

## Tracts of South Ave. East Eyed As Possible Redevelopment Area

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — The town council Tuesday passed a resolution to recommend to the planning board to investigate whether to designate a strip on South Avenue as a non-condemnation redevelopment area. The properties to be investigated would be the following based on the block and lot information provided in the resolution:

418 South Avenue East owned by Westfield Crossing LLC, 421-429 South Avenue owned by Westfield Crossing LLC, 448 South Avenue East owned by Westfield Crossing

LLC (identified on Google maps as Sevell's Auto), 445-449 South Avenue owned by TerraTherm on Google maps), 338 Windsor Avenue owned by Westfield Crossing LLC (shown as Sevell's Auto Body on Google maps.)

Town planner Don Sammet would conduct the investigation, which could take until about December, Town Administrator Jim Gildea said.

In other business, during the workshop meeting, Councilwoman Dawn Mackey said the town is to address rising floodwaters. "We can't deny seeing more and more of that with the

building," Ms. Mackey said.

The results of a leaf-collection survey showed 545 residents responded, Councilman David Contract said. Of the respondents, 53 percent were extremely satisfied with leaf collection, while 40 percent were not satisfied, Mr. Contract said.

He has recommended creating a leaf collection committee to study how to collect leaves in town. "We need to figure out a better way in Westfield," Mr. Contract stated. Currently, the town offers street side pickup of leaf piles that are to be put out on the street within one week of being collected.

Mayor Shelley Brindle suggested that the town possibly hire extra leaf-collection staff during heavier leaf-collection periods.

In regards to recycling, the town's conservation center collected more than 500 pounds of plastic bags, which earned the municipality a free park bench from Trex Company, Councilman Contract said. "Bring it clean and dry and it can be recycled," Mr. Contract said. Mayor Brindle suggested placing the bench in the Mindowaskin Park playground. The bench has a back on it, unlike the new benches which are designed backless to be handicapped accessible. The mayor said she had heard from some nursing moms and seniors who said they would prefer a bench with a back.

Also, starting next year, the town will only sell permits to the conservation center online.

With school starting this week, school crossing guards have been attending training through the new company contracted to supply the guards to the town. "They still have a few spots to fill," Mr. Gildea said, further commenting that about three or four guards are needed. Of the guards who had been hired by the town previously

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Paul Lachenaier for The Westfield Leader

HBO COMES TO CRANFORD...Vintage automobiles were in downtown Cranford Thursday afternoon to be used in the filming of HBO's "The Plot Against America" starring John Turturro and Winona Ryder.

## New Super. Excited About Joining Mountainside

By KATE BROWNE  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

MOUNTAINSIDE — Janet Walling, the new superintendent of the Mountainside School District, is looking forward to beginning the school year and is grateful for the warm welcome and support that the board, staff and parents have provided over the past two months.

During a recent interview, Mrs. Walling explained that she was attracted to Mountainside because of its reputation as a close-knit community, which supports and values its public schools. She noted it is a district with an effective board of education, strong parental involvement and a highly engaged staff. Mrs. Walling expressed her appreciation for the administrators, staff, and custodians who have worked tirelessly over the summer to prepare for the start of the school year at Beechwood and Deerfield Elementary Schools and is looking forward to working with Berkeley Heights and other local districts as the school year begins.

Mrs. Walling comes to Mountainside from the Atlantic Highlands

School District in Monmouth County, where she worked for 31 years. She began as a special-education teacher, worked in regular education and gained extensive experience in management and administration by serving as interim supervisor for both curriculum and special education. Mrs. Walling also served as principal of the Atlantic Highlands Elementary School, which served students from pre-kindergarten to sixth grade, for more than a decade.

Mrs. Walling's goals align with Mountainside's mission of providing students with the opportunities, experiences, and support needed in order to become strong independent learners. She envisions broadening professional development opportunities for staff; continuing the use of solid instructional practices; and extending the implementation of social and emotional learning strategies, as well as data driven insights to support the needs of what she termed the "whole learner." She said the district promotes a collaborative learning environment, infusing critical thinking, technology

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Christina M. Hinke for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD RETURNS TO 40's...HBO has chosen Downtown Cranford for a filming location for their upcoming miniseries, "The Plot Against America." It is based on a Phillip Roth novel and is set in the 1940's. Storefronts, traffic signs and meters were made to look from the period. The traffic lines on the roads were blacked out and old-time cars were lining the streets. Lots of people came out Thursday night to take pictures. Filming was to take place Thursday and Friday overnight.

