



SCHOOL'S OUT...Second grade students take time to taste the snowflakes during the height of Monday's storm. After-school programs were cancelled and area schools had delayed openings due to the heavy snowfall. Pictured, left to right, are: Katherine McKinley, Katie Schaaf, and Sarah Frantz.

Rec. Department Revamping Town Pool Signup Process

By DEBORAH MADISON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

After last year's registration procedure for Westfield's Municipal Pool resulted in lines of hundreds of registrants wrapped around the Municipal Building by 8 a.m. on opening day, the Recreation Department has decided to revamp and hopefully, streamline the procedure.

Instead of previous pool members having to apply in person on opening day of registration, as was the case last year, they will now be able to register in person or by mail.

The Recreation Department processed more than 1,800 applications on the first day of registration last year.

Under the revised plan, last year's previous pool members will receive their applications by mail. They will have six weeks, between March 1 and April 15, to register either by mail or in person. If full pool membership capacity is not reached by April 15, then all Westfield residents, including previous members as well as non-previous members can register be-

tween April 16 and April 30, or until full capacity is reached.

If full capacity is still not reached by April 30, then non-residents and all the prior groups will have an opportunity to register in May. However, all registration after April 16 must be done in person.

Mr. Burrell explained that because the Recreation Department could not predict whether full capacity would be reached after the first window of opportunity, all registrations after April 16 had to be done in person.

"We generally have a 20 percent

turnover in membership each year, so I expect that there will be room for new members, however, we won't definitely know that until after April 15," he said. Pool membership was approximately 88 percent residents and 12 percent non-residents last year, Mr. Burrell said.

This process, he added, should eliminate the long lines that occurred opening day of registration last year.

The new procedure will need to go before the Town Council as an ordinance change and pass through two

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RESERVATIONS RECOMMENDED...Last year, streams of people wrapped around the Municipal Building in Westfield to register for membership to the Memorial Pool in town. Pictured, above, clerks at the Recreation Office had their hands full helping registrants.

North Side Residents Voice Opposition To Deck, Citing Traffic Congestion on Prospect And Elm

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

The town's proposal to build a multi-level parking structure on Elm and Prospect Streets is facing strong opposition from some north side residents.

The governing body is considering building a deck of between 600 and 800 spaces on the lots. Town officials are in the process of hiring a consultant for the pre-design phase of the proposed facility, which will include the taking of soil samples.

Julie Diddell of Elm Street represented a group of residents called Citizens Concerned About Proposed Northside Parking Deck, who are opposed to the proposed location of the facility.

"We come before you tonight to present ourselves and to let you know that there is indeed a groundswell of interest in opposing any plans to build the parking deck in the Prospect Street lot," she told the governing body on Tuesday night.

Mayor Gregory S. McDermott responded that the council's Transportation, Parking and Traffic Committee is gathering information concerning the proposal for a north side deck.

"You (Ms. Diddell) are welcome to join in their discussions. If there is

anything that comes out, obviously we want your input," the Mayor said.

Third Ward Councilman Neil F. Sullivan responded that, "Last year, all indications were that (Elm and Prospect lots) where it (a deck) should go."

"It's very much a work in progress," the councilman said.

Robert Tarte of Prospect Street expressed his concern that the exit to

the proposed deck would be placed on Prospect, a narrow road that he feared could not handle the significant increase in traffic which a deck would bring.

He said a one-block area of Prospect Street near the proposed location for the deck, which includes a condominium, apartment building and several multi-family residences, has over 100 residents. In addition,

both Summit Bank and Trader Joe's have driveways near the site.

In addition, he said other condo units and an intermediate school are located nearby, causing existing traffic congestion.

"To add another 400 to 600 cars onto a narrow street like Prospect Street, we believe would cause mammoth traffic problems," Mr. Tarte

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Proposal for Concierge Service On Hold Per NJ Transit Deal

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

It appears the town will have to go back to the drawing board on a proposal to initiate a concierge service in the Westfield train station.

