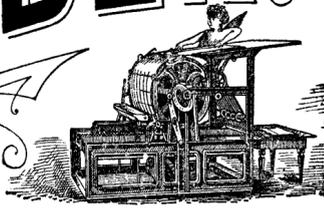




WESTFIELD LEADER



OUR 111th YEAR - ISSUE NO. 48-111

USPS 680020
Periodical - Postage Paid at Westfield, N.J.

Thursday, August 9, 2001

Published Every Thursday
Since 1890

(908) 232-4407

FIFTY CENTS



COMINGS AND GOINGS...Several storefronts in Westfield and Mountainside will welcome new businesses. Pictured, top left, the construction of two dozen townhouses is almost completed. Pictured, top right, the Fleet Bank, which owned and occupied the building at the corner of East Broad and Elm Streets, has merged with SummitBank, moving down the block into the former SummitBank drive-thru building on Elm Street. Pictured, bottom left, the site of the former Friendly's on Mountain Avenue in Mountainside has been sold to Valley National Bank. Renovations are underway and the bank is expected to open by late fall. Pictured, bottom right, the construction of a 9,000-square-foot office building on Springfield Avenue is underway. The space has already been leased by the Westfield Eye and Surgical Group and another doctor.

Dems Say Build Deck or Roll Back Parking Fee Hikes

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

Westfield Town Council Democrats, and a candidate seeking to join them on the dais next year, told their Republican counterparts Tuesday night to either move forward on plans to build a parking deck or roll back last year's increases in parking fees. "Other than raising the fees and expanding meter hours, almost a year later little else has been accomplished for the design and construction of a parking facility," said last year's Democratic Mayoral contender, Susan Jacobson. Mrs. Jacobson is running for Fourth Ward Councilwoman this year.

they are "going to carry through" on "adding real additional parking capacity" than he "can't justify keeping these added fees in effect."

Second Ward Councilman Rafael J. Betancourt, a Republican, said he felt Democrats were "jumping the gun" by rolling back the parking fees. He said the council should "wait and see" what an advisory committee, created by Republican Mayor McDermott, says before making any further decisions.

The Democrats noted that last

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Residents Say 'No' to Light At Chestnut

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

Residents living in neighborhoods near a proposed traffic signal at Chestnut and East Broad Streets told the County of Union Tuesday night to ditch the plans.

"It is irresponsible and negligent on the part of Union County and the Town of Westfield to make an isolated decision on this intersection without recognizing the broader impact on our neighborhoods," stated John W. Stone of South Chestnut Street.

He said the RBA Group of Morristown, hired by the town to complete a traffic calming study of the corridor, has not recommended a light.

Resident Nancy A. Thornberry of St. Marks Avenue said her concern remains focused on cut-through traffic on side streets. She said recent accident reports from the Westfield Police Department indicate that a light would not improve safety in the area.

Of 53 accidents that occurred over the past five years along South Chestnut, between Broad Street and North Avenue, only 14 occurred at East Broad and Chestnut.

The remainder occurred at Lenox Avenue, Fourth Avenue, Benson Place, St. Marks, Arlington, Tremont and Fairmont Avenues.

"There is simply no rational basis on which to conclude that a light at East Broad and Chestnut is in the best interest of the town," said Ms. Thornberry. "Make no mistake about it, a light at this intersection would turn Chestnut into a driveway for ShopRite (currently under construction in Garwood on the Westfield border)."

Mayor Gregory S. McDermott said that he will be sending a letter to the county asking that the Board of Chosen Freeholders not take action on the light proposal at this time.

Union County Manager Michael J. Lapolla told *The Westfield Leader* that the town had contacted the county

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Westfield Remains Attractive Venue to Locate Business; Day Care, Eye Doctors Coming to Town

By DEBORAH MADISON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

With over 431 retail business establishments, including 28 restaurants and hundreds of second floor offices and apartments, the central business district of downtown Westfield is an evolving entity, which thrives on a combination of stability and change.

