

Westfield Gets Feedback on Parks and Rec. Master Plan

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — A second Parks and Recreation Master Plan open house feedback session was held at the Edison Intermediate School last Wednesday night. The forum was created to keep residents informed and receive feedback on Westfield's overall master plan themes such as parking, historic preservation, land use, and specifically the parks and recreation master plan portion, stated Councilman Mark LoGrippe.

Similar to the first parks and recreation meeting, residents were given "fake cash" to put towards one of eight ideas that evening, Councilman LoGrippe said. Proposed or possible

public-space, parks, and recreation projects include building new athletic fields, creating a new park, constructing bike-walking trails, upgrading existing parks and facilities, and upgrading Memorial Pool.

Other project ideas include developing a recreation center and constructing a community indoor pool.

Resident and former Westfield planning board member Pam Wiazak said "the allocating cash concept" is a "fun and interactive way" to collect resident feedback and data.

Councilman LoGrippe described himself as a "constant Westfield youth sports advocate."

"When the youth win, everyone wins," said Councilman LoGrippe.

Councilman LoGrippe said he believes more field space is needed for Westfield's soccer, lacrosse and P.A.L. leagues. More field space, excellent sports programs, "means increased property values" and desirability for Westfield residency, he added.

The Westfield Lacrosse Club's past president, Hugh McGuire, said he "has been advocating" for lacrosse field space for over ten years. He said 90 percent of the Westfield Lacrosse Club's games are "on the road."

With limited field space, the lacrosse club must "pay hefty amounts" to other municipalities to rent space, he said.

"If space was available, we would purchase more. The worst part is not only is field space costly, but it is very hard to come by," Mr. McGuire said.

Westfield Lacrosse Club board member Brian Taylor said "lacrosse is a spring sport." A spring sport means non-turf fields are "sensitive and temperamental to damage" during these months, Mr. Taylor said.

"We have a great working relationship with other sport clubs in town. However, you are talking in addition to reduced field space competition for space between clubs. Rightfully so for both organizations," Mr. Taylor said.

"I do not want to emphasize one organization over another," Mr. Taylor said, adding that he just wanted to emphasize how much "each organization needs the field space."

Mr. McGuire said "no field space" means young parents will opt for communities with field space such as Summit. The Westfield Lacrosse Club has 24 teams with over 800 children, stated Mr. McGuire. He said Westfield High School sent "at least 12 students to Division I schools" last year.

"I'm talking the boys' team only."

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Freeholders Adopt Budget; Taxes to Go Up \$6.3 Mil.

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

COUNTY -- The Union County Freeholder Board last Thursday adopted the 2019 county budget of \$490,197,756, with \$367,295,299 to be raised in taxes, an increase of \$6.3 million over last year.

According to a spreadsheet released by a county spokesman, homeowners in nine of the 21 municipalities in the county will see taxes either stay flat or decrease from last year.

Locally, Westfielders will pay an average county tax of \$3,928, an increase of \$31 over last year. Cranford taxpayers will pay \$2,613, up \$23 from 2018. The average homeowner in Scotch Plains will pay \$2,716, down \$8 with the average Fanwood resident paying \$2,351, down \$6. Mountainside residents will pay \$3,113, down \$55, with Garwood homeowners paying \$2,079, down \$3.

Summit residents will pay \$4,935, down \$32. Taxes also will drop slightly in Clark, New Providence, Plainfield and Winfield. Berkeley Heights, Elizabeth, Hillside, Kenilworth, Linden, Rahway, Roselle Park, Springfield and Union will see increases.

The amounts to be raised are as follows: Westfield, \$40,813,766; Scotch Plains, \$22,034,059; Fanwood, \$6,323,653; Garwood, \$3,738,803; Mountainside, \$9,101,194; Cranford, \$23,630,733; and Summit, \$37,153,311.

In addition, an open tax totaling \$10,950,230 also is collected as follows: Cranford, \$703,568; Fanwood, \$187,815; Garwood, \$111,108; Mountainside, \$271,895; Scotch Plains, \$655,345; Westfield, \$1,216,046; and Summit, \$1,105,257.

"The overall result (from this year's county budget) is a tax increase of



PLAY PLAY!...Elected officials throw out the first ball Saturday following the annual Westfield Baseball League Parade enroute to Gumbert Field.

Cranford Board of Ed. Adopts 2019-2020 School Budget

By ROBYN ORR-GIOFFRE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD — A presentation given by Cranford Superintendent of Schools, Scott Rubin, Ed.D. and the Business Administrator Robert Carfagno proposed a final draft of the 2019-2020 school budget during Monday night's board of education (BOE) meeting.

