



Serving the Town Since 1890

The Westfield Leader

Special Election '98 Edition

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FIFTY CENTS



William A. Burke for The Westfield Leader

BONJOUR...A group dressed as characters from "Madeline," a staple of children's literature, enjoyed the Halloween Parade Sunday in Westfield. Pictured, dressed as nuns, are Joan Pfeiffer and Sigrid Sanchez. The youngsters include Skylar Fixler, Madison Troxler, Jessica Cobuzzi, Christine Murphy, Francie Schaeffer and Devon Cash.

Mayor Jardim, Mrs. Vernick, Mr. Greco In Three-Way Battle for Mayor's Office

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

This Tuesday, Westfield voters will decide a hotly contested race for Mayor which will make history no matter which way the election falls.

Thomas C. Jardim, the town's first Democratic Mayor since the sinking of the Titanic in 1912, is being challenged by both Republican First Ward Councilwoman Gail S. Vernick and independent candidate Norman N. Greco.

Mr. Greco, who served on the council from 1992 through 1997 representing the First Ward, was defeated by Mayor Jardim as the Republican candidate for mayor in 1996.

Regardless, history will be made in Westfield whether Mayor Jardim is victorious since he would be the first Democratic mayor reelected in the town's history or Mrs. Vernick wins and becomes the town's first woman to serve in the mayor's office,



Thomas C. Jardim* (D)



Gail S. Vernick (R)



Norman N. Greco (I)

while Mr. Greco would be the town's first independent mayor.

During this week's forum sponsored by the Westfield Area League

of Women Voters, Mayor Jardim described some of the positive things that have occurred over the past two years while he was Mayor. He noted

that the downtown vacancy rate dropped from 22 percent to almost zero — under one percent.

The Town Council embarked on a comprehensive 10-year, \$5 million road improvement plan.

"We've focused on long-term capital planning and strategic planning and strategic budgetary thinking like never before," he said, referring to other infrastructure improvements such as parks and fields.

The Mayor noted his efforts to give "Westfield's rail commuters a voice to improve their quality of life" through the Raritan Valley Line Commuter Line Commission that he created last year.

Mrs. Vernick, who was elected to the council in 1994 over Democrat William Brennan, noted a few of her accomplishments the past four years, including: working to successfully gain council passage of a residential parking program in the vicinity of the Westfield "Y," bringing pedestrian signs to town, her recent initiative to equip school crossing guards and mail carriers with 911 emergency cellular phones through private donations, as well as her tax relief plan which was recently introduced before Congress.

The tax break plan would enable seniors who do not itemize on their federal taxes to deduct what they pay in property taxes and to set up an individual retirement account, or IRA, where savings would be tax free to be used to pay taxes in a person's senior years.

Mayor Jardim said from what he has heard of the plan he believes it is geared more to younger persons and would have "no impact on seniors now."

Mr. Greco continued his theme of bringing a "business-like, common-sense" approach to the Mayor's office. He is the owner of a steam cleaning carpeting company as well as several other business ventures.

He said that as an independent candidate, he has no ties to any political party and he would not be involved in "political paybacks."

Mr. Greco said if elected he would put the issue of whether to build a parking deck in the downtown before the public for a vote.

Mayor Jardim noted that the county has applied for a \$25,000 grant from Union County which would be used to hire a planner who would conduct a study on parking capacity and development in the downtown centered around the south side train station lot. The study would determine the best location for a parking facility for shoppers as well as for commuters.

Noting that currently 900 residents are on a waiting list for parking permits at the south side lot — some of whom have been on the list for several years — Mayor Jardim called this an "unacceptable" situation.

The Mayor said building additional parking capacity is "inevitable."

Noting that with many national retailers making new investments in the downtown, Mrs. Vernick said parking is an important issue for the future of the business district. She noted that The Gap clothing stores, for instance, have an annual goal of \$3 million in revenues. She said if stores do not reach their projections, possibly because of a lack of parking,

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Eight Candidates for Council Discuss Issues During Forum Sponsored by the Westfield Area League of Women Voters

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

This coming Tuesday Westfield residents will not only decide the three-way Mayoral race in town but four races for council seats in all four wards. Republicans have a 6-2 edge on the council. Mayor Thomas C. Jardim is the third Democratic vote on the governing body.

In the First Ward, Democrat Carl Salisbury and Republican Jon Bramnick, both attorneys, are vying for the seat currently occupied by Republican Mayoral contender Gail S. Vernick.

Independent Norman Greco is also running for Mayor.