Last year, of the 31 new stores that opened in the downtown's special improvement district (SID), 17 were locally owned "mom and pop" or franchise businesses (55 percent), six were regional businesses (19 percent), six were professional offices (19 percent) and only two were chain stores (7 percent), according to Sherry Cronin, Director of the Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC), which manages the downtown special improvement district.

Although it may seem that an abundance of stores remain empty for long periods of time and that there are frequent vacancies, the current vacancy rate for a town of Westfield's size is actually quite low, said Anthony Schilling, one of the downtown's leading real estate brokers.

The fact that national chains seek out Westfield is a good sign that the downtown is healthy and thriving, Mr. Schilling suggested.

Ms. Cronin also remarked that when other towns want to create an economic development plan, they often use Westfield as a model of success, borrowing development strategies and planning methods. Additionally, the smaller businesses

need the major national retailers, also called "anchor stores," to draw the shoppers to the area, creating more prosperity for everyone, she told *The Westfield Leader*.

Many new changes are coming to Westfield's central business district in the near future. The Fleet Bank, which owned and occupied the building at the corner of East Broad and Elm Streets, has merged with SummitBank and has moved down the block into the former SummitBank drive-thru building on Elm Street.

The Fleet Bank is now in the process of marketing the East Broad and Elm Street building. Fleet will also be selling their drive-through location on Clark Street, across from the Y.

The town has expressed an interest in purchasing this property for extended parking. *The Leader* has learned that the Westfield Y is also interested in the Clark Street property. Both the town and Y seek to use the space for additional parking.

The corner of Elm and East Broad Streets used to be called bank square, because of the number of banks on that corner, explained Ms. Cronin.

Currently, First Union is the only bank remaining at that location. Ms. Cronin attributes this change to banks desiring a drive-thru location today, something which the busy corner cannot accommodate.

After the initial deal to turn the 1 Elm Street bank building into a steak house fell through due to financial obstacles, the building was purchased by real estate developer Mitchell

Berlant from Warren in July.

Mr. Berlant's firm owns and manages many suburban office and professional buildings in nearby towns.

The interior of the building is currently being renovated and several retail businesses have expressed an interest in occupying the ground floor, said Mr. Berlant.

He noted that it would be premature to guess who that will be at this

time or to specify the exact renovations, which will be modified to the needs of the new lessees. The exterior of the building will remain the same for the time being, according to Mr. Berlant.

Shopper's Liquors, located on South Avenue for 15 years, is in the process of doubling their space and renovating to incorporate a gourmet

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Police, Community Seek to Create Safer Streets for Pedestrians to Cross

By ADAM BERNSTEIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

Following two accidents involving pedestrians in recent weeks, the Westfield Police Department, and business and community leaders are seeking to accomplish a tall order — getting motorists to stop for pedestrians in the crosswalk.

There were two fatalities in 1999 when motorists struck pedestrians, and in the past two weeks, motorists struck — but did not seriously injure — two more in crosswalks downtown — one crossing Quimby Street, the other at Elm on the corner of East Broad Streets.

The police have been actively working to reduce speeds on major roads, and the Town Council has hired The RBA Group out of Morristown to change the texture of the entire East Broad Street corridor — what they call "traffic calming" — but problems persist as the acci-

dents clearly demonstrate.

Police Captain Robert Compton said that the Westfield police are "taking a progressive, proactive approach" to the problem, but they are limited in what they can do. He commented that enforcement, not innovation, remains their role.

However, the police have taken steps to actively enforce the law, most notably in the S.O.S. (Safe Operating Speed) program that was initiated on April 1. The S.O.S. program involves strict radar enforcement on key streets and intersections, as well as education through newspaper articles, TV-36 and flyers.

This year, through the efforts of the program, the police have more than doubled the number of tickets given to speeders through radar enforcement.

"Our goal is to change the attitude of people who drive through

Westfield, to promote safe driving," Captain Compton said in reference to the program. He added, "We want you to know that if you violate the law, you will get a ticket."

