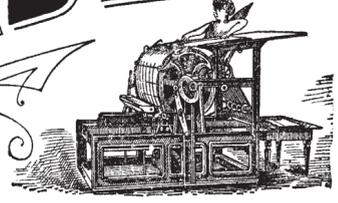




WESTFIELD LEADER.



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THE LUCK OF THE IRISH...Last Saturday, the Union County St. Patrick's Day Parade in Union drew droves of Irish descent and plenty of revelers. Pictured, left to right, are: far left, loads of luck are offered to the parade attendants by a giant leprechaun; top, the Westfield Fife & Drum Corps of Westfield marches proudly throughout downtown Union, and, bottom, the parade's General Chairman Michael Scanlon, Grand Marshal Joseph B. Sullivan and Woodbridge Mayor James E. McGreevey join in the festivities.

Town Council Unveils Budget With Modest Hike in Tax Rate

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

An 11th hour assist from Trenton lawmakers has enabled the town to shave another two cents off the municipal tax rate, thus placing the tax burden over 2000 at one cent, or roughly \$18, for a homeowner assessed at \$180,000.

The council voted 8-0 Tuesday night to introduce a \$24.8 million spending plan, with \$12.8 million to be raised through local property taxes.

The town was able to reduce the Police and Firemen's Retirement System by \$478,000 as per the Pension Cost Stabilization Act, thus decreasing this year's allocation for Westfield to \$240,582. The town's original contribution had been set at \$718,592.

Mayor Gregory S. McDermott said the one cent increase on the municipal tax rate is particularly important, given the projected increases in the school and county tax levies.

He asked the Finance Committee to be "pro active" this year by implementing the town's capital projects. The Mayor had Town Administrator Thomas B. Shannon initiate a six-year capital spending plan this year.

As per this year's budget, Mayor McDermott said the town plans to hire a private company to run a commuter jitney service from the Westfield Train Station. In addition, the budget includes \$95,000 in funding for a parking manager and support staff.

"It's a solid budget. We are putting in some good new initiatives and for the Westfield taxpayers, it's some nice relief," added Finance Committee member Peter Echausse, who

represents the First Ward on the Town Council.

The committee also includes Second Ward Councilman Matthew P. Albano, the Committee Chairman; First Ward Councilman Carl A. Salisbury and Fourth Ward Councilman Lawrence A. Goldman. Mr. McDermott cited Mr. Albano for

fire department and an additional street sweeper for the Department of Public Works. Mr. Echausse noted that the new fire pumper will mean the town will not have to purchase another truck for 10 years.

The spending plan includes increased funding for sewer maintenance. The Mayor said the budget also includes an aggressive road improvement program. Roads to be improved this year are: East Dudley Avenue, from Mountain Avenue to Prospect Street; Lawrence Avenue, from Route 22 to Hillside Avenue; the roads surrounding Wilson Elementary School, and Scotch Plains Avenue.

In addition to the field maintenance personnel, the town is buying additional capital equipment for improvement of ballparks.

The town also has funded a Length Of Service Awards Program (LOSAP), at \$92,000, a system aimed at retaining and recruiting rescue squad members.

The town saw a \$113,000 increase in health insurance for municipal employees, to \$1.6 million. Also, the allocation to the Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority jumped \$248,000, to \$1.24 million.

Councilman Echausse noted that the \$1.8 million Memorial Park reconstruction project was deferred to next year.

During the budget process, Mr. Shannon reduced the line item for reserve for uncollected taxes from \$1.8 to \$1.6 million, based on an anticipated 98 percent collection rate.

The council also agreed to reduce the town's reliance on the sale of

"It's a solid budget. We are putting in some good new initiatives and for the Westfield taxpayers, it's some nice relief."

--Finance Committee member Peter Echausse, who represents the First Ward on the Town Council.

encouraging dialogue during the lengthy budget process.

"That's why I think we had a very good budget and a very good process," Mayor McDermott added.

