

THE WESTFIELD LEADER

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Council Amends, Then OKs Decree to Build Deck, Decks

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

After hearing arguments over the course of four and a half hours, both pro and con, the Town Council unanimously passed an ordinance Tuesday night setting up a funding source of \$700,000 for the design, construction management and related professional services for the building of a parking deck or decks in the downtown.

The vote occurred at 1 a.m. Wednesday following comments from residents which began at 8:30 p.m. The ordinance on the council's agenda was identical to one defeated on first reading just two weeks earlier in a 5-4 vote. Mayor Gregory S.

McDermott broke a 4-4 deadlock. The ordinance on Tuesday was passed following an amendment by Third Ward Councilman Neil F. Sullivan, who chairs the Transportation, Parking and Traffic Committee, which changed the ordinance to reflect the possibility of building not just one deck, as included in the original ordinance, but two decks. In addition, the document reflects that funds can be spent on other means of improving the parking situation within the town. These include a commuter jitney service, a valet parking system at the South Avenue train station lot and reconfiguration of the "horseshoe" area of the South Avenue lot to add

more spaces. Councilman Sullivan said four of the 11 so-called "parking principals," approved last summer by the council, have been implemented to date. He said the town anticipates that the valet parking and jitney service will be up and running by the fall. Town Administrator Thomas B. Shannon announced that interviews among the remaining eight candidates for the newly created position of parking manager will be conducted the week of Monday, June 11, with a recommendation made to Mayor McDermott and the council by the end of that week. Mayor McDermott told *The Westfield Leader* that he envisions this person moving all the parking projects forward, including the hiring of a consultant to design the parking deck or decks by July. Fourth Ward Councilman Lawrence A. Goldman, in supporting construction of a deck, said, "There is never going to be a perfect location" to construct a parking facility. With over 35 persons speaking at



READY TO PLAY... The Second Garden State Open Table Tennis Tournament was held in the Westfield National Guard Armory last Saturday and Sunday. Sponsored by "Lily Yip Sports, Inc.," participants included 10 players from the North Jersey Developmental Center. The event helped prepare for the Special Olympic Summer Games to be held from Friday to Sunday, June 1 to 3. See story on Page 5.

Full-Day Vo-Tech Program Concerns Local School Districts

By SUSAN M. DYCKMAN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

The state's increased requirements for high school graduation make it difficult for a "shared time" vocational-technical program like that offered at the Union County Vocational-Technical Schools (UCVTS) in Scotch Plains to work the way it used to, according to Superintendent Thomas J. Bistocchi. "There's not enough time in a child's day to fulfill the requirements," he said. The school has proposed a \$12 million expansion that would allow the school to offer a full-time academic and vocational program. The proposal calls for construction of a new 80,000-square-foot building for classrooms, science and computer labs, fitness center and auditorium.

certainly increase for a full-time program. It costs Scotch Plains-Fanwood \$2,500 per student for the existing



Union County Vocational-Technical Schools

In a shared time program, a student receives academic instruction at his local high school, then travels to UCVTS for vocational training. While students spend three periods on the UCVTS campus, Mr. Bistocchi said they spend the equivalent of one period or more traveling between schools. Of New Jersey's 21 county vocational-technical schools, approximately 12 are full-time programs. The UCVTS superintendent maintains a shift to a full-time program, that offers both academic and vocational courses at one location, is necessary for the program to remain a viable option for students seeking vocational opportunities.

shared time program. In discussing the issue, some board members have expressed concern about the impact of increased costs to the district for a full-day vo-tech program. "It's all about making sure the opportunities are there," said Mr. Bistocchi, who predicted a "devastating" impact on the county economy if the UCVTS program ceased to exist.

Mr. Bistocchi cited a 1992 study conducted under former UCVTS superintendent and present State Education Commissioner Vito Gagliardi, which suggested the school turn to a full-time delivery system. He also commented on the reimbursement opportunities presented by the School Facilities Construction and Financing Act, saying it was an "opportune time" to expand the program. UCVTS currently enrolls 600 to 700 students on a shared time basis. With a shift to full time, enrollment would drop closer to 500 students. Superintendent Bistocchi does not anticipate a "dramatic impact" on local districts though, tuition would

Parade to Begin Monday at 9 a.m.

