

## The Westfield Leader

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## Numerous Changes at Town Hall Need To Be Addressed With Staffing Assessment

The old guard is leaving Westfield, but it remains to be seen whether the new blood coming in will make the town government more efficient.

Let's take a closer look at who's going from and who's coming to town:

First, at Town Hall: Gregory S. McDermott has taken over the reins as Mayor. Keith S. Hertell has assumed control of the Recreation Commission and is now actively recruiting for a new Recreation Director following the announced resignation of Glenn Burrell. There are also new Chairmen of the Planning Board and Board of Adjustment, and a new President of the Westfield Memorial Library Board of Trustees.

Last year, Westfield underwent major changes with the retirements of Town Administrator Edward A. Gottko and Town Clerk Joy Vreeland, both experienced veterans at Town Hall. They were replaced by Thomas B. Shannon and Bernard A. Heeney, respectively. In addition, Bernard Tracy has taken over from Anthony J. Scutti as Police Chief, with John Castellano now heading up the Fire Department following the retirement of Paul Battiloro, Jr. as Chief.

Michael LaPlace left in October as Executive Director of the Downtown Westfield Corporation for a position with the local government in Plainsboro. The DWC's top pick to succeed Mr. LaPlace, Tony Longo, a planner out of Las Vegas who was previously employed in the New York City Mayor's Office, had to turn down an offer from the DWC due to an illness in his family. So, the DWC named Sherry Cronin, a member of its Board of Directors, as Interim Director, with the hope that she will eventually become a permanent director. The DWC governs a \$300,000 budget for the downtown special improvement district.

One major change that has arisen is the DWC Board's decision to terminate a \$21,000 contract with the Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce, for

which the Chamber handled promotions for DWC events. The DWC and Chamber, which at one point did not get along, have shared the same office suite for the past year. Is this relationship souring again or is this simply the result of a change of command, with a new Mayor and second year DWC Board of Directors chairman at the helm?

Another concern we have is the significant changes at Town Hall. Mr. Burrell is leaving the town payroll as of tomorrow, March 16. There will also be two other vacancies in the Recreation Department, with the new program director, Allison Halperin, leaving for a higher paying position in Scotch Plains' government, and the retirement of a long-time clerical assistant.

The Town Clerk's Office and the Municipal Court have also experienced staffing problems, as both departments have struggled to hold onto persons serving as deputy clerks, with individuals having departed due to either higher paying positions in other areas of the town's workforce, i.e. the building department, or in the private sector.

Another thing we have noticed recently is the large number of work that is being out-sourced.

The bottom line is the Mayor and the Town Council need to conduct a top to bottom review of staffing — both from a job description standpoint and a salary review. This evaluation must be done in-house. Westfield has out-sourced too many projects recently, whether it be for parking studies or engineering services, not to mention the Downtown Improvement Plan streetscape project that has been championed by the DWC.

The key is that Westfield should not be losing employees to surrounding towns which pay better.

Westfield needs to maintain a qualified, knowledgeable and friendly staff that is sufficiently compensated. Town Hall must once again be a fun place to work if the Town of Westfield is to continue to run an operation that meets the needs of its citizens.

## COAH Director Clears Up Confusion Over Relationship With Redevelopment Plan

By SHIRLEY M. BISHOP

There appears to be some confusion regarding the Council On Affordable Housing (COAH) and its relationship with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (State Plan).

COAH carefully follows the State Plan, and, in fact, is the one state agency whose rules specifically defer to those of the State Planning Commission (SPC), the Pinelands Commission, the Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission and CAFRA. The COAH planning staff and the planning staff of the Office of State Planning (OSP) work closely together. The two agencies have a memorandum of understanding, and currently a joint task force of COAH board members and SPC members are meeting on such issues as affordable housing, smart growth, redevelopment, sewer and water.

COAH housing obligations, or quotas as referenced by some people, are not in conflict with planning designations in the State Plan. COAH's rules state that in rural or environmentally sensitive areas (Planning Areas 4 and 5), "the Council shall require inclusionary develop-

ment (containing affordable housing) to be located in centers" and that "all sites designated for low and moderate income housing shall be consistent with the applicable water and sewer plans.

However, market rate units do not have to abide by such stringent regulations. Former farmland is now often dotted with expensive market rate homes, not affordable ones, on septic systems. Low and moderate income housing can only be designated for sites that have existing infrastructure and are consistent with the State Plan.

If a town comes in voluntarily to COAH and is not sued, that community maintains control of its zoning and the decisions for its provision of affordable housing. The existing pattern of development need not be drastically altered by affordable housing obligations if a community is diligent in its planning and does not leave itself open to Mt. Laurel litigation.

A COAH task force is meeting regularly to decide the components of a third round methodology which will focus on the need to be fair, understandable and predictable. Also, COAH has had ongoing dialogues with the Coali-

tion for Affordable Housing and the Environment.

