

# 5 Years.... and The Dividend Issue

**---Garwood's \*Independent\* T.R.E.E---**

## ***The Roaming Eye & Ear***

A Quarterly Observance compliments of the TOT Group (Tee'd Off Taxpayers)

Vol: 5 Issue: 4 Date: July/ Sept, 3rd Quarter, 2008

Phone # 908-654-1392 Email: araceengineering@aol.com

Yearly donation \$10 Editor: Bruce Paterson 325 Willow ave Garwood, NJ 07027

Page 1

**MISSION STATEMENT:** Garwood can be broken down into 3 major dynamics. Each should be reported on. The government has their newsletter; the school board has their missive. That makes the TREE the de facto voice of the people. The other 2 are dry with facts and figures. What the others don't cover, the TREE is there, covering public response and concerns or what the public is saying at various meetings. Or just the opinion of the residents sitting on the "stoop". And the TREE is there to point out and clarify- WHEN THE OTHER 2 HAVE NOT GIVEN IT THEIR BEST EFFORTS. Remember: **The residents of this great boro come first! So why does it always seem to be the taxpayers versus the government???** Anyone is welcome to speak his or her mind in the TREE, as long as it is printable. Hope you enjoy the info. Donations can be mailed to above address for a year of the TREE. Thanks, The Editor.

Please note that the monies collected for the TREE remains with this newsletter and is not donated to any campaign.

### **5 years (I think you celebrate it with abalone)**

- \* *Surprise! We just finished our fifth year of this "renegade" newsletter, which centers on our Garwood Universe. We want to thank those faithful subscribers from year one and those who joined in along our journey. In particular we thank those many residents and even the elected officials that took us into their confidence to give us information or explain sides of issues to us. We thank those that had the passion to speak their concerns at the various government meetings, because without them our newsletter would have been still-born. After all the masthead says there is a dynamic of administration and the people are part of it. This isn't going to be a flashback Seinfeld anniversary show but we would like to quickly note a couple items of importance during these past 5 years and how the residents were able to achieve them. Despite Garwood being such a small town, it has been amazing that there are many, many issues and concerns that gave rise to the peoples' voice and opinions and the TREE helped to share them. At times we were reporting, and at times we were part of the catalyst.*

**A more open government:** Back in ye olde days of 2000-2003, so many people were complaining that they knew nothing of what was going on in the boro. The newspapers had minimal coverage since Garwood is so small. Everything came as either a shock or a surprise. Since government was not proactive, you had to pry any information out of them or take the time out of our busy lives to attend meetings and ask questions. We decided to bring the information that we've seen, asked or heard around town to you via this newsletter. It is odd that there are those that hate this newsletter for doing this, bringing the people, info and their opinions together. There are those that even go out of their way and still do to try to stop the distribution of the TREE. As a merchant once said when someone told them they should not distribute this newsletter, "Why would you be afraid of the truth?". She is from central America and understands oppression. We can only assume that "they" are getting something out of keeping the other residents in the dark. A defining achievement happened when the boro, with this editors prodding, actually came out with Garwood's bi-annual newsletter, "Just the Facts".

**The people are involved in their future:** The residents in seeing that activism is a positive thing become enabled to take on issues dear to them. You can't always depend on the government to make the right moves because even the government has agendas. In a perfect world the government would be true to serving the people first, but all of you have heard the term "NJ politics" and how it now affects us adversely. The people now speak more than ever, backed by information some possibly shared through the TREE. Some issues where the people have spoken were the proposal of a gas station on North avenue and the development of the St Anne's property with dense housing. This was democracy in action as people expressed their sentiments.

---

It is a fortunate time that TREE appeared in September 2003 to chronicle the tough financial times that our residents face. Through the county, boro and school district we have been subjected to huge tax increases in this period. From the days of 2002 when taxes started to spike to the present proposed budgets our total property taxes went up 48%! At least now, by way of this TREE, the residents understand the reasons for this increase, some justified, others questionable but all expensive.

- \* **EXTRA! EXTRA!** This edition we also call the "Dividend and Realignment Issue". To all the subscribers who are paid up to date, we are enclosing a dividend check for you. In the 5 years, we slowly accrued unspent funds over and above our printing and mailing costs. These dividends we are sharing with you. We are also thinking of how to handle the next 5 years of the TREE so we are planning to realign all subscriptions to start with the December/January edition. More will be discussed in the September/October issue. This newsletter has always been about you so you deserve it. Thanks for the support! The Editor.