Westfield's annual Memorial Day Parade will kick off this Monday, May 28, at 9 a.m. at the Veterans Memorial Monument at the circle intersection of East Broad Street and North Avenue. Opening remarks will be made by this year's master of ceremonies, Peter Hogaboom, who as the American Legion Chaplain will offer the opening prayer and benediction. Alfred Riker, Commander of the Martin Wallberg American Legion Post No. 3; Alfred Shea, Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Mountside Chapter, as well as Westfield Mayor Gregory S. McDermott, will address the crowd. Representatives of the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars will place wreaths at the monument. Cannon volleys by the New York Lambs Artillery will be followed by "The Star Spangled Banner," performed by the Westfield High School Marching Band. Taps and echo taps will be played by Christopher Velderman and Adam Subhaus, accompanied by Dr. Theodore Schlossberg of the New Jersey Workshop for the Arts. Kerry Stubbs will sing an a cappella rendition of "God Bless America."

The parade will start at the completion of ceremonies at the monument. Marchers will go up East Broad Street, make a left

Consultant Recommends Two Decks in Downtown; While Mayor Forms Advisory on Parking Issue

By JAMES M. FOERST
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

Last week, Rich & Associates, the parking consultant to the Town of Westfield, recommended that the town move ahead with plans to build a parking deck at Elm and Prospect Streets and construct a second, smaller structure on North Avenue alongside the railroad tracks and behind the Paine Webber building. The town council met last Thursday with Richard A. Rich of Rich & Associates to update recently elected council members on the parking problems in town, as well as to have Mr. Rich answer questions which have arisen since his last presentation to them in the fall. In particular, both Second Ward Councilman Rafael Betancourt and First Ward Councilman Peter Echausse were not members of the council when Mr. Rich gave his initial presentation recommending a deck at lots 1 and 8, located at Elm and Prospect Streets. "My goal is to leave tonight having all of the council's questions answered," said Mayor Gregory S. McDermott. "If you had to do it all over again, would you change your recommen-

and if so, what would you change?" Mayor McDermott asked Mr. Rich. "The community needs to be involved in the process," said Mr. Rich, who continued by stating, "There was not enough public input in the

of February 2000 found a parking deficiency of some 617 spots with a 10-year estimate of a 1,436-space shortfall. "I think we have overestimated the need for parking," commented Neil F. Sullivan, Third Ward Councilman

commuter lots. Councilman Sullivan noted that many of the people on the waiting list would decline the permit if it were made available.

There are presently 970 names on waiting lists for parking permits at the train station lots located on South Avenue and Watterson Street, officials said. In the end Mr. Rich concluded, "I strongly recommend two parking structures. A smaller structure on lots 1 and 8 and a second structure on lot 9."

"Frankly, anything would enhance the area on Elm Street near lots 1 and 8," said Mr. Rich. "It is important that we add spaces now. We would decrease the size of a lot 1 and 8 structure by approximately 40 percent to 500 stalls. This would mitigate citizens, traffic concerns and address design issues," said Mr. Rich. While the first structure is being built, Mr. Rich reasoned, the town could plan for the construction of a second structure at lot 9, which would add an additional 262 spaces. "There would be additional cost with two locations," responded Mr. Rich, when asked by Fourth Ward

"The community needs to be involved in the process. There was not enough public input in the initial process."
Richard A. Rich
Rich & Associates
Parking Consultant to Town of Westfield

initial process." Councilman Echausse questioned Mr. Rich about the possibility of building a deck on lot 9, also known as the Shell lot, at the corner of North and Central Avenues. "I still think that your best shot is lots 1 and 8," Mr. Rich responded. "Lot 9 is less efficient than lots 1 and 8 with cost per space being higher on lot 9. Also, even if we built to full capacity on lot 9, with a net gain of 262 spaces, there is still a serious parking deficit downtown," he said. Lots 1 and 8 are located between Elm and Prospect Streets in the downtown area. Mr. Rich's parking study

and Chairman of the council's Transportation, Parking and Traffic Committee. "The enforcement of short-term parking has cleared out the downtown and reduced the number of spaces needed in the central business district. We have created shoppers space by getting out the short-term (employee) parkers," Mr. Sullivan said, while referring to meter feeders. He also noted that, "the permit deficit is really only approximately 350 spots," calculating that numerous names were duplicates on the South Avenue and Watterson Street

Local Chiropractor, Vietnam Veteran to Head Westfield Memorial Day Parade This Monday

By SUSAN BARBARA GORDON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

Dr. Martin E. Cohen, who served as a medic in Vietnam, now practices his healing arts at the Chiropractic Center of Westfield, located at 434 Summit Avenue, in a neighborhood that is a world away from the struggle for survival that faced him every day

during the war. Dr. Cohen, this year's Grand Marshal of the Westfield Memorial Day Parade, will be the first Vietnam veteran to hold that honor. The chiropractor, who served in the Navy, providing medical care for service personnel and their families, was sent to Vietnam as a Marine combat corpsman. Dr. Cohen's tour of duty during 1968 and 1969 included the Tet Offensive, Quang Tri Province, Cua Viet, Dong Ha, Da Nang and Hue.