The public and private sectors have been encouraged to give input for a new methodology and new regulations via task forces on Urban Redevelopment; Pinelands, CAFRA and Hackensack Meadowlands; Rural, Open Space and Farmland Preservation; Coordination with State Agencies; Coordination with Housing Advocates and Housing Administrators; Legal, Planning and Financing Issues, and Suburban Growth Areas. These task forces will be reconvening this spring. When COAH proposes its new regulations, which will include the formula for affordable housing obligations, the public will have the opportunity to make additional comments.

For individuals or groups who wish more information about COAH, check the web site www.dca.state.nj.us/dca/coah or contact Sidna Mitchell, COAH Deputy Director, at (609) 292-4553.

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Shirley M. Bishop serves as Executive Director of the state Council On Affordable Housing in Trenton.

## The Ripple Effect of School Violence Continues to Cripple Our Nation

By MICHELLE H. LEPOIDEVIN  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

For most of us, the most horrific things we had to confront as students were pop quizzes, being sent to the principal's office, or the class bully who tried to steal our milk money.

Today, that class bully is carrying a gun, and he may not be who you think. He or she may not be wearing a leather jacket with slicked back hair, smoking Marlboro's under the bleachers with his gang.

It could be the kid in the chess club who, if he is called a nerd one more time, feels like he is going to "snap." It could be the girl who is mocked in gym class because she doesn't "measure up" to everyone else, and wishes her persecutors would just die already.

As we send our children to school in the morning, we never imagine seeing them on the afternoon news, running out of the school to safety with their hands over their heads because the kid in chess club did, indeed, snap.

Bomb scares, death threats and gun possession have made headlines as recently as last week at Santana High School in California, Pottsgrove High School in Pennsylvania, two middle schools in Camden, Washington Township High School, East Camden Middle School, and Von E. Mauger Middle School in Middlesex.

I have heard too many arguments made by local principals against the installation of metal detectors. Instead, they point out, the guidance programs in place (as laudable as they are) will weed out any and every "problem child" who is considering hurting his peers.

"It's not going to make them feel safe. They will feel threatened," one principal in Westfield informed me in the wake of the Columbine High School tragedy.

Although Middlesex Borough detectives have hinted to school officials about a possible rise in school violence, those in charge in the Middlesex school district won't consider installing metal detectors.

### Deadlines

General News - Friday 4pm  
Weekend Sports - Monday 12pm  
Classifieds - Tuesday 2pm

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Photos - B/W and Color  
No Panoramic or Polaroid  
Typed, not handwritten  
Upper and lower case  
Need name & daytime phone

For our complete editorial policies request a copy of our Policy Guide

## Safer Streets in Town Should Not Come At Expense of Children's Civil Rights

On Friday night, March 9, I parked my car on Central Avenue and started to walk towards the Rialto to catch the late show. There was a group of young people, probably middle school age, standing on Central, chatting. I assumed they had just come out of the theater. I thought to myself, these are wonderful looking, happy, smiling children. I also thought, Westfield is a nice town.

All of a sudden, a police car comes to a halt in front of the children and a policeman exits his patrol car in a hostile manner, disperses the young people in an intimidating and frightening way, and isolates one young boy from his group of friends.

If I was the parent of that child, I would be furious to have had my son subjected to that kind of police action for no apparent reason. None of the children had been boisterous or a public nuisance. Their only "crime," if that is what Westfield police describe it as, was to be standing as a group on the sidewalk of their own town.

The time has come for citizens to ask, is this the way we want our children treated by the Westfield police? As adults, we would be outraged to be spoken to in the manner I heard the policeman address these young people.

I speak up as a parent, as a citizen and as a taxpayer. I want the streets safe, but not at the expense of our children's civil liberties. I also do not want our children growing up believing that they are engaged in an antagonistic relationship with the police. These children were doing nothing wrong. They should not be made to feel they are guilty of some offense.

Gail Buckland  
Westfield

Aurora Perlee  
Westfield

## Combining Directors of Human Resources And Technology Might Dilute Both Posts

I would like to comment on the plan to combine the positions of Director of Human Resources and Director of Technology. Before I do I'd like you to know that I work for a billion dollar corporation as its vice president of Enabling Technologies. This includes responsibility for the areas of human resources, Information Technology, Communications and Learning Technologies.

I understand the requirements of leadership positions in these areas. Based on

this understanding I am concerned that by combining the two positions, you dilute the effectiveness of both.

My Director of Human Resources has primary responsibility for both strategic and tactical people issues from recruiting to retiring, including compensation, benefits, employee relations, employee law and contract negotiations. Your human resources job might be different, but I imagine it still must focus on significant people issues.

My Chief Information Officer has primary responsibility for both strategic and tactical Information Technology issues. Most of these issues do relate to people, but the knowledge requirements of each job are significantly different. Technology should be used as a tool by your employees and their students.

It should not drive your learning plans, it should enhance the achievement of them. On the other hand, there is a great need for your employees and their students to learn how to use technology to improve the learning process.

Your employees have extremely important issues that need support from Human Resources.

Your employees also need appropriate technology to keep abreast of the changes in the way we get things done because of technology.

