

Council Introduces Ordinances to 'Monetize' Downtown Businesses

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD—Three ordinances were introduced that would amend ordinances pertaining to the central business district (CBD) at Tuesday's town council meeting.

The first amends certain provisions of the land-use ordinance of the town to establish commercial use of rooftops as a conditional use; to allow for use of ground-level patios as places for eating and drinking; and to remove the prohibition on the sale of food for beverages to be served or

consumed on the premises, but outside the confines of a building; all within the CBD. Mayor Shelley Brindle said this is to allow for a business to utilize more of the property to "monetize" their business.

The second ordinance amends certain provisions of the land-use ordinance of the town to establish regulations for accessory structures within nonresidential zones and located on ground-level patios used as places for eating and drinking, thereby setting certain rules pertaining to safety, noise, tables, umbrellas and other ac-

cessories.

The third amends certain provisions of the land-use ordinance of the town for parking requirements within the CBD. The thought is to loosen the requirements, and give the planner and the zoning officer authority to grant parking waivers to lessen the strain of parking variance requests that go before the planning and zoning boards of adjustment, Town Administrator Jim Gildea said.

Another ordinance was introduced that addresses the requirements of the fair housing act regarding compliance with the town's affordable-housing obligations, specifically pertaining to two parcels where special-needs housing in association with the Arc of Union County will be located. This will allow for the special-needs housing to be allocated as was approved in the town's affordable-housing settlement. The ordinance will then go to the planning board for its approval.

Union County Board of Elections Administrator Nicole DiRado presented to the mayor and council the new voting machine that will be used in this year's General Election in the town. Westfield was selected as a pilot town for the new voting machine. The machine will allow voters to print out a ballot, called a paper ballot trail, to ensure their vote was correctly inputted, has a touch screen, and lets voters enlarge text and type in a write in candidate, among other enhancements. The machine is not attached to the Internet or a network, she said. It has a USB stick that is hardened, and is 265 bit encrypted. The paper ballot trail has no personal identifiers printed on it, and will be stored in the machine.

During the mayor's comments, Mayor Brindle said there was a neighborhood meeting for Elm Street residents to discuss the recent burglaries

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Paul Lachenauer for The Westfield Leader

COLONIAL COOKING...Visitors who stopped by Miller-Cory Museum in Westfield for Four Centuries In A Weekend were treated to a cooking demonstration by docents Laura Sassi and Sherry Lange of authentic colonial-era open-hearth cooking using period recipes and techniques.

Traffic Impacts from 905 Apts. Questioned By Residents. Board

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD—In response to testimony heard last month at the planning board hearing for the rezoning application of 750 Walnut Avenue, owned by Hartz Mountain Industries, LLC, which wants to build 905 apartments to house a projected 1,846 people, questions were posed by residents and the board last Wednesday at the board's hearing to try to make sense of the projections.

Last month, Karl Pehnke, a traffic

engineer with Langan Engineering, hired by Hartz, said 447 vehicles were projected to come in and out of the property during the peak morning hour of 7:30 to 8:30 a.m., further stating there would be similar traffic counts as what exists today. However, the site currently is mostly vacant after Bank of America, the largest office user there, closed its doors. The traffic study was conducted in October 2016, and supplemented in January and February 2017, after the bank offices were closed, and Langan had estimated what the vehicle counts would be with the vacant office in operation, but did not have actual counts when the site was fully functioning.

When asked by Mayor Tom Hannen, Jr. if the cars driving students to school had been calculated, Mr. Pehnke said no, not specifically. The township's schools are located north of the site, with Walnut Elementary School being located just north on Walnut Avenue from the site. The applicant's planner had estimated 135 school children would occupy the 905 apartments in total, Deputy Mayor Ann Dooley noted.

Northerly, or left-hand turns, out of the site at the peak morning hour of 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. is estimated at 115 trips, Mr. Pehnke said.

"If we're talking about 115, we have already exceeded that with just the number of children going to school in that direction, notwithstanding the other commuters, whether going to the train station or somewhere else," Mayor Hannen said.

Ms. Dooley asked if a traffic count had been done during the time period when school lets out in the afternoon, and Mr. Pehnke said he did not take traffic counts at that time, rather counted in the morning and evening peak hours.

Residents also said that relocating driveways on the site to align with the entrances to local roads, across from the site, in the Indian Village section of the township, would add undue traffic into the neighborhood.

Board member Peter Taylor asked how many cars are projected to go straight at the exits of the development. Mr. Pehnke responded, none.

Mr. Taylor argued that vehicles could potentially cut through onto

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Christina M. Hinke for The Westfield Leader

HISTORY OF CHARLES ADDAMS...Mike McDarby of Westfield and Maxine Rosenberg of Springfield peruse the Charles Addams cartoons on display at the Charles Addams Art Exhibit is on through the weekend at James Ward Mansion located downtown on East Broad Street. The exhibit is part of AddamsFest, which will be held October 26 to 28, and include family-themed events, movie screenings, art exhibits, a beer garden and masquerade ball.