Dr. Martin E. Cohen

by the lack of support for those fighting in Vietnam), he was able to honor his friends who did not return home, by visiting the Vietnam Memorial in Holmdel. When asked what he chooses to impart to this year's Memorial Day Parade viewers, Dr. Cohen responded, "Veterans should be treated with respect and acknowledged, no matter what war they served in."

Dr. Cohen is Past Commander of American Legion Post No. 3, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post No. 11467 and Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter No. 233. He and Janice, his wife of 30 years, have lived in Westfield since 1977. They have two daughters, Danielle and Jessica. Opening ceremonies for this year's parade, on Monday, May 28, will be at 9 a.m. at the Monument to Veterans of World War I, at the plaza of East Broad Street and North Avenue in Westfield. Participants wishing to be in the line of march are asked to assemble at the Lord & Taylor parking lot at 8 a.m.



COURTESY OF DR. MARTIN E. COHEN
SUSTAINING A MINOR INJURY... Vietnam veteran Dr. Martin E. Cohen is shown wearing a cast on his leg from an injury sustained in the war. His leg still carries the shrapnel to this day.

He served with distinction, receiving numerous medals and commendations, including the Republic of South Vietnam Campaign Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, National Defense Medal, Navy Commendation Medal with Combat "V" for valor, and a Purple Heart. Looking at photographs of himself as a handsome young Marine, Dr. Cohen speaks of that period, which compressed a life-time of lessons into two years, with a combination of dry humor and misty eyes. Two photos stand out — a smiling Dr. Cohen wearing a cast on his leg (which still carries the shrapnel that he jokes sets off metal detectors) and him with a young Vietnamese child in front of an orphanage where corpsmen helped treat the youngsters. Though he said there can never really be closure to his Vietnam experiences (the day-to-day terror, inherent in any war, compounded



COURTESY OF DR. MARTIN E. COHEN
HELPING THE CHILDREN... Dr. Martin E. Cohen is pictured here with a young Vietnamese child in front of an orphanage where corpsmen helped treat the youngsters.

INDEX
A&E.....Page 21 Editorial..... Page 4 Religious..... Page 7
Business..... Page 17 Education.....Page 9 Social..... Page 6
Classifieds..... Page 16 Obituary..... Page 8 Sports..... Page 11

CYAN YELLOW MAGENTA BLACK



SPECIAL GUEST... Acting Governor Donald T. DiFrancesco made a special appearance at Brookside Park in Scotch Plains on May 20 for the Jim Airey ALS Awareness Tournament. Pictured, above, Mr. DiFrancesco meets with baseball fans.

Local Consumers Forced to Dig Deeper at Gasoline Pumps

By FRED ROSSI
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

Although the staggering 30 to 40 cent rise in gasoline prices of the past two months appears to have ended, or at least stabilized, the fact remains that, as the summer holiday season begins this weekend, gas prices are, for the most part, the highest they've ever been. A year ago, prices at the pump shot up to about \$1.50 for a gallon of regular gasoline.

However, prices remained steady throughout much of last fall and began to decline during the winter, with prices at some gas stations dropping to as low as \$1.29 per gallon.

Two months ago, however, price increases started to become an almost daily occurrence as the nation's energy woes began to affect consumers across the country. Gas prices in our area are now well above \$1.50 for a gallon of regular, and some stations are charging nearly \$2 for a gallon of premium.

Some are blaming the Bush Administration for its admitted lack of options to stabilize gas prices. Others blame

the dearth of new oil refineries in the United States, while some point the finger at everyone's favorite scapegoats — OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) and the oil

husband's car takes premium gas, she is "writing down places where I see cheap gas."

Gina Bonneau, visiting the area from the shore area, explained that the increase in gas prices has been a sort of blessing in disguise.

"I had been thinking about how to increase my physical activity in my busy schedule," she added.