In the Second Ward, veteran Republican Councilman James J. Gruba is being challenged by engineer Joe Stoner. Mr. Gruba joined the council in 1992 to fill the seat of Bud C. Boothe upon his promotion to Mayor.

In the Third Ward, Democratic incumbent Councilman John J. Walsh is being challenged by Republican Noreen Lund while Democratic Fourth Ward Councilman Lawrence A. Goldman is being challenged in his reelection bid by Republican Tom Cusimano.

The victory by Democratic Mayor Jardim and his running mates, Mr. Goldman and Mr. Walsh, represented the first time Democrats held four votes on the governing body. Mayor Jardim's victory in 1996 represented the first Democrat to serve in the office since 1912.

Last year, Republicans fended off Democratic challenges to hold onto seats in the First and Third Wards with victories by Gregory S. McDermott and incumbent Neil F. Sullivan, Jr., respectively, while Republican Janis Fried Weinstein defeated incumbent Democratic Fourth Ward Councilman Donnell Carr.

Mrs. Weinstein, who now holds the seat long held by Democrat James Hely, was defeated as the incumbent in a narrow race to Mr. Goldman in 1996.

The council candidates faced off last Thursday in a forum sponsored by the Westfield Area League of Women Voters.

Mr. Bramnick noted in his opening remarks that election polls should be taken "after the election; not before the election." The former Plainfield City Councilman said he would conduct random weekly polls of constituents in his ward on their concerns or problems.

Mr. Salisbury, noting the importance of two-party representation, said he hopes the town can "continue to have a vibrant Democracy where Republicans and Democrats have a forum" on the council.

Second Ward Councilman Gruba said in his previous campaigns the storefront vacancy rate in the downtown was a major concern of voters. Noting that all vacancies are nearly



Carl Salisbury - 1st Ward (D)



Jon M. Bramnick - 1st Ward (R)



Joe Stoner - 2nd Ward (D)



James J. Gruba* - 2nd Ward (R)



John J. Walsh* - 3rd Ward (D)



Noreen Lund - 3rd Ward (R)



Lawrence Goldman* - 4th Ward (D)



Tom Cusimano - 4th Ward (R)

filled in the business district, he said Westfielders are "excited about what they see downtown" in terms of retail estate development.

He said the one remaining issue for the council is resolving downtown

parking needs, something that will be addressed by the 1999 council.

Mr. Stoner said voters of his ward want council representatives "who will engage them on important issues" and who will be "persuaded by

the wisdom the residents bring to the issue."

The candidate said he would be a visible councilman by attending community events such as neighborhood block parties. He said he would be an "approachable" and "accessible" councilman.

The daughter of the former Colonial Barbershop owner on East Broad Street, Ms. Lund said her goals on council, if elected, are "preserving the history and integrity of Westfield as we all move forward; enhancing and revitalizing South and Central Avenues with a focused plan; addressing public safety issues; and improving town services."

If elected, she vowed to be a "proactive voice" on the Town Council.

Councilman Walsh noted that Democrats have offered "new ideas" to the council resulting in the expansion of the number of roads included in the town's annual road improvement program, along with initiatives to refurbish the town's parks and fields and the formation of a Raritan Valley Commuter Line Coalition resulting in the addition of two more trains to the evening rush hour by NJ Transit.

He also noted the creation of a Neighborhood Preservation Committee to begin working on an improvement and possible grant for the area surrounding Cacciola Place off Cen-

tral Avenue.

Mr. Walsh said that these "successes" must be shared with both sides of the aisle on the council.

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Publisher's Note

This edition of *The Westfield Leader* has been mailed to every resident in Westfield and Mountainside to inform voters of the issues and of the candidates for the election this Tuesday, November 3. We encourage everyone to vote.

Our towns have good government and great candidates seeking office. Half of them will be serving us shortly, while the others not elected will have an opportunity to run again in the future. Celebrate and thank them all.

We also use this edition to present ourselves to those of you who are not subscribers. I believe good newspapers help communities, and that's what we're trying to do. Please join us. If you're stymied for a gift idea for your neighbor this season, consider one that gives year round — a subscription to *The Leader*.

Horace R. Corbin
Publisher



Jeanne Whitney for The Westfield Leader

MR. WESTFIELD...H. Emerson Thomas, pictured left, received special recognition from the United States Congress at a 50th anniversary celebration of the Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce last Monday. Mr. Thomas, who turns 96 years old next month, was cited for his "outstanding and valuable service" to the town. Former Chamber President, Freeholder, Councilman and longtime friend Arthur Fried, shares the podium with the honoree. Please see a story on Page A-2.



