

FEMA Gives Aid to Cranford For Elevating Six Homes

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD — The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recently awarded a \$1,668,563 Flood Mitigation Award (FMA) grant to the township for a 2017 application to fund the elevation of six flood-prone homes. The six homes — located at 14 Kensington Avenue, 2 Venetia Avenue, 9 Richmond Avenue, 610 Riverside Drive, 12 Forest Avenue and 105 Edgewood Road — have either been classified as homes that have had repetitive losses or severe repetitive losses as a result of a flood. The homes are situated just east of the Rahway River.

The state standards call for a home to be elevated one foot above the base flood level. Cranford, in the past, has called for a stricter standard of one foot above the flood levels of Hurricane Irene.

Hurricane Irene in 2011, the Tax Day Storm in 2007 and Hurricane Floyd in 1999 are among the most recent flood events that have inundated some homes in the township. During the latest massive flood to hit the township, caused by Hurricane Irene, residents were ordered to evacuate the municipality, and homes had floodwaters reach their first-floor living space and municipal buildings were under water.

The goal of FMA is to reduce or

eliminate claims under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). FMA provides funding to states, territories, federally-recognized tribes and local communities for projects and planning that reduces or eliminates long-term risk of flood damage to structures insured under the NFIP, as stated on the FEMA website.

Cranford had last received FMA grant funding to elevate homes in 2012, and at the time the average cost to elevate a home was about \$225,000, Township Administrator Terence Wall told *The Westfield Leader*.

Once the elevations have been successfully completed, homeowners will be reimbursed for expenses. How much each is reimbursed is dependent upon the damages each property had made insurance claims against. Typically, a property classified as a severe repetitive loss, which has experienced loss due to at least three flood events, can receive 100 percent of the cost, while homes classified as repetitive losses can receive up to 90 percent, and some insured properties receive 75 percent, according to information on the FEMA website.

Homeowners also may be eligible to receive a rental reimbursement to offset the cost during the construction period of the elevation, Mr. Wall said.

Last year, the township had sent letters to those property owners whose properties were classified as severe repetitive loss or repetitive loss, notifying them that they could apply for this grant through the township. The deadline to apply for 2018 grant funding is Friday, November 30. Homeowners interested in applying can contact the local Office of Emergency Management for more information.



Susan Myrill Dougherty for *The Westfield Leader*
JAZZY NIGHT...As part of the ongoing summer jazz nights in Downtown Westfield, the Radam Schwartz group entertains on Central Avenue last Wednesday night. The Sweet Sounds Downtown Jazz Festival, now in its 22nd year, is held Tuesday nights and is sponsored by the Downtown Westfield Corporation.

RVSA Doubles, Quadruples Connection Fees to Its System

By WAYNE BAKER
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

RAHWAY — The Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority's (RVSA) Board of Commissioners last Thursday raised the fees for connections to its system. The board also heard that its complaint against a new state law prohibiting annual cost increases greater than 2 percent has been filed.

During discussion on connection fees, Michael Gelin, Woodbridge's commissioner, suggested the fees be identified as administrative fees since

RVSA's actions normally involve only paperwork review. The suggestion was approved. Stephen Greet, Garwood's commissioner, confirmed during the discussion that this change does not impact municipalities' ability to charge appropriate fees.

The new fees are: \$100 for up to 2,000 gallons per day (GPD), doubling from the current \$50; \$250 for 2,001 to 7,999 GPD, doubling from \$125, and \$1,000 for 8,000 and over GPD, quadrupling from the current \$250 fee. This rate also covers cases where a New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) treatment works application is required for reasons other than flow, such as a single-family home with a need to extend a sewer or a lateral that crosses a right-of-way (road). Cases where revisions are needed to RVSA's water quality management plan will see a \$2,000 fee. The latter two cases, other than for flow, are extremely rare, according to Jim Meehan, RVSA's executive director.

In other business, the digester cover replacement project continues to progress, although it is behind schedule. The first new membrane cover is slated to be installed on digester 3 during the week of August 27. Mr. Meehan continued to stress that the contractor seems now to be working with a true sense of urgency. According to the RVSA website, the digester reduces sludge and disease-causing micro-organisms.

A change order was approved to demolish and do asbestos abatement on the former U.S. Healthworks property. This will allow Tomar, the digester cover contractor, to use the space for staging as they continue their work.

The board approved purchase of a new pump costing \$103,406. This pump will replace one of two currently used to move waste to the drying facility. The pump that will be replaced will be rebuilt to serve as a backup. Plant Superintendent Dan Ward told the board that the pumps are essential in drying the waste to reduce shipping costs. He also told commissioners that he would not be comfortable removing the pump and covering the hole with plywood because of the size and depth of the tank.

The motion to throw out metering from the April 16 and 17 storm, which was tabled at last month's meeting, was re-introduced and re-tabled, partially due to the absence of two commissioners, Frank Mazzarella of Clark and Marty Rothfelder of Westfield. In discussion of this, John Tomaine, Mountainside's commissioner, raised the question of whether the board of commissioners had the authority to do this. Dennis Estis, general counsel, said he agreed with Mr. Tomaine's interpretation except in cases of faulty metering or similar circumstances.

RVSA's complaint regarding the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



Kristan McAlaney for *The Westfield Leader*
DOG DAYS OF SUMMER...Continuing its Second Sunday promotional events, the Downtown Westfield Corporation sponsored the inaugural Dog Days of Summer on August 19, after it was rained out on August 12. This Quimby Street event featured a pet parade, pet portraits, animal adoption and toys.