Councilman Echausse explained that the town was able to remove a \$478,000 line item on the appropriations side of the budget that had been allocated for the state's Police and Firemen's Pension System. That, in effect, reduced the projected municipal tax rate increase from 2.9 cents to .5 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation. Mr. Shannon said the county tax board administrator is likely to put the rate at one cent over 2000.

The municipal budget, which will come up for a public hearing and adoption vote on Tuesday, April 24, includes funding for a field maintenance crew of up to four persons; acquisition of a fire pumper for the

Community Turns Out to BOE Meeting in Support of Programs

By MELISSA BETKOWSKI
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

Parents of Westfield students and concerned citizens turned out on Tuesday night at the Board of Education's special meeting to show their support for various programs in jeopardy of being eliminated from the tentative 2001-2002 school budget.

The projected 2001-2002 school budget currently stands at \$60,050,992. The spending plan would be supported by a tax levy of approximately \$51 million, to be voted on by residents in April.

Board of Education President Darielle Walsh opened the meeting by addressing the audience regarding the issues surrounding the second budget question which will be on the April 17 ballot.

Mrs. Walsh reminded the public that the second question is part of the total budget package, not merely an additional item for consideration.

The items in the base budget and the second question are all components needed in order for the district to offer a comprehensive education to all its students, she said.

"We are asking for support of the total budget," she noted.

"We have recommended a budget that is educationally and fiscally responsible," Mrs. Walsh said.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. William J. Foley said that part of the task behind formulating a second question, is the idea of crafting something that will succeed.

"We try to craft a package that will be acceptable to the community," Dr. Foley added.

Dr. Foley discussed some changes that have been made to the tentative budget since the board's meeting last week.

He said that the board had been asked to restore the Primary Enrichment Program (PEP), noting that the planned structure is for a scaled back version of PEP for fewer students.

Also, Dr. Foley noted that the textbooks for new curricula have been moved from the second question to the base budget in accordance with public concern.

Additional staffing at Roosevelt Intermediate School has also been planned for in order to address overcrowding concerns.

Dr. Foley did state that some athletic programs and co-curricular activities have been moved to the second question to make room for some of the other changes. Golf, boys and girls tennis, bowling, and gymnastics are some of the sports included in the second question.

Business Administrator and Board Secretary Robert A. Berman told *The Westfield Leader* on Wednesday afternoon that these five sports are being examined for inclusion in the second question due to low enrollment.

Dr. Foley said that he would have liked to propose the total budget as one question, but the law won't allow it.

In echoing Mrs. Walsh's statement about the budget being educationally and fiscally responsible, Dr. Foley said that he doesn't want to see anything done that will jeopardize the passage of the second question.

Budget and Finance Committee Chairman Michael J. Kessler reiterated the one budget concept, noting that nothing in the second question is less important than things in the base budget.

Mr. Kessler said that this year the Budget and Finance Committee, along with the full board, tried to start the budget process earlier, and that boards of the future will have to start even earlier.

Board Member William Wallace voiced support for the textbooks being moved to the base budget and was also pleased to see staff concerns at Roosevelt being addressed.

Mr. Wallace said that he would support an additional penny in the tax rate to fund a full-time Director of Technology for the district.

As was noted at last week's meeting, there has been discussion over consolidating the positions of Director of Technology and Director of Human Resources, following the retirements of David Tuller and Darlene Nowak.

Curriculum Committee Chairwoman Annmarie Puleio said that in her discussions with Westfield residents she has heard support for the board in the budget process, with many people understanding that the board must do what it has to in order to provide a comprehensive education to the children of Westfield.

Ms. Puleio remembered that the board members had been concerned over the passage of the December bond referendum and were pleasantly surprised by the overwhelming support shown by the community.

Ms. Puleio also supported the addition of a penny in the tax rate in order to fund the Director of Technology.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

While Train Commuters Seek Alternatives, Residents Complain Over On-Street Parking

By DEBORAH MADISON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

The only incontrovertible fact that everyone in Westfield can agree on is that there is a parking problem. Commuters, shoppers and employees all vying for less-than-adequate numbers of spaces, creating competition in a simple supply and demand enigma. Meter feeding, illegal parking, price gouging and commuter cars congesting residential side streets have all been par for the course in this first-come-first-serve parking dilemma.

