

Board OK's Development at South/Westfield Aves., First St.

By ZOE RADER
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Plans for a three-story development on South Avenue called the "Circle Plaza of Westfield" was approved by the planning board Monday night, even after area residents opposed the development.

The pending development, located at 408 Westfield Avenue, 501 South Avenue and 320 and 322 First Street, will consist of 30 apartments above retail and commercial space on the ground floor. Five of the apartments will be affordable-housing units while the others will be sold at a market price. The application was first heard at the July 2

planning board meeting, but the board had a number of concerns and asked the applicant to return with modifications.

The board expressed gratitude when the applicant returned Monday night with thorough changes to the site plans. Board Chairman Robert Newell even called the applicant's work "admirable."

Some alterations included stop signs at the parking lot exits, changes to the fencing and landscape and the addition of a nine-foot porch. The porch will be the main entrance of the apartment complex and lead into a lounge area with a stairwell and elevator that must be accessed by keycard.

A lot of the changes are aimed to make the development look more residential and blend in with the surrounding homes.

Craig Peregoy, the applicant's traffic engineer, observed the traffic in the area during the month of April, but had no official report of his findings. Mr. Peregoy said he was confident, however, that the new development would not add problematic traffic and had 59 parking spaces, which he said exceeds the town's requirement.

No restrictions or specifications on who could park in these spaces was mentioned in the application or by the board. Employees of the first-floor spaces, customers and residents can all park there, unless a retail or commercial tenant wants otherwise, Mr. Peregoy said.

Since the complex is across the street from the train station, Mr. Peregoy also testified that most of the apartment residents will be commuters and likely not have cars.

Besides the porch that needed a small variance, the application coordinated with the town code. This did not seem to impress the public, however.

Many surrounding residents to the proposed "Circle Plaza of Westfield" spoke out against the project. With a church and two schools close by, the public was mostly concerned with traffic, the safety of pedestrians and a lack of parking.

Joni Mason, a 23-year resident of Westfield who lives on Trinity Place, implored the board to require a formal traffic report conducted during the school year before accepting the application. Ms. Mason disagreed with Mr. Peregoy's assumption that the new apartment residents would not have cars, stating

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PRINT IT...Westfield Police Officer Elizabeth Savik doing fingerprints during Westfield's National Night Out Tuesday held in parking lot 2 on the northside of the train station.



JAWS OF LIFE...Westfield Police Officer Jeff Johnson demonstrates a Jaws of Life device during Westfield's National Night Out Tuesday held in parking lot 2 on the northside of the train station. The annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and shares public awareness of crime prevention.

750 Walnut Re-zoning Hearing Continues; Board Asks for EIS

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD — The planning board hearing for Hartz Mountain Industries continued August 1 for the re-zoning application for 750 Walnut Avenue, where the applicant proposes to change the current commercial zone to a residential zone. Hartz Mountain's plan calls for 905 apartments within five buildings along the 30-acre property that borders a golf

course in Clark, a Conrail line that borders a residential neighborhood, a portion of Raritan Road and Walnut Avenue. It was standing-room only in the municipal chambers.

The planning board hearing began with testimony provided by the applicant's civil engineer, Jeffrey Martell, of Stonefield Engineering and Design in Rutherford. He gave testimony on a site plan, also called a concept plan, that he prepared. He went over items such as parking, the buildings, the driveways, the fire access road and a landscaping plan.

In discussing the plan, the board made a motion to demand the applicant provide an Environmental Impact Study (EIS). The property at one time was the site of a pharmaceutical company, Mayor Thomas H. Hannen, Jr. noted.

"What is going to be in the EIS? Reason I ask, you pointed out maybe some of the berm can stay if you build the detention underground...you won't find out what is underground until you get further along, and it was a pharmaceutical facility and the reason why it was zoned commercial was because of that," board member Dan Aschenbach said. He said he

would like to know what is going to be in the EIS.

The plan calls for 1,775 parking spaces contained in both surface lots and garages. Planning board member Peter Taylor said the plan shows parking stalls that are sized smaller than the township ordinance requires. Mr. Martell said he used the Residential Site Improvement Standards (RSIS) from the state. The site plan calls for nine-foot by 18-foot stalls, whereas the township ordinance requires parking spaces sized 10 feet by 18 feet. The ordinance also requires a break between every 12 spaces, Mr. Taylor noted.

Should the plan be adjusted to meet the township requirement, Mr. Taylor said the applicant would need to provide more space for parking. Deputy Mayor Ann Dooley asked if this site could accommodate another parking garage.

"No, without changing other elements," Mr. Martell said.

"Like what other elements?" Ms. Dooley asked.