WHS Band to Perform at Nat'l Concert Band Festival

By SARAH MCGRAIL
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — A national stage awaits the Westfield High School (WHS) Wind Ensemble, which has been invited to perform in a prestigious festival for the first time in the school's history.

The elite WHS Wind Ensemble has been invited to perform at the highly-respected 2019 National Concert Band Festival, as only the fifth New Jersey band in the festival's 28-year history.

With more than 20,000 concert band programs across the country, WHS Band Director Christopher Vitale described the invitation as "not your ordinary performance opportunity."

The 50-member WHS Wind Ensemble will travel to Indianapolis in March to perform alongside bands from all over the country in an event that organizers say "celebrates outstanding music-making by the nation's finest high school and middle

school scholastic ensembles."

Mr. Vitale welcomed the "momentous accomplishment" and told his musicians: "To be selected to perform at this festival is the highest accolade a band can receive!"

In their acceptance letter received from Eric Martin, president of festival organizers, Music for All, he said: "Your ensemble was deemed to have achieved the level of musical performance and artistry worthy of being featured on a national stage. "We commend you and your students for your exemplary commitment to excellence and we look forward to your performance and the national attention and recognition it will bring to your students and program."

Thomas Weber, Westfield's supervisor of visual and performing arts, praised Mr. Vitale and fellow Band Director Trevor Sindorf for "continuously encouraging their students to reach their highest potential."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



Courtesy of Westfield High School
PRESTIGIOUS INVITATION...The Westfield High School (WHS) Wind Ensemble has been invited to perform in the distinguished National Concert Band Festival for the first time in school history. WHS will be only the fifth New Jersey band in the festival's 28-year history when the 50-member ensemble travels to Indianapolis in March 2019 for the event. Pictured, above, performing is band member Daniel Shenker.

Planning Board Recommends Paperboard Redevelop. Plan

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD — The planning board recommended the Garwood Paperboard (75 North Avenue) redevelopment plan at its August 8 meeting.

Project manager Michael Mistretta of Harbor Consultants stated the site's redevelopment will include a "one-building, 124-unit inclusionary housing development" keeping with the borough's "affordable-housing obligations set forth in the FSHC (Fair Share Housing Center) settlement agreement." Of the 124 units, 18 will be marketed as affordable units per the "inclusionary housing component," Mr. Mistretta said.

The 4.54-acre property is located a half-mile from the Garwood train station. The development is proposed with a maximum 52-foot building height of four stories, with a 3.3-acre maximum lot area, Mr. Mistretta said. He said the residential development's "affordable bedroom mix" consists of two one-bedroom units, 12 two-bedroom units, and four three-bedrooms units.

The developer, Garwood Developers Associates, LLC, has proposed to donate a 4,000-square-foot interior community space within the residential building. In addition to the interior community space, an exterior or outdoor community space is proposed as a 4,200-square-foot outdoor public area, stated Mr. Mistretta.

Mr. Mistretta said the outdoor public area will front North Avenue to attract pedestrians along the North Avenue corridor. He said the 4,000-square-foot interior community space will be maintained by the borough, as the space will be available for borough programs and extracurricular activities.

The residential property owner will maintain the outdoor public area contiguous to the community space.

Mr. Mistretta said a 6,000-square-

foot amenity deck will include outdoor seating, incorporating a decorative hardscape (defined as man-made features in landscape architecture), fire pits, and outdoor landscape lights.

On November 13, 2015, the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs corresponded with Garwood stating that the property is situated within the Metropolitan Planning Area, "where development and redevelopment are encouraged," Mr. Mistretta told the board.

"The redevelopment area is a prime example of an underutilized industrial property," said Mr. Mistretta.

He said four buildings are situated on the property, three buildings are in the rear portion of the lot, and one which is the main building located along the front property line.

"The main building (along the property line) is known locally as the Castle and was constructed in the Gothic Revival style. One of the main goals of this redevelopment plan is the preservation of the Castle and its incorporation into site redevelopment," Mr. Mistretta said.

He said the borough's master plan's historic preservation element will include "the Castle" as honoring and complementing Garwood's industrial beginnings, the former Aeolian Company offices that existed within the Castle building.

Mr. Mistretta said the residential building's lobby has a proposed area of 2,800 square feet incorporating "the Castle" historic element.

Garwood Developers Associates, LLC purchased the property on December 19, 2017, from Millen Industries. The Aeolian company utilized the buildings and property in 1900 to manufacture pianos and pipe organs. Decades later, the "Garwood Paperboard" title was developed when the property

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



Susan Myrill Dougherty for *The Westfield Leader*
KIDS FUN AND JAZZ...At jazz night on August 15, children gather on the play area at the train station set up by the Downtown Westfield Corporation, the sponsor of the weekly summer event. The Sweet Sounds Downtown Jazz Festival, now in its 22nd year, is held Tuesday nights.

PAGE INDEX

| | | | |
|-----------------|------------|-------------------|-------|
| Regional | 2-3, 17-18 | Education | 9, 19 |
| Editorial | 4-5 | Sports | 11-16 |
| Police | 18 | Real Estate | 11-20 |
| Community ... | 6-8 | Classifieds | 17 |
| Obituary | 6 | A&E | 19-20 |



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