She said the higher gas prices made her realize "that I didn't have to drive to the boardwalk or a park to accomplish my walking routine. I can walk to do errands such as going to the post office or local stores in a healthy way, while saving on gasoline."

Suzanne Dominguez of Milltown said she "considers the rise in gas prices to be a major drain on my pocketbook." She said that "instead of spending around \$20 a week, now the expense looks more like \$25 or \$30. Over a year's time, that'll add up to more than I'd like to spend."

She added that the increased cost of gas "won't break me, but it does affect the way I think about going out for a nice drive in the country or my cross-country summer plans."

Cleis Murillo of Bound Brook drives a van she said she uses to shuttle around her mother, her sister and their kids. She said she had never worried about the wear-and-tear and the cost of gas.

"Now," she joked, "I practically charge (my family) at the door before they get in! It's a major financial undertaking to fill my tank now."

Local gas retailers say the price hikes are out of their hands as they are forced to pass on the higher prices they pay to their suppliers.



File photo of The Westfield Leader

companies — for the rapid rise in gas prices this spring. Whoever is at fault, the fact is that consumers have to dig much deeper in their wallets in order to fill up their gas tanks.

Susan Konray of Westfield told *The Westfield Leader* that the Bush Administration "is probably orchestrating a gas crisis in order to push through policies to lower our emission and pollution standards and allow the industry to burn dirtier fuel oil and coal. The people will pay and big business will reap huge benefits."

Dale Cassidy from New York said that, despite the spike in gas prices, she is "still doing normal stuff."

She said that partly because her

Slower Economy Impacts Some Area Stores; Talbot's, Target Report Increase In Sales Volume

By FRED ROSSI
Specially Written for The Times

A year ago, it almost seemed that the good times would last forever. The national economy was barreling ahead into the 10th year of its expansion — one that had seen unemployment drop to its lowest level in decades; one that had turned a triple-digit federal budget deficit into a triple-digit surplus; one that had provided stock market investors with trillions of dollars in capital gains, and one that had given consumers reason to believe that everything was somehow affordable and nothing was unattainable.

What a difference a year makes. The economy slammed on its brakes late last year as stocks skidded into a bear market and whispers about a recession grew louder. Joblessness has risen as layoffs have mounted. Stock losses have forced many to pare back their spending. Consumers are more nervous than they were six or seven months ago. Locally, the picture is a mixed one, as discovered this week during a quick check with area businesses and business leaders.

With no businesses in town closing their doors recently, Debbie Schmidt, Executive Director of the Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce, said it's "a good sign that things are going fine."

Typically, she told *The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood*, after the winter holidays, those businesses that had struggled just to make it through the December shopping season then close their doors.

Joanna Kreil Elected

To Skidmore Honor Society
WESTFIELD — Joanna Kreil, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Kreil, has been elected to the Periclean Honor Society at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, N.Y. Joanna is a member of the Class of 2002. The society was formed to stimulate intellectual curiosity, to encourage creative activity, and to honor academic achievement.

But that wasn't the case this year in Westfield. In fact, she said, "people are looking to open in Westfield."

Pointing to the recent revival in the stock market, Ms. Schmidt expressed her hope that the worst of the economy's decline is over. She also noted that Talbot's, the national clothing retailer with a store in Westfield, just announced its sales were up 10 percent for the last fiscal year. In addition, Target, although not located in Westfield, was cited by Ms. Schmidt as also having reported healthy sales figures.

"So I think that the retail sector is doing well," she said.

She added that Trader Joe's, the specialty grocer on Elm Street, is serving some 7,000 customers a week and "doing very well," according to a recent conversation she had with the store's manager. And banks in Westfield are also healthy. While there is consolidation occurring in the industry, "we're not seeing closures due to a lack of activity."

Ray Pardon, President of the Scotch Plains Business and Professional Association, says that, overall, "general walk-around trade and business activity in town seems to be down."

He told *The Times* his feeling is that the current economic slowdown may be "more of a psychological recession than a financial one." Seeing big losses in the stock market, reading about layoffs and paying more for gasoline "sets up a negative psychological outlook in people's minds," he said.

A bright side to a slower economy for local merchants, Mr. Pardon said, is that "people tend to stay home and not take longer vacations," thus making it more likely that they'll spend their money closer to home.

Mr. Pardon added that business at his own store, Nuts N' Plenty on Park Avenue, has "definitely slowed down. I see it in my numbers." Another indicator to him of less-rosy times is the increase in the number of customers paying for their orders with credit cards rather than cash.