"Current parking lots, building configurations, etc...It would domino into other changes," Mr. Dan Aschenbach said. He said he

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Termination Agreement Advised for Attanasio, Huber

By KATE BROWNE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

MOUNTAINSIDE — During Tuesday's Mountainside Borough Council work meeting, Borough Attorney John Post recommended that the governing body execute an employment termination agreement with former Police Chief Alan Attanasio and Officer Andrew Huber, both of whom voluntarily resigned as of July 21.

The two were named as defendants in a civil lawsuit filed in May by five members of the Mountainside Police Department and a part-time employee. The suit, Stinner versus Borough of Mountainside, alleges that the men engaged in sexist, racist and homophobic conduct. Under the terms of the agreement, the two former officers will forfeit all accrued compensation other than what they are entitled to under the federal wage laws.

Unlike most employees, who can

be terminated at will, New Jersey law provides special employment protections to members of law enforcement. In New Jersey, a police officer can only be removed from his or her position if he or she voluntarily resigns, if he or she is terminated for cause, or if a termination is negotiated. The termination for cause process in New Jersey is one of the most onerous in the country. The state is one of only five in the nation that does not have an officer decertification process, and, as a result, it often requires a criminal conviction before an officer can be removed.

According to Mr. Post, an officer who a municipality wishes to terminate for cause is entitled to a disciplinary hearing, which can take several months and cost approximately \$100,000 per officer in legal fees and administrative hearing costs. The officer also would be entitled to a civil

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BAD ACCIDENT...A box truck driver was seriously injured last Thursday morning in an accident on Route 22 west between the intersection of New Providence Road and Pembroke Road. Mountainside Police said the 2011 Isuzu Model NPR box truck struck the rear of a 1997 Mack tri-axle dump truck as the vehicles were merging into the left lane. The box truck driver was transported to the trauma unit at Morristown Medical Center by Union County EMS. The driver of the dump truck was not injured. The Mountainside Fire Department and Atlantic Healthcare Paramedics were also on the scene.

Weekly Trash Pickups Discussed by Bd. of Health

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Board of Health members on Monday night discussed possible negative health impacts if residents elected to reduce their garbage pickup from twice weekly to once weekly.

The town code requires residents to have garbage pickup twice weekly, stated Health Board President Thomas K. O'Neill. Councilman and Green Team liaison, David Contract, said the idea was proposed by the Green Team to reduce Westfield's total waste output. It was noted that the town code requires only one weekly residential pickup.

Mr. O'Neill said the manner in which the bagged garbage will be contained remains a primary concern for the health board. Health Officer Megan Avallone said individuals who elect for one pickup for garbage per week may eventually have overflow of their household trash.

Ms. Avallone said a Green Team liaison will speak at September's board of health meeting, discussing the initiative's objective and how it will be introduced to minimize or eliminate any health concerns.

"Containment is the concern. Actual trash bags being stored in residential yards set next to a filled can is the problem," said board member Dr. Lawrence Budnick.

Westfield's garbage collection is solicited through private contractors. Ms. Avallone said theoretically if a town was to reduce its pickups from twice to once weekly the plan could be rolled out without any health impact.

Ms. Avallone said there would be no health impact for a town organized garbage pickup if the cans can be guaranteed large enough to contain overflow pertaining to special events

and skipped pickups. She said the health board is not suggesting a town-organized garbage disposal program, but that each private company offers different sized garbage bins or may not offer a bin.

She said where residents choose to place garbage overflows until the next pickup is the health board's primary concern, especially during summer months, when uncontained waste can create a "mustering smell" throughout a neighborhood.

Ms. Avallone said from "personal experience" individuals who have once-a-week pickups find holidays to be pressing. A skipped garbage pickup leads to the garbage beginning to overflow from a single container before the next pickup the following week, stated Ms. Avallone.

The health officer said uncontained garbage or bagged garbage not placed into a container can create a rodent problem.

Board member Elizabeth Talmont said the Green Team's suggestion would allow for "flexibility" in the town's ordinance regarding garbage disposal, as those residents who do not create as much waste do not have to pay for garbage disposal services they do not utilize.

Dr. Budnick said senior citizens do not generate as much garbage as a family household.

Ms. Talmont said the Green Team's suggestion is "progressive" regarding environmental conscientiousness, which is "important," but the idea must be practical in its execution.

Health board member Dr. David Weinman stated that he would personally elect for a twice-weekly pickup. Dr. Weinman said his neighbors and his family would not appreciate if one family forgot to put out their disposal and the neighborhood

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STANDING-ROOM ONLY...The Cranford Planning Board hearing for Hartz Mountain Industries continued for the re-zoning application for 750 Walnut Avenue, where Hartz Mountain proposes to change the current commercial zone to a residential zone. The hearing, which drew a standing-room-only crowd, went on past midnight. The hearing will continue on Wednesday, September 5, at the Cranford Municipal Building.

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