

Town Council OKs Rezoning Of New England Dr. Properties

By FRED T. ROSSI
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD—The town council on Tuesday approved an ordinance modifying the town's zoning map to redesignate 24 residential properties, mostly on New England Drive, in an effort to forestall any potential subdivisions on the street.

Town Planner Don Sammet analyzed the properties, where the average lot frontage of 122 feet is well in excess of the minimum lot frontage food in the RS-12 single-family residence district. He recommended changing the street's designation to RS-16, which will, said Mayor Shelley Brindle before the council's public hearing, "mitigate the risk of subdivisions" since the RS-16 zone requires wider lot frontages. Besides

21 lots on New England Drive, two lots on Lamberts Mill Road and one on Willow Grove Parkway will be part of the zone change.

"We are doing several important things. First, we are voting on an ordinance to modify the zoning map to change an area encompassing New England Drive from RS-12 to RS-16, which will mitigate the risk of subdividing. This was brought to our attention by the residents of New England Drive as a result of a recent subdivision application. Upon review by our town planner, Don Sammet, it was discovered that the current zoning was an oversight when the zoning recommendations were made in 1991, and that the RS-16 designation is indeed more appropriate and conforming than what exists today,"

Mayor Brindle said.

"I would like to thank the New England Drive residents for their advocacy, and Don Sammet for his exceptional and thorough analysis, and the planning board for reviewing the ordinance and confirming consistency with the Master Plan. I am encouraged by how quickly we have been able to address this issue from when it was first introduced to the planning board in November, to the resulting change to our zoning ordinance this evening. Special thanks to Code Review Chairwoman Dawn Mackey for making this a priority and facilitating a quick and appropriate resolution."

The council also approved an ordinance designating the 129-year-old house at 603 Clark Street as a historic landmark.

The council additionally introduced several ordinances that will be considered at its Tuesday, February 26 meeting. One will boost penalties for violations of the town's housing and zoning ordinances to up to \$2,000. Mayor Brindle said that the fines have been "too low" and hoped the higher penalties would deter developers from skirting town regulations.

Another ordinance will permit the playing of music and videos on commercial rooftops. Mr. Sammet explained at the council's conference meeting that the ordinance change will allow patrons of rooftop restaurants to enjoy music while they dine. A third ordinance will allow restaurants and retail establishments to sell alcoholic beverages on Sundays starting at 9 a.m. instead of noon. Town Attorney Thomas Jardim said another part of the proposed ordinance will scale back the ending time for off-premise retail sales of alcoholic beverages in the early hours of New Year's Day from 3 a.m. to 1 a.m.

Town Administrator Jim Gildea

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When Completed, Region To See Over 2,500 Units

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

REGION — With housing developments still in the planning board hearing stage, under construction or completed, *The Westfield Leader* this week has compiled a summary of some of the large developments approved over the past few years. These developments, when all are completed, will add some 2,500 new housing units to the region.

The developments, except Cranford Crossing, are in response to affordable-housing mandates per each town's Fair Share Housing Plan per the mid-1970s Mount Laurel New Jersey Supreme Court decision. Most are apartments with some townhouse units for sale as in the case of Mountainside.

Some 366 new residential units were built between 2003 and 2015, in Cranford including Cranford Crossing (50 apartments, no affordable units listed) and Riverfront at Cranford Station (127 apartments, 19 affordable units). Also, Birchwood Developers Associates, LLC took over as the new developer for the Birchwood Avenue project, which the township reduced from 360 units under the previous developer, S. Hekemian Group, to 225 units, with 34 affordable units. That project is now under construction.

Woodmont Station, located at 555 South Avenue, has 163 units, of which 24 were listed as affordable.

The Cranford Planning Board currently is hearing the application of Hartz Mountain Industries, LLC to rezone 750 Walnut Avenue to allow for construction of 905 apartments. The property is located near the border with Clark.

Over 100 apartment units have been built in Fanwood in the past seven



HEADED TO INDIANAPOLIS...The Westfield High School (WHS) Wind Ensemble Band will perform at a national concert next month in Indianapolis. WHS will be just the fifth New Jersey band to receive an invitation to perform at the annual Music for All National Festival, which is now in its 28th year. The 50-member-strong band will travel across the country by coach buses to Indianapolis, a journey that is expected to take around 12 hours, where they will join bands from 14 other states for the festival from March 14 to 16.

