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TALKING WESTFIELD ISSUES... Westfield Democratic candidates for mayor and town council were interviewed by *The Westfield Leader* on Friday. Pictured, from left to right, are: Paul Peyton, editor; Michael Dardia, Ward 2 candidate; Shelley Brindle, candidate for Mayor; Dawn Mackey, Ward 4 candidate; Linda Habgood, Ward 1 candidate; and David Contract, Ward 3 candidate. See story on page 2.

Time Frame for Fair Share Hearing Discussed in GW

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO
Specially Written for *The Westfield Leader*

GARWOOD — The borough council approved three ordinances Tuesday to remain in compliance with the state's fair share housing requirements. The planning board will now review all ordinances, providing commentary to be adhered to or not adhered to in the final ordinance approved by council as development terms. The ordinance review and final approval will be presented to a judge at the borough's court hearing on Monday, October 30, in State Superior Court in Elizabeth.

The court hearing will assure Garwood is in compliance with addressing the requirements in the Fair Housing Act regarding affordable housing.

Councilman Joseph Sarno said he was concerned with the council approving an ordinance for planning board review instead of a resolution for Garwood Planning Board review.

"No matter what, from tonight this plan needs to go to the planning board from this body (council) as a resolution or ordinance, the court (on October 30) will be looking at an ordinance. Then on November 14 (next council meeting) action will be taken," said William Northgrave, the borough's re-development attorney.

Mr. Northgrave's legal analysis summarized how both the planning board and council will have time to review and approve a working resolution or ordinance. His statements were to summarize a roadmap towards remaining in fair housing compliance for the October 30 court date while addressing time frames for precise development calculations or details on both the council and the planning board's behalf.

Mr. Sarno said once an ordinance is set it is almost impossible to go backwards and renegotiate the terms in the ordinance. He said a resolution allows for more discussion and planning board feedback on what is appropriate land development at each site.

Mr. Sarno said he had concerns with a disproportionate or undesirable three-bedroom mix amount in the development.

"This should go to the planning board first. The planning board can add value. We're going to be compliant; they're (planning board members) land use experts, not us," said Mr. Sarno.

Councilwoman Ileen Cuccaro said she supported Councilman Sarno's concerns with the council introducing an ordinance review versus a resolution review. Ms. Cuccaro said she did not want to see the council rush through something (ordinance approvals for negotiated development terms) that is uncertain.

"I'm sure we could get a two-week extension," Ms. Cuccaro said. "I don't know if we propose this (as a working resolution in court on October 30) what will happen. Not what we anticipated nor represented to the court in April (at the last hearing)," Borough Attorney Robert Renaud said.

Mr. Renaud said several times

throughout the discussion that he did not want to taint negotiations and would explain negative court hearing ramifications or not being compliant with the fair share requirement in executive session.

"We're in the 11th hour and stakes are high," said Councilwoman Sara Todisco, describing the downside to delaying or blindly making an incorrect decision by becoming in-compliant before a court hearing.

"It is not the 11th hour. You do have time. I appreciate Mr. Sarno, who has brought to council what the planning board has not; which is bringing the planning board to the planning. We are not involved," said planning board member William Nierstedt.

Mr. Renaud stated he would refute Mr. Nierstedt's claim in executive session that it is not the 11th hour and that the planning board could undoubtedly review a resolution for another 35 days overlapping the October 30 hearing date.

Mr. Nierstedt said in another public commentary session during the meeting that the council staying unified and protecting the borough against financial lawsuits is part of each council member's fiduciary responsibility.



VETERANS DAY... Westfield Leader subscriber Bill Morales of Dunellen visits the USS Arizona Memorial in Honolulu this week honoring those that gave their lives for defense of the nation.

Alt. Side Parking

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Gildea," Councilman Frank Arena said. "When those positions come up...they are very eager to talk to us. It says a lot about the town and your leadership," Mr. Arena said.

"We are going to miss Claire," Mr. Loughlin said.

"I am going to miss you guys, too," Ms. Gray said.

During the passage of resolutions in the official meeting, the town received a \$5,079 grant for body armor for the police department.

The council gave permission for a fireworks display to take place at Echo Lake Country Club on Saturday, November 4, to begin about 10 p.m. and last about 10 minutes.

Most of the new meter heads have been installed. "A lot of positive feedback on the new meters," said Mr. Gildea.

The new meters will accept multiple methods of payment. Fifty percent of current pay station payments are credit or app, Mayor Andy Skibitsky said.

Stripping of newly-paved roads is 65 percent complete, Town Engineer Kris McAloon said, with a part of the northwest portion of town to be completed.

Foundation Park, located across from the South Avenue circle, has been improved with two benches

and new lighting installed. The town is waiting for PSE&G to turn on the lights.

Also during the workshop session, Michael Endy, president of the Westfield Art Association, stopped in to give the council the association's membership brochure and a schedule of events for the 2017-2018 year. The Westfield Art Association is a 501c(3) non-profit organization. Memberships begin at \$15, and go up to \$60. To learn more, visit westfieldartassociation.org.

