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LENDING HER VOICE...Carrie Hayes of Plainfield took part along with thousands of others in New York City's Women's March on Saturday.

Courtesy of Robert Algarin

### Eminent Domain

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gations in place by the end of this year. "You can't do it on property owners' back," resident Rita LaBrutto said during public comment.

"I think we have other options," Commissioner Mary O'Connor said. She said rehabilitating the area could be done by having discussions with the property owners to create a cohesive streetscape, and have redevelopment in the area, "without disrupting family-owned businesses that are Cranford staples."

Some of the business owners who operate in the study area said the township should have let them know the committee was to vote on a resolution to conduct a study.

"While there are some people who want to see this town have a more urban setting, I don't believe most of our residents of any generation, from millennials to seniors, want that. The township needs to fulfill its affordable-

housing obligation but, "we need to do it without losing our identity," Commissioner O'Connor said.

Resident Kathy Allegro suggested the township have a professional present to the community an explanation of the township's affordable-housing obligations.

One resident asked that the committee consider the flooding issues within the township before governing body members allow more development. "I would love to see more open space," resident Dawn Nalepa said during public comment.

"I don't want any more high-density (housing)," Ms. Nalepa said.

Mai Reitmeyer, who grew up in Cranford, moved back to the township five years ago, "because we love that Cranford is a place we can literally run our errands, go to Marino's to get fresh fish, go to Breadsmith and get bread, and get fresh vegetables from Dreyer's...It's like Europe."

As a way to improve the streetscape, Ms. Nalepa also suggested the township have the owner of Swan Cleaners paint the outside and talk to the owner of the gas station on the corner of Springfield and North Avenues about doing some work on his building and adding some bushes.

Converting the township parking lot on North Avenue that is part of the study area into a commuter lot also was proposed by Ms. Nalepa.

### WF BOE

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representative with the New Jersey School Boards Association, reminded board members of their responsibility to the community to make decisions that are in the best interests of every child in the district.

"You speak for the kids," she told them. "You are the children's voice."

The board was surprised to hear that new rules meant board members were restricted in volunteering to help out with school activities, such as coaching sports or running clubs.

Any volunteering that involves a board member spending time interacting with school staff on a regular basis or volunteering for activities that involved collecting money are no longer allowed.

### American Water Discusses \$3-M. Water Main Upgrade

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD — New Jersey American Water (American Water) field operations manager Michael Bange offered a proposal to Mayor Charles Lombardo and the borough council of a \$3-million water main revitalization program for Garwood's south side at Tuesday's governing body meeting.

American Water would pay for pipe restoration, absorbing the \$3-million cost burden. The restoration will improve water quality and water pressure. An official presentation will be made, including a question-and-answer period, for concerned residents at the Tuesday, February 13 council meeting.

Mr. Bange said restoring pipes would reduce water-main breaks. He said a projected reduction in municipal dollars spent on borough insurance would coincide with a better water flow used to fight fires.

He said American Water will pay for all before and after construction costs needed to access the pipes. He also said that American Water is responsible for curbside landscape repairs while homeowners are responsible for the left side of the curb to the water valve outside their homes.

Mr. Bange said the restoration process will begin with fire hydrants and other service valves. The process will happen in various phases beginning in February with a mid-October end date.

"The good outweighs the negative," said Councilwoman Sara Todisco, as she reflected on the "long-term benefits" the project brings to the borough at no cost to the taxpayer.

Mr. Bange said all residents will be notified with specific details on how long each phase will be and what each phase entails. He said American Water has completed similar projects in other towns, "spreading the money around" to update servicing pipes.

He said that American Water construction inspector RJ Serridge will distribute his number to all affected households to provide resourceful information or resolve any unexpected issues throughout the project.

In other business, the council introduced an ordinance increasing the Department of Public Works (DPW) foreman salary from the current three extra dollars per hour to six extra dollars per

hour. Mayor Lombardo became the deciding vote as the council was deadlocked between three yes votes and three no votes.

Councilwoman Blumenstock introduced the ordinance on behalf of the streets and roads sub-committee. The pay rate is in comparison to hourly for entry-level DPW employees or "laborers," Ms. Blumenstock stated. Ms. Blumenstock said a foreman's responsibilities have increased over the last several decades.

"It turns out that the salary rate has not been looked at or changed in two decades. Laborers grandfathered in may be making the same or close to a foreman. Benefits are no longer fully paid for," Ms. Blumenstock added.

The streets and roads committee voted 2 to 1 on whether or not to place the ordinance introduction prior to the council meeting. Councilman Marc Lazarow and Ms. Blumenstock supported the measure on the agenda while Councilman Richard McCormack did not.

"(The salary) is still at the low end of surrounding towns, but what we think is fair and equitable," said Ms. Blumenstock, in comparing DPW foreman pay to surrounding towns.

Both Mr. Lazarow and Ms. Todisco said they supported Ms. Blumenstock's assertion on a need for an "equitable pay for borough employees."

Ms. Todisco said she does not support holding Garwood employees to a lesser pay standard by viewing "Garwood in a bubble." She said the borough should instead analyze what other surrounding towns are doing when making decisions.