The latest chapter in the parking saga has been the implementation of two-hour limit signs on Carleton Road. Joining the ranks of many of the other streets surrounding the train station, Carleton has now been alleviated of the plethora of commuter cars which used to congest that residential neighborhood.

The residents of Carleton, like their neighbors on Summit and Rahway Avenues and Westfield Road, got fed up with having bumper-to-bumper commuter cars parked in front of their homes, and asked the town to remedy the problem.

The result of this partial-remedy has been to displace those commuters to other nearby side streets, such as Park Place and parts of Westfield Road or to push them further up Carleton, to where there are no hourly limits.

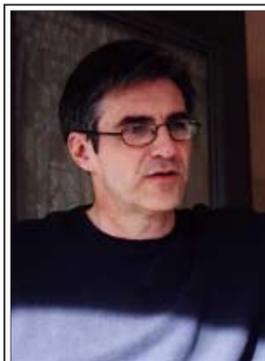
Not that the commuters and the residents are not sympathetic to each others' plights, but each side has made some valid points regarding their needs and rights.

"I used to be a commuter and I am sympathetic to their need to get to work," said Carleton Road resident Rodger Bilheimer. "But the whole complexion of the neighborhood changed when the commuter cars were moved off the block."

"The town needs to find a solution for both the residents and the commuters; not solutions that are only helpful to one, and detrimental to the other," he added.

Park Place resident Sally Wright said that now that Carleton has been restricted, there are even more commuter cars parking on Park Place in front of her home.

"When my rides come to get me, they have nowhere to pull over. They



Rodger Bilheimer of Carleton Road:

"I'm sympathetic to the commuters, but I don't want wall-to-wall cars in front of my house, blocking my driveway. The town needs to accommodate both the commuters and the residents."



Commuter Lisa Kraus:

"I have to get dropped off and picked up. It's not always convenient, but we've only been on the permit list for a year and a half."



Anton Kouraeva and mother Natalia Kouraeva of Carleton Road:

"When the commuters parked on Carleton, my son, Anton's school bus had nowhere to pull over and had to stop in the middle of the road. It was very unsafe."

All photos by Ingrid McKinley for The Westfield Leader



Commuter Eric Bass:

"I missed the 8:39 a.m. train because the walk from where I had to park my car was too long. It's a very punitive system."



Park Place resident Sally Wright:

"The hourly restriction on Carleton simply relocated the problem to our street. Where's the equity in that?"



Commuter Jennifer Scott

"I park in the Watterson Street lot. It's not ideal, but it's satisfactory."

have to stop in the middle of the street. I'd like to see some equity for our street now. They've simply relocated the parking problem to Park Place," she said.

On the other side of this parking dilemma are many disgruntled com-

muters who feel that the town, in implementing these parking restrictions, has abandoned them.

"It is reprehensible that they are pushing us further and further away from the train station," said Westfield resident and daily commuter, Rachel Pujol.

"The town had a responsibility to find a suitable alternative for the commuters before taking away our only options," she added.

Like many Westfield commuters, Mrs. Pujol was told that there is a five-year waiting list for a permit in the train station lot.

"It is not an acceptable solution to ask me to wait five years for a parking space. How am I supposed to get to work? I cannot walk alone at night, half a mile to some isolated parking lot," she said.

Mrs. Pujol is referring to one of the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Registration Deadline For BOE Elections Slated for March 19

WESTFIELD -- Monday, March 19, marks the final day for residents to register as voters for the upcoming school board elections.

The elections will be held on Tuesday, April 17.

