

Friends of Track and Field Concerned on Kehler Timeline

By SARAH McGRILL
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Plans to start the Kehler Stadium renovation early next year will have an “incredibly disruptive effect” on track and field athletes, the Board of Education was told this week.

Jim McCutcheon, president of the Friends of Westfield Track, told board members that, because the start date was planned for early March, the intention was to bus around 200 members of Westfield High School track team to different tracks around Union County to do their training once they could no longer use the Kehler track.

“Why does the administration believe that adding an additional one to two hours to their day, with the incredibly disruptive effect it will have on their academic and athletic welfare, is the best option?” Mr. McCutcheon asked. “That’s one to two hours away from academic studies, extra-curricular activities and sleep.”

Mr. McCutcheon explained that a Westfield team taken by bus to Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School – one of the possible locations – would have to wait for the home high school to complete their own training before they could get started.

“That could be as late as 5-5:30,”

he said. “Westfield may not finish its practice until 7-7:30 and get home as late as 8 o’clock.”

Mr. McCutcheon also said the group was concerned about a significant reduction in the number of students participating in track and field because of the extra one or two hours required to participate.

He had already heard from the parents of students who planned to drop spring track and freshmen who may not join the program.

Mr. McCutcheon’s son, James, captain of the Westfield track team, was at the meeting along with a good number of track team parents.

Board members said they accepted the validity of Mr. McCutcheon’s arguments and already had plans to revisit the proposed construction dates in a meeting with Westfield High School (WHS) Principal Derrick Nelson and WHS Athletics Director Sandy Mamary later this week.

The original date for the work to begin on Kehler was May 8, 2018, but, after a lawsuit forced the board to delay the work until 2019, they decided to revise what would have been a tight schedule and to start work on March 1.

“We knew that the original date was an aggressive timeline,” Board President Gretchan Ohlig said. “And then, because of the lawsuit, we actually saw what the May to August timeline looked like in terms of the weather.”

“But there was no perfect way to extend the timeline at either end,” she said.

“Your concerns are legitimate but it is going to be a balancing act and not everybody is going to be happy,” board member Charles Ostroff told the track parents:

Another group of parents also at the meeting voiced their concern about a district issue.

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Susan M. Dougherty for The Westfield Leader
NEW RIDES FOR FESTIFALL...With the rides and blow-up attractions all in a new, separate area at the North Avenue lot of the Westfield train station, children are given more thrills this year at the annual FestiFall street fair on Sunday.

WPD Advises Residents to Lock Cars As Break-Ins Rise

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Mayor Shelley Brindle commented towards the end of Tuesday’s public governing body meeting that town residents should lock their vehicles. The town has had three cars stolen recently, bringing the total stolen vehicles this year to 19, she said. In addition, 104 vehicle burglaries have occurred this year.

“There is technology available to identify key fobs in a car...they know they are in there,” Mayor Brindle said. “Our absentmindedness creates an unfair burden on our police department.”

In each stolen vehicle incident, the vehicle had either a key fob or a key left inside the vehicle, Acting Police Chief Christopher Battiloro said. A majority of the vehicles were recovered in Essex County, he said. The thefts and burglaries mostly occur overnight, and he urged people to lock their cars, as each incident had shown no evidence of a forced entry.

“Never leave a key or key fob in the vehicle, lock and close garage doors...do not leave valuables in plain view or leave cash, credit or debit cards in the

vehicle...finally, with cold weather approaching, do not leave vehicles running unattended...prevent yourself from becoming a victim,” said the acting chief, who also was appointed as the emergency management coordinator.

An ordinance was passed that will allow microbreweries in certain areas and certain zone districts in the downtown.

Also, a new NJ Transit bus stop will be added at Saint Paul Street and North Avenue, on both the eastbound and westbound sides of North Avenue, a stop recommended by the New Jersey Department of Transportation after residents had proposed another stop.

The Gumbert Park ice rink is expected to be installed next month, Mayor Brindle announced. The new sidewalks navigating pedestrians to the ice rink location have been laid, she said. Garwood Councilwoman Sara Todisco was named as a rink liaison on behalf of the Garwood neighbors, Mayor Brindle said. The one pole that holds a basketball hoop had been missing for many years, and was not knocked down during recent rink area renovations, Town

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Fred T. Rossi for The Westfield Leader
BAND COMPETITION...The Cranford High School Marching Band was among 15 high school marching bands taking part in Saturday’s 20th Annual Marching Band Festival at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School.



Susan M. Dougherty for The Westfield Leader
SOUNDS OF FESTIFALL...A crowd gathers around the stage area set up in downtown Westfield to hear music entertainment that was provided throughout the day at the annual FestiFall street fair on Sunday.

Garwood Council Expresses Concerns Over Ice Rink

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD — Councilwomen Sara Todisco and Stephanie Bianco addressed the Gumbert Park temporary ice rink construction and its impact on the surrounding Garwood neighborhood at Tuesday’s borough council meeting.

Ms. Bianco stated that an official letter signed by Mayor Charles Lombardo and every council member should be sent to Westfield addressing the residents and borough council’s dissatisfaction with the ice rink. She said the letter must declare the rink should not be located permanently or at the sight for even next

winter.