Although the building is owned by the town, tenant NJ Transit has say over any future tenants per a 1955 legal agreement between the town and the Central Railroad of New Jersey, according to Town Attorney Robert Cochren. NJ Transit is the current tenant at the train station.

"Basically it's our building but they have the right to do what they

want with it. And they can approve any sub-tenancy and anything else that goes on within the building," he advised the governing body.

"We have a significant problem. NJ Transit is going in a completely different direction," he told the council. "We aren't anywhere near where they apparently directed us last year to do."

Mr. Cochren said a NJ Transit real estate official informed him that the agency is looking for a concierge service modeled after a program in Maplewood. The agency does not favor having an individual run the service as had been considered by the council, the town attorney noted.

NJ Transit, the Town Attorney said, favors setting up a consortium of businesses who would cooperate together and former a corporation.

That would seemingly put an end to a plan developed by Ray Mikell,

Vice President of *Commuter News of New York and New Jersey*. Mr. Mikell came before the council late last year on a proposal to establish a service to be called the Westfield Concierge

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Calendar, 2001-2002 Budget Top Agenda Items at BOE Meeting

By MELISSA BETKOWSKI
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

A discussion over the pros and cons of a Sunday graduation was a major sticking point for the Westfield Board of Education during its regular meeting held Tuesday night.

The board, in discussing the 2001-2002 school calendar, was faced with a dilemma over when to schedule

graduation.

In 1999, the Westfield High School (WHS) graduation was held on a Sunday for the first time in the school's history. Many people involved in the administration felt that the Sunday graduation, also Father's Day, was a great success.

However, according to WHS Principal Dr. Robert G. Petix, the teachers were told in 1999 that the Sunday graduation was a one-time event, and, he did not feel that the faculty would be receptive to having graduation once again on a Sunday. The 2001-2002 graduation is tentatively set for Sunday, June 23, also Father's Day.

Dr. Petix noted that some faculty members raised objections over the fact that the graduation was held on Father's Day, but also a Sabbath.

Board Member Kimberly Rhodes argued strongly for the graduation to be held on the Sunday, stating that it is much easier for family members to be involved in the ceremony when work schedules do not have to be taken into consideration.

Ms. Rhodes posed a question as to whether or not the graduation could happen without the faculty involvement.

Dr. Petix noted that the presence of staff at the graduation is important to the students, and that it is necessary for the faculty to be in attendance in order to have a successful graduation.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. William J. Foley said that the graduation is not something that can be tinkered with. "You can't run a pilot graduation," he said, in response to Ms. Rhodes' question of whether volunteers could carry out the tasks normally assigned to staff members on the day of graduation.

Discussing the calendar further, Dr. Petix raised some concern over

the layout of the calendar, with an eight-week stretch without a break in April and May. The Spring Vacation is tentatively scheduled for March 25-29, with Passover being the 28th and 29th and Good Friday the 29th.

According to the calendar the way it is, the next day off for students would be on May 27 for Memorial Day.

The board considered the issue raised by Dr. Petix and discussed moving the Spring Vacation to April 1-5.

Dr. Petix told members of the board that he would suggest not closing schools on September 19, the second day of Rosh Hashanah, October 8 (Columbus Day) and February 19 (the second day of the Presidents' Weekend break).

Discussion was also held on the issue of the four-hour sessions for Grades K-5 in October and November for Parent Conferences.

The board voted 6-2 to send the calendar back to the Policies Committee for further consideration.

During the meeting, the board also heard from Business Administrator and Board Secretary Robert A. Berman about the 2001-2002 Budget. Currently, the tentative budget stands at approximately \$56 million.

Mr. Berman discussed the meetings held by the Finance Committee which addressed budgetary concerns. Board President Darielle Walsh said "the budget is a work in progress."

Mr. Berman informed the board about the district's applications for Retroactive Debt Service aid from the State of New Jersey. He said that 15 of the district's 23 applications have been approved, and still others are being approved.