Full campaign coverage starts on Page B-1

Remember **VOTE** on **November 3rd**

Eight Candidates Vying for Town Council Discuss Issues During Forum Sponsored By Westfield Area League of Women Voters

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As the Republican Fourth Ward candidate, Mr. Cusimano pledged to "work for equitable, cost-effective solutions" as a councilman.

Councilman Goldman spoke of decades of "one-party domination" by Republicans which were "unresponsive" to residents.

He noted as Chairman of the Laws and Rules Committee he led the effort to enact the town's exterior property maintenance code to address unsafe properties and "neighborhood eyesores" in the town.

While he was chairman he worked on the "overhaul" of previous town zoning laws, while also working on revisions to the town's sidewalk café ordinance.

Supporting more parking spaces in the business district, he said it is time to "stop the excuses" and take action regarding the lack of downtown spaces.

During the campaign, Mr. Goldman proposed the creation of a commission by the Mayor to look at Westfield's form of government.

Mr. Goldman noted that the current system, with two-year terms for council members and the Mayor, diverts council members from focusing on council business to reelection campaigns in an election each year. Mr. Goldman said the governing body might want to consider either three-year or four-year terms instead.

Mr. Cusimano, who supports two-year terms, said the shorter terms force council members to get out and meet residents and hear their concerns.

Ms. Lund said she supports the shorter terms which she said allows council members "a chance to do their homework" on council business.

Councilman Gruba described Mr. Goldman's call for an evaluation of term length as "provocative proposal that holds some possibilities."

Meanwhile, Mr. Bramnick said the "competency of the leadership and the substance far outweighs the procedures."

One resident questioned changes made in the town's fall leaf pickup. Mr. Walsh, Chairman of the council's Public Works Committee, said one change which could speed things would be additional manpower.

Mr. Walsh said he would like to narrow the current window for the pick-up program, which is now from October 28 to December 15, so that collections are completed by Thanks-

giving Day.

Ms. Lund indicated that the current successful program began in the fall of 1996 before Mayor Jardim and Councilmen Goldman and Walsh were elected.

The plan included a change whereby south side leaves are taken to the Westfield Conservation Center on Lamberts Mill Road with the north side leaves transported to the county's compost facility in Springfield. This change cut down on transportation time needed on the south side thus freeing up Public Works crews to spend more time picking up leaves.

Central Avenue's appearance remains a "top priority" for Ms. Lund. She proposes a long-term plan for the Central Avenue corridor similar to the SID and Main Street Westfield programs in the downtown. She said someone would be needed, either full-time or part-time, to run the program.

Mr. Gruba said he now supports adding the Central Avenue corridor into the SID. Council members in 1996 chose not to make this move, believing the SID tax would place too much of a burden on property owners in this area. However, now that the downtown is vibrant again and the fact that Central Avenue is perhaps the most traveled corridor into the downtown, he now supports placing the area in the SID.

"It is an area that should reflect as much pride as any other area of town," he said.

Mr. Walsh said a neighborhood preservation effort proposed for the area along with improved lighting, safety and private investment would help "raise the level of a neighborhood that has been so long troubled."

He suggested that in addition to the grant application to the state's Neighborhood Preservation Program, the town could focus on the needs of this area of town when applying for the annual Union County Community Block Development grant program. These funds are distributed by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through the county.

Mr. Stoner said council attention is also needed along the North Avenue entrances into town.

In discussing the condition of town roads, Councilman Gruba noted the council has begun to look at funding a long-term roads improvement program. In addition to this effort, he said improved technology will help

to improve the condition of the roads.

His opponent, Mr. Stoner, said streets in the Second Ward are "particularly in poor shape."

Mr. Walsh said in the past some streets were "squeezed" out of improvement programs because they did not fall under the criteria established for the town's annual \$150,000 appropriation for smaller streets, nor those established for the state's Transportation Trust Fund, which is also an annual program.

In the past, roads such as Benson Place did not receive repair under either program. Mr. Walsh has proposed the issuance of a bond for an expanded improvement program to fund those roads that fall in the middle. He has said this program would replace the current bond, floated in 1985, for construction of the Westfield Memorial Library, when the debt is retired in 2001.

He said the council could either float the bond and thus take on debt for the program or by funding it through the town budget and to replace the line item currently included for the library bond, including principal and interest.

On the issue of the SID, Councilman Goldman said the program has put downtown interests "under one roof" instead of different entities as was the case when disagreements developed between Main Street and Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce officials.

He said the Downtown Westfield Corporation is putting together an improvement plan that looks towards the future of the downtown.