The cost of a ticket for failure to yield to a pedestrian in a crosswalk is a minimal of \$100 and a couple of points on the motorist driving record — but Police Sergeant Terence Gillespie said that, "under extenuating circumstances, the penalty could go way up."

The heavy traffic that zips through town is only one aspect of the traffic problem; the inadequate parking, a more pragmatic, pressing issue, detracts attention from the potentially unsafe crossing conditions in the downtown.

A possible partial solution — closing off Quimby Street to traffic and making it a pedestrian-only walkway — was met with skepticism by

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

County Taxes Up \$1.057 Mil. in Town; Average Homeowner To Pay \$1,553

By FRED ROSSI
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

Editor's Note: The following is the second of a three-part series on property taxes in Westfield this year. This week's story focuses on the Union County portion of taxes.

For the first time since 1995, Union County's tax levy has risen. The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders approved a \$315.2 million

county budget (versus \$314.6 million last year) to be funded, in part, by the first county tax hike in six years that will result in all but two of the county's 21 municipalities paying higher county taxes.

A handful of unusual expenses this year were a factor in the tax increase, including \$12.5 million in lost revenue from the pullout last year of state prisoners housed in the Union County Jail in Elizabeth; a \$2.1 million boost in health insurance costs for county employees, and a \$1 million increase in costs to house county residents in state mental hospitals.

Slightly more than half of this year's budget — nearly \$160 million — will be raised via property taxes. The balance will come from \$20.5 million taken from the county's \$27 million surplus; nearly \$45 million in state and federal assistance, and close to \$90 million in other county

revenue sources such as the County Clerk's office, the Surrogate's office and the Sheriff's office.

Westfield will pay \$16.07 million in taxes to finance the Union County government and its activities — the second highest in the county — a figure that represents an increase of \$1.057 million, or just under 8 percent. Homeowners will pay an average of \$1,553, or \$97 more than last year, on an average assessed home of \$175,000.

The largest chunk of the Union County budget is earmarked for salaries and benefits for the county's approximately 2,700 employees. Slightly more than 41 percent — or \$129.5 million — will pay county employees' salaries.

Another 26 percent of this year's budget — or about \$83 million — will go towards health and welfare

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

INDEX

A&E.....	Page 19	Editorial.....	Page 4	Religious.....	Page 7
Business.....	Page 15	Education.....	Page 9	Social.....	Page 6
Classifieds.....	Page 16	Obituary.....	Page 8	Sports.....	Page 11

Westfield Blues Reach Babe Ruth Final Four

The Westfield Blue 10-year-old baseball team has reached the National Championship quarter finals in Vincennes, Ind. As one of the four teams left, the Westfielders have one loss to Newburg, Ind. (10-0) in the double elimination tournament. The Westfield team beat Oahu, Hawaii (13-11) and the Indiana host team to advance. The National Champion will be determined this week.



IN LOVE AT ECHO LAKE...Geri and Greg Imbrico of Linden share an intimate dinner for two among hundreds of music fans at Echo Lake Park in Mountainside during a concert with "Who's Johnny." The couple, who dine al fresco each week, have been attending the outdoor music programs at the park since the inception of the concert series.

Proposed Trash Train Would Pass At-Grade Rahway Ave. Crossing

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders will hold a special hearing this Monday, August 13, on a proposed \$50 million barge-to-rail, marine trash transfer station on the Linden waterfront.

The hearing, to be held at Linden City Hall, 301 North Wood Avenue, will begin at 7 p.m.

The Tremley Point facility, to be built by Browning Ferris Industries (BFI), will process between 10,000 and 15,000 tons per day of household waste generated in Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens, which will come to the Garden State daily by barge from New York City.

Reportedly, the 18-acre Linden waterfront would be the largest transfer station in North America.

BFI has said the waste will be loaded into sealed steel containers and put on rail cars that will transport the waste to landfills owned by Allied Waste in Georgia and South Carolina. Allied is the parent company of BFI.