One area where conflicting stories were heard was the local travel industry.

Claudia Santo, with Sojourn Travel on Elm Street, said she had "absolutely" seen a slowdown in bookings in all areas of travel. She first noticed a downturn early this year.

But Jean Ann Honig, with SeaBound Cruises/World Cruises Ltd. on Front Street in Scotch Plains, stated she has seen a 20 percent increase in bookings

so far this year.

"The first quarter was better than usual for cruising," she told *The Times*, attributing the rise to the fact that cruises typically have a fixed price with nearly everything included in that price. "The cruise lines tell us that their sales are flat," she said, but her business has bucked that trend.

WESTFIELD POLICE BLOTTER

TUESDAY, MAY 15

- James Tobin, 35, of Bayville and Luanne Tuch, 26, of Toms River were arrested on Washington Street on narcotics charges, police confirmed.

- Tobin, charged with possession of suspected heroin, drug paraphernalia and a hypodermic syringe, was held on \$25,000 bail.

- Tuch, charged with possession of suspected heroin and possession of drug paraphernalia, was also wanted on a \$50,000 contempt of court warrant out of Ocean County.

- She was released on her own recognizance with summonses on the Westfield charges and released to the Ocean County Sheriff's Department.

- A Lincoln Road resident reported the theft of her wallet, containing \$80, while she was at an Elm Street supermarket.

THURSDAY, MAY 17

- An unknown individual attempted to pry open the driver's side door of a motor vehicle at the south side train station. Police said entry to the vehicle was not gained.

- The theft of \$31 from a book bag in the gym area of Westfield High School was reported to police.

- A Prospect Street resident reported that the front driver's side mirror on her motor vehicle was damaged while the vehicle was parked on Cowperthwaite Place.

FRIDAY, MAY 18

- Richard Yerich, Jr., 42, of Mountainside was arrested and charged with driving while intoxicated at Woodland and Kimball Avenues. Yerich was subsequently released on his own recognizance.

- Joseph Robinson, 18, of Westfield was arrested and charged with possession of a fictitious driver's license on Vernon Place. He was released on his own recognizance with a summons.

- Johnathan J. Singhbaba, 18, of Westfield was arrested and charged with possession of less than 50 grams of marijuana and possession of alcohol by a person under 21 years of age. He was released on his own recognizance.

SATURDAY, MAY 19

- A Trinity Place resident reported that someone used her identity to open an account with a business.

- Nicholas D. Klastava, 19, of Scotch Plains was arrested at Clark Street and Ludlow Place and charged with possession of alcohol while underage. He was released on his own recognizance with a summons.

Two Decks Recommended

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Councilman Lawrence A. Goldman, about the financial ramifications of two decks.

Mr. Rich noted that there would be required duplications in two structures such as "stairs, elevators, foundations and facades." Mr. Rich also noted that similar concerns were raised in other towns and cities where he has been involved.

"The two deck solution was successful in both Appleton, Wisc. and Davenport, Iowa," Mr. Rich commented.

The council reintroduced and amended Tuesday an ordinance authorizing the allocation of \$700,000 of general revenue funds toward capital parking solutions.

The same ordinance was rejected at the May 8 council meeting after Mayor McDermott broke a 4-4 deadlock by voting against the ordinance in favor of further discussions. The ordinance, in part, funds the design phase of a deck although it does not give specifics on the size or location. That would be decided by the firm to be hired by the town to handle this phase of the project.

The mayor also announced that a Citizens Parking Committee had been formed to gather information from the public regarding the parking proposals. The mayor described the committee as "non-political."

The committee is made up of towns people and includes a broad spectrum of citizens. The mayor said that the committee includes "pro-deck people and anti-deck people, people from northside and people from southside, engineers, merchants and people in the building trades."

"The committee should include stakeholders," stated Mr. Rich. "The end-user should be involved."

The committee will meet twice a week for six weeks, culminating with a public presentation by Westfield resident and Committee Chairman Andy Cataldo at an upcoming council meeting.

In other matters, Town Administrator Thomas B. Shannon told *The Westfield Leader* that the final decision on the hiring of a parking director will be made before the end of June. Mr. Shannon stated that out of the 39 candidates who submitted résumés for the position, the field had been narrowed to eight.

"We expect to make a decision in approximately a month," said Mr. Shannon.