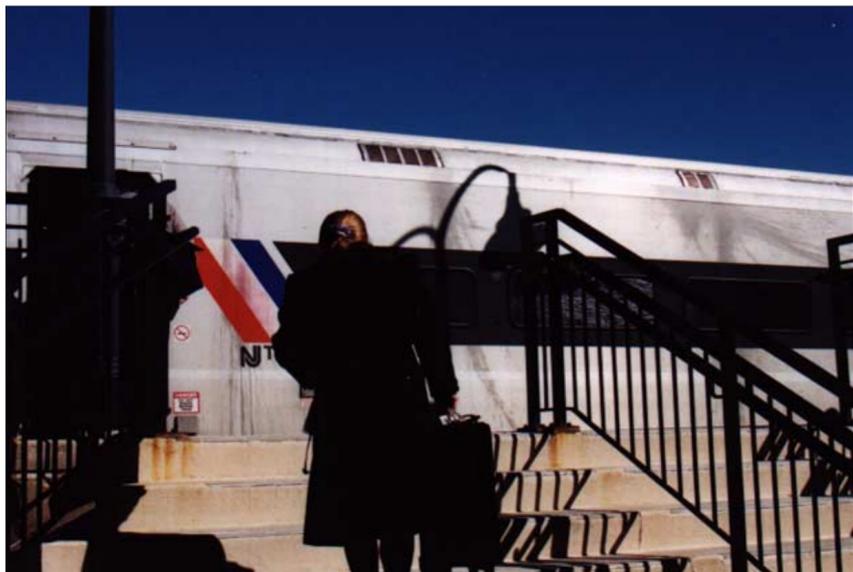
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CYAN YELLOW MAGENTA BLACK



THE BATTLE OF US VERSUS THEM...Residents of Westfield Road, near Park Street, are angered by the endless stream of cars owned by commuters, which they believe are clogging their streets. On the other hand, NJ Transit commuters, such as the woman, above, preparing to board the train, feel like the Town of Westfield has failed them by not offering more viable parking alternatives.



Ingrid McKinley for The Westfield Leader

Retirement Fund Legislation to Let Mountainside Reduce Tax Pt. Hike

By LAUREN S. PASS
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

MOUNTAINSIDE — During the governing body's work session Tuesday night, Mountainside Mayor Robert F. Vigilanti announced that the borough just received notification from the state that it will be able to reduce the previously estimated tax point increase for 2001 from 3 points down to approximately 1 point.

In light of recently-passed Senate Bill No. 1961, that recalculated the interest returned on the Police and Firemen's Retirement System, many municipalities, including Mountainside, will be receiving a refund.

The borough's tax obligation for the retirement system was determined to be reduced by \$91,344, from \$137,318 to \$45,974, according to the borough's Financial Officer, Michele Swisher. The revised tax calculation results in an approximate tax liability increase of \$16 for a home assessed at \$150,000, instead of the previously estimated \$46 per average household over last year.

Mayor Vigilanti announced that this will most likely be "a one-time-

only gift from the state," and that taxes will probably increase by the previously estimated 2 points in 2002.

The exact point reduction will be re-calculated by the County of Union and may be rounded up or down, Ms. Swisher added.

In other business Tuesday, a resolution was unanimously passed raising compensation for the Substitute Prosecutor to \$325 per session, and \$300 for the Public Defender per session. This will be retroactive to January 1, 2001.

Concerning the possibility of Beechwood School being reinstated as a part of the Mountainside public school district, a discussion took place on the potential need for a police officer to be stationed at that school.

Beechwood was previously rented to a private school for children with disabilities for the past decade. That contract will not be renewed in light of the district needing the space for expected enrollment increases. The reinstatement of Beechwood will be put to a referendum.

Currently, a police officer is shared between Governor Livingston High School and Deerfield Elementary

School. The Officer in School Program is supported by a federally funded grant, which pays for the salary and training of a police officer to patrol the schools, as well as carry out the school's DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program.

Chief School Administrator Dr. Gerard Schaller told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood* that the Officer in School Program has been very successful in providing the added security, which Mountainside schools want to provide.

New office equipment for the borough's administrative offices, totaling \$20,000, will be purchased, including a new copy machine, new fax machine and several new and used filing cabinets.

Three tax sale certificate redemptions have been made, totaling \$132,316, for properties re-assessed at higher values than originally estimated.

The appointment of John M. Clifford to the Mountainside Ethics Board was made. Mr. Clifford will be the Democratic representative.