“Garwood does not want to see this rink for more than one year,” Ms. Bianco said.

Ms. Bianco said the four months the rink is operating between November 1 to March 1 is “really six months,” when including the month required to install the rink and another month to take it down.

Mayor Lombardo, Councilwoman Jennifer Blumenstock and Councilwoman Todisco attended a Gumbert Park ice rink official walkthrough several weeks ago, stated Ms. Todisco. “Some issues have already arisen, such as the contractor beginning work before the ordinance permitted 8 a.m. start time,” Ms. Todisco said.

Ms. Todisco said Westfield’s Mayor Shelley Brindle wants to “alleviate” the Pointe residents concerns regarding the ice rink. As the project progresses, Mayor Brindle mentioned to Ms. Todisco she is supportive of Ms. Todisco acting as a liaison to Westfield’s leadership on the Pointe residents’ behalf and all Garwood residents behalf, stated Ms. Todisco.

Ms. Todisco said she was using the opportunity to reduce other concerns the Pointe residents have expressed. Such concerns include foul balls being hit towards their building from the Gumbert baseball field, stated Ms. Todisco.

“Residents are also concerned about the on-street parking on Chestnut Street,” Ms. Todisco said.

Ms. Todisco said she believes the

police department should “look into” restricting the parking down from two hours to possibly no parking when the rink is operating. She said police should strive to make parking restrictions to ensure rink visitors use the designated 48-spot parking lot next to the baseball field rather than on-street parking.

In other business, the council unanimously decided to table a resolution committing Garwood from condoning billboards similar to the one displayed on Morris Avenue in Union Township. The billboard “used hate-speech” towards President Donald Trump as asserted in the resolution. “Garwood prides itself on the borough’s diversity and does not promote hate speech of any kind,” stated the proposed resolution.

Resident Bill Nierstedt, a former councilman, said a billboard declaring Donald Trump an “idiot” using private property and private funding is not hate speech, but “political speech.”

Mr. Nierstedt stated that free speech, the right to assemble, and the right to criticize the President are rights afforded by the United States constitution.

Resident Bruce Paterson agreed that the line between hate speech and defamation is often a fine line decided upon by the United States Supreme Court on a case-by-case basis.

Councilman Marc Lazarow stated that he supports “hate speech” being

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DWC Reports on Pizza Run, Implements Policy Change

By DOMINIC A. LAGANO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — During its board of directors’ meeting Monday evening, the Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC) provided statistics on the annual Downtown Westfield 5K and Pizza Extravaganza and announced a policy change pertaining to its sponsors.

“The Pizza Run is a signature event which makes Westfield famous,” stated DWC Executive Director Sherry Cronin. “It was a great event,” she said of this year’s run, noting how it “builds community, resident and volunteer engagement.”

Held on July 25, the run had 2,107 registrants, of which 1,662 participated. Ms. Cronin attributed the lower than normal turnout to the rain showers that occurred immediately prior to the race.

More than 65 percent of the participants hailed from Union County, with over 40 percent being residents of Westfield. Seven states other than New Jersey were represented in the 5K: Connecticut, Florida, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Texas.

The board also announced a new policy for the Downtown Westfield 5K and Pizza Extravaganza pertaining to its sponsors.

“We have a number of sponsors (for the 5K),” stated Ms. Cronin. “We offer a 15-percent discount for anybody that’s in the Special Improvement District (SID – which the DWC administratively manages) to try to entice them to be a sponsor of the 5K, but this (event) appeals to people that are outside of Westfield and certainly want to share the market with us.”

“So, in that, we wanted to affirm basically our policy that, with regard to next year’s Pizza Run, for ensuring

that the board is on board with us basically saying that a competing sponsor cannot be located in the immediate vicinity of one of our existing stores or businesses in our downtown,” announced Ms. Cronin.

The new policy arose due to a situation at this year’s run when a competing business from a neighboring town had its sponsor booth placed adjacent to a Westfield business selling the same product.

“I think that’s right. If you go back to one of the primary missions of the DWC, it is about the benefit to our merchants,” stated Westfield Mayor Shelley Brindle. “I know there are some issues with downtown merchants in the first place just because of the Pizza Run and how it shuts down their businesses for a part of the day. So, it would also seem then to put a competitive business in front or adjacent to their store is an unnecessary aggravation. So, I think that policy is appropriate when you consider the mission of the DWC.”

A discussion ensued among the board members regarding what determines a competing sponsor and how to implement this policy.

Additionally during the meeting, the board approved grants for three businesses in the downtown area. The DWC provides grants to alleviate some of the costs of opening a new business or to alleviate the cost for an existing business that renovates its structure or signage.

Located at 137 Central Avenue, Westfield Dance Studio will install a new sign informing customers that the entrance to the studio is located at the rear of the building and cannot be accessed from Central Avenue. A grant was awarded to partially alleviate this expense.

Westfield Station Café, located at

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Paul Lachenauer for The Westfield Leader
FOR DOGS ONLY...Families gather to watch the Pooch Plunge on Sunday at the Cranford Centennial Avenue Pool. The event was organized by the Cranford Community Connection and the Township of Cranford Recreation and Parks Department.

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