

## DWC Reorganizes as Mayor Joins Bd.; Town Hiring PR Dir.

By DOMINIC A. LAGANO  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — During its first Board of Directors' meeting of 2018, held Monday evening, the Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC), the management entity of the Special Improvement District (SID), conducted its annual reorganization of the board.

Recently installed Westfield Mayor Shelley Brindle was present for the meeting. Ms. Brindle had previously designated herself as a representative to the board.

"I'm really excited about this,"

Mayor Brindle stated. "There's a reason I put myself on this board, and there's two boards I put myself on...it's this one and the planning board. I think it reflects how critical I think they are to Westfield's future and what I hope to do in terms of revitalizing not only our downtown but really bringing in new businesses and increasing our commercial tax base and all those kinds of things that can benefit all Westfield residents."

"I really think this a great opportunity to take a fresh look at the DWC and really what the mission is, what the opportunities are, and really reex-

amine everything that we've done to make sure it's fitting in with the mission that we hope to achieve in the future," Mayor Brindle added.

The mayor introduced Westfield resident Liz Jeffery, an economic development professional who is volunteering her time to be an economic development advisor to the mayor. In addition to her advisory role, she will serve as a liaison for the mayor to property owners, business owners and the DWC. Ms. Jeffery also is the economic development consultant for the Borough of Fanwood.

Ms. Jeffery spoke briefly on her role. "I just thought there is so much need for extra focus and effort in honoring the people of Westfield, and I would step up and help the mayor for the foreseeable future. I think it's necessary at this time to take a macro look at our town and look at all the multi-faceted issues. It takes a lot of work and it takes a lot of manpower. We will look at our own organic opportunities and challenges...I hope to focus on the great bones we do have and adding layers to bring ourselves forward to the next couple decades."

Next, the new board members nominated and voted for its leadership positions. Patricia Hanigan was elected DWC chairwoman, returning member Alan De Rose was elected vice-chairman, Gary Goodman was elected treasurer and Miriam Verga was elected secretary.

Also joining the board is town council designee Dawn Mackey, recently elected Westfield councilwoman from Ward 4, and Jim Donofrio. Additionally returning to the board is Shawn Hanna and Town Administrator Jim Gildea.

After the election process, the board discussed a number of issues, including the functions of various DWC committees, the processes currently in place when a business owner de-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



Dominic A. Lagano for The Westfield Leader

REORGANIZED...Westfield Mayor Shelley Brindle, center, attends her first meeting of the Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC) Board of Directors on Monday night when the DWC reorganized.

## Eminent Domain Removed From Prop. In Study Area

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD — Eminent domain has been removed from the study to determine if a parcel of land in the downtown can be designated an area in need of redevelopment. The township committee voted Tuesday, 3-to-2, to supersede a resolution passed last year and replace it with a resolution authorizing the committee request to the planning board to undertake conducting a study of North Avenue East to determine if it can be designated a non-condemnation area in need of redevelopment and/or area in need of rehabilitation.

In addition, the committee has removed a number of properties from the list that include viable businesses in that area. The resolution, Mayor Thomas Hannen, Jr. said, would request the planning board only include township-owned properties made up of the municipal parking lot 1 and fire station, the former MDTV building at 27 North Avenue East, a parking area and road-

way adjacent to the train line, a parking lot on 26-30 North Avenue East, as well as Swan Cleaners at 44 North Avenue East in the study.

"I believe we should preserve eminent domain with respect to Swan Cleaners," said Deputy Mayor Ann Dooley, who voted against the amended resolution. She said the township would not be liable to pay for any environmental hazard remediation at the Swan Cleaners site if there was a condemnation designation.

"This action to not include eminent domain really challenges us to do any redevelopment. That area has been in need of rehabilitation for over a decade," said Commissioner Jean-Albert Maisonneuve, who also voted against amending the resolution.

The township's affordable-housing obligation also plays a part in the idea to redevelop this part of North Avenue, Ms. Dooley said. The township has been ordered by the State Superior Court, Union County, to have its obli-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



Christina M. Hinke for The Westfield Leader

NO LONGER EMINENT...The Cranford Township Committee voted 3 to 2 on Tuesday night to remove the option of eminent domain on the properties pictured along North Avenue East facing eastbound.



Paul Lachenauer for The Westfield Leader

HEAR OUR VOICES...Crowds of marchers took part in the second annual Westfield Women's March on Saturday. The march was aimed this year at increasing turnout at the polls for the mid-term Congressional elections this November and for the ousting of President Donald Trump.

## School Board Marks Success Of Westfield HS Football Team

By SARAH MCGRAIL  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Football players took to the stage at Westfield High School (WHS) this week to celebrate their third consecutive state championship and another undefeated season.

The Blue Devils lined up on stage to be congratulated by the board of education Tuesday because there were too many of them to squeeze into the usual meeting room at the Elm Street administration building.

"This is getting to be a bit of a habit," Board President Gretchan Ohlig told them. "But it is a wonderful habit."

## Property Owners Refute Claims of Disrepair

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD — A group of business owners along North Avenue East between Centennial Avenue and Alden Street said Wednesday that their properties are being labeled as condemned or derelict when one searches their properties online.

