

Sarno, Cuccaro Rip Todisco, Blumenstock Over Mailing

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD — Republican Council members Joseph Sarno and Ileen Cuccaro, at Tuesday's borough council meeting, criticized Democrats, Council President Sara Todisco's and Councilwoman Jen Blumenstock's recent flyer updating residents on the South Avenue redevelopment plan. The South Avenue II redevelopment site plan will be discussed at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, December 5, at the Lincoln School with Russo Development, the developer, taking public commentary. At the meeting, council members and their legal representatives had differing opinions on whether the flyer

indicates site-plan specifics are finalized or if and to what degree Russo and the borough are still negotiating. The one-page flyer invited residents to the December 5 public meeting while providing background information on why the redevelopment came about per court statutes. The flyer provided two possible development realities. "There are two options available and we want to know what you think. Our job as council members is to weigh the pros and cons of each option, which includes understanding your perspective," according to the flyer. The first option is 52 townhomes

with 26 two-bedroom units and 26 three-bedroom units. Borough residents would pay for sewer, garbage and snow-plowing expenses. Eighteen additional parking spots would be set aside for municipal parking (27 total spots including already owned existing ones by the Garwood Fire Department).

The second proposed option is 73 total rental units with seven studio apartments, 39 one-bedroom units, 19 two-bedroom units and eight three-bedroom units. The rental units would include the developer paying for sewer, garbage and snow-plowing expenses. The building layout would be a one-building structure (e-shape) with 23 additional (32 total) municipal parking spots.

Ms. Cuccaro said the flyer being distributed was politically motivated.

Mr. Sarno, Ms. Todisco and Ms. Blumenstock are all on a planning board and council joint committee overseeing the South Avenue II redevelopment specifics.

Ms. Cuccaro said that Ms. Todisco "does this all the time," referring to Ms. Todisco and Ms. Blumenstock allegedly excluding Mr. Sarno from voicing an opinion or "having control" in negotiations with Russo on the joint committee.

"It's a bit unfair to go out on your own to do this when you're the only ones with the information," said Mr. Sarno to Ms. Todisco and Ms. Blumenstock.

Ms. Cuccaro said she dislikes the fact two council members can take it upon themselves to inform the public without notifying other council members first.

The flyer was paid for by Ms. Todisco and Ms. Blumenstock. "I am not going to apologize for informing the public on an important issue," Ms. Blumenstock responded.

Mr. Sarno said it was "naïve" for Ms. Todisco and Ms. Blumenstock to release negotiation information be-

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AP Scholars, Spring Athletes Are Recognized by BOE

By ROBYN ORR-GIOFFRE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD — The board of education commended AP Scholars and Spring athletes at its regular monthly board meeting Monday for their demonstrated excellence in various areas.

Cranford High School (CHS) Spring athletes who played baseball, lacrosse and softball were acknowledged by CHS Principal Mark Cantagallo and the board for their accomplishments during this past Spring season.

Additionally, Mr. Cantagallo and the board recognized the many successes of CHS Advanced Placement (AP) Scholars. Fifty-eight CHS students were recognized as AP Scholars. 24 CHS students were named as AP Scholars with Honor, 62 CHS students were acknowledged as AP Scholars with Distinction and one CHS student, Meg Cui, was commended as a National AP Scholar.

Mr. Cantagallo commented that being recognized as a National AP Scholar "is the greatest academic achievement" a student can attain on the high-school level. Maria Polyviou, an art teacher at Lincoln Elementary School, was acknowledged by Lincoln School Principal Dennis McCaffery and the board for her accomplishments related to the 10th Annual Scarecrow Stroll. Lincoln School, led by Ms. Polyviou, has won the school category for the scarecrow contest six years in a row.

Mr. McCaffery told the board he had "nothing to do with" the success for Lincoln School in the Scarecrow Stroll and gave all credit to Ms. Polyviou, commenting that "she's just



Susan M. Dougherty for The Westfield Leader

LIT FOR THE SEASON...Santa and Mrs. Claus wave to the crowd during Westfield's Christmas tree-lighting ceremony.

Neighboring Residents Concerned With Birchwood Flooding, Buffer

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD — After hearing the formal presentation of the redevelopment plan for 215-235 Birchwood Avenue by Planner Mike Mistretta of Harbor Consultants at Tuesday's township committee meeting, residents asked the committee to consider deepening the vegetation buffer between homes on Wadsworth Terrace and the rear of a building planned for the new development, as well as to consider the impact of flooding that would occur as a result of the development.