The tentative tax impact for the 2001-2002 budget is approximately

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PARKING INFLATION...This parking meter displays the newly-established prices for parking in municipal lots in Westfield. Cars may park for six minutes at the cost of a nickel, 12 minutes for each dime, and 30 minutes per quarter.

Vito Gagliardi to Be New Education Commissioner

By SUSAN M. DYCKMAN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

The former Superintendent of Union County Vocational-Technical Schools, Vito Gagliardi, is the likely candidate to succeed David C. Hespe as New Jersey's Commissioner of Education.

Mr. Hespe, who was named Commissioner in April 1999 under former Governor Christine Todd Whitman, will step down March 2. He has accepted a position as visiting professor in the college of education at Rowan University.

When asked about the status of Mr. Gagliardi's nomination, Anthony D'Elia in the Office of Public Information at the State Department of Education said only that Mr. Gagliardi's name had been mentioned as a replacement for Mr. Hespe.

While acknowledging Mr. Gagliardi's role as a close advisor

on education issues to Acting Governor Donald T. DiFrancesco, Mr. D'Elia emphasized, "To our knowledge, he (Mr. DiFrancesco) has not sent the name to the Senate" for confirmation.

Under New Jersey law, once the Governor has nominated a candidate for a Cabinet position, that name is presented to the Senate for review and approval.

During his February 5 agenda-setting address to the New Jersey legislature, Mr. DiFrancesco made it clear that education is among his priorities for the coming 10 months. The acting governor said he would direct the new commissioner of education to work with legislators to create the foremost new teacher training and retention program in the nation.

Neither Mr. Gagliardi nor the Governor's Office could not be reached for comment on the status of the nomination.

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'Hat Drive' for Kids With Cancer Rewarding Success for HS Students

By SUSAN M. DYCKMAN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

SCOTCH PLAINS -- It turned out to be a bigger undertaking than they originally anticipated, but seven members of Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School (SPFHS) Student Leadership Conference (SLC) are hard at work on their "Hats Off to Kids with Cancer" project.

Seniors Mike Stanley and Christin Kurz; junior Jacqueline L'Heureux; Sophomores Ray DiNizo, Monique Lemus and Mats Notoane; and freshman Tracy Salmon teamed up with Scotch Plains resident and Board of Education member Linda Nelson last September for the high school's two and a half-day leadership camp.

Out of that weekend and subsequent meetings, the students decided to implement a service program which Ray's mom had read about last year, collecting hats for children with cancer. Of all the community service ideas they talked about, said Ray, the hat idea was "an original." Though not part of the start-up team, his sister, Jennie, has been very active in the collection campaign.

According to Tracy, the students particularly liked the idea of helping children. They are planning to give the hats to St. Barnabas and Robert Wood Johnson Medical Centers, which treat approximately 600 children for cancer every year.

In planning how to collect new hats from fellow students at SPFHS, the group decided to use posters and announcements to spread the word. Christin also wrote letters to all 53 homeroom teachers to enlist their support. As an added incentive, the group promised a pizza party to the homeroom that turned in the most hats. Math teacher Nicholas Drakos' junior/senior homeroom was the big winner, collecting approximately 100 hats.

"There was a lot of behind-the-scenes work," explained Mrs. Nelson, who noted that the Fanwood A&P donated 75 bags to aid in the collection effort, which took place January 16 to 31. She also mentioned the group had received a small donation from Schering-Plough, which students will use to purchase more hats.

By January 31, students had col-

lected about 200 useable hats from their classmates. Many are clearly new, still bearing the tags from the

SPFHS students, as well as Principal David Heisey and community representatives Larry Naldi and



A BIG SUCCESS...Members of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Leadership Council display some of the hats they have collected for their "Hats Off to Kids with Cancer" project.

stores where they were purchased. Though there were a fair number of hats that were unacceptable because they had obviously been used, the collectors were generally pleased with the response to their campaign.

