

Smith to Host Town Hall On Overdevelopment

SCOTCH PLAINS — Mayor Alexander Smith will host a public town hall meeting on Tuesday, June 12, at 7 p.m., at the Scotch Plains Municipal Building, 430 Park Avenue, in the Town Council Chambers, to discuss courts forcing overdevelopment in local communities.

Mayor Smith will be joined by Assemblywoman Holly Schepisi (R-39th, Westwood), who has introduced a package of legislation on affordable housing to make the process more realistic and fairer.

"I am grateful for Assemblywoman Schepisi's efforts in sponsoring state legislation to end the madness of overdevelopment throughout New Jersey," said Mayor Smith. "No one is against affordable housing, but I am against the fact that the courts can force us to change the residential character of our town to meet ridiculous and unrealistic housing numbers. While doing our best to meet our affordable-housing obligation, there has to be a better process that includes regional planning, safety, infrastructure, traffic and school impacts. We need the State Legislature to take action, and I thank Assemblywoman Schepisi for intro-

ducing much-needed state legislation and for coming to Scotch Plains to help us engage our residents and demand reform. We need this to be a bipartisan effort."

The public is strongly encouraged to attend this meeting to learn more about Scotch Plains' affordable-housing obligation, the process and needed state legislation to reform it.

Mayor Smith is serving his second year as mayor of Scotch Plains. He was recently sworn in as a member of the board of directors of the New Jersey Conference of Mayors and is working on a bipartisan basis with fellow mayors to get the State Legislature to pass affordable-housing reform legislation.

Assemblywoman Schepisi was first elected to the New Jersey General Assembly in November 2011 representing the 39th Legislative District. Considered a "rising star" in New Jersey politics, the New Jersey League of Municipalities honored her with its "2014 Outstanding Women in Government Award" and the New Jersey Conference of Mayors named her its "2018 Assemblywoman of the Year."

Williams to Replace Carter On Freeholder Board

COUNTY — Plainfield Councilwoman Rebecca Williams has been appointed to fill an unexpired term on the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders.

Freeholder Williams, who will be ceremonially sworn in at the Freeholder meeting tonight, June 7, was chosen by the Union County Democratic Committee to complete the term left vacant by former Freeholder Linda Carter, who recently resigned to become the State Assemblywoman for the 22nd District, which includes Scotch Plains and Fanwood.

"We congratulate Freeholder Williams on her appointment and we look forward to working with her in moving Union County forward," Freeholder Chairman Sergio Granados said. "On behalf of the Freeholder Board, directors and our employees, I welcome her to county government. Her experience as a councilwoman and community roots has helped to prepare her for this new chapter in her life of serving our over 500,000 Union County residents."

"It is an honor to represent the people of Union County on the Board of Chosen Freeholders. I look forward to working with all the members of the board in serving the residents of this great county. I have served as an ethical, dependable and dedicated public servant at the municipal level, and as an effective advocate on various issues. I am ready to serve," Freeholder Williams said.

Prior to her appointment to the Freeholder Board she was serving for the third straight year as the chair-



Rebecca Williams

woman of the council's Administration and Finance Committee. She also was the current chairwoman of the Public Safety Committee.

Lance Statement on Tariff Announcement

FLEMINGTON — Congressman Leonard Lance (D-7th, Westfield) issued the following statement on the decision to impose tariffs on aluminum and steel imports from Canada, Mexico and the European Union:

"I disagree with the administration's actions on aluminum and steel tariffs. We should target bad actors like China who engage in unfair trading practices that are to the detriment to American businesses and consumers rather than confronting our key trading partners hostilely. These tariffs will only hurt U.S. economic growth and job creation."



ADDRESSING GUN VIOLENCE...Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-6th, Long Branch), at podium, and Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-12th, Trenton) held a press conference last week with local officials from Middlesex County to address solutions to reduce gun violence.

Watson Coleman, Pallone Push for Handgun Bill

REGION — Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-6th, Long Branch) and Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-12th, Trenton) are calling on Congress to act on "commonsense solutions" to reduce gun violence. In April, Rep. Watson Coleman introduced the Handgun Licensing and Registration Act of 2018, with Rep. Pallone as an original co-sponsor. The legislation would overturn a 1986 law to build a framework of standards for handgun ownership in the United States by creating a federal licensing and registration process for gun ownership.

"The National Rifle Association has threatened, fundraised and strong-armed the debate around the Second Amendment for so long that commonsense measures — measures that would bring down rates of gun violence and even receive the support of law enforcement — have been deemed taboo. To that I say, no more," Ms. Watson Coleman said at an event in East Brunswick last week. "Our kids deserve to feel safe at school. Our communities deserve to be safe at home and in their daily lives. Our country is supposed to be a model for the world,

yet with guns we have more deaths, more mass shootings than any other nation. This bill, like dozens of other basic proposals, would fix some of our gun-violence problems. We register to vote, we register our vehicles, we register businesses — why don't we do the same for weapons?"

"The plague of gun violence in our communities is completely unacceptable," said Mr. Pallone. "As members of Congress, it is not enough to ask for a moment of silence. It is not enough to express our thoughts and prayers...The Handgun Licensing and Registration Act would provide real solutions that will not only help prevent mass shootings like what we saw recently in Parkland and in Sante Fe, but also curb the gun violence we see in our communities every day."