## Westfield's Full-Day Kinder Plans for \$12 Mil. Expansion

By JENNIFER GLACKIN  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — The board of education approved the next step for bringing full-day kindergarten to the district at its August 27 meeting. The preliminary building expansion plan presented at the meeting will be sent to the New Jersey Department of Education as an application for approval.

As previously reported in *The Westfield Leader*, current buildings do not provide enough space for a full-day kindergarten program; Jefferson Elementary School and Washington Elementary School were chosen for expansion.

The proposed additions to Jefferson and Washington schools, as well as the previously upgraded Lincoln Early Childhood Center, will house the estimated 420 to 440 students for full-day kindergarten.

Architect George Duthie, of Fraytak, Veisz, Hopkins, Duthie, P.C., presented the project, including building plans, estimated costs and timeline.

According to Mr. Duthie, each school



Susan M. Dougherty for The Westfield Leader

ELVIS IN THE HOUSE...At the St. Bartholomew/UNICO Italian Festival in Scotch Plains over the Labor Day weekend, Elvis (Mark Reno), backed up by Bill Turner and Blue Smoke Band, serenades the crowds on Saturday night. The pleasant weather contributed to the fun.

## New Principals, Security Changes Greet Pupils in New School Year

By PAUL J. PEYTON  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — The school year in Westfield has brought leadership changes with new principals at Westfield High School and Roosevelt Intermediate School as well as 26 new teachers.

Brian Gechtman of Scotch Plains is the new principal of Roosevelt Intermediate School (RIS). He succeeds Mary Asfendis, who is now principal of Westfield High School (WHS). In addition, Keith Brunson, previously dean of 11th-grade students at Piscataway

High School, is the new assistant principal at Roosevelt, filling the vacancy left when Mr. Gechtman was promoted.

"They are working well and are eager to have the staff arrive (on September 3) and then they are eager for the students to arrive [today]," Superintendent of Schools Margaret Dolan, Ed.D., said during an interview with *The Westfield Leader* on Thursday.

Superintendent Dolan said the main focus of the summer by school officials was security.

"We truly are fortunate that we have the Westfield Police Department, who has worked for years and continues to do so, as well as training from the New Jersey Department of Education on security, (which includes) up-to-date training on best practices (for school security)," she said.

In addition, the Union County Prosecutor's Office offers programs for school administrators.

"They (law enforcement) are the experts in security and we really appreciate their efforts in working with us, answering our questions and making recommendations for the best way for us to secure our schools," she said.

The superintendent said this is not

only important during the school day, but after hours when various community groups are using the schools. "So that was an area of focus," she said.

Security changes were presented at the August 27 board of education meeting. She said following the board meeting she sent an email to all staff and parents announcing the security changes. School principals also have been sending out letters to parents.

A welcome video to parents includes security changes.

She said all staff have tags that they wear, which provide admittance to school buildings. Superintendent Dolan said access is "very specific," meaning a teacher only has access to the school building he or she teaches in during "specified hours and days of the year." Access is revoked once a staffer is no longer employed by the district.

Staff have been trained in lockdown situations, as evidenced last spring at Tamaques Elementary School after school hours when a man with a gun showed up to see his ex-girlfriend who is a teacher at the school. Superintendent Dolan said all school buildings also have panic buttons and staff can

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SPORTS -- Scotch Plains-Fanwood Football Preseason with scrimmage game; Westfield/Cranford Football scrimmage; Westfield Devilfish Season Wrapup.

Town News -- Westfield Mayor Shelley Brindle's Opening Remarks from the September 3 Town Council meeting.

~See goleader.com~



Courtesy of the Westfield Board of Education

BACK TO SCHOOL...Westfield Leader Assignment Editor Paul Peyton interviews Superintendent of Schools Margaret Dolan, Ed.D., last Thursday concerning the new school year.

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600 North Avenue West  
Westfield, NJ 07090  
908.233.0065  
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