Ray would like to continue the program next year. Jennie DiNizo believes SPFHS should add the hat collection to the school's list of annual drives, right up there with food and clothing. The biggest challenge going forward will be to make it clear that donated hats must be new because that is all the hospitals will accept.

Though some of the students would like to personally deliver the hats to their future owners, they brainstormed other ideas in the event such a visit cannot happen. They considered putting labels that say, "From Your Friends at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School" onto plastic bags containing individual caps.

"I'm particularly proud of how the students have stuck with the program even when it turned out to be significantly more work than we first thought," said Mrs. Nelson.

The Student Leadership Conference includes approximately 100

Charlie Roll. SPFHS social studies teacher Andrea Karanik serves as



MESSENGERS OF LOVE...Large crimson cupids bring Valentine's Day greetings to passersby on Dudley Avenue in Westfield.

Westfield School Bd.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

\$51 million, with an increase of nine cents per \$100 of assessed property value.

Mr. Berman said that the board looks forward to adopting the tentative 2001-2002 Budget at its meeting on March 6.

Also addressed at the meeting were the concerns of members of the board over the starting time at the high school.

Currently, first period starts at 7:30 a.m., with the day ending at 2:45 p.m.

According to Dr. Petix, students are not required to take a nine period day, but may opt to go from 7:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. or from 8:17 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. Dr. Petix noted, however, that students may begin later but may not get all of their course choices if they opt for an eight period day. There are certain courses, he said, that must be offered during first period.

He said that the nine period day was begun at the high school in 1972 as a split session to alleviate overcrowding problems in the school at that time. When the population dropped, he said, the option was there to go back to a later start time, but then the students wouldn't have the options that a nine period day offered.

Board Member Eileen Satkin said that the literature keeps reinforcing the fact that students do not do well being in school so early in the morning.

Annamarie Puleio said that the board is charged with the task of "evaluating whether past practice is the best practice."

Ms. Puleio noted that the choices that the board is faced with are not an either-or dichotomy, but that the board has many options to examine.

"We have to take an honest look at the issue or we haven't done a good job," she said.

A question was raised by Board Member Anne Riegel over whether starting a half-hour later would be substantive, or whether other options would need to be evaluated.

Mrs. Walsh noted that the board needs to decide what it is looking to do in terms of this issue before proceeding.

The board will hold a special meeting tonight at 8 p.m. at Roosevelt Intermediate School to discuss the conditions of the district's athletic fields.

Concierge

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and Errand Company. Mr. Mikell planned to develop a membership list of merchants whose services would be utilized by the concierge establishment. Members - different types of business in town such as dry cleaners - would have been charged \$50 per month in the first year and \$40 per month during the second year. Under the proposal, merchants would be charged \$200 for the first four months and \$275 for the first six months, or \$550 for a year.

Customers would be charged a small service fee per transaction under Mr. Mikell's proposal.

"They (NJ Transit) will not approve what is on the table right now," said Mr. Cochren. "We are not close (to an agreement)."

In response, Mayor Gregory S. McDermott told *The Westfield Leader* that, "We have to go back and see what we have to do now."

On another matter, Mr. Cochren informed council members that the town could be facing another battle in regard to parking spaces being used by a builder in municipal lot no. 5.

A contractor erecting an office building on the site of the former Excellent Diner has hired attorney James B. Flynn of Westfield in regard to communication from town officials over their desire to terminate the use of parking spaces by the company.

Don-John Builders of Watchung, Mr. Cochren said, is seeking an extension on the agreement with the town for use of 13 parking spaces. The town is receiving \$1.50 per space or \$19.50 per day for the spaces, explained Third Ward Councilman Neil F. Sullivan.

"I'm more concerned with the absence of the spaces and the seamlessly no end in site (on the construction work)," Mr. Sullivan told *The Leader*. He said the builder had been instructed that the meters would be made available for downtown commerce as of February.

The town had wanted the spaces available for the 2000 holiday season but the builder was unable to complete the project by that deadline. The current deadline expires today, February 8.