Mr. Carfagno told the board "there have been no cuts and have been no reductions."

The \$68,522,849 budget, which was passed Monday night, is a more than 1 percent increase from last

year. The increase on the average Cranford taxpayer will be \$167.16. The amount to be raised in school taxes is \$66,507,830. The debt service payment is \$859,235.

Mr. Carfagno described the process of developing the budget as "a year-round process," and further commented that involved parties are "talking about it, thinking about it year round."

The proposed budget falls into two categories; non-discretionary items and budgetary items under local control.

Non-discretionary items include salaries and benefits, which account for 83 percent of the budget, out-of-district tuition costs, accounting for 5 percent, transportation costs, accounting for 3 percent, energy costs, accounting for 1 percent, student related/extraordinary services, accounting for 1 percent and liability insurance, accounting for 1 percent of the budget.

Some of the budgetary items under local control, some with partial discretion, include technology and textbooks, professional development, equipment, building maintenance, extra-curricular programs, staffing and classroom instructional supplies.

The budget will also include curriculum enhancement, technology advancement and upgrades in security and health and wellness enhancement.

In other board business, the BOE accepted resignations due to retirement for Michele Fazio, Lori Moonan, Pam Monteagudo, Carol Westlund, Elaine Traynor, Robin Melleno, Susan Fitzmaurice, June Molloy, Andrea Ohlandt and Cynthia Brennan.

Additionally, the BOE accepted the resignation of Marc Edery, principal of Orange Avenue School. Mr. Edery has been principal of the school since the fall of 2015, after coming over from the Marlboro, NJ School District.

Cranford High School Senior, Bridget Dineen was recognized by the board for winning the National Award for Good Citizenship through the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR).

Additionally, Catarina Guimaraes, a para-athlete from Cranford High School was given accolades for her numerous athletic accomplishments.

The board accepted a donation from the Cranford Public Schools Friends of the Performing Arts in the amount of \$2,322 to be used towards the purchase of a conductor's podium and an orchestra rack for the Cranford High School Performing Arts Department.

The week of May 12 through May 18, 2019 has been declared by the board as Special Education Week.

The next regularly scheduled board meeting is Monday, May 13.



TEAMSPIRIT...The annual Westfield Baseball League Parade marches through the streets of Westfield enroute to Gumbert Field.



FUTURE POLICE OFFICER...This youngster tries on a helmet while sitting on a police motorcycle during Saturday's Westfield Police Department Autism Family Day.

New Fire Truck Would Cost Garwood \$1.3 Mil.

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD — Fire Chief Allan Tweedle and Assistant Chief John Scalzadonna discussed the Fire Department's proposed purchase of a new \$1.3 million ladder truck at a town hall-style meeting on Monday at Lincoln School.

Chief Tweedle said Garwood is the only municipality in Union County aside from Winfield that does not have a ladder truck. Councilman Richard McCormack, the fire committee chairman who moderated the event with Mayor Sara Todisco, had told the borough council earlier this year that the fire department had been requesting a new truck for more than 10 years and that after a review of how a new truck would provide "enhanced safety to residents," he had asked the governing body to consider the purchase.

The fire department's existing ground ladder cannot reach 20 buildings on the north side of town, Chief Tweedle said, including ones housing 27 businesses and 130 residential units as well as Lincoln School, 72 senior-housing residential units, and

a church. He said the south side of town has 18 buildings that are inaccessible using the department's current ground ladder, including buildings housing 21 businesses, 43 residential units and two churches.

A new ladder truck's aerial platform will enable firefighters to access building roofs, vent pitched roofs, attach hoses to the platform to fight the fire and access more area from a single position, Chief Tweedle explained. He said the ladder truck offers a 100-foot reach compared to the ground ladder's 40-foot reach.

The 40-foot reach is calculated when the ladder is directed upright, Chief Tweedle said. When considering a ladder is not utilized "directly upright," the ladder's functional reach is less.

He said an aerial platform — which he called a "stable platform to work from" — also allows firefighters to "spray down into a fire" with a master stream spraying 1,500 gallons per minute.

Mayor Todisco said the ladder truck is not an expenditure purchase only

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AUTISMAWARENESS...Westfield Police Chief Christopher Battiloro gives away autism awareness badges at during Saturday's first ever Westfield Police Department Autism Family Day.

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