The 5,900-foot train, consisting of between 80 to 90 rail cars each, will pass over 27 at-grade crossings in New Jersey through the use of the Lehigh Valley and the Port Reading rail lines.

The Lehigh Valley line includes the Rahway Avenue grade crossing in Westfield. The line would bring the train through Clark and Scotch Plains.

BFI has indicated that solid waste loaded in steel containers "has been coming from New York through New Jersey across the Lehigh Line and the Trenton Line to Pennsylvania almost every day for the last three years."

BFI, in its response to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) memorandum dated July 23, estimated that the speed of the train when passing through the Rahway Avenue rail crossing will be 50 mph. The train will take two minutes and 20 seconds to pass through the at-grade crossing.

Despite concerns raised by the DEP, BFI has maintained that it is requesting a permit to process 10,000 tons per day, not 15,000, the maximum tonnage described

in BFI's original application. The application indicated that the marine terminal would be designed to handle up to 15,000 tons.

New York's waste is currently trucked to the Essex County incinerator in Newark.

In relation to the project, the New Jersey Attorney General's Office executed a search warrant of the office of Linden Mayor John T. Gregorio on August 1. Press reports indicated that officials may have been looking for possible bribes involving the transfer station project.

Since a grand jury investigation was launched by the Attorney General in January, the Linden City Council has been subpoenaed twice for documents and correspondence related to the project, according to a *Star-Ledger* report.

The 18,000-acre property where the marine station will be built is reportedly owned by Mayor Gregorio's son-in-law, Dominick Pucillo. *The Star-Ledger* also reported that the partnership of Tremley Point Marine includes State Senator Ray Lesniak's law partner, Paul M. Weiner, and Agnes Villani, wife of Ben Villani, who has reportedly been barred for life from the New York State waste-hauling business.

The rental income for the property, once the BFI station is open, is said to be \$1.2 million per month.

The project has been overwhelmingly supported by the Linden City Council, the Union County Utilities Authority and the County Freeholder Board.

The Freeholders had approved an amendment last November to the county's Solid Waste Management Plan to include the Linden marine transfer station in the county's Solid Waste Management Plan. However, the DEP rejected the application from BFI to amend the solid waste plan over the potential impact the operation could have on the environment.

Per its concerns, the DEP ordered a response from BFI and the subsequent re-adoption and re-certification of the Solid Waste Management Plan amendment by the freeholder board.

Westfield and S. Plains To Receive Commuter Jitneys From NJ Transit

WESTFIELD -- Scotch Plains and Westfield are among 20 towns that will be receiving commuter jitneys as part of NJ Transit's community shuttle program.

The 20-passenger mini-buses, free of charge to the towns, will operate locally between residential neighborhoods and NJ Transit train stations, including Westfield and Fanwood, during peak commuter morning and evening rush hours.

During off-peak hours, NJ Transit officials said the vehicles can be used for other community-based transportation services.

"During these days of record ridership and limited parking on our rail systems, programs such as Community Shuttle are vital to the success of public transportation in New Jersey," said Westfield resident and NJ Transit Executive Director Jeffrey A. Warsh. "Our customers need and deserve alternate ways to reach our systems."

Three million dollars in federal funding for the program was secured by New Jersey Congressman William Pascrell (D-8th, Essex, Passaic) and Donald Payne (D-10th, Essex, Hudson, Union) as part of the Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century (TEA-21) for the second year of the Community Shuttle Program.

"The shuttle program is a creative, cost-effective way to make our communities more livable," said Congressman Pascrell. "At a time when we must have innovative mass transit investment, these federally-funded shuttle buses will go a long way toward easing traffic congestion, reducing air pollution, and improving the daily commute for so many across our state."

Congressman Payne called access to transportation "a key element of enhanced economic development."

The two Congressmen secured the same amount of funding last year to pay for the distribution of 20 mini-buses to 18 communities state-wide.

The Westfield and Scotch Plains buses, as well as the others in the second year of the program, are scheduled to arrive by spring 2002.