## **The Municipal Council:**

[www.garwood.org](http://www.garwood.org)

- \* **Place to place transfers:** The council meeting of June 13 was also an ABC meeting (Alcoholic Beverage Commission). 2 eating and drinking establishments came before the board asking if they can serve alcohol outside, similar to Bensi's. Rosie's bar located at the MEWs and The Station on South and Center had pled their case and the council allowed them. Since these are more a drinking type establishment the council allowed that the patrons can sit and drink outside without having to eat food. All they need is to be offered food not order food. One stipulation on The Station was during the hour of 2:45 to 3:45pm the patrons have to go inside because Center street is the main walkway of the children leaving Lincoln school and going home to the South side.
- \* The boro is studying the **cost impact of decreasing the number of bulk picks** from 5 last year to 3 times this year. So far the decreased pick ups added \$2,000 more in overtime since there is more bulk to pick up at one time. Unfortunately, the town had decreased the number of seasonal workers, for savings to offset spiraling property tax, so that means there will be even more overtime demanded from the higher paid DPW workers. At least we are saving on the round trip for our trash trucks since last year our bulk went to Hackensack but this year we are taking it to the transfer station in Linden.
- \* One initiative noted in the mayor's state of the boro address was **Garwood to become "eco friendly"**. That responsibility has fallen on councilman Sytko's shoulders. Presently, he is reviewing costs to put solar panels on the boro hall roof and is interfacing with the BOE to see if they want to share in solar panel costs for their end. He is also planning for efficiency analysis of the boro buildings to see where energy costs savings can occur.
- \* **The password is \$520:** In May, the council introduced the municipal budget for public comment. The first question from a resident was the simple query: What is the tax impact on the average home? No one from the council on up to the mayor said a word, they couldn't answer it. The resident had to walk them through the numbers and one councilman then did the math by hand. The finance commissioner 2 weeks later apologized and noted that she was ill and wasn't thinking clearly. *And they are in control of our \$7 million?*

**The Municipal council:-continued-**

- § As the council struggles with the **unwieldy tax impact** of initially \$520 per household (*this is just the municipal end of it*) a few items came up to ameliorate it, some that they initiated, some from the state: The state reinstated some but not all of the state aid that they took away. We are being penalized only by a 25% reduction now. In addition the mayor and council has decreased their stipends, reduced costs of seasonal laborers, set aside fewer funds to cover uncollected property taxes and increased the revenue stream from the library and sewerage charges. These affects will bring the boro end down to \$378 average per household. (Which, including the county and school tax impact of \$230, now total about \$610 on average.). Councilwoman Villagio stated that without the increased pension impacts and state aid reductions taxes would have been \$128 average.
- § Regarding above paragraph: Two items come to light. It was the suggestion from councilman Sytko that the mayor and council should feel the pain also and recommended **the council get a reduced stipend** of \$1,000/year in lieu of \$2000. The finance committee compromised and reduced their own stipends to \$1,500/year. This \$1500 figure is interesting in that they would still remain in the state pension program getting pension credits. And since this is the tenth year for pension credits, some of the council people and the mayor are now 100% vested in the pension system (*Its nice they are still thinking of themselves to a degree but at least it was something. We thank councilman Sytko, who campaigned on being a fiscal conservative.*) Note that Fanwood council doesn't get any stipend and Cranford gets \$1000. The other item is councilwoman Villagio's **statement about what the taxes would be** if not for aid reduction impacts. That's all and well in theory but I don't remember them campaigning and crowing back in the years 2001 to 2004 using the platform of how they are keeping the taxes low due to them allowing to stiff the state pension program of the boro workers and police. They took full credit without clueing in the residents on that charade. Therefore, her statement about "low taxes if" doesn't hold water. (*Now you know why the TREE holds them accountable these days for what we are now going through. Their taking advantage of a system of multi-years under funding that created this problem in the first place. They should have at least been honest with the taxpayers back then and even put some \$ in reserve.*)
- \* June 24 council meeting- the day **GW council hit the "nadir of nastiness"**,  
 The issues: 1) The owners of a Travel agency on Center street approached the council and noted that their parking lot is crumbling into the brook due to the town's gabions are lower than the grade of their lot and asked if they can do something to prevent the crumbling. The council said they can't help them, but suggested the owners put curbing in if the owners feel something needs to be done. When they asked who owns the brook, the boro attorney sarcastically said, who knows? The travel agency people then said, "we can see we're getting nowhere here" and up and left. 2) A resident stood up and said she got 2 summonses to go to court for not having dog licenses. She stated she didn't have dogs since Feb, 2007 last year. The council said she "got a notification" about inquiring if she had dogs. (Note they did not phrase it that they "sent" the notification but automatically assumed that she "got" the notification). She said she never "got" the notification and then suddenly received 2 summonses made out to one old address but mailed to her new different address. The council said she now has to go to court to prove that she doesn't have the dogs. How does one prove you don't have something? 3) In discussing the possible paving of East street in front of Washington school a resident asked them to consider putting into the pavement some sort of deterrent to stop all the speeding since many parents are complaining about the speeders with their children around school. The police chief said he only received 1 complaint and has set up radar enforcement. The council dismissed that anything can be done to the pavement, but said maybe paint lines. Just stop gap and tepid measures will be taken on this speedway. 4) Town Yard sale- a resident spoke and said that there was no advertising in the Suburban News, so the turnout was very bad; one person made under \$10. This resident suggested a second yard sale with advertising could easily be done. The council said it won't happen. GW only has it once a year and that the sellers should save their wares to sell for next year. When the dust settled, the final score was: Government--4, residents--0.