Mr. Sarno stated the raise will cost the borough an estimated extra \$10,000 per year. He questioned how the raise can be given before a financial budget is finalized.

Resident Kathy Villaggio stated the raise should not be awarded until after the 2018 budget is finalized. Ms. Villaggio stated a little extra wait to make a decision would be reasonable, especially since the wait has been more than two decades.

"What precedent are we setting for other borough employees?" said Mr. McCormack, asking fellow council members if pay increases will be suggested or requested in other departments.

"Fair and equitable? I would love to give everyone a 50-million-dollar raise," said Ms. Cuccaro, questioning where money will come from to accommodate the raise in the budget.

"How did this originate? How come it wasn't discussed beforehand?" asked Councilman Sarno.

Councilman Sarno criticized the raise as an ordinance introduction because it was introduced directly to the agenda versus being discussed during the workshop meeting and investigated by the sub-committee.

"Sometimes it is hard to un-see facts," said Ms. Todisco, referring to the sub-committee's discovery in pay disparity, prompting the introduction of the ordinance.

Mayor Lombardo said he believes in the committee system.

Ms. Todisco thanked Mr. McCormack for meeting with her to discuss council matters in a professional yet private setting. Ms. Todisco stated this is an example of bipartisan support needed to foster well-discussed decisions for borough residents.



LARGE TURNOUT...Crowds of marchers took part 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.

Paul Lachenaer for The Westfield Leader

### BOE Gets Update on Fields, Reviews Guidance Program

By KATE BROWNE  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

MOUNTAINSIDE — Chief School Administrator (CSA) Nancy Lubarsky updated the public at Tuesday's board of education meeting on the status of the upgrades to the Beechwood Elementary School fields.

According to Ms. Lubarsky, the existing budget contains sufficient funds for cleanup and debris removal in the third base area, repairs to the infield and public grass areas, minor repairs to the backstop, and the replacement of a portion of the topsoil, all of which will likely be completed later this year. In addition, she explained that the board is in the process of scheduling a meeting with the vendor to finalize plans for the installation of two playgrounds — one for the preschool students and one for the older students. She cautioned that the schedule for the installation of the playground will be weather dependent but that it would likely be in place by the early spring and will include handicap-accessible free-standing equipment.

The bulk of Tuesday's meeting was spent on a presentation regarding a review of the district's guidance program including recommendations for improvement. The board asked for review of the guidance program because of the many new challenges students face including issues associated with social media, the widespread availability of drugs and alcohol, and the rise of anxiety disorders in teenagers. One of the district's goals for the upcoming academic year is to assess, improve and expand the services of the guidance department to include a formal mental health/wellness program to address issues such as stress, depression, and improvements in the substance-abuse

#### Clarification

WESTFIELD — The Westfield Recreation Commission is working with John Bell, the engineer who has been working on the design for the upgrade of Tamaques Park, to schedule a date to meet with the commissioners at a future recreation commission meeting to discuss the Tamaques Park project.

Westfield Recreation Director Don Bogardus said the commission is looking to schedule Mr. Bell at a commission meeting in either March or, more likely, April, as scheduling did not work for Mr. Bell to be on the February 5 meeting agenda as reported by The Westfield Leader.

programs.

CSA Lubarsky noted that the traditional role of the guidance department — scheduling, transitioning to high school, counseling, and crisis intervention — has changed and expanded to include the many new initiatives and state mandates relating to harassment, intimidation and bullying, and standardized testing. As a result of these increased demands and changing responsibilities, a decision has been made to develop a Social Emotional Student Wellness Curriculum for students in grades K through 8. Two new guidance counselors have been hired. Kristen DalCortivo will be a full-time counselor for grades 3 to 8 and Ramona Ramesar will be a part-time counselor for grades Pre K to 5. Both women will assist the board in selecting an appropriate social and emotional learning program for the students.

According to Ms. Lubarsky, the timeline for implementation anticipates that the team will be in a position to make recommendations to the board by the end of the school year. During the public comment portion of the meeting, a resident expressed concern about the possible inclusion of "mindfulness" and meditation which might be problematic for certain Christian students.

The board approved field trips to the Union County Teen Arts Festival, the Jazz in the Middle Festival at Chatham Middle School and the Watson Adventures at Princeton; approved the safety and security drill reports for both Deerfield and Beechwood Schools, and handled several administrative and personnel matters including tuition reimbursement and leave requests.

Earlier in the meeting, CSA Lubarsky introduced Councilwoman Wendy Fech-Caccamo, who will serve as this year's school board liaison. Councilwoman Fech-Caccamo gave a short statement during which she thanked the members for their service and expressed her enthusiasm for working with them to support Mountainside parents and students.

CSA Lubarsky presented each board member with a certificate of appreciation and read a proclamation acknowledging that January has been declared School Board Recognition Month. She urged all residents to recognize the contributions made by the more than 5,000 New Jersey residents who volunteer to serve on the more than 581 local school boards that support the education of over 1.4 million public-school students.

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