Westfield officials have said they plan to use the mini-bus, along with one to be obtained through a State Department of Community Affairs grant as part of a new jitney bus program in town to transport commuters to and from the Westfield Train Station.

A survey conducted by the town in 1999 revealed that 300 commuters would be interested in utilizing a curbside commuter jitney service. The town has proposed the operation of two routes, one on the north side and the other on the south side of town. When discussed several years ago, four routes had been proposed.

Scotch Plains has entered into a joint program with Fanwood on use of its mini-bus.

"We're going to use it to get commuters back and forth to the Fanwood train station," said Scotch Plains Township Manager Thomas E. Atkins. He indicated that the service is not going to start "for a while" because the bus route still has to be worked out.

The vehicles, which cost \$94,000 each, include a wheelchair lift and two wheelchair securements, air conditioning, reading lamps and overhead package racks.

Once the communities begin providing the service, they are approved for up to \$60,000 in start-ups from NJ Transit for the first three years of service. During off-peak hours and on weekends, communities may use the mini-buses for other municipality-sponsored services such as transportation of seniors or for recreational purposes.

In addition to the Raritan Valley Line routes of Westfield and Scotch Plains, Roselle Park also will receive a bus.

Paul J. Peyton and Fred Rossi contributed to this story.

Businesses

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

deli, an espresso and cappuccino bar, pastries and specialty gift baskets.

The shop will have an eat in or take out structure, with over 250 cheeses imported from around the world and other gourmet delicacies, according to owner, Sean Weinerman. Mr. Weinerman will change the name to Town & Country Fine Wines & Spirits Market Place, and will offer statewide delivery and Internet ordering service. He expects to be up and running by the end of September.

Adjacent to Shopper's Liquors, in the same strip mall, Dress Barn has moved to Garwood and vacated 12,000 square feet of retail space. In addition, the 8,500 square feet of space next door, formerly occupied by Mandee's, has also become available. Mr. Schilling is currently seeking retail renters for those spaces.

Westfield resident Roy Pascal has purchased the building at Lenox and North Avenues, previously occupied by Tullio's Hair Spectrum. Mr. Pascal intends on renting out the existing 3,700 square foot ground floor, after completing some renovations.

"It's an ideal location for retail and can be subdivided according to retailer's wishes," he said.

Coming to the previous location of West Coast Video on Central Avenue, is the Here We Grow Day Care Center, which will employ a relatively new technological advance in the day care industry.

The center will offer video access via the Internet, through their Internet camera system, so that parents can log on and view their children who are at the center, while at home or work, explained the center's new owner, Cheryl Hoose.

Scotch Plains' residents Michael and Cheryl Hoose hope to have the 4,700-square foot space renovated and ready for operation by September.

Mrs. Hoose said that this is the first day care center to offer the Internet-video viewing service in New Jersey. She expects to be able to accommodate up to 70 children, ages six weeks to five years.

Another major development on Central Avenue, near the corner of Cacciola Place, the construction of two-dozen townhouses by real estate developer Ralph Rapuano is almost completed.

The townhouses should be ready for occupancy within a few months, Mr. Schilling estimated. Additional townhouses, with 13,000 square feet of ground floor retail space on the corner lot, are expected to begin construction next month and take approximately one year to complete.

Sir Puff Café, a tobacco shop, which has been on Elm Street for the past four years, has been converted by the owner into Sweet Waters, an upscale steak house, which opened last month under new management. The owner purchased the former Raymond's Restaurant liquor license and renovated the interior with richly-polished wood, leather sofas and chairs, sparkling crystal and starched, white tablecloths for an atmosphere of elegant dining.

The former Sinclair's restaurant on North Avenue and Toon-Cel-Town, a Disney lithograph outlet on Quimby Street, are both with the buildings owners seeking retail establishments.

Real Estate Broker Maria Walters of Century 21 of North Edison is looking for a leaser for 102-106 East Broad Street, currently occupied by a Chinese restaurant.

"We'd like to find another restaurant renter as the space is already zoned for that," said Ms. Walters.