### **The Municipal council:-continued-**

- \* Councilwoman Villagio stated that NJ legislators are looking at **towns to require a qualified purchasing agent**. This will either mean more personnel being hired or an existing worker will have to take special courses. The boro is planning to ask for a 5 year exemption since this will of course entail more taxes spent on something we don't need.
- \* **Mayor's Saturday**-this is held at boro hall at 10am the second Saturday of each month except July and August. This is a great venue for discussing any boro concerns with the mayor in the privacy of his boro office in lieu of the public forum section of the council meeting. Or if you haven't met the mayor just come down and say hello. He is there for you

### **The Planning/Zoning Board:**

- \* The MEWs developer attorney came in front of the planning board and requested that the age restriction on 20% of the town houses be dropped **from 55 to 50 years old**. All other covenants set by the redevelopment plan remain in effect, especially the one about the townhouses excluding children or only allow them to visit for a short time. The board voted to agree. The resolution then went before the council for their vote and voted in agreement also. However, to keep the residents in the loop, the MEWs Association which is comprised of all the residents of the MEWs has the final vote and this has to be a 67% plurality to go into affect. *Why would the town so easily rescind its redevelopment covenants that they worked hard to create? Is it just so the "connected" realtor can sell the townhouses faster before the downturn in real estate prices (which is a negative), or the boro can retrieve ratables faster (which is a positive)? Neither of these underlying motives was discussed in the board or council.*
- \* You've heard of "Where's Waldo", we have our own "**Where's Dec, the zoning officer**". At the council meetings, at mayors Saturday, at the planning board, many, many discussions occur about temporary signs, trucks parked illegally on property, halted house construction, contractors ignoring the zoning covenants, gravel covering whole lots. All these are zoning violations and this has been going on for 4-5 months now without any relief. *Is Garwood doing anything about this?*
- \* **Master Plan:** There is a **public meeting** scheduled July 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm at boro hall. The purpose is to receive input from the public as to the future direction of Garwood. This is your boro; we've already seen some activity of development. Whether you felt it was good or bad, you should attend and speak. And bring any ideas you have for the betterment of Garwood.

### **The School Board:**

<[www.garwoodschoools.org](http://www.garwoodschoools.org)>

- \* Our **Clark/Garwood Send receive contract:** Synopsis: This contract's duration is from 7/1/07 to 6/30/17 (10 years contract length). Negotiations started 2 years prior. There are approximately 180 Garwood high school children that we send to ALJ High school in Clark. (145 that go directly to ALJ, 35 that are special.) Garwood has to pay all transportation costs (Last contract it was included.) 1st year tuition is \$1,552,000. Last year that was the contract end was \$1,485,000 a jump of \$70,000 but when the transportation cost is factored in (a rough guess of \$90,000) that makes the cost impact of \$160,000 for the transition (a 10% increase). Each year will have a fixed 4.5% increase to contract where in the 7<sup>th</sup> year we will pay \$2,080,000. In years 8 thru 10 it will be based on the actual cost of tuition per each child, formal cost numbers to be decided by both boards. We are also responsible for other related costs such as aides, other tuition, out of district placements, litigation cost arising from parents dispute on placement and classifications. Presently, since the contract switchover created large costs impacts we are paying only 66% of transportation costs with the balance being deferred to later years 4 thru 8 (*so some large impacts are pushed back-be prepared*). Specific report cards, honors, recognition, suspensions, etc. of the GW high school students will be forwarded monthly to the BOE for record. Any special event such as a merging of our boro will cancel this contract.