Mr. Cusimano called the downtown "the heart and soul" of the town as well as a "gathering place" which creates a "first impression" for visitors to Westfield. He commended the current council for its efforts in improving the downtown.

Regarding the plan to add 71 parking spaces at Tamaques Park, Mr. Cusimano, a member of the Westfield Recreation Commission, said he remains opposed to the plan. He said officials should look at the scheduling of events not only at Tamaques but at all parks in town. He said despite open spaces, motorists park in the oval drive anyway.

Mr. Goldman noted the parking plan was approved by both the Recreation Commission and Town Council as part of their capital improvement budgets. It was subsequently approved through an ordinance adopted earlier this year by the council.

Voters in Westfield to Decide Between Mayor Jardim, Mrs. Vernick, Mr. Greco In Three-Way Battle for Mayor's Office

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they will leave town.

Mrs. Vernick said in addition to looking at a deck, she proposed a jitney bus service, similar to what NJ Transit is doing in Maplewood. She said the service freed up 600 spaces in that town.

On the issue of sharing services with other towns to cut costs, Mr.

He said the council needs to balance concerns including parking on the oval drive, elimination parking on side streets near the park, ensuring access to the park by all town residents, as well as the preservation of greenery at the park.

In terms of the growing amount of newspaper vending machines in the downtown, Mr. Goldman said his committee is looking at balancing the town's desire for safety, including "unimpeded" access by residents to the sidewalk and aesthetics of the machines versus First Amendment rights of the newspapers.

During the closing statements at the forum, Mr. Goldman said he will always be mindful of "discussion, compromise and respect" when it comes to working with his colleagues on the council.

Mr. Cusimano sees council service as a "means to give back to the community." He said he will bring his "dedication of work ethic and a sense of teamwork" to the council if elected.

Mr. Walsh described himself and Mr. Goldman as "two candles who have generated some light but very little heat" on the council. He said Democrats would like to "add two more candles" with victories by Mr. Salisbury and Mr. Stoner.

Mr. Gruba, Chairman of the council's Finance Committee over the past six years, said infrastructure improvements along with leaf and snow removal services "must be done and paid for" by the town. He vowed to continue his watchful eye on town spending.

Noting that "democracy can be messy," Mr. Salisbury said "a vibrant healthy democracy requires hard work. It takes civility and respect for others. It takes lively debate and disagreement, and that's healthy."

Mr. Bramnick indicated that he would push council meetings to be televised, noting that residents have the right to see their council "solve problems."

Greco said he would look to "streamline" services if elected. He noted towns want to maintain their own identity which sometimes limits the amount of services which can be shared.

Mrs. Vernick, who also favors shared services, noted that the town's health department has contracts with other towns to cut costs in those communities. She said she would look at purchasing supplies for the Department of Public Works through agreements with other towns.

Mayor Jardim said he has spoken to Town Administrator Edward A. Gottko about sharing Municipal Court services with other communities. He also said the town may share rescue squad services with neighboring communities.

On the issue of property taxes, Mayor Jardim, the only member of the governing body to vote against this year's budget, said he believes the reserve fund for uncollected taxes could be cut in order to achieve lower property taxes.

The Mayor also said operating expenses could be cut by as much as five percent.

Mrs. Vernick challenged the Mayor, stating that a five percent cut in the budget would be equal to a tax point or \$80,000 on the expenditures side of the budget. She questioned whether services or personnel would be cut to achieve this

goal.

Mr. Greco vowed not to cut services. He said he would initiate job studies to focus on each employee's functions so that the town "can things done in a timely fashion." Although not saying how he would achieve it, Mr. Greco said he would work to reduce property taxes in town.

Mrs. Vernick vowed to be a full-time mayor. She said she would schedule daily meetings with constituents as well as meeting regularly with town department heads and administrators to ensure government which is "efficient, friendly and prompt."

Mayor Jardim referred to the town's elected officials as "only temporary guardians of an institution and a town that was here long before any of us, and will surely be here long after we're gone."

Noting the infrastructure improvements underway, he vowed to continue to work hard to continue "moving this town in the right direction."

Mr. Greco noted that he is the only candidate that will "bridge the gap between our political parties."

"Westfield needs a strong mayor, a facilitator, somebody who is unencumbered by political ties. I have no political aspiration other than to be Mayor of Westfield," said the life-long Westfield resident.

