

## Pool Rates to Increase; Mayor Seeks to Improve Communications

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Westfield Memorial Pool rates were approved to increase for this summer at the town council meeting Tuesday. The increase is in response to new minimum wage rate increases and pool maintenance, Town Administrator Jim Gildea said. Users will see a \$20 increase in main rates for residents and non-residents; individual rates will be increased by \$5, and senior citizen rates will not be raised. The last time a rate increase had occurred was in 2011, Mr. Gildea noted.

Brochures will be mailed at the

end of this month, and registration begins in February or March, Mr. Gildea said.

Mayor Shelley Brindle gave a recap of her first two weeks as mayor, when she had an opportunity to meet a variety of town employees. She thanked the Department of Public Works (DPW) for clearing the streets during the recent snowstorm, and said she drove in the snow plow for a couple of hours during the storm. Mayor Brindle also thanked the MLK Association for the interfaith service held Monday in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

In other news, Mayor Brindle announced that Megan Avallone,

health officer for the health department, had given birth to a baby girl Sunday.

"One of my priorities...is improving communications with residents," Mayor Brindle said. The town is investigating using social media and video such as Facebook Live.

"I have some informal technology friends who are going to help out with technology solutions...to create more customer relationship strategies," Mayor Brindle said at the workshop meeting.

Mayor Brindle said she is looking at initiatives to enhance services to residents, create efficiencies, and create opportunities for economic development in the downtown.

In other business, an ordinance was introduced to allow three handicapped parking spaces. Two spaces are to be added at Wilson Elementary School, and one space at 505 Cumberland Street.

The DPW is to do a final cleanup of leaves that have been left over from the leaf cleanup. The leaf collection was extended because leaves fell late, Mr. Gildea said, and so the council approved to amend a contract with the leaf collector to cover the costs, and will be fulfilled with the 2017 budget.

Town Planner Don Sammet was reappointed as the municipal housing liaison. Allison Carrie was appointed to the historic preservation commission, alternate member 2, and Donna Canavan and Joseph Manzo were appointed as members of the Tree Preservation Commission.

The mayor and council also have requested proposals for the positions of prosecutor and public defender, and for the yearly appointments of town attorney, labor attorney, affordable housing counsel and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

## Board Continues Review of South Ave. Development Plan

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD — The planning board continued its discussions last Wednesday on the South Avenue I (Casale/Petro Site) site plan review. The plan calls for construction of 298 units.

Russo Development's senior vice-president and civil engineer, Douglas G. Bartels, described the development's structural dimensions and chosen construction materials to the board. Mr. Bartels verified that the board agrees the engineering specifics are feasible while acknowledging residents interests in the design process.

Russo Development attorney Christopher Minks said Russo has worked extensively with the planning board and that the borough has hired professionals to include all feasible design features into the final site plan.

Mr. Minks said upon planning board member Gene Jannotti's request the developer has looked into providing electric-car charging stations inside South Avenue I's parking garage.

"It's a way to better the product," said Mr. Minks, referring to the added design feature proposed by Mr. Jannotti.

Mr. Minks said each parking garage floor will be fitted with resident security access only for each floor. He said an electronic key will recognize each floor's resident when they access the building from their parking garage floor.

Mr. Bartels said the demolition process should take six to nine months. Mr. Minks added that the demolition process will be "piece-



Christina M. Hinke for The Westfield Leader

SAVE MARINO'S...As Michael Tears, co-owner of Marino's restaurant, stands at the podium at last Wednesday's Cranford Planning Board meeting to discuss the proposed condemnation area in need of redevelopment study for North Avenue East, audience member Wayne Hayes stands to shout his support for Marino's.

## Residents, Business Owners Question Redevelopment Study

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRAFORD — "My dream was to buy this place, and I bought it with my best friend. And now we hear yesterday we may lose our place. Why?" Michael Tears, co-owner of Marino's, asked the planning board Wednesday at a packed board meeting.

Owners of the longstanding businesses that operate on North Avenue

within the parameters of the redevelopment study area wanted to know why they were never notified by the township that their properties could be subject to eminent domain, as stated in the preliminary investigation report for North Avenue East prepared by Harbor Consultants posted to the township website on January 8.

The report studies the business district that includes Riverside Inn, Carmen's Foreign Car Repair, Swan Cleaners, Posh Salon, Chapman Bros. Plumbing, Heating and Air Conditioning, Marino's Seafood and Restaurant, Bar Americana, Goodman Realty, Puff and Stuff, Deco Salon, Hunan Wok, Cranford Hair Salon, Island Tans and a gas station, as well as township-owned property — the fire house, parking lot on North Union and Springfield Avenues, the vacant MDTV building, and a driveway and parking areas adjacent to the Raritan Valley train line.