The governing body's next regular meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 20, at 8 p.m., at which time officials are expected to hold a public hearing on and adopt the 2001 municipal budget.

Community Attends BOE Mtg. To Show Support for Programs

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

nology position.

Long Range Planning Committee Chairwoman Eileen Satkin discussed the board's "tremendous commitment to education."

Mrs. Satkin reminded the public that if the second question is defeated it is eliminated. The base budget, if it is not passed, goes before the Town Council for approval, but the second question would not get a second chance.

"We have a significant problem if

it is not passed."

If the second question is passed, the funds allocated would become part of the base budget for the following year.

Mrs. Walsh urged the voters to "step up to the plate" and do their part for the passage of the budget.

She noted that if the budget is defeated and goes to the Town Council, the council has the option of cutting the budget however it sees fit.

"We don't tell the town council what roads to pave," Mrs. Walsh said, adding that the council should not be afforded the opportunity to dictate how the district spends its money.

Board Member Kimberly Rhodes, in an impassioned plea said "we must get the budget passed."

Ms. Rhodes noted that she had received a number of calls and e-mails about the budget from concerned parents and urged all those who have concerns to support the budget as a total package.

Board Vice President Arlene Gardner, putting the tax increase in perspective for the public noted that she had recently been paying bills and noticed that the garbage bill that all Westfield residents pay is \$30 per month, or \$360 per year. The proposed tax increase to the town is roughly \$300 on the average house.

"Aren't our kids worth the money that we pay for our garbage?" Mrs. Gardner asked.

Gary McCreedy, a member of the district's technology committee said that the public needs to be made aware of costs that the district cannot control, such as utility costs or the rising cost of out-of-district special education.

Carolyn Fleder, also a member of the technology committee, appealed to the board on a number of concerns.

Mrs. Fleder noted that the district's per pupil spending is below the state average, while comparable districts are above.

"Don't stop at a penny," she said, urging the board to do whatever it has to in order to provide excellence in education.

Robin Rosen Chang told the board that she had recently moved to Westfield because of the excellent education the town is known for providing. She said that she would not have considered moving to the town had it not offered an elementary foreign language program.

Other parents appealed for a full-time Vice Principal at Franklin Elementary School, noting that making it a half-time position will not work. Also addressed was the need for appropriate guidance and student assistance counselors throughout the district.

As the final comment of the evening, Mark Fleder told the board that the public wants to work with the board in its quest to provide superior educational opportunities.

FAA Set to Hold Hearing Tuesday

On Airspace Redesign

SPRINGFIELD — The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) will hold a hearing this Tuesday, March 20, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Holiday Inn on Route 22 in Springfield as part of the agency's redesign of the New York - New Jersey metropolitan airspace.

The FAA's last redesign of the airspace was in 1987.

"I would like to encourage attendance by residents concerned about aircraft noise,"

said Jerome Feder, the Westfield representative and Acting Chairman of the Union County Air Traffic Advisory Board.

Town Council Unveils Budget With Modest Hike in Tax Rate

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

municipal assets account — an account consisting mostly of revenues from the sale of town-owned land — from \$570,000 to \$250,000 in the operating budget. This was accomplished by reducing the reserve for uncollected taxes from \$1,850,000 to \$1,650,000, along with becoming less reliant on deferring charges.

On the latter, the council agreed to reduce the deferred charges line item — also referred to as unfunded debt — from \$950,000 to \$600,000, according to Councilman Echausse. He said the town currently has \$3.5 million of unfunded debt, which represents mostly road improvement projects.

Councilman Echausse called this year's spending plan "a solid budget" that addresses the needs of residents.

Councilman Goldman said the town was able this year to deliver existing as well as new services, all while having little impact on local taxes.

He called the state's decision to reduce allocations for police and firefighters' pensions "great news."

Councilman Goldman was cautious about whether the governing body could deliver the same kind of

minimal tax impact next year, noting "what's given one year could easily be taken away the next."