Sole, a shoe store specializing in imported Italian children's shoes, has come to Prospect Street. Owner Anna Mastroianni featured film star of HBO's "The Sopranos," Dan Grimaldi, who portrays Patsy Parisi in the hit series, at the grand opening on August 2.

Ms. Mastroianni is a Broadway actress and stunt woman, who is taking a break from her acting career to launch her new business.

Her brother, John, owns Bovella's, a pastry shop on East Broad Street, across the street from her new store.

Real estate Developer Mitchell Berlant, who also owns 1 Elm Street, is constructing a 9,000-square-foot office building on Springfield Avenue. The space has already been leased by the Westfield Eye and Surgical Group and another doctor, said Mr. Berlant.

Across the street at 1024 Springfield Avenue in Mountaintide, a 6,500-square foot office/professional building is being constructed to take the place of a previous fruit and vegetable stand.

The site of the former Friendly's on Mountain Avenue in Mountaintide has been sold to Valley National Bank. Renovations are underway and the bank is expected to open by late fall.

And finally, Success Express, which came to Elm Street from Scotch Plains last year, has new owners, and had a grand re-opening in June, expanding their line of New Age gift items and diversifying their inventory.

Westfield Planning Bd. Favors Plan to Limit Residential Expansion

By JAMES FOERST
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — The scarcity of open space within Westfield has prompted the Town Council to consider an ordinance which would limit additional expansion of residential properties within existing neighborhoods.

The proposed amendment to the existing land use ordinance was presented for discussion to the Westfield Planning Board on Monday night by Rafael J. Betancourt, Fourth Ward Councilman and Town Council liaison to the Planning Board.

The ordinance was unanimously endorsed by the Planning Board. Board Chairman Robert L. Newell noted that if the measure passes, "the Planning Board can then control (development) applications to benefit Westfield as a whole and not each individual applicant."

The proposed ordinance is aimed at reducing residential over-development, a practice known as "shoe-horning."

The term was coined to mean subdividing a one-family residential lot into two or more lots for the purpose of constructing additional residences within existing neighborhoods. Under the current ordinance, the board is almost powerless to limit "shoe-horning." Applications for subdivision of lots have been heard at almost every Planning Board meeting this year.

The proposed amendments consist of 13 criteria which an applicant must demonstrate before a major or minor subdivision is approved by the Planning Board. The new ordinance would require that any proposed development "does not substantially depart from the character of the existing development" and that it will not "lead to increases in population density affecting the public health, safety, and general welfare."

The applicant must also prove that the development "promotes a desirable visual environment which is harmonious with the character of the existing development and which enhances the character of the surrounding neighborhood and the town as a whole, and avoids adversely affecting the value of adjacent or nearby properties."

"This ordinance gives the Planning Board the authority to send proposed development before the Architectural Review Board as well as the Historic Preservation Commission," Mr. Newell commented.

This gives the board the ability to restrict development as well as control the size and character of any new residential properties.

Planning Board Attorney Paul Straucher noted that the amendments give the board the "teeth" they have been looking for to limit development in keeping with the Master Plan.

Mr. Newell stated that the elements of the ordinance would be used to "maintain the existing character of the neighborhoods." The board will determine if applicants meet the test by listening to "expert testimony and using common sense," explained Councilman Betancourt.

However, the councilman was not able to define a timeline for passage of the ordinance, but did state that the proposal would not be in place until after the board meets again in September.

In other business, the Central Avenue

revitalization continues with the board's conditional approval of a new children's day school. The board approved the application of Noah's Ark Day School to operate a pre-school at 618 Central Avenue.

The school will operate Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., with an estimated 50 to 100 students ranging in age from 2½ to 5 years of age. Final approval is pending review of the site plan by the Town Engineer Kenneth B. Marsh, who was not present at the meeting.

Noah's Ark requested a variance from the parking ordinance requiring 14 on-site parking spaces. Town ordinance requires that a commercial property have one parking space for every 300 square feet of operating area.