This comes as a result of the township hiring a planner to conduct a study of this parcel of land, as well as the fire house and the municipal parking lot 1 on North Union and Springfield Avenues, to determine if the area can be classified as a condemnation area in need of redevelopment, which would provide the township power of eminent domain.

"How are all of our properties condemned on Google?" Rose Finocchiaro, co-owner of Carmen's Auto Repair, asked in a roundtable meeting held between business owners of North Avenue East and Township Commissioner Jean-Albert Maisonneuve, as well as Downtown Management Corporation (DMC) Chairwoman Kathleen Prunty and DMC members Anthony Durante and owner of Kilkenny House, Barry O'Donovan.

When the planning board held a presentation last week of the study drafted by Planner Mike Mistretta of Harbor Consultants, business owners and residents packed the municipal chambers to protest against the use of eminent domain.

Harbor's report concludes the entire study area be declared a condemnation area in need of redevelopment. The property owners who attended Wednesday's meeting wanted to understand how their properties could be classified as derelict consid-

ering they keep up their properties.

"My building is in disrepair...that's a joke," said Gary Goodman, who owns the two-story property on the corner of Alden Street and North Avenue East.

Ralph Brunette, who owns the two-story property next door to Mr. Goodman's at 25 North Avenue East, said the study is not representative of the upkeep he does to his building, which houses a new salon and apartments above. "Or does the town say make it look as bad as you can?" to the planner conducting the study, Mr. Brunette said.

"I have a building — it is perfection — I may sue him," referring to Harbor Consultants, Mr. Brunette said.

Judy Swick, owner of Chapman Bros., a local plumbing business founded in 1932, and Mr. Brunette have both sought legal counsel.

Hector Alvarez, who owns Bar Americana, as well as Ms. Swick, said they both have plans to expand their property, to add a residential use above the ground level, but now that their properties are marked as condemned it would make it difficult for them to move forward with the expansion.

Mr. Alvarez added that should he be forced out that his liquor license could not be moved. Bar Americana is a fairly new restaurant and bar, that was completely remodeled and changed its name (formerly Cervantes of Spain).

"If you go to refinance, get a loan, the bank will see your area is in a redevelopment zone, condemned. You will have to go through hurdles," Mr. Goodman said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

The team won every game in the 2017 season and now has a 37-game winning streak, the state's best. In November, the team beat Bridgewater-Raritan for the third consecutive year in the state championship final.

Coach Jim DeSarno, assistant principal at WHS, was named Coach of the Year by NJ.com and the New Jersey Coaches Association.

"This is a very special group and the senior class has really set the bar very high for our future teams. The thing that stands out to me is how well this group has represented our school and our community. They have shone as athletes in the biggest stadiums but, in their sportsmanship and their enthusiasm, they have really stood out," Mr. DeSarno said.

The board also celebrated two members of the district staff who will retire in 2018: John Pearce, a custodian at the high school for 36 years, and Marie Coveney, an art teacher at Franklin Elementary School for 15 years.

Ms. Ohlig said that Mr. Pearce "in his own time is on a mission to paint all the stairwells at the high school and his goal is to finish them before he retires at the end of August."

Board Vice-President Peggy Oster told members that work on the new website was ongoing and that the Tech-

nology Committee was continuing to ensure the website would work for everybody.

Schools Superintendent Margaret Dolan, Ed.D., said parents could e-mail any member of the board if they wanted to make suggestions.

Board member Amy Root said that an idea that started off at Franklin Elementary School to have a Community Service Day was being extended to all the other schools in the district. Every child in the district would have the opportunity to do a hands-on project to help other people so they can see how even a small endeavor can make a difference. Past projects have included making lunches to be distributed at soup kitchens and planting seedlings to give to senior citizens.

Following the meeting, Superintendent Dolan commented on the recent vandalism at the high school, in which graffiti was painted on the school building.

"This is very frustrating when we work hard to maintain our buildings and make them welcoming for students," she said.

The meeting was followed by a training session in Ethics for School Officials.

Gwen Thornton, field service repre-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



Paul Lachenauer for The Westfield Leader

HEAR OUR VOICES...Union County Freeholder Chairman Sergio Granados, at right, marches along East Broad Street in the second annual Westfield Women's March on Saturday from the Westfield Train Station parking lot on North Avenue to Mindowaskin Park on East Broad where a rally took place. Marches were held throughout the country, including in Morristown, N.J. and New York City.

### PAGE INDEX

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



WESTFIELD WEST  
COLDWELL BANKER  
RESIDENTIAL BROKERAGE

Congratulations to the  
#1 Agent for December!



Cathy Splinter  
Sales Associate  
C. 908.398.7200



Westfield West Office • 600 North Avenue West, Westfield, NJ 07090 • 908.233.0065 • ColdwellBankerHomes.com

© 2018 Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage. All Rights Reserved. Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage fully supports the principles of the Fair Housing Act and the Equal Opportunity Act. Operated by a subsidiary of NRT LLC. Coldwell Banker® and the Coldwell Banker logo are registered service marks owned by Coldwell Banker Real Estate LLC. Real estate agents affiliated with Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage are independent contractor sales associates and are not employees of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage. #98866NJ\_1/18

#600NORTH