Some owners said they heard about the study by word of mouth. The owner of Riverside Inn, known to some as The Dive, posted on Facebook a campaign to Save The Dive after he heard that his property could be taken by eminent domain.

When Mayor Thomas Hannen, Jr. stated The Dive was never supposed to be in the study, the crowd cheered, and Riverside Inn owner Peter Jacobs gave a "thumbs up" to *The Westfield Leader* while taking his photograph after the announcement. The township committee would need to vote to exclude it from the condemnation area in need of redevelopment at a future meeting.

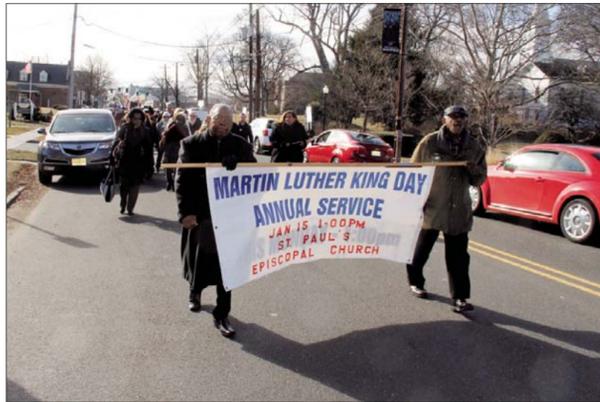
But the question still remained for Chapman Bros. owner Judy Swick. Why them? She, as well as other property owners affected, say they want to be excluded as well from the study area.

"Rewrite it—no eminent domain," Carmello Finocchiaro, who has owned Carmen's for 30 years, told *The Leader* after the meeting.

Margaret Lo, who owns the property where Hunan Wok, Island Tans, and Cranford Hair Co. operate, as well as a parking area next door, told *The Leader* that if she wanted to redevelop her land, "I would build it myself."

Resident Wayne Hayes told the planning board it is unfair to the other business owners that the committee

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



Paul Lachenaier for The Westfield Leader

WE SHALL OVERCOME...Marchers proceed down East Broad Street on Monday en route to St. Paul's Episcopal Church for the town's interfaith service honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

## Township Reveals Affordable Housing Data and Locations

By FRED T. ROSSI  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

SCOTCH PLAINS — The township this week revealed what Scotch Plains' affordable-housing obligations will be, with Mayor Alexander Smith expressing hope that the State Legislature will eventually take action to lessen the impact on towns.

At Tuesday's township council meeting, planner Michael Mistretta said a final settlement of litigation with developers will result in 598 affordable-housing units being built in several locations over the next seven years. That figure, according to the township's affordable-housing attorney, Robert Renaud, was the result of negotiations that reduced Scotch Plains' obligation by 30 percent from the original 854. He said the housing numbers were

derived from formulas taking into account overall population, low-income population, the size of the town and residents' incomes.

"It has no relation to reality," he said. "It's a mathematical calculation."

The affordable-housing units will comprise about 15 percent of what is expected to be more than 3,000 total new housing units set to be developed in the coming years.

"We're looking at very large building projects" in Scotch Plains, Mayor Smith said.

Mr. Mistretta spent nearly an hour detailing where the new housing will be located. The Bowcraft Amusement Park site on Route 22 will be developed into a 200-unit complex, with 35 of those units be-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



Christina M. Hinke for The Westfield Leader

COMMUNITY SPIRIT...Orange Avenue School Brownie Troop 40744 and Daisy Troop 40923 members made bags that will be filled with personal care items for women at Raphael's Life House during the sixth annual Cranford Interfaith Council MLK Day service project at the First Presbyterian Church of Cranford. This event was designed to help a variety of organizations. The council will continue to collect individual-sized personal care items for the homeless at any house of worship in Cranford, the Cranford Library, the Cranford Municipal Building and the Cranford Community Center through the end of the month.



Paul Lachenaier for The Westfield Leader

LIVING THE DREAM...Mayor Shelley Brindle and her husband stand with members of the Westfield MLK Day Committee in front of the town's monument to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at the start of Westfield's MLK Day March on Monday.

### PAGE INDEX

Regional .....	2-3	Education .....	17
Editorial .....	4-5	Sports .....	9-14
Police .....	16	Real Estate .....	9-18
Community ...	6-7	Classifieds .....	15
Obituary .....	6	A&E .....	17-18



CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



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