Garwood Council Cands. Face Off During Forum

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD—Four candidates for borough council squared off last Thursday at a forum at The Pointe.

Topic areas included what should be done to prepare for the redevelopment resident influx, the shared-service agreement with Fanwood, how budget surpluses should be spent, the state-wide property tax re-evaluation, the recreation complex, and how the Paperboard space on North Avenue should be utilized.

Democratic Council candidates include lawyer and advocate Sean Benoit and retired FBI agent Michael Ince. Republican council candidates include Councilwoman Stephanie Bianco and board of education member Sal Piarulli.

Moderator Bill Connolly of The Pointe stated that when fully rented the redevelopment projects will increase the borough's population by 1,000 residents or 25 percent. "What should we be doing now to prepare?" he asked the candidates.

Ms. Bianco responded that relying on outside shared services without a ladder truck that can reach the top

floor, "is not always such a good idea." She said taking proper precautions with police, infrastructure and traffic congestions is important. She said the renters will become eventual homebuyers from her experience in the real estate field.

"I don't know how many students this project will bring to the town. It was said under 30. I don't believe that," Ms. Bianco said.

Mr. Ince said most renters will be singles, married couples and commuters to New York City.

"I don't believe the number of school-aged children will be great," said Mr. Ince, comparing the development results to similar redevelopments in Cranford, which produced a "small" school-aged children population increase.

Mr. Benoit said he welcomes the new residents to Garwood, saying the borough is an intimate community with a spirit of volunteerism and inclusion. He supports welcoming packages to make new residents feel at home.

Mr. Benoit said Garwood's population will not reach the levels it was at in the 1950s even with 1,000 additional residents.

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Paul Lachenauer for The Westfield Leader

A TOOL FOR EVERY JOB...Jim Colangelo shows off his collection of period tools during Four Centuries In A Weekend at Crane Phillips House in Cranford held this past Saturday and Sunday.

Garwood Honors Lincoln 'Space Club' Students

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD—Mayor Charles Lombardo and the borough council, at Tuesday's council meeting, honored Lincoln School teacher Denise Cafaro alongside participating "space club" students for launching weather balloon Mustang-1. The Mustang-1 launch was funded through an Education Foundation of Garwood grant. The weather balloon eventually had tracking devices, a GoPro camera, and was monitored by a flight computer.

Eventually, the Mustang-1 was retrieved from the banks of the Long Island Sound. The students provided preliminary research on the balloon's path. The GoPro camera took "remarkable photos" during the balloons journey, Mayor Lombardo said.

"You're truly an amazing educator. The children of Garwood are lucky to have you," said Mayor Lombardo, praising Ms. Cafaro on her accomplishments.

Ms. Cafaro said she worked with "a wonderful group of students" and that she is excited to review their other experiments findings in the upcoming weeks.

During regular council business, Mayor Lombardo and borough council approved an ordinance on first reading that revises the registration and renewal fee for maintaining, registering and repairing foreclosed residential properties.

Councilman Richard McCormick said he wanted insight on how a business owner in Garwood was initially approved by the planning board and now was finding difficulty attaining final approval because the business owner could no longer provide parking.

"I'm not picking on the planning

board. How do we do that? How do we justify that? How do we come to that? Why?" Mr. McCormick asked.

Mr. McCormick said the business owner was told under a general assumption their business could remain in operation if parking could be negotiated with the developer.

Resident Albert Del Conte stated he was at the planning board meeting Mr. McCormick had questioned. He said the business owner was aware their operation was contingent on fulfilling a parking requirement for the store's patrons.

Resident Bruce Paterson said he found the whole situation "disheartening." He said the business owner is one of the "longest merchant or business owners downtown."

"I feel sorry for her," said Mr. Paterson.

Mr. Paterson said he hopes the parking requirement will be waived by the planning board.

In other comments, Mr. Del Conte said one campaign sign is appropriate per each residence. Mr. Del Conte said three to four signs per lawn should not be allowed nor the "enormous political banners." The banners or billboard-style signs had been removed since their original erection, he said.

Mr. Del Conte stated that, "Perhaps an ordinance should be proposed," banning multiple political signs that advertise the same campaign on an individual property.

In other business, the basketball court at Hartman Park was to be repaved yesterday, stated Councilman Marc Lazarow. He said the contract for the fire department roofing project went out last Friday.

The library's second annual pumpkin decorating contest started on Monday, October 23, stated Mr.

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Christina M. Hinke for The Westfield Leader

THE HULK...The Incredible Hulk is one of the many scarecrows on display as part of the 11th annual Cranford Downtown Scarecrow Stroll. All are welcome to downtown Cranford to check out over 100 scarecrows lining the streets and vote for a favorite. The scarecrows are created by families, kids, groups, organizations, classes and businesses, and will be on display through the end of October.

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