Twp. Seeks New Engineering Team, Zoning Officer

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD — Cranford's zoning officer and the township engineer have both resigned. William Maisol has resigned from his position as township engineer, effective Friday, March 1. He has served in the position since July 10, 2017. He also served as the engineer for the planning board. He is leaving to return to the company with which he was previously employed, the planning

board said. Ron Johnson began as zoning officer on April 3, 2017, and has resigned immediately.

According to the township website, the township also is seeking a full-time engineering aide and a part-time receptionist/administrative assistant to the clerk's office.

Mr. Maisol is expected to attend the Wednesday, February 20 planning board meeting, where the Hartz Mountain application to rezone 750 Walnut Avenue will continue. That night, the board's professionals in real estate, traffic and engineering are to present data to the board. At the Wednesday, March 6 planning board meeting, the board's professionals in environmental aspects of the plan will present; then on Wednesday, March 20, the board of education will present data.

The planning board, last Wednesday, approved an amended preliminary and final site plan presented by National Christmas Tree Products Inc., located at 70 Jackson Drive. The application had been previously heard, and the applicant had made some further changes to its plan, mostly additional plantings and fencing to add a buffer to neighboring properties, and add fencing around garbage areas, one of which is enlarged to add more garbage containers.

Residents who live adjacent to the commercial property had complained that Renewal by Anderson, a window-replacement company and a tenant that leases space from National Tree, is noisy when throwing away old windows into the garbage containers that sit near the property line. The garbage area Renewal uses is to contain five to six garbage containers.

The board had argued that a township ordinance says that the throwing away of demolition materials can only be done between the hours of 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. weekdays, and starts later on weekends. In the end, the applicant and board agreed to an early start time on Saturday, but on Sunday the deposit of windows cannot occur until 9 a.m., as the ordinance allows.

During public comments, resident Rita LaBrutto asked the board when it had worked on the affordable-housing plan, as in the past this discussion was held in public, she said. Board Attorney Jonathan Drill said the board is not obligated by law to work on it in public, and said more and more municipalities are working on third-round affordable-housing plans in private session because otherwise it would "expose the plan" and give developers an "advantage." The affordable-housing plan is

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FUN IN THE SNOW...A family enjoys the snow on Tuesday by sledding at Unami Park in Cranford.

Committee Tables Resolution On Sale of Myrtle Parcel

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD — Mayor Patrick Giblin and the township committee decided to table a resolution authorizing the sale of public land on Myrtle Street at Monday evening's township committee workshop meeting. Mayor Giblin stated that because Tuesday's official meeting was cancelled due to adverse weather conditions, the resolution will be reconsidered and discussed at a meeting on Tuesday, February 19.

Several residents from the surrounding neighborhood of Myrtle Street articulated concerns with negative impacts the land sale would have on the neighborhood.

Township Attorney Ryan Cooper said the municipal-owned land on Myrtle Street has been included in Cranford's Master Plan since 2013. The tract is being developed with consideration to "affordable-housing and fair share credits" as per

court-mandated housing requirements, stated Mr. Cooper.

"I cannot support the proposed sale and development of this land, which houses woods, which create a barrier buffer to the noise from the Garden State Parkway," resident Mark Mayer told the township committee during public comments.

Mr. Mayer said the tract of land functions as a "transition zone from the industrial park located just on the other side of the street."

Neighbors are concerned development would adversely impact property values, while posing a detriment to the wildlife, which will be "pushed out with no natural shelter," Mr. Mayer said.

Resident Marie Mayer said development would remove "40-foot trees," which provide a "visual and noise buffer to Commerce Drive (a commercial area)." Ms. Mayer said the selection of the property for

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LOVE FOR VETS...Daughters of the American Revolution Westfield Chapter members volunteered at the "Presidential Golf" event at the Veterans Home in Menlo Park on February 8. They assisted the veterans with putting, met and interacted with them, and helped with handing out prizes. Pictured, from left to right, are: Savannah Freeman, Victoria Freeman, Jill Sawers, Barbara Benko, chapter regent; Cynthia Cashill and Lisa Kane, chapter registrar.



HEARTS FOR OTHERS...A Valentine's party for families was held on Sunday at The Presbyterian Church in Westfield and featured lunch and games.

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