### **School Board:-continued-**

- \* In the district, **2 databases were combined** for efficiency and ease of information use, one taken from in house and the other that was outsourced. It was a student database combining with NJSMARTS, the state database. The district secretaries and administrators can now access all different information on the students. Teachers can log in to insert the students' grades. The administration then could generate report cards. It is able to track attendance, know who has siblings, has student ID numbers with photos, can cross check info such as medical alerts, and is able to track the student schedule through the day if a need arises.
- § The school **district received the settlement monies** from the Berkeley Heights Employment suit. It was approximately \$200,000. This was put into the capital reserve account to be used against a list of capital improvements which total over \$800,000. Items such as pointing brickwork, stucco finish, replace windows and screens, replace roofing.
- \* In early June the BOE held their annual "**goals setting meeting**" where they formulate the district's goals and benchmarks for the district and school superintendent to achieve, such as student proficiency levels in the various mandated state testing. This reporter had to leave that meeting early and requested that the goals be put on the school website for the public for 2 reasons: 1) so the public can see what these goals are, 2) since we have a new superintendent, the parents could measure her initial performance thru the school year. We'll see if they are transparent in this request.
- \* Where have we heard this before? A resident came before the BOE to complain about 2 board members and their actions outside the board. She wanted them to be sanctioned and reprimanded for using their board position unethically. (*See what makes Garwood, Garwood in the Around Town section*). The board attorney quoted: "The public comments are OK, but there is a state board standard code of ethics. **This board does not have jurisdiction.** You may take your grievance to the state board school ethics commission either thru their website or by phone.
- \* Board member Koenig suggested the BOE create the "**Mann Award**" in honor of Doris Mann who had passed away in December. She was an institution in Garwood giving selflessly many years ago in public service and accomplishments. Koenig suggested the award be given to the student with the highest grade average in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.
- \* **38 students received the straight A** honor award presentation this past marking period.
- \* Board member Villaraut suggested that the BOE should start **sending out the meeting agenda** ahead of time as a move toward open communication with the community.
- \* **Superintendent's Contract:** July 15<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm in the Lincoln School cafeteria is a meeting for public discussion and comment. Subsequently the BOE may take possible action on the contract. (This means they will vote on it). We'll cover this in our September issue.
- \* **Spencer Tracy and Audrey Hepburn:** Now that School board member Gary Maher stepped down from the board, the public will miss the ongoing point/counterpoint bickering between Board member Christine Guerriero and Gary Maher regarding germane procedural formalities.. It was much in the tradition of the old Tracy and Hepburn Movies. Christine now remains with no foil.

**Due to the length of the TREE, we had to omit the Ouch and the Hello/Goodbye section. Sorry, The Editor. This quarter's Kudos will is listed at the end of the issue**

## Sotlight On:

- \* *The world observed a milestone watching Hillary Clinton's valiant but unsuccessful try in becoming the democrat nominee for the presidency of the United States. With this effort and a successful win in November, she would have been the first woman attaining the position of the most powerful leader in the world. All of the past 43 presidents were men, as we know. Alas she fell short on delegates and out of the dust yet another first had arisen: The first Afro-American to be the democrat nominee for the presidency. (Assuming the democrat convention is a given). For this near milestone of "First Woman Leader", the TREE went to interview some of Garwood's local women who were our First Women Leaders in our local organizations: Peggy Briggs, and Evelyn Archibald.*

**Evelyn Archibald** stepped up to become the Cub Master of Pack 75 from 1984 to 1989. Her predecessor was Tom Dolly. He was stepping down and the pack was looking for someone to replace him. Evelyn, having her children in the pack stepped forward and upon a committee vote became the first woman cub master of the pack. Evelyn says she felt she had a knack at doing it. Upon taking the reins, she brought the pack to a higher level. For each monthly meeting she had a theme. For pack activities she was able to get all parents more involved in volunteering, sizing up their knowledge or acumen of subjects and then assigning responsibilities according to their special knack. She brought her skills into better organizing the "Pinewood derby" and "scouting for food" events. For the Pinewood Derby, she introduced an award where the tiger cubs picked the "Best Looking Car". In the pack they called her "the drill sergeant" because she kept good control, especially when you have a room full of cub scouts. She was a stickler for rules. In that sense as she said, you either follow them or change them, it's that simple. One concern that she put to rest was the practical jokes and the hazing that went on in the past at "Deerwoods", the annual camping trip. She felt there was a liability and that someone could get hurt, so she put her foot down-no more hazing! In 1989, she became the first person from Garwood who received the "Wood Badge" from the regional organization. Evelyn had to go to seminars to learn certain skills so she could train and promote leadership and community responsibility in the young cub scouts. From cub master, she then went onto being the first woman who was a committee chair of the cub scouts. This was the next level up and the committee oversees the structure and direction of the scouts. She served at this position from 1990 to 1995. She finally stepped down, as she said, "while loving it and still having fun." Her kids were out of scouts since 1991. At that final year's Blue and Gold Dinner, they gave her a plaque and flowers and a hearty round of applause for her leadership.

**Peggy Briggs** took the helm of the Garwood Lion's Club in 1996. Although, other Lion's clubs outside of town had women members, our Garwood club remained as a male bastion at that time. However, this was to change. Peggy came to their attention when she volunteered as a resident at the Lions Flea market that was held at Casale's parking lot once a year. They were shorthanded and she stepped up to help. It was her demonstration of hard work and simple community spirit that coaxed the Lion's club into asking her to join. She gladly joined as the first female member and that first year she became secretary. As a Lion's tradition, when one joins the Lion's they have to have a nickname. Hers was "Irish Briggs". Normally, in the club one works their way up to the presidency, but after that first year in the club, she was asked if she would like to be president. Everyone accepted her with no contention, and she was voted unanimously for the president. Here is where she showed off her organizational skills in creating efficiencies in the Lion's club yearly events. She proudly claims she gets this from her "kitchen sense" and, coincidentally, many of the Lion's club activities involve food. As an example, she notes that the Lions Club is famous for their clam chowder at the seniors' picnic. The club prep time "Pre-Peggy" was normally 6pm to 10:30pm, which the club felt was a normal but unusually long time to make clam chowder. She suggested that prior to the club getting together for the chowder that some of the ingredients, such as cooking the bacon, be prepared ahead of time at one member's house. This shortened the "hang time" by 2 hours. Also for the seniors' picnic, she worked with council back then to have the little league area ready ahead of time so everyone wasn't rushing that same day cleaning and preparing. Since seniors were the main purpose, she introduced more water and diet soda drinks and less beer and

