk since 2005.

### Cranford

Democrats expanded their control of the township committee, winning both seats that were up for grabs, including one held by a Republican. Deputy Mayor Patrick Giblin will be joined on the committee by first-time candidate Jean-Albert Maisonneuve as they defeated Republicans Andis Kalnins, an incumbent, and Richard Buontempo.

Kurt Petschow, Jr., Lisa Carbone and Kristen Mallon were reelected to the board of education.

Once an office use, 215-235 Birchwood Avenue is planned to become a residential use with three, four-story apartment buildings, according to a redevelopment plan introduced on first reading by the township committee. The redevelopment would include multi-family residential development consisting of 225 apartments, 34 of which are affordable, and spread amongst three separate buildings.

### Garwood

Council President Sara Todisco, a Democrat, and Richard McCormack, a Republican, were the winners in the borough council election. Democrat Russ Graham finished in third place followed by Republican Michael Collings. After provisional and mail-in votes were calculated, Mr. McCormack's margin of victory over

Mr. Graham was six votes.

Planning board members provided critical commentary after reviewing the South Avenue redevelopment plan ordinance which calls for the property to be designated for 52 stacked town homes. "The plan is purely for the applicant (Russo Development). Russo can do better than this. I don't see how the borough is benefiting from this plan," said planning board member Bill Nierstedt.

Albert Del Conte was elected as a new member to the Garwood Board of Education along with incumbent board members Linda Koenig and Christine Guerriero. Board member Mary Ann Kjetsaa was elected after running unopposed for a one-year term.

### Scotch Plains

Mayor Alexander Smith said results of a just-completed survey on downtown redevelopment from 1,290 people — nearly all of whom are Scotch Plains residents, business owners and property owners — found that 86 percent believed that the downtown business district needs redevelopment.

Evan Murray and Cynthia Clancy, both of Scotch Plains, were unopposed in their reelection bids to the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education.

The board of education recognized the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Soccer Association on reaching its 40th anniversary.

The planning board gave unanimous approval to a minor subdivision of a property currently owned by the Scotch Plains Baptist Church. The building was previously used by the Fanwood-Scotch Plains YMCA for day-care programs. The property will be subdivided for three homes facing Union Street.

### Fanwood

Councilman Russell Huegel was re-elected to a fourth term, while running mate Anthony Carter was elected to his inaugural three-year term on the governing body over the sole Republican candidate, Brian Walter.

Write-in candidate Amy Boroff received 300 votes to win a seat on the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education, replacing Jeanne Cleary, who did not run for another term.

### Mountainside

Borough residents voted to return Republicans Deanna Andre and Keith Turner to the borough council over Democrats Carlos Gomez and Lauren Cook. Additionally, incumbent Dante Gioia and Dana Guidicciopetro were elected to the two open seats on the Mountainside Board of Education. They were unopposed.

Dozens of residents asked the borough council for clarity and additional information regarding the possible installation of soccer fields and playground equipment at the Beechwood School. Mayor Paul Mirabelli explained that the 2017 Union County Kids Recreation Trust Fund grant application was for a total of \$90,000 for a potential soccer field. The county, though, only provided \$50,000 of the amount requested.

### Region

In a landslide, voters elected Democrat Phil Murphy as New Jersey's next governor over Lieutenant Governor Kim Guadagno in the race to succeed Chris Christie. Locally, Republican state Senator Tom Kean, Jr. defeated Democrat Jill Lazare, while Republican Assemblyman Jon Bramnick was reelected and his running mate, Assemblywoman Nancy Muñoz, edged Lacey Rzeszowski. Bruce Bergen, the current chairman of the Union County Freeholder board, finished fourth. In District 22, Senator Nick Scutari and Assemblymen Jerry Green and James Kennedy, all Democrats, defeated GOP Senate candidate Joseph Bonilla and GOP Assembly candidates John Quattrocchi and Richard Fortunato, and two independent Assembly candidates.

### County

Democrat Peter Corvelli, with 66 percent of the vote, defeated Republican Marc Krauss (34 percent) to succeed Joe Cryan as county sheriff. Mr. Cryan was elected to replace retiring state Senator Ray Lesniak in the 20th Legislative District.

Freeholder incumbents Chris Hudak and Angel Estrada and their running mate, Hillside Mayor Angela Garrison, all Democrats, defeated Republicans Pat Quattrocchi, Peter Lijoi and Mark Martini.



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