Polls will be open this Tuesday, November 3, from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Town Council Examines Block Grant Proposals

By MICHELLE H. LePOIDEVIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

The Westfield Town Council heard requests for funding through block grants on Tuesday from the Westfield Neighborhood Council, the Westfield Community Center, the Westfield/Mountainside Chapter of the American Red Cross, Youth and Family Counseling Service Inc., Planners Diversified of Summit, and Town Engineer Kenneth B. Marsh.

According to Mayor Thomas C. Jardim, the Town of Westfield works with other county municipalities to "hash out" what organizations would receive funds and how the funds would be appropriated.

The Westfield Neighborhood Council brought before town officials a tally of \$75,000 which would include the removal of an existing playground to enable the installation of a new playground and playground equipment.

The Westfield Community Center requested approximately \$20,000 to continue its Senior Citizens Recreational Program; \$11,775 for improvements to the center's building, including such projects as resurfacing of a gymnasium floor, replacement of a gymnasium door, sidewalk replacement, fence repair and ceiling tile repair for the center's computer room, plus \$3,000 for cultural enrichment trips for teenagers, and \$71,500 to develop architectural plans to build a new facility.

The Red Cross chapter asked for \$35,000 for projects including handicapped access to the building and roof repair.

Youth and Family Counseling

Service would like to make it's facility handicapped accessible, at a cost of approximately \$44,000.

Planner's Diversified of Summit, a consultant service, has proposed projects tallying \$115,000, including \$30,000 for a new facade for Central Avenue, "streetscape" improvements for South Avenue, Cacciola Place and Grove Street, \$12,000 for park restorations at Windsor Avenue and elsewhere, and \$3,000 for appraisal services.

Mr. Marsh proposed five projects on behalf of the town. These projects would include \$31,000 for building and resurfacing for Windsor Avenue; \$14,000 to complete roadway improvements on Livingston Street; \$15,000 for new plantings, walks, benches and installation of a handicapped ramp and rebuilding of a curve at Windsor Park; planting of approximately 80 out of 150 new trees earmarked for neighborhood streets by the Department of Public Works, and restorations for Americans With Disabilities Act compliance, for \$115,000, at Tamaques Park.

According to town officials, funding for proposed grants would not be made available until September of 1999.

Members of the governing body also approved the second and final reading of a proposed ordinance to establish a Housing Commission for Westfield.

According to former Councilman Kenneth MacRitchie, the commission would meet quarterly to "formulate inventories of housing in need of rehabilitation and would discuss which programs would be most suitable for each situation."

Small Business is Big Business at Fleet

Fleet Bank's Business Solution Centers
Of
Westfield & Mountainside
Cordially Invite the Business Community to

A Small Business Symposium

5:30-6:00 pm Cocktails and Hors d'Oeuvres
Door Prize Registration
(Golf Outing for Four at Knob Hill Golf Course, and more)

6:00-7:30 pm Featured Topics
*The State of the Economy and What it Means to You
*Year 2000-The Impact on Business
*Using the Internet to Grow Your Business

7:30-8:30 pm Cocktails & Hors d'Oeuvres
Coffee & Dessert Service

Thursday, November 5, 1998
The Westwood
438 North Avenue • Garwood, NJ

RSVP by November 2nd to Felice Nelson (908) 389-0756
This Event is Complimentary. Seating is Limited.



Thomas C. Jardim
Westfield Mayor
Democrat

Occupation - Attorney with Sills, Cummis in Newark specializing in corporate and employment law; Westfield Mayor

Education - B.A. from University of Richmond; J.D. from American University in Washington, D.C.; M.A. in Foreign Affairs from American University

Experience - Westfield Mayor one term; counsel to Greater Newark Business Development Consortium; Treasurer, Union County League of Municipalities

Platform - Efficiently-run government, road improvement, vital downtown, increased parking, parks and recreation



Norman N. Greco
Westfield Mayor
Independent

Occupation - President, Greco Services Industries

Education - Westfield High School graduate, lifelong Westfield resident

Experience - Town Councilman six years; former President, Westfield Chamber of Commerce

Platform - Business-oriented approach to town government, a town-wide referendum for public decision on parking deck, responsive government, efficient maintenance of parks and ball fields



Gail S. Vernick
Westfield Mayor
Republican

Occupation - Westfield Town Council

Education - B.A. - Human Resource Management; Registered Nurse

Experience - Council Liaison to Chamber of Commerce; Board of Health; Congressional Rail Coalition; Arts Commission; Parent-Teacher Organization member

Platform - Control property taxes; improve public safety; resolution of parking issues; efficient customer-focused municipal services



Jon M.

Bramnick

Republican First Ward Candidate for Westfield Town Council