### Spotlight:-continued-

sugar drinks. As the president she knew the members had equal but different fortes. She recognized each ones strengths and capitalized on each one's skills when one was needed at that point. Peggy says she was a good "handler" as president. Her meetings were organized to be kept within 40 minutes with no digression off points. She had the members save their chit-chat and comederie until after the meeting was adjourned. She also helped bring more women members into the organization. At that point the men accepted the integration since Peggy proved herself as the vanguard. The other Lion's Clubs outside of Garwood said, "It's about time".

In closing each interview, we asked each of "Garwood's First Woman Leaders" opinion on "Do we need a woman President and why?" Peggy said, "Absolutely, there are already women in powerful positions, such as Hillary as a state senator or Nancy Pelosi as the Speaker of the House. It is not so much why, but why not?" Evelyn sounded pragmatic, saying that a woman president may not be necessarily better, but possibly the leadership of the United States would better work with a combination of a man and a woman. She said any leadership position should really have the best person serving no matter what gender. As for her opinion on Hillary being president? Evelyn said "Anybody but". Proof that not all our woman leaders automatically have the same viewpoints.

A few other "First Woman Leaders" should be mentioned for honor also, and we apologize if we missed others: Doris Mann, who recently passed away in December, was the first councilwoman of our Garwood; Georgiana Gurrieri was the first Mayor, serving from 1987 to 1990, when she suddenly passed away before her term was finished. Carolyn Haines was the first woman volunteer fireman back in the mid 80's; Kathy DeFabio was the first ranking officer of the Garwood First Aid Squad back in 1977. Betty Patrick was the first woman President of the little league kitchen in the mid 60's, the kitchen having been run by men and as Betty said, they made a mess of things so the women had to take over. These could be prophetic words to reflect upon regarding the world too.

### Around Town:

- \* Garwood resident Tech Sgt Bottege has returned from his duty in Iraq and has brought back a **US flag that was flown into battle on his 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion gunship**. He has presented it to Garwood and we might possibly put it on the council wall next to our boro flag.
- \* The **water tower at Aeolian** is now being contracted to be taken down. This could be considered a landmark of sorts in that water towers are becoming extinct. Get your cameras!
- \* In the space of a few weeks in early to Mid- May, there were many incidents of someone(s) with a **baseball bat causing damage** to boro automobiles. These incidents occurred around New St, Maple and 3rd, Locust and Center. Some damage was extensive. Culprits have not been caught as of this writing.
- \* **What makes Garwood, Garwood:** This past quarter had some interesting community speed bumps, items that make life just a little livelier in our Garwood. To note: The PTA tricky tray fundraiser was cancelled due to a certain height of squabbling among the PTA organizers, officers and even BOE members. Police were involved; statements, minor threats, questionable ethics, hurt feelings, and hopefully this great fundraiser will be held again next year since it really is about charity and not about personalities. The Garwood Little League playoffs: accusations of cheating arose over the number of innings the pitcher can pitch in consecutive games and the age of the pitcher, this pitcher being the son of an officer in the league. Again, hurt feelings, but it is about sportsmanship and good exercise. The league will be back next year, of course. The book bag incident involved a merchant, 5 families, a pair of blonde twins, a few weeks of concern; and the book-bag made its way safely back to the proper owner.

