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ONE DOLLAR

Decision on Gumbert Ice Rink Put Off Until June by Rec. Panel

By FRED T. ROSSI
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — After listening to several dozen residents offering opposing views on whether to keep the winter ice rink at Gumbert Park for another year, a split recreation commission voted Monday to delay a final decision until June.

The commission listened to comments from 32 residents — mostly from Westfield but a few from Garwood — for nearly two hours at its meeting, with the audience of nearly 200 split between student skaters and their parents who favored keeping the rink and homeowners living near the park who decried it as disruptive and better suited for another location. During the past winter, the town had partnered with Union Sports Arena to install and operate the rink, which offered a venue for

local student hockey players and skaters.

Ken Anderson, the owner of Union Sports Arena, spoke about the recently-completed first season and his plans for the coming year. He said the maiden run “wasn’t as good as we hoped,” noting that he had lost about \$300,000. But he said he was confident that, with increased revenues and some cost cutting, the rink would break even next year. About 22,000 individual visits to the rink were recorded during the four months of operation, with half being Westfield residents. The facility, which was situated on Gumbert Park’s basketball courts, hosted more than 800 hours of programming, Mr. Anderson said, and employed 26 Westfield students.

Mr. Anderson said he had looked at other locations for the rink, including

Memorial Park and Tamaques Park, but issues related to the costs of readying the sites left Gumbert Park as the “only practical alternative.” He told the commission that he is planning various changes for next year, including better customer flow, aesthetic improvements, more soundproofing and better fence screening, larger changing rooms, expanded skate times for adults and children and food concessions. He added that he wants to contribute \$30,000 to the town to be used for site improvements, offsetting the cost of crossing guards and public works personnel and making aesthetic improvements.

When Mr. Anderson finished his presentation, half of the room — those favoring the rink — burst into loud and boisterous applause, while the other half remained silent. During the two hours of public comment that followed, supporters of keeping the rink at Gumbert Park for another year pointed to the positive impact they said it had on children and student athletes. Jennifer Principato, a Scotch Plains Avenue resident, said the rink “really brought the community together” and called it “a wonderful experience.” A Stanley Oval resident called the rink “a wonderful opportunity for all the children.”

Several students among the several dozen students in attendance also spoke in favor of keeping the rink, with one describing the “positive impact” she felt from teaching young children how to ice skate. Other student hockey players and their parents pointed to the rink’s proximity to town and told of the travel time saved from having a rink in Westfield versus having to drive to rinks located elsewhere.

Chris Forno, president of the Westfield Hockey Club, backed the rink and recalled how he enjoyed watching the hockey games, as well as watching students teaching youngsters

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



FREE SEEDLINGS...The Westfield Green Team gives away seedlings from the Tree Recovery Campaign at Saturday’s Earth Day event at the Westfield Train Station parking lot on South Avenue.

BOE Honors Carissimo On Receiving Philhower Award

By JENNIFER GLACKIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Tuesday’s Westfield Board of Education meeting, held at Jefferson Elementary School, buzzed with excitement for fourth-grade teacher Anna Carissimo, who received the 27th annual Westfield Rotary Club Charles Philhower Fellowship Award. Board member Gretchen Ohlig, whose children were previously in Mrs. Carissimo’s class, presented the teacher with the resolution.

Superintendent of Schools Margaret Dolan, Ed.D., declared this meeting “absolutely our favorite of every year.” The Charles Philhower Fellowship Award recognizes an “outstanding teacher at the elementary-school level.” Recipients are chosen based on recommendations by current and former students, parents and colleagues. Mrs. Carissimo has taught at Jefferson for 19 years, is the safety patrol supervisor, spearheaded planning of the after-school STEAM program, and has a passion for science and technology.

Recently, Mrs. Carissimo wrote a PTO mini-grant for the fourth grade to acquire snap circuit sets to enhance their science unit on energy.

Mrs. Carissimo’s positive attitude and tireless dedication to her students and the Jefferson school community were echoed by parents, students and colleagues, using words such as “going above and beyond,” “deserving,” and “the best teacher.”

Susie Hung, Ed.D., principal of Jefferson Elementary, said Mrs. Carissimo has taught more than 400 students since she began teaching in September of 2000, noting that she is intuitive and “motivates and encourages her students to work hard and always do their best.”

Colleagues Tania Bizink and Patricia Merlo said Mrs. Carissimo “undoubtedly is the face, heart, and future of Jefferson.”

Parent Cindy Linsen, whose children had Mrs. Carissimo for four years, stated, “she shines as bright as the sun” and “recognizes the value of teachable moments.”

Students dressed their best to honor their beloved teacher with a special song and personal stories. They said she encourages them to “stay positive” and to see any struggles as part of their journey.

Mrs. Carissimo declared it was “truly an honor to be recognized in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



PHILHOWER AWARD WINNER...Jefferson Elementary School teacher and Charles Philhower Fellowship Award winner Anna Carissimo poses with her class and Jefferson Principal Susie Hung, Ed.D.

7-Eleven to Close Overnight; Capital Budget Introduced

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Beginning Saturday, June 1, the 7-Eleven convenience store on Central Avenue is to close to customers between 1 and 5 a.m., Councilwoman Dawn Mackey said during Tuesday night’s meeting of the governing body. The change in the establishment’s operating hours will be on a six-month trial basis, she said. This shift comes on the heels of three incidences at the property, two of which were armed, and one which appeared to be armed, that had occurred within a six-month time period and all during overnight hours, Councilwoman Mackey said.

“We are pleased they chose to listen to the concerns of the immediate neighborhood,” Ms. Mackey said.