The applicant proposed zero parking spaces on the property but has arranged to lease the 14 required parking spaces from the commercial dry cleaning operation which the property abuts. This type of leasing arrangement is authorized by ordinance so long as the spaces are "within 500 feet" of the property according to Robert Alagarin, architect for Noah's Ark.

Noah's Ark Day School is currently operated by Danielle Marino on Mountain Avenue near the Westfield/Mountaintide border. Both the Mountain Avenue and Central Avenue locations will remain in operation after the new Central Avenue school opens in September.

Pedestrians

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the Captain Compton for while only a thruway, the traffic that travels on Quimby Street would be diverted directly onto Elm Street and Central Avenue.

Debbie Schmidt, Executive Director of the Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce, hopes that any publicity about the accidents "would encourage people who come downtown for shopping, dining or entertainment to be a little more careful when driving through."

She reacted favorably to the proposed traffic calming by saying, "traffic moving at a slower pace is always a positive in a downtown district."

Ms. Schmidt, like Captain Compton, was hesitant to endorse the closing of Quimby Street. There are two issues that concern the businesses along the thruway; whether there would be adequate parking and also whether by closing of the street would reduce business traffic.

In a statement released to *The Westfield Leader*, The BRAKES Group (Bikers Runners And Kids Entitled to Safety), a resident organization based in Westfield, indicated that they are "most disturbed by the incidents in town recently, especially since the summer is often a 'quiet' time."

Sara Strohecker, Founder and Co-Chairwoman of the group, believes that while the police have done a good job with their efforts this spring, "the stepped up enforcement must be consistent and complete."

The police and The BRAKES Group both agree that while measures can be taken to make crossing safer, ultimately, people have "to take responsibility for their own behavior."

Union County Taxes Up \$1.057 Million in Town

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the laying off of 99 corrections officers, Mr. Mirabella estimated, in state-matters earlier this year, a savings of \$4.8 million this year and \$8.1 million next year.

Two years ago, Jersey Gardens Mall opened in Elizabeth. A bit further south on Routes 1 & 9 in Linden, a major development is in progress near the Linden Airport. Stores, a hotel and a movie theater at that site will result in an estimated \$6 million in tax revenues for the county.

The county Freeholders are also putting forth several new initiatives in an effort to improve the quality of life for residents. "Access 2001" is a program in which the county will connect its libraries to help them share resources for children.

Web-based links will be developed between schools and libraries and ways will be sought for libraries to assist young students with homework and projects. The county will also be expanding its Office of Veterans Affairs to meet the needs of the veteran population.

A "one-stop shop," with a toll-free telephone number, will be created to help veterans seeking information about benefits, health care issues and other matters.

The county is also continuing its Freeholder Scholars program that helps families pay the cost of higher education, as well as its HEART Grant program, which supports the arts in Union County.

Recently, as part of its effort to retain open space, Union County reached a tentative agreement to buy the largest piece of open space in the county.

For \$9 million, a 63.5-acre parcel of land in Summit, near the Watchung Reservation, will be purchased from New Jersey-American Water Company and preserved as park land. Of the \$9 million price tag, \$7.5 million will come from the county's open space trust fund that was approved by voters last November and \$1.5 million will come from the state's Green Acres program.

Deck or Rollback

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

August the council as a whole agreed to construct a deck at lots 1 and 8 at Elm and Prospect Streets.

Mrs. Jacobson noted that meters, which jumped from 25 to 50 cents an hour for two-hour meters, and parking permits, now \$540 per year, were increased only about a month after the governing body agreed to build a deck. The council had agreed to raise the fees "to give the town a start" in raising the fees to offset construction costs of a deck.

Parking permits had been \$360 annually for the Shell lot and \$480 at the Cigo lot, both employee lots; \$360 at the South Avenue train station lot and \$180 at the Watterson Street lot, both commuter parking lots. All of the lots, except Watterson, were raised to \$540. Watterson was raised to \$360. Persons who pay semi-annually, pay 10 percent higher.