**Around town:-continued-**

- \* **The damsel in distress and an intractable government:** A resident who lived on the 500 block of Myrtle sold her house in March and moved to a rental apartment on Beech. The new owners then changed the locks on the doors and prepared to take ownership in a month. However, a glitch in transferring the deed occurred and the ownership never was transferred. The young lady was not aware of this and 2 months went by. The growing lawn then became a property maintenance code violation. The police, enforcing the law sent 2 notices in the middle of May about the grass height. But it went to her old address and it took 12 days before she received them, and this was after the deadline that the police gave her. Suddenly, in the course of 4 days she received 2 notifications and a court summons all dated late. An email exchange then occurred with the police and they demanded she cut her lawn. But she pleaded it wasn't her lawn. They told her it was. It was then she found the new owners did not take ownership. But she had sold her lawnmower. Under police duress in the first week of June she had to cut the 3 foot high lawn with hedge shears. The police stopped down the street to observe her cutting the lawn. The neighbors seeing her plight fortunately came out in force to help cut the lawn. With the summons she was scheduled to go to court on a daytime on Monday. However, since she just started a new job, she would lose a days pay. In asking the court for relief to change it to the nighttime session, they resisted. The court administrator assured her that it would be quick. Her company allowed her 2 hours max and she would get paid still. However, in court the judge showed up ½ hour late and she ended up behind many, many cases. It took her 4 hours until her case came up and luckily it was dismissed. She still lost the days pay though. She came to the June 10th council meeting in early June to protest how she was treated, the mayor called it a "unique situation", and that was that. Little did she know that while she was protesting her plight about how undiplomatic the boro is at the council meeting, just on the other side of the wall were two more summonses already written out in her name for no dog license for dogs she hadn't owned in 1 ½ years. 2 days after the council meeting they mailed her another surprise package. See "nadir of nastiness" in the council section.
- \* A boro resident living on Cedar street was **busted in April in a pre-dawn raid**. His tag was King Sleepy and was part of the Latin Kings drug ring. This house was right across the street from another house that was under surveillance by Garwood police for drug activity couple of years ago.
- \* This edition's "**The Golden Guano Award**" goes to: Finance Chair Villagio with her statement in the May 13<sup>th</sup> council meeting of: "to deliver the same level of services our citizens have come to expect." With our bulk pick up down to 3 times a year, skyrocketing property taxes, cutting back or delaying street projects year after year, one has to wonder what town is she talking about? The truckload of golden guano will be delivered soon to your doorstep, finance chair. *(We will award those people in power when they say outrageous statements. We'll be on the lookout for phrases such as "same level of services", "free to the residents", "a good change for Garwood" and award the Golden Guano accordingly. Who will be Next?)*
- \* The Garwood seniors club is close to **raising the age of the club eligibility back to 62**. They initially dropped the age to 55 in hopes of getting new members 2 years ago but only 2-3 members signed up at the lower age. *(Probably because those "youngsters" all work during the days and are too vain to admit that they are seniors yet.)* The boro "seniors" commission always kept the age of 62 for benefits and programs given to the seniors such as home handyman, leaf raking and the senior bus.
- \* **Merchant News:**
  - Express Deli-On corner of Center and South is selling their business. Goodbye Steve and Carlos.
  - Cartek has left its premises on New Street. (Carol, maybe you don't have to sell now –no more noise)
  - Cox Stationers of South ave is moving to Elizabeth avenue, Linden.

## **General Information/Rumor:**

- \* **75' Ladder Fire Truck:** As previously reported the boro stated they will probably be going out to bond \$525,000 to buy this in the summer. In an informal budget meeting on a Saturday in May, residents pressed the issue as to why can't mutual aid handle this necessity instead of us spending money. Indeed they are right. In carefully reviewing the Fire chief's report, he did a poor job of justifying the need and didn't disprove that mutual aid is a workable choice. After all, the mutual aid has been used for over 50 years. The only solid reason he stated was that a separate ladder takes 6 men to handle versus the truck mounted ladder can be maneuvered by 2 men. In that same meeting, a councilman stated his justification of the ladder truck saying, *"if it could save just 1 life"*. But to quote columnist Paul Mulshine in the 6/24 edition of the Star ledger, *"Any cliché will do if you're a democrat trying to get your hands on other people's money."*
- § **Community center:** The committee found that the recreation area is partially situated in wetlands and the boro would have to go to the NJ DEP for 3-4 permits. This would setback the schedule at least 1 year it was reported, from end of 2008 to end of 2009. It was also discussed to expand the proposed meeting room to accommodate 35 people, build a large deck surrounding the building and include the mayor's initiatives of "going green" (being environmentally friendly). Now getting an environmental consultant involved, surveys, the schedule delay and extra construction costs put the project over budget but unknown the exact impact. *We wonder who will pay for that.* Two interesting items are being discussed: 1) Possibly situating the complex at the dead end of Center street. 2) Removing of the Lion's club Gazebo to expand and relocate the building. This 2<sup>nd</sup> item is interesting because during the public hearing, the boro promised that the Gazebo would stay since it was a heritage structure built personally by the Lion's Club. *But it was a politician that promised this so I guess he had his fingers crossed. Thank God, this group isn't in control in Europe, the Louvre would be condominiums. Plus over a year ago it was pointed out to council in discussion of the Garwood flood map that end of town at the stream area is a flood zone.* To be continued.....
- \* **The Juvenile Conference Committee (JCC)** needs 1 more member for the Garwood Contingent. This is a county commission. Each town has 4 members. For GW the 4 members would review and make recommendations regarding each GW juvenile's first transgression. It normally meets 1 time a year. If interested-Call Evelyn at 789-1413.
- \* **Tree Obituaries: RIP**


---

The MEWs Jr- 12 trees gave their lives in the clearing and grubbing construction activity

---

Developer accidentally removed a town tree on the 400 block Willow-big troubles with the boro.

---

400 Block Willow-Boro tree split, had to be taken down. The homeowner will ask the boro to put up 2 trees in its place.

---

**PSE&G:** 400 Block Myrtle- Horrible mangling went on when they cleared for the power lines. I had to take a photo of the atrocity. Horrible.