Mr. Cochren said the builder is apparently ready to say that loss of the spaces would present them with an economic hardship. The building is owned by the Lekas family.

North Side Residents Voice Opposition To Parking Deck

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stated.

Mr. Tarte said area residents, who oppose the location of the deck, especially want any plans to locate a deck on Prospect scratched. He said Elm Street would be better able to handle the additional traffic since it has traffic signals at several key intersections.

He said Prospect lacks signals at major intersections and is used by fire engines responding to emergency calls on the north side.

"I really feel the location of the deck should be at the south side station," Mr. Tarte added. He accused the Chamber of Commerce and some residents of neighborhoods near the South Avenue train station lot of influencing the council into locating the deck on the north side of town.

"When I moved to Westfield years ago, this town cared about people. Now we only seem to care about the businesses," he said.

Town Administrator Thomas P. Shannon said the town has hired a consultant to develop a study on the impact of the deck on downtown traffic flow and safety. He said the report is likely to recommend removal of Prospect Street as a location for the exiting deck traffic.

Councilman Sullivan noted that the governing body had not paid attention to traffic when the initial recommendation was made to consider Prospect and Elm as the best location for a deck.

He hoped that traffic capacity on Elm and Prospect, along with the engineering information on how a deck would look, will come before the Transportation, Parking and Traffic Committee for discussion soon.

First Ward Councilman Peter Echausse vowed that the committee would hold "open" meetings "to make sure that residents will be heard" and be brought up to date on the results of the traffic study. Mr. Echausse serves on the committee which is chaired by Councilman Sullivan.

Under other business, representatives of sports leagues, including the baseball and soccer association, voiced their support for a plan to have users of town parks and fields work with Department of Public Works crews to keep the fields properly maintained on a regular basis.

Chris Carson of Raymond Street, a soccer coach and greens keeper, said Westfield has been missing "the equipment and money to do the job, the people to do the job, and the desire to do the job."

"From a professional standpoint, I would say that the fields are in dire need of treatment," Mr. Carson stated. He said the plan unveiled by Rec-

reation Commission Chairman Keith Hertell is "not only doable, it is long overdue."

Former Councilman John J. Walsh, a Boulevard resident, said he would take Mayor McDermott up on his election campaign pledge to make field maintenance a priority in town.

Pool Registration

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readings, before being approved. The first reading of the new ordinance took place at Tuesday night's Town Council meeting.

Pool fees for this year have been revised. The new pool rates are as follows: Resident family: \$210 up from \$200; family with child-care: \$265, up from \$250; husband and wife: \$170, up from \$160, and individual: \$125, up from \$120. These rates represent a 5 percent increase over last year, Mr. Burrell reported.

The senior citizen and handicapped permit rates, \$60 and \$2, respectively, remained unchanged. Non-resident fees will be as follows: family: \$395, up from \$375; family with child-care, \$520, up from \$495; husband and wife: \$330, up from \$315, and individual: \$235, up from \$225. Those fees were raised approximately 5 percent as well.

Senior citizen non-resident: \$105, and handicapped non-resident, \$2, remained unchanged.

Donald Seeley Spends Semester at Sea

WESTFIELD - Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, Pa. reported that Donald Seeley of Westfield is participating in the University of Pittsburgh's "Semester at Sea" program during the spring 2001 semester.

Donald is a member of the Class of 2002 at Gettysburg College.



AWARE OF WORLD HUNGER...To increase children's awareness of the food plight affecting nations around the world, fifth graders at Wilson Elementary School in Westfield participated in World Food Day. Students only ate rice and water for lunch and then participated in activities to increase their personal awareness about world hunger. In an effort to relieve local hunger, the students conducted a food drive the following day. Almost 300 pounds of food was collected and donated to a local food bank. Pictured, left to right, are students in Laura Fenn's class: Daniel Lack, Bobbie Miller, Lauren Huff and Danielle Tepper.

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