The Handgun Licensing and Registration Act of 2018 requires that the person seeking gun ownership is at least 21 years old, undergoes firearm training, and has undergone a criminal history and background check including submitting fingerprints and photographs. The Act would require license renewal process after five years of issuance.

Pallone Comments on Latest Facebook Privacy Reports

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-6th, Long Branch) released the following statement Monday after new reports disclosed that Facebook gave phone and electronic device makers access to vast amounts of user data:

"It's deeply concerning that Facebook continues to withhold critical details about the information it has and shares with others. This is just the latest example of Facebook only coming forward when forced to

do so by a media outlet. Our Committee is also still waiting for a lot of answers from Facebook to questions Mr. Zuckerberg could not or would not answer at our hearing. The Federal Trade Commission must conduct a full review to determine if the consent decree was violated. Facebook and other data collectors, including these device manufacturers, should be prepared to come before Congress so that we can get a better grasp of the entire data collection ecosystem, and how people's personal information is being shared and used."

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg testified before the Energy and Commerce Committee in April following reports that the company allowed third-party app developers widespread access to millions of users' personal information.

Akai Lounge Appears Before Bd. of Health

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO
Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD — Akai Lounge was granted a possible two-day business closure, at Monday's board of health meeting, if the establishment receives a less than satisfactory health inspection within 365 days. Akai Lounge owner James Du was requested to appear for a health hearing after the restaurant received three consecutive conditional satisfactory ratings.

"Thank you to everybody in Westfield for supporting us. I cannot say enough thank you. We have fixed everything and tried to minimize any problems moving forward," said Mr. Du.

Health Inspector Beau Preston said the refrigerator was not keeping food below 41 degrees Fahrenheit. Mr. Preston said raw fish and chicken were being maintained at 44 degrees.

Manager Lillian Pien said the previous refrigerator is only a few years old, but from frequent use has started to age or not maintain specific temperatures as consistently. Ms. Pien said the restaurant has replaced an aging refrigerator and joined the refrigerator company's maintenance program. She said the refrigeration company assures temperatures will remain as desired.

"We don't cut corners. Our clientele is highly educated and they know what they want. We obtain our food from the most reputable fish market in the area," Mr. Du said.

Ms. Pien said the restaurant has sent its workers to a "Spanish-speaking food handler course" to mitigate a language barrier in the education process. She said the course enables the restaurant's workers to remain certified on the food-handling process.

Westfield health board member, Dr. Lawrence Budnick, said having certified food handlers is important, especially for those in charge of the establishment.

Restaurant owners often are chal-

lenged by "rotating employees" or a high employee turnover, stated Mr. Du, explaining that staff receiving certified food handler training this month may not work at the establishment in three months or a year from now.

"Word on the street is we're (board of health) kind of tough. We just want everyone to be safe. We do want you to succeed," Dr. Vasilios Diamantopoulos said.

Dr. Diamantopoulos stated that, "employees are difficult," but business owners must "be ahead of the curve." He said the certified food training is not set as a hurdle for business owners, but assures their staff is trained properly.

"Whatever training courses, we will send people," Mr. Du said. Ms. Pien said to assure future compliant management procedures all staff and management will follow the board of health's checklist.

"I'm very happy the owner came today with a plan. They seem to understand we're all working to bring them into compliance so their restaurant succeeds," Health Officer Megan Avallone said.

The board unanimously agreed to keep the restaurant health code violation hearing process "as is," Board President Thomas O'Neill said. The board had discussed creating a subcommittee to hear restaurant health-code violations, Mr. O'Neill said.

Currently, if a restaurant is frequently less than satisfactory a hearing is held to speak with the business owner or representatives, stated Ms. Avallone. The current hearing process incorporates all board of health members and involved health inspectors, Mr. O'Neill added.

Ms. Avallone said Westfield "really cares" about consumer safety and the business owners within the town. She said other boards will simply issue fines for violations, not affording the owners the opportunity to represent themselves.

Downtown Redevelopment Panel Launches Survey

SCOTCH PLAINS — The Scotch Plains Downtown Redevelopment Committee (SPDRC) launched a visual preference survey on Monday aimed at gathering input from the community on architectural themes that are preferred in the downtown of Scotch Plains. The survey offers six different conceptual architectural design options submitted by SPDRC members and Harbor Consultants, the township's consulting planner, and asks participants to select their preferred theme.

The visual preference survey will be available until 4 p.m. on Monday, June 18. The online survey can be found on the township's Facebook and Twitter pages.

A poster version of the survey is located at the Scotch Plains Public Library, 1927 Bartle Avenue, where participants can select their preference in person. The poster version of the survey also will be available to the public at the Wednesday, June 13 SPDRC meeting at 7 p.m., Scotch Plains Municipal Building, 430 Park Avenue, in

the Town Council Chambers.

"Since day one, the SPDRC has made inclusiveness and community involvement part of its mission," said Mayor Al Smith, who is chairman of the SPDRC. "I encourage all residents, business, and property owners to take this survey to help the SPDRC determine which architectural themes should be incorporated in our downtown redevelopment plan."

The images in the survey are both conceptual and generic in that they provide visual/graphic representations of conceptual design options and may depict elements of another community. While many of the examples differ in height and size of the buildings depicted, the images are not intended to assess these characteristics — the SPDRC is only seeking preference on architectural styles.

The online version is set to only allow one submission per IP address. For those who are filling out the poster version of the survey, the SPDRC asks that residents adhere to the honor system and take the survey once.

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