---

Large Conifer removed from corner of East and Willow. It was blocking the site lines of intersection. Mid May rain storms took down a tree on Myrtle.
- \* **The recreation committee has begun charging nominal fees for activities.** The participants must pay for their own admission fee into the destination; the identifier T-shirt the children wear they now pay \$5 for, summer recreation camp fee is \$10, ceramics now has a small fee, and the committee is mulling over charging a fee for field trips, since the cost of bus and gas has increased dramatically. Switching to user based fees lessens the burden on all the residents. *Another odd thing is that they have a "Recreation Hotline", which is a cell phone that the taxpayers are footing the bill. Why?..... Help! Help! My kid needs to bounce a basketball immediately!*
- \* For those that were wondering back in April after the star ledger article, the **boro workers buy their own coffee**, it does not come from tax monies.
- \* The **library is celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary** having been started by the Garwood PTA in 1933.

## **THE GOOD RESIDENTS SPEAK:**

- \* If they are going to build high density in a neighborhood, maybe the developer should pay a few thousand dollars bonus to the neighbors within the 200 foot distance since it is impacting their homes and neighborhood.
- \* Anyone sitting on the boro Finance committee should at least be a homeowner who pays the property tax.
- \* Why don't they combine the school board elections with the primaries since they both have small turnout of different types of voters groups for each election? That way there would be no duplication and a lot more voters.
- \* Insurance was the excuse for canceling those Monday night pump drills down at Washington school where the firemen sprayed water and the children ran around thru it – a resident says why don't they find out the insurance cost for doing it, pay it and bring that great community tradition back again.
- \* The residents should form a taxpayer and consumer group to voice their issues and concerns for a higher profile.
- \* Anyone running for the board or council should declare up to what \$ amount of taxpayers monies they wouldn't think twice about spending.
- \* When noting someone from Garwood in the TREE, maybe you should note how long they lived here in Garwood. That way it would show that even the newcomers are participating
- \* A good resident asks: Say what's become of the rat infestation? She pointed out that people are back to feeding squirrels and birds and leaving garbage cans uncovered.
- \* A good resident asks: Should a person who teaches as a college department head be the prime person of negotiations on the BOE side against the teachers union?
- \* A good resident wonders if the boro is going to have the program again for the seniors where on the real hot nights, boro hall is open for the seniors without air conditioning to come down and cool off.
- \* Now that the rec area is pushed back 1 year which increases the construction cost, the boro should have a town wide fundraiser to offset the added escalation costs and to check the climate of whether this is still a viable project. Maybe set the goal at \$20,000. *(This last one was the editor's)*

## **Some Upcoming Local Public Events:**

*(also watch town bulletin board) Any particulars needed, just call phone number listed in that section*

- \* **From the The Seniors:** Walter Maszczak 789-1067, Paulette Drogan-seniors town director 789-0738

---

**The Town:** July 16<sup>th</sup> Showboat Casino 9:30am to 7:30pm Leaves from Firehouse.

---

August 6<sup>th</sup> Bus ride to the "Staten" in Staten Island to see "the 3 masters of Comedy", leaves from Fire house 10:15am \$42 pp. Dinner, dancing, audience participation.

- \* **St Paul's:** Reverend Hess 654-0482 *The church that is handicap accessible!*

---

July 15, 16, 17 Vacation Bible school 6PM to 8:30PM call for details.

---

July 20<sup>th</sup> Christmas in July 10:30 service. Items to be placed under the Christmas Tree will be for the US servicemen serving our country. Items such as: playing cards, tissues, pens, sunscreen, stationary, hand lotion, micro-wavable food, candy and nuts. There will also be Christmas carols, Christmas scripture and the Christmas Tree.

---

Aug 9<sup>th</sup>-Family Movie night 7PM-big name movie-Come find out!

---

Sept 14<sup>th</sup>-Rally Sunday 10:30am, start of the Sunday school year, details not firmed up yet.

### **Upcoming Events:-continued-**

- \* **VFW:** Kathleen Dorkowski, pres of ladies aux 233-9016, Dennis Clark, commander 247-5389/789-0880, Ed 334-5398

---

The VFW is collecting items to send to our troops. Call the number above. Donations gratefully accepted.

---

Fly your flag, support our troops, vote in every election

---

VFW air conditioned hall rentals-call 908-789-0880. Available for all occasions (except bachelor parties).

---

The post invites all its members and guests to drop into our canteen for some fun and comradeship. Hours are Mon, Wed, Fri 1pm until closing. Sat 4 pm til closing, Sun 12:30 pm till closing. Come on out, play some darts, billiards, watch a game or race, enjoy some good company.

- \* From the **Town, BOE**

---

July 9<sup>th</sup> is the planning board meeting regarding public input on our master plan. 7:30pm boro hall.