Mayor McDermott said the town is moving by hiring a consultant, for Union County traffic engineer Walt Gardiner, to move ahead with parking initiatives.

The mayor said that it would be "irresponsible" of the town to go out and build a deck unless questions posed by area residents are answered.

"We might be going a little bit slower but I believe we are moving in the right direction," the mayor said.

He said an advisory committee he set up will report to himself and the full council in September.

Councilman Goldman said he thought the council had made a decision last year to build a deck.

Republican Matthew P. Albano, who represents the Second Ward, said he has a number of concerns on construction of deck including the impact on traffic, the environment not to mention the financial implications on the town such a facility would create.

Mr. Albano noted the town has picked up 29 temporary commuter parking spaces from a developer on Cacciola Place and seven spaces in the horseshoe area of the South Avenue train station parking lot through the re-striping of the lot. He also noted the town is considering a valet service at the lot.

"So we are seeking ways to decrease the parking dilemma that we are under," Councilman Albano stated.

He sees the council being diligent in how it moves through the process "to make sure we do the right thing for the town itself."

First Ward Councilman Carl A. Salisbury, a Democrat, indicated that the council needs to reaffirm its decision to build additional parking capacity including the location of a deck.

If this decision cannot be made, then a discussion on reducing parking fees is in order, he said.

Mayor McDermott said he would look to schedule such a council discussion, perhaps a half hour earlier the regular starting time of council conference meetings.

Chestnut Light

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

in 1999, shortly after a 23-year-old nanny was killed attempting to cross East Broad Street near Temple Emanu-El, to seek help in creating a safer thoroughfare. He said 13,000 vehicles use East Broad daily.

He said the county contracted with Middletown-based T&M Associates to conduct a study and recommend how the East Broad Street corridor could be made safer. T&M has recommended a light at East Broad and its intersections with Mountain and Central Avenues.

Mr. Lapolla said the only way to accomplish this feat is to regulate traffic flow. This, he maintained, can only be accomplished with a light.

He called traffic calming the traffic engineer's version of a "pet rock" and something that would not work.

"On transportation issues, making a decision is not their (the Town Council's) strong suit," said Mr. Lapolla.

He said the county has been in consultation with the town from the beginning on the traffic light proposal.

"They (Republicans) are trying to turn this into a political issue when it is not," the County Manager stated. On another matter, Cranford Avenue resident Judith Weinstein asked the town to address several acres of overgrown weeds behind homes in the 900 block of the street.

The land is owned by Westfield but leased to Cranford for the site of a retention basin. She said Cranford has not maintained the property, resulting in 12-foot-high weeds that have become a home for rodents, possum, deer and countless insects.

She said the property had once been considered by the town for a soccer field but was rejected because of existing wetlands.

Town officials indicated they would look into the situation, including researching whether the Westfield Planning Board, which approved the retention basin, included any maintenance provisions by Cranford in a resolution memorializing the board's action.

In other business, the council appointed Jim Gildea as Acting Administrator for the remainder of the year and Administrator for all of 2002.

Mr. Gildea replaced Thomas B. Shannon, who resigned last month. He will receive a salary of \$75,000 this year and \$85,000 next year.

Mayor McDermott said the appointment will give the department heads and Mr. Gildea a chance to work together in a number of areas, including the drafting and implementation of next year's municipal budget.

Douglas M. Fasciale

Certified Civil Trial Attorney
by the Supreme Court of New Jersey

Concentrating in personal injury
and malpractice cases.

Hoagland, Longo, Moran, Dunst & Doukas, LLP
Attorneys At Law - A Full Service Firm

40 Paterson Street
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
(732) 545-4717

116 S. Euclid Avenue
Westfield, NJ 07090
(908) 232-9944

DFasciale@hoaglandlongo.com
www.hoaglandlongo.com

"While they're away..."

Give them
"A Touch of Home"

with a
College Subscription
to the

WESTFIELD LEADER.

Call Now
(908) 232-4407