

## PSE&G Community Meeting On 69kV Lines Attracts 240

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD – At a community meeting held at the Cranford Community Center last Wednesday, PSE&G representatives answered questions from 240 residents about a planned 69kV electrical wire route.

The route will replace existing utility poles along Walnut Avenue, Lincoln Avenue, Lexington Avenue, Chester Lang Place and South Avenue, stated PSE&G public relations representative Rebecca Mazzarella. The project is a “pole-for-pole” replacement of 73 poles, meaning that the intended total pole count will not increase, stated Ms. Mazzarella. PSE&G would be upgrading the

50-year-old 26kV lines with “standard 21st century 69kV electric lines,” Ms. Mazzarella said. “As populations have increased, consumer electronic needs have evolved. The additional 69kV network will alleviate demands on the remaining 26kV network,” said Ms. Mazzarella.

She said the upgrade is required to provide “safe, adequate and reliable” service throughout the utility’s service territory.

PSE&G representatives were placed at several different tables based on resident concern areas to “de-mystify” any rumors, misunderstandings, or fallacies surrounding the project, stated Ms. Mazzarella.

She said the project will be both underground and above ground based on practicality, considering surrounding infrastructure independent of PSE&G equipment and property. Ms. Mazzarella said constructing the entire project underground would be six to seven times more expensive than above-ground utility pole construction.

“Additional costs unfortunately flow through to customers. That is why we safely reduce project costs making rational installation decisions while planning our routes,” said Ms. Mazzarella.

She said line voltage has no effect on the surrounding electromagnetic field and the new lines will be comparable in “existing background levels.”

Ms. Mazzarella said all trees removed on public or private property can be replaced at the owner’s discretion at a rate of two trees planted per one removed. Should homeowners choose not to replant a tree on their private property, PSE&G will plant the tree on public property to help in flood reduction, stated Ms. Mazzarella.

Resident Justin Quinn said PSE&G is utilizing the wood preservative pentachlorophenol (penta) on the power line poles, which he said is a “known carcinogen.” Mr. Quinn stated that penta was banned in over 26 countries throughout the world, which was acknowledged at the Stockholm Convention in 2015.

Mr. Quinn said the poles will be placed into the soil, degrading over time, releasing penta into Cranford’s high-water table, which can come in contact with children, adults and family pets.

He said other utility companies settled class-action lawsuits because penta contaminated a bay.

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## Zoning Board Grants Variances for Old Homes

By JENNIFER GLACKIN  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Three applications were unanimously approved at Monday’s Board of Adjustment (BOA) meeting. Two older local homes will be getting a facelift and the third was a kitchen renovation and expansion.

Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and currently existing easement concerns peppered the evening. FAR refers to the ratio of gross floor area to the area of the plot of land.

Pradip and Rehka Paul of 122 Livingston Street wish to expand their current 1920s two-bedroom, one-bathroom house to a modern three-bedroom, two-bathroom house. However, the property is 25-foot wide and 169-feet deep, a very narrow lot for the neighborhood, requiring a hardship variance for maximum continuous wall length. The current house has 12 feet of width in the living room space, once the wall widths and stairs are accounted for, according to architect Paritosh Kumar of PK Architecture in Clark. He continued saying that the lot is 30-percent undersized for the neighborhood and said the rear addition would offset that difference.

Also, due to an existing easement on the property, a shared driveway that does not allow for parking or access to the property’s garage would be replaced with a small driveway in the front of the home and the garage, which is rotting, would be demolished.

Board member Matt Sontz was initially concerned about the new front driveway taking away a street parking space, but reconsidered when the applicant’s professional planner, Paul Grygiel, said there is no parking allowed in the current driveway, so residents have been



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CATCHING UP...These neighbors catch up while shopping during Thursday’s Girls Day And Night Out event, sponsored by the Downtown Westfield Corporation, the management entity for the town’s special improvement district. More than 1,600 participants gathered to peruse downtown Westfield businesses. Shoppers also enjoyed free parking and live music.

## Bd. Planner: 750 Walnut Ave. Apts. Would Have Negative Fiscal Impact

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD – The planning board’s planner, during last Wednesday’s board meeting, said in his own fiscal-impact analysis that both the municipality and the school district would see a negative fiscal impact should a proposed apartment complex be built at 750 Walnut Avenue. Hartz Mountain Industries, LLC owns the 30.5-acre property eyed for the development, and currently is applying to rezone the property from commercial to residential in order to

build 905 apartment units across five buildings on the property.

The total negative impact to both the township and the school district could be as high as a negative \$2.3 million, the board’s planner, Raymond Liotta of Maser Consulting, said. Mr. Liotta gave a presentation of his analysis and review of the fiscal-impact analysis studies submitted by the applicant for the proposed development.