Additionally during this meeting, the town council introduced the capital budget with a 7-to-1 vote. Councilwoman Jo Ann Neylan voted against approval of the \$4.76-million capital bond ordinance. The bond ordinance includes the purchase of new vehicles for recreation and police departments, road paving and allocates funds for the renovation to the coffee kiosk at the South Avenue train station, improvements to the Quimby Street alleyway to Municipal Parking Lot 7 and more pedestrian walkway beacons. Town Administrator Jim Gildea said.

The annual capital ordinance “is a larger number...because we are doing more road paving,” said Mr. Gildea. The town will be spending more money on road paving than it has historically because the town has negotiated with Elizabethtown Gas (EG) to pave curb to curb on roads EG is opening for gas line work. “They have never done this with another municipality where it had a negotiation where it resulted in curb to curb full length paving,” Mr. Gildea said. “It’s a major win-

win (for Westfield).”

At total of 90 roads, equating to about 20 miles of roads, are to be paved this year, Mr. Gildea said. Over eight miles of roads are to be paved this year through funds from the capital ordinance, historically it’s been about six miles of roads in a year, Mr. Gildea said. Rahway Avenue paving is to be close to fully offset by grant funding, Mr. Gildea said. Part of the negotiations with EG was to not have EG pave Rahway Avenue after its work was performed, and instead reallocate the funds EG would have spent on that road to other roads in the town, Mr. Gildea said. Elizabethtown Gas will be paving 10 miles of road, Mr. Gildea said.

A list of roads will be included on the town website. Chris Roth, the town’s new engineering inspector, was present at the meeting and he will be assisting in the responsibilities of inspections during the paving process, Mr. Gildea said. Also, the council voted on an ordinance to appropriate \$1 million in capital funds to purchase vehicles for the Department of Public Works. There will be no bond or debt service for this purchase, as it was included in the town budget, Mr. Gildea said. An additional cost of \$19,000 to the contract for improvements to the Memorial Pool has been granted, bringing the total cost for improvements to \$117,600. The change order was for some site conditions, Mr. Gildea said. “(the change order) has to do with primarily PSE&G providing electric service to the building,” Town Engineer Kris McAloon said, “which we hope to be energized and fully operational by the end of this week.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS...Girl Scout Leader of Troop 40925 Erica Link, in red, helps her daughter, Jackie Link, and fellow Girl Scout member Allison Collins, pictured right, assemble their cardboard box shelter on the night of April 27. The girls participated in Box City at The Presbyterian Church in Westfield as part of their community service for their Girl Scout Silver Awards.

Planning Board OKs First Microbrewery In Westfield

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — The planning board on Monday night approved a microbrewery for 515-523 South Avenue West in Westfield. The applicant plans on renovating the building.

Westfield residents and brewery owners Corinne and Tim Grant of Lions Roar Brewing Company said they will operate the facility as a “destination for family and friends.” Ms. Grant said the microbrewery trend is “growing in popularity or underway” throughout the

United States, with Lions Roar to be the first microbrewery in Westfield.

She said the microbrewery experience is not solely about drinking or serving alcohol. Lions Roar is planning theme nights, brewery tours, and a beer-taste explanation for first-time palates.

New Jersey law prohibits microbreweries from serving their first drink before an initial facility tour is given to each customer, stated Ms. Grant. Lions Roar will only serve its crafted beers, stated Ms. Grant.

“What we produce, we’re keeping for our customers at our location. We want to become a destination,” said Ms. Grant, responding to a board inquiry on whether Lions Roar beer will be served at other Westfield establishments or establishments throughout New Jersey.

She explained that microbreweries are prohibited from selling food on their premises, noting that the culture is people bring their own food or order food through UberEat-type services and traditional delivery.

Ms. Grant said because no food will be served on the premises, the business is mutually beneficial to surrounding food establishments.

The applicant’s attorney, Andrew Kohut, said microbreweries create “a synergy or partnership which benefits surrounding eateries.”

The microbrewery will operate with a “3” barrel production method versus the bigger breweries where “people picture big metal reserves (containers),”

stated Ms. Grant.

Most weekday evenings after work would serve as the “peak hour” for the commuter customer, stated Ms. Grant.

Commuters looking to spend some time “waiting for a train or relaxing after work” will stop by for a drink, Ms. Grant explained. Weekend business will be comprised of family clientele, hobby beer tasters, and group parties or events.

A common practice for IPA (microbrewery beers) enthusiasts is to travel to different breweries throughout a region or state, stated Ms. Grant.

A Westfield ordinance requires 36 parking spaces while the applicant proposed zero parking spaces, stated Mr. Kohut. The applicant’s engineer, Matthew J. Seckler, said the board must consider the previous businesses’ parking deficits or “parking needs” were more demanding (pre-existing) with the zero parking provided.

Mr. Seckler said the “nature of the business” accounts “peak parking demand” at times when the surrounding area or business will not be at their peak demand.

He said an evening-centric establishment means more businesses will be winding down their operations or will have experienced their peak customer demand earlier in the day. Mr. Seckler said the establishment will not tolerate intoxicated drivers, noting that customers will use cabs and Uber-type services.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



BOOKWORMS...Book enthusiasts check out the large selection of offerings at the annual Westfield Memorial Library book sale, sponsored by the Friends of the Westfield Memorial Library, which was held May 1 to 4.

PAGE INDEX

Regional	2-3	Education	8-9, 24
Editorial	4-5, 22-23	Sports	13-21
Police	23	Real Estate	13-20
Community ...	6-7, 10-11	Classifieds	21
Obituary	10	A&E	24-26



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