During the Westfield First presentation, local business owners Anna Mastroianni of Sole shoe store and Asad Hussein of Duke's Delhi Indian restaurant were highlighted. Mr. Hussein said he is donating sales of one night's dinner to support a breast cancer awareness fund.

Chief Spirit Officer Meaghan Murphy announced the Boys and Girls Club coat drive is ongoing. "Teenagers are often overlooked," she said, and suggested coat donations for teenagers be dropped off. Dirt Culture Beauty on South Avenue is collecting.

www.goleader.com

Cranford

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while Commissioner Ann Dooley called Ms. Rowley the "best ever in your position" and a "consummate professional."

In other business at the committee's brief meeting, Commissioner Mary O'Connor said she is hopeful about bringing back the household bulk waste pickup program, and is discussing it with her committee colleagues. Commissioner Dooley reminded residents that the township's annual leaf pickup program will get underway next Monday. Mayor Hannen read a proclamation declaring November 25 as Small Business Saturday.

BOE Forum

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effective online presence.

Ms. Benner has 22 years' experience teaching middle and high school in Linden and has three sons currently attending Edison Intermediate School. As a teacher, she said she had seen advancements in policies to give students the right to a quality education but she also had seen mismanagement of funds. She feels it would give a different perspective to have a teacher on the board who could say how policies and technology would actually work in the classroom.

The Candidates Night is now airing on Blue Devils Cable TV36 through November 7, at 9 a.m., noon, 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. On Sundays, it will be shown at noon.

Health Benefits

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distressing for your staff," Ms. Elias said.

The resolution on the agenda cites "equal or better benefits guaranteed in the May 25, 2017 letter."

Garwood Business Administrator Eric Larson said equal or better is a negotiated term referring to quantified co-pay amounts, not guaranteeing the same health-care providers (doctors, specialists and facilities) will be in the new plan.

"We did not have any information in negotiations," stated board member Amanda Langston.

Brown & Brown advisor Anthony Ciardella "shopped the plan" and AmeriHealth "offered to take on Garwood" employees, stated Mr. Larson. AmeriHealth is a company focused on small districts, Mr. Larson said.

Ms. Langston said the board was made aware the change was a viable option months after (in September) the business administrator and the external advisor Mr. Ciardella analyzed other plan options.

Mr. Larson said Garwood entering a health plan is difficult because it is a smaller workforce. The prevailing industry wisdom is larger plans or more participants have a greater diversified risk for issuers, when analyzing claims-to-premiums collected.

Mr. Larson said the state plan has

seen premium increases of more than 23 percent in a given year and an expected 13- to 14-percent increase in cost starting in January.

Board member Linda Koenig said she remembers when fellow employees and she had to "scratch up pennies" to pay for a 23- to 25-percent state health plan premium increase in the early 2000s.

"With many districts leaving the state health plan, it was an opportunity for Garwood to do so," Mr. Larson said.

Mr. Larson said district employees are expected to pay 1 percent less in healthcare coverage premiums this year versus a double-digit cost increase because of the change to AmeriHealth. Mr. Larson said rates are guaranteed for 18 months with AmeriHealth versus 12 months with the state health plan.

"The issue is the lack of transparency. If the plan is so great, why couldn't we be given specifics four weeks ago? We could do research and have our fears alleviated," GEA Vice-President Tamara Benc said.

Ms. Benc said a great stressor is for those with serious and chronic ailments who seek guidance from a specific specialist who may not be covered in the new plan.

"Children with special needs may no longer be able to access the same therapists or facilities," GEA Secretary Lisa Zatorsky said.

Employees will have only 72 days to find new specialists and generalists and to re-schedule important appointments, "adding a level of un-needed stress," stated Ms. Benc.

In other business, this Friday, October 27, the eighth-grade pretzel sale will take place, followed by the eighth-grade clothing drive on Saturday, October 28. The Parent Teacher Association will sponsor a Trick-or-Trunk on October 28, with Lincoln School students participating in Halloween parades and parties on Tuesday, October 31.

Forum Video to be Posted Online

WESTFIELD — Wednesday's Westfield Mayor and Town Council candidates forum will be available for viewing at www.goleader.com/services/video/2017/ by Saturday. It will also be shown on TV36, which can be watched at home or online at www.westfieldnj.gov/tv36.

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GREETING OUR GUESTS... Volunteer Anna Bauer, dressed in late 19th or early 20th century dress, and Civil War reenactor Jim Gelson stand in front of the Crane-Phillips House in Cranford, one of some two dozen historic sites open for tours as part of last weekend's Four Centuries in a Weekend tours around Union County.



READY FOR HALLOWEEN... This youngster appears all ready for Halloween as she attends the Cranford street fair on Sunday.

RE-ELECT ANDY SKIBITSKY FOR MAYOR

Paid for by Re-Elect Skibitsky for Mayor, Mariella Foley, Treasurer, 241 North Ave. West, Suite 300, Westfield, NJ 07090