Mr. Liotta had conducted his own analysis because he had seen differences in the three reports supplied by the applicant, one being the cap rate (evaluation of property and rate of return on investment) used in Hartz Mountain’s analysis, he said. In the first two reports, the applicant used a 6-percent cap rate and in the third report the applicant used a 5.5-percent cap rate. Mr. Liotta supplied his analysis using both cap rates, as well as using the school district’s analysis (prepared by consultant Ross Haber) of the children who could be added to the district as a result of the apartments, and the district’s cost per pupil.

No explanation was given as to the reasoning behind the cap rate change, Mr. Liotta said. The effect of the cap rate change affects the valuation number of the project value.

Basing his analysis on a 6-percent cap rate, the township would see a negative \$210,687 net fiscal impact, Mr. Liotta said. The school district would see a negative \$2,258,171 at a 6-percent cap rate. In sum, the township and school district would see a total negative \$2,468,858 fiscal impact analysis at a 6-percent cap rate, he said.

Using a 5.5-percent cap rate, the township would see a negative \$79,835 net fiscal impact, while the school district would see a negative \$1,949,404.

Hartz Mountain’s planner, Keenan Hughes of Phillips, Preiss, Grygiel, Leheny, Hughes LLC, had provided three reports last year, with the final report being updated in October 2018, that showed a positive net fiscal impact to both the township and the school district.

In Mr. Liotta’s review, he calculated the value at \$290,687,127 at a 5.5-percent cap rate; and with a 6-percent cap rate the value would be \$266,463,200 in Mr. Liotta’s analysis. “It’s a \$24.4-million difference and could make a difference in tax revenues generated by the property,” Mr. Liotta said.

Mr. Hughes gave a rebuttal to the

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PLAYING MUSIC TILL WHEN?...The band 8 Till When? played at the corner of Elm and East Broad Streets in downtown Westfield, while ladies shopped for bargains at Thursday’s Girls Day And Night Out event, sponsored by the Downtown Westfield Corporation.

## Garwood Mayor, Council Support Ladder Truck

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD – Mayor Sara Todisco and the borough council on Thursday unanimously supported the Garwood Fire Department acquiring a ladder truck. The cost of the truck is estimated at \$1.3 million.

Over the last month, Garwood Fire Chief Allan Tweedle and Assistant Chief John Scalzadonna discussed the ladder truck’s specifics at two public town-hall-style meetings. The council opined on the ladder truck acquisition thus avoiding a referendum vote by residents. It was revealed during these meetings that the existing ladder truck cannot reach 20 buildings on the north side and 18 buildings on the south side of the borough.

At Thursday’s council meeting, former councilwoman Ileen Cuccaro said considering the truck’s cost “the truck should be up for public vote.” “You cannot put public safety on a

ballot,” Mayor Todisco responded.

The mayor said the governing body is elected to lead, protect, and make “tough, yet beneficial” decisions for Garwood. Mayor Todisco said the governing body funds the police and fire departments, “ensuring they are properly equipped” to serve the borough.

Mayor Todisco said the council unanimously decided “to do what we have always done” which is “listen, discuss, text and email concerned residents.” She said the town-hall-style meetings engage residents, allowing leadership to hear “what the community wants or respond to resident concerns.”

“I could not fault it at all,” said Ms. Cuccaro, complementing the fire chief’s two presentations.

Councilman Russell Graham said he was apprehensive of the “ladder truck (purchase) at first.” He said the truck’s cost, need, manpower and

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HANDS OF TIME...At the 51st Annual Dinner of the Westfield Historical Society, president of the society Nancy Priest, pictured right, congratulates two members who were cited for outstanding service. Holding the original 1886 hour hand and the 1910 minute hand of the town’s clock are Carey Golden, pictured at left, recipient of the 2019 C. Houghton Birdsall “President’s Award for Distinguished Service” and Jack Panosh for “Notable Contributions to the Preservation of Westfield Heritage.” Mr. Panosh has the moniker of “Westfield Clock Meister” due to his restoration of the 133-year-old town clock, which is housed in the tower of the First United Methodist Church.



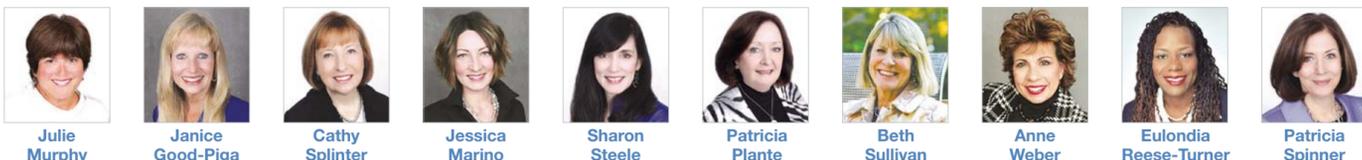
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TOWN BELL MASTER...On May 10, at the Westfield Historical Society’s 51st Annual Dinner at the Echo Lake Country Club, Jack Panosh stands with a display of the history of the town bell, as well as the 133-year-old town clock. The Society’s recipient of the Trustees’ Award for “Notable Contributions to the Preservation of Westfield Heritage,” Mr. Panosh has been restoring and maintaining the Westfield town clock housed in the First United Methodist Church since 1992.

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