Second Ward Councilman Rafael Betancourt said he was happy that the governing body has begun a long-term budget system whereby the council will better be able to keep tax increases down in future years.

Councilman Salisbury said this year's small tax impact will enable him to "sleep a little better." He said he had been undecided on whether he would have supported the original three cent projected hike in the municipal tax rate.

Juelis, Korecky Earn Dean's List Recognition At Bucknell University

WESTFIELD — Mark J. Juelis and Kelly J. Korecky, both of Westfield, have been named to the Dean's List for the fall 2000 semester at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pa.

Mark is the son of Mr. and Mrs. John Juelis. Kelly is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ed Korecky.

WESTFIELD POLICE BLOTTER

TUESDAY, MARCH 6

- A Westfield resident reported the theft of his 1992 Jeep Cherokee from the south side train station parking lot. The vehicle had not been recovered as of press time.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7

- A Scotch Plains resident reported that his motor vehicle was damaged while parked on North Avenue, West.
- Kyle Harvin, 24, of Westfield was arrested in the parking lot of a South Avenue convenience store and charged with possession of suspected cocaine.

Harvin, who was also wanted on a Highland Park Municipal Court warrant, was turned over to authorities in that community pending determination of bail there. He was issued a summons for the Westfield charge.

THURSDAY, MARCH 8

- A Clarence Avenue resident reported an incident of theft by deception, in which someone accessed his account through an Automatic Teller Machine and removed \$80.

FRIDAY, MARCH 9

- Lauren A. McMillan, 23, of Westfield was charged with driving while intoxicated after she was involved in a motor vehicle accident in the 200 block of South Avenue, West. She was released with a summons.

SATURDAY, MARCH 10

- A Central Avenue coffee shop reported an incident of criminal mischief in which someone carved the initials "JWB" into a wall in a bathroom at the establishment.

SUNDAY, MARCH 11

- The driver's side mirror on an automobile was broken while the car was parked in the 900 block of Boulevard.
- A resident of Glastonbury, Conn.

Middle, Upper Schools At Pingry School Post Honor Roll Recipients

WESTFIELD — Headmaster John Neiswender of The Pingry School has announced the names of students who were recently appointed to the first semester Honor Roll in the Middle and Upper Schools at the Martinsville campus.

Students from Westfield include:
Grade 7: Sam Blum, Kelly Peeler and Amy Santoriello.
Grade 8: Rita Biagioli, Elizabeth Encarnacion, Alexander Meder and Christopher Svoboda.
Grade 9: Alexander Bregman, David Spett and Gwen Tobert.
Grade 10: Nicholas Dovidio, Eric Meder and Diana Svoboda.
Grade 11: Peter Jeydel and Brian Martin.
Grade 12: Condi Thiam.

Realtors' Association Offers Educational Scholarships

WESTFIELD — The Greater Union County Association of Realtors has announced that 15 educational scholarships are now being awarded through the New Jersey Association of Realtors Educational Foundation.

Applicants for the scholarship should be pursuing an education at the undergraduate or graduate levels or be seniors in high school. Residents of New Jersey, limited to members of the New Jersey Association of Realtors (NJAR) or relatives of members, are eligible for scholarship assistance.

Those considering a career in real estate, as evidenced by a major in real estate or related field of study, will be given special consideration.

Related fields include the following topics: buying, servicing and selling, lending, exchanging, financing, appraising, management, syndication and urban planning.

The criteria for selection includes academic achievements, financial need, sincerity of purpose in real estate endeavors, and contribution to family, school and community. All decisions as to whether or not an applicant qualifies will be at the discretion of the selection committee.

The scholarships include two Nancy Reynolds scholarships at \$2,000 each, seven \$1,500 awards named in honor of various individuals and Realtor Associations, and six general scholarships at \$1,250 each.

Applications are available from the Greater Union County Association of Realtors at 767 Central Avenue, Westfield, (908) 232-9000. The entries must be typed and returned to the NJAR by 5 p.m. on Friday, April 27. Applications received after that date will not be considered.

Douglas M. Fasciale

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by the Supreme Court of New Jersey

Concentrating in personal injury
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