The combining of these two positions might be a great idea five years from now when technology is imbedded in your operations, people are fully trained in its possibilities and real value is being displayed from each investment in technology. Until then, you risk the dilution of the effort required to keep moving forward in both technology and human resource management.

I can understand the temptation to combine these jobs. To have an effective organization these positions must work very close together. I recognized that need when I brought the positions together under one area called Enabling Technologies. However, we all have to realize that these positions require significant resources and combining them would be unfair to the incumbent, your employees, your students and your taxpayers.

Therefore, I ask that you consider including both positions in the base budget. Without the proper personnel on staff, all the people and technology investment in the world will not yield the results we are really trying to achieve.

Jacqueline Piesco  
Westfield

Pete Tortorello  
Westfield



### CAPITAL/CAPITOL

Most columns have only one capital at their top, but this edition of the Word Sleuths has two. Let's explore the origin of the capital and its many definitions and the historical legend that created its homophone, capitol.

The words capital and capitol are closely related. Both stem from the Latin word caput, later spelled capitulus, and both mean the head. The English words cattle and chattel also came from capitulus, since a man's wealth was, at one time, measured in terms of the number of head of cattle he owned.

A person with too much capital or wealth during the French Revolution was called a capitalist and was in literal danger of having his head separated from his body by the blade of the guillotine. Caput! Capital punishment still refers to the head or life or the loss of same.

Today, capital has a variety of meanings that stem from the caput source. These include the top of a column, wealth, the city or town serving as the seat of a government, and an indication that something is excellent.

While capital has many meanings, capitol is limited to just one, "the building in which a state's legislature assembles." The Congress of the United States is referred to as Capitol Hill because the U.S. Capitol building is situated on a hill in our Nation's Capital.

## Letters to the Editor

### Westfield's Job Is to Maintain Brightwood's Natural Setting

The robins are flocking around the pond at Brightwood Park on this sunshine-filled day and seem to be asking, what are we "doing" here? Is spring really on the way? Or are we too early?

And I wonder, as I walk around the park, whose been here already, cutting down the trees and thickets? Who decided, who chose? What's the plan? At the Recreation Commission meeting last Thursday, it genuinely appeared that no one knew just exactly "who" was responsible for the already significant changes to the park.

And so it was especially welcome to have at least one citizen present who is extremely knowledgeable about the natural world. He informed the commission about what was lost, namely, a redbird blackbird and goldfinch habitat. And Rose of Sharon.

And he told us that the pond is not, in fact, stagnant. (Although, to the untrained eye, it appears to be with its perennial green pond covering.) The green cover-

ing, not just some random pollutant pond scum, is duckweed, which is, in fact, part of the natural ecosystem. He assured us that, in fact, numerous fish are alive and well — large mouth bass, rainbow trout.

This is an evolving park which, left completely alone, will eventually become deciduous forest. Our job is to maintain it at its current state, which is a balance of five ecosystems, which segue naturally from pond, to marsh, to swamp, to fields, to forest.

We call Brightwood a natural refuge, but in fact it was created in 1973 from a town dump. Because it is in the midst of congested suburbia, it must be protected. And so, "natural" (as in "nature refuge") is, in fact, a misnomer.

Brightwood was created as the dream of Noel Taylor, a Westfield High School science teacher, back in the 1960s. He was a visionary man, during a revolutionary time. But make no mistake, he had to fight then to make his dream come true. And, like the artist Christo's work, the struggle was some of the most beautiful part.

It's unlikely a project of such scope and imagination would come to fruition today — sadly, our dreams have become smaller. But must they? Says who?

Meanwhile let's remember Noel Taylor's legacy, and the new plants and animals that have found a home in this man-made refuge. And for the citizens of Westfield, our task is not only to visit the park at different times of day, as the light changes, as the seasons change, but to become knowledgeable about what's in our own back yard, and then protect it.

Gail Buckland  
Westfield

Aurora Perlee  
Westfield

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Jacqueline Piesco  
Westfield

Pete Tortorello  
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### WHS Class of 1955 Sets Millennium Reunion

WESTFIELD—The Westfield High School Class of 1955 will host its Millennium Reunion on Saturday, April 21. A luncheon and tour will take place at the school and a dinner dance will be held at the Echo Lake Country Club. A brunch will be served on Sunday, April 22, at the home of a classmate.

The whereabouts of the following classmates is needed. Please call Art and Barbara Jaffee Horner at (908) 232-7758 or e-mail Artjpre@bellatlantic.net if the location of these pupils is known.

The classmates are: Thor Anderson, Judith Andrews, Barbara Austin Manzi, Carol Boyer Burroughs, Stephen S. Evans, John B. Freeman, Jr., Phyllis R. Hammond, Craig H. Harris, Gail Hewson, Lawrence L. Horstman, Jr., Jacqueline S. Huttkey, Joan Luker, Priscilla Markham, Sondra Meltzer Silver, Susanne Nielson, R. William O'Keefe, David A. Tryon, and E. Bruce Wetzell.