The township committee adopted an ordinance for a redevelopment plan for 215-235 Birchwood Avenue that

establishes the land as a non-condemnation area in need of redevelopment. The property is being converted from an office use to a residential use. The plan presented depicted three, four-story apartment buildings with 225 units, including parking on the ground level of each building.

At the rear of the property, Mr. Mistretta said, a 150-foot buffer of current vegetation will remain on the property. Residents of Wadsworth Terrace asked to deepen the buffer, and asked why it is not 175 feet as proposed by a previous plan by former developer Cranford Development Associates.

"Why not move it up, because every foot we gain reduces the impact on residents," said resident Joe LoGuidice of Wadsworth Terrace.

In response, Commissioner Ann Dooley said by pushing the buildings away from the rear lot line, the residents who would be living in the new development would be closer to the street on Birchwood Avenue. "You could be impacting the quality of life of those people facing Birchwood, too," Commissioner Dooley said.

"As a longtime resident...I would like to think our concerns should be put [ahead of] the aesthetics of people that aren't residents of a building that hasn't been built yet," resident Mark Smith of Wadsworth Terrace said.

"We will be staring at this as we

look out our windows," said Wadsworth Terrace resident Brad LaForte, who also asked that the buffer be increased.

Flooding in the area also is a concern. Wadsworth Terrace residents have experienced flooding when there was none previously since the neighboring nursing home had built an addition about 20 years ago, Mr. Smith said. He had concerns about how the new development would further increase flooding for the area. The property along Birchwood Avenue lies in a flood zone.

"Is the town council willing to set aside a fund for residents if indeed flooding does increase?" Mr. Smith asked.

Rita LaBrutto of Arlington Road had asked about the terms of the agreement between the township and the developer, Birchwood Developers Associates LLC. Mayor Thomas H. Hannen, Jr. said a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) is on the table and is "going to be decided at the next juncture." The town would collect less in taxes over the years, Ms. Dooley confirmed, should there be a PILOT.

Resident Kathy Allegro asked the committee's rationale for offering a PILOT.

Mayor Hannen said the township would not be getting the same sale price if the PILOT was not part of

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Susan M. Dougherty for The Westfield Leader

SOUNDS OF CHRISTMAS...The Westfield Community Band entertains the large crowd during Sunday night's annual Christmas tree-lighting ceremony at the North Avenue train station lot.

Retirements Announced By Cranford Twp. Committee

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD — The township committee said Monday at its workshop meeting that it is seeking Community Development Block Grant funds for the fiscal year 2018-2019. The township is requesting \$8,400 for the Senior Citizen Nutrition Program; \$100,000 for the Handicap Ramp Replacement Program; \$54,218 for the Senior Citizen Social Services Program; and \$14,558 for the Senior Citizen Handyman Program.

The Christmas lights that have adorned the train trestle will not be displayed this year because NJ Transit has asked the township to pay a \$2,500 fee to do so. The committee agreed to not pay the fee and officials will discuss how they may be able to hang the lights without using NJ Transit property during the Christmas season in years to come.

Deputy Mayor Patrick Giblin announced that John Malar is retiring as director of the township library. Kenilworth Public Library Director Michael Maziekien was selected as

Mr. Malar's replacement. Also, the library is to request a bond, now that the referendum in the state election has been passed by voters that will allow libraries to request money for improvements to their facilities.

Kathleen Miller Prunty is retiring as the director of the Office of Business and Economic Development, also known as the Downtown Management Corporation, effective February 2018, after serving 20 years, Mr. Giblin said. The township department is "charged with economic revitalization and marketing for the Special Improvement District," according to its webpage. Ms. Prunty in 2004 won the Economic Development Director of the Year award at the 25th Annual Mayors Dinner of the Gateway Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Commissioner Ann Dooley suggested changing the start time of the committee's official meetings, held typically on Tuesdays, to half an hour earlier, at 7:30 p.m., and the conference session at 7 p.m.

Bond counsel for the township,

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Paul Lachenaier for The Westfield Leader

SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY...A shopper passes a sign advertising free parking in Downtown Westfield during Small Business Saturday.



Paul Lachenaier for The Westfield Leader

A HOLIDAY TRADITION...Downtown Cranford horse and buggy rides and other holiday activities were held the day after Thanksgiving on Friday. The events were sponsored by the Cranford Chamber of Commerce.

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