---

July 15<sup>th</sup> is the school districts public discussion of the new school superintendent's contract. 7:30pm Lincoln school gym.

---

July 26<sup>th</sup> 1pm to 4pm Garwood Seniors Appreciation Dinner

### **Letters to the Editor:**

- \* We received a 6 page letter to the editor, and unfortunately it is too long for the TREE. But we will sum it up as best we can, and cleaned up the remarks. It brings up a couple of interesting questions that fits into the NJ politics of today:

---

1) The dodge Durango that Garwood bought recently for the police is being discontinued due to lack of sales. Did we get a good price for it, did a certain dodge dealership need to be bailed out, or both. 2) Why bring up buying a ladder truck now after both multi-storied MEW's projects were approved and being built, since they are the projects that created the need for the ladder truck. 3) Senator Menendez sent a letter to the Consumer Product safety commission urging the agency to expand its investigation into the potential hazardous lead levels of artificial turf. *(At least our rec area complex has been put on hold for another year due to a different problem about the wetlands noted elsewhere in this TREE. Maybe the artificial turf problem will be resolved by then)* Also the writer said the curbs, sidewalks around Washington school are badly deteriorated or lifted and is an accident waiting to happen. Other critical points made against the police, freeholders, the senior citizen director. Finally ended with an interesting point: Since the last mayor who was republican left office in the mid to late 80's our property taxes have quadrupled. The writer referred many times to this boro administration as "bleeding heart liberals" with wasteful spending habits and has turned Garwood into an embarrassment with all their predicaments they get us into.

**Kudos:** *(space permitting and only some items that I can get to -I had suggested a website addition to the BOE and council, but they were tepid about listing all the great achievements of our residents-I probably could fill all the pages, but that would leave no room for my usual hoopla)*

- \* Congratulations to **St Paul's Church newsletter**. It celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> year this month in getting "The Word" out.
- \* **David Durante**- Congratulations on becoming an alternate to represent the US at the Beijing Olympics in the "all around" championship contests..
- \* VFW 6<sup>th</sup> grade essay contest winner was **Alexus Papala**. Theme was "What's the USA and Freedom means to me". She received a \$50 savings bond.
- \* The new President of the ladies auxiliary VFW post 6807 is **Kathleen Dorkowski.**, **Kitty Madara**, is now the senior vice president and trustee

**Kudos -continued-**

- \* **Curtis Blackman** had the honor to receive this year Leadership Award from the Bridgeway Members Association of Elizabeth.
- \* **Alonza Klopfer**, an 8 year old, for capturing her third consecutive All-Around State Champion title for her age group. It was sponsored by the USAG Women's Junior Olympics at Rutgers. This was her third year of competing, taking the title each year.
- \* Welcome new BOE members **Linda Koenig, Christine Guerriero and Karen Rusin**. Each one had previously served so they're no strangers.
- \* As the new school year starts, we welcome **Adele Lewis** as the board president and **Barbara Greet** as board vice president. (They continue in their same function as last 4 years)
- \* **The library** is celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary having it started by the Garwood PTA in 1933.
- \* Congratulation goes to Teacher **Glenn Stott** in becoming a US citizen in May.
- \* The Msgr. John M. Walsh Council #5437, Garwood Knights of Columbus would like to congratulate the following Garwood Lincoln School Students who won First Place in the council's annual Basketball Free Throw Competition in April.

**Age 10: Joe Matlosz, Meagan Beriont, Age 11: Niko D'Alto, Christine Lodato, Age 12: Ryan Brinkerhoff, Sally Beriont, Age 13: Dan D'Alto, Meghan Emmons, Age 14: Nico Congiusta.**

Each winner received an engraved plaque, advanced to the District Level and won, receiving a First Place Ribbon with Medal, and then advanced to the Regional Round. Our special thanks to Lincoln School Physical Education Teachers, **Virginia & George Hansen** for all their help in coordinating the competition, and the school's administration for their continued interest and support of our council's community activities and programs.

**Dedication:**

- \* This 5<sup>th</sup> year issue is dedicated to 2 people we enjoyed talking to.  

---

Doris Mann always sat on her front porch with Ralph her husband and Tommy her son. Walking by I would stop and talk about her years of roots in Garwood, her Daily Journal job, county job and politics in general. She had a head on her shoulder, very wise and able to summarize problems easily.

---

Rich LeFebvre was a "good ol' boy" always dressed in denim and flannel. Easy going, he was also very organized as he ran his Ben Franklin Crafts store with his wife Alice. They sold the store, moved to Easton, PA. Rich started to even get involved out there, since he was a community spirited fellow. Unfortunately, he passed away within a year and a half of moving to Pennsy.

---

Garwood and this editor will miss them both. Goodbye, Doris and Rich.

***---Garwood's \*Independent\*  
T.R.E.E---***

***The Roaming Eye & Ear***

**A Quarterly Observance compliments of the TOT Group (Tee'd Off Taxpayers)**