Memorial Day Parade To Begin Monday at 9 a.m.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

onto Elm Street, a right onto Orchard Street, then a right onto Mountain Avenue.

At the Revolutionary War Cemetery, the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution will break ranks and conduct services in the cemetery, where over 100 war veterans are buried, including those who served in the French and Indian War, the War of 1812 and the Civil War.

The parade will continue left onto East Broad Street. There will be a brief stop at the Municipal Building, where the veterans' contingent will observe a moment of silence in front of the World War II memorial plaque bearing the names of the men and women who died serving their country.

The parade will be led by the National Guard, police escort with the Mayor and the Town Council, this year's Grand Marshal, Dr. Martin Cohen, and the veterans' contingent, followed by various civil and youth organizations, the Westfield Fire Department and the rescue squad.

This year's musical accompaniment will include the Westfield Fife and Drum, Bound Brook Drum and Bugle Corp., Westfield High School Marching Band,

Westfield Community Band and the New Jersey Music Studio Jazz Band sponsored by the New Jersey Workshop for the Arts.

The parade will conclude at Fairview Cemetery, where memorial services will be held by the Westfield and Mountaintop Veterans of Foreign Wars. Soft drinks will be available at the cemetery entrance. Flags will also be available throughout the parade route for a donation of \$1 to help offset parade costs.

In addition, all marchers are welcome to come back to the American Legion Hall on the corner of North Avenue and Crossway Place.

Marchers or anyone interested in being included in this year's parade are asked to be in the Lord & Taylor parking lot at 8 a.m. on the morning of the parade.

Any questions on the parade should be directed to Stan Cuba at (908) 654-9181. If the weather is questionable on the day of the parade, there will be recorded message at this number. In case of inclement weather, ceremonies will be held at the American Legion Hall.

Council Amends, Then OKs Decree to Build Deck, Decks

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the meeting, comments ranged from a recommendation to build a deck on the Lord & Taylor parking lot on North Avenue to the acquisition of a triangle of land on Lenox Avenue, so that it could be added to lot 7 on North Avenue to construct a parking structure.

First Ward Councilman Carl A. Salisbury noted that the town had had discussions with Lord & Taylor corporate executives on putting a deck on their property, "and they are not interested."

Debbie Schmidt, Executive Director of the Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce, an organization that last summer came out in favor of building two decks, announced that over the course of two weeks, 1,393 persons have signed petitions supporting "tiered parking in Westfield."

Of that number, 854 signatures were from people residing in Westfield, with another 539 from employees, business owners and shoppers. The petitions were available at various stores in the downtown.

"A business owner who comes to Westfield risks his livelihood to be a part of the Westfield business community," Ms. Schmidt said. "He pays taxes directly to the town if he is a property owner or through his lease if he is a tenant."

Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC) Executive Director Sherry Cronin offered a slide presentation showing Westfield from the early and mid 1990s, when the downtown had a 40 percent vacancy rate, to today, when most of the downtown has been filled and even renovated.

Julie Diddell of Elm Street, a member of the Concerned Citizens for the Preservation of Residential Westfield, said the group has collected almost 1,000 signatures opposing a north side deck.

She said the petition asks the council "to implement less costly, less invasive measures prior to spending more resources on a \$12 million garage."

Mrs. Diddell said she believes the bulk of the Chamber's petition signers were non-residents, while the Citizens' petition was signed by residents. She said the 1,000 signatures represented only a "modest effort" by the group and that the effort was ongoing.

Keith S. Hertell of Lawrence Avenue said he is trying to rationalize the need for the town to spend "anywhere

from \$12 million to \$20 million" to build a deck "that will forever alter the character of our 100-year-old community."

He cited increased traffic, higher pollution emissions, obstructed site lines and safety issues for children and adults alike, as well as the "potential financial burden" on taxpayers a parking facility would bring.

Mr. Hertell said the Chamber and DWC, in supporting a deck, "must be seen as representing their base," the town's merchants.

The former Board of Education member, who served as Finance Committee Chairman on the board, said he supports a parking garage on the South Avenue train station parking lot.

Ferris Place resident Randall Packer was among those deck opponents who took offense to a full-page, pro-deck advertisement run last week in *The Westfield Leader* by the Chamber and the DWC. Describing the two entities as "advocacy groups," he called information included in the ad "nothing more than speculation."

Favoring the deck, Richard Andreski of Eaglecroft Road said, "this is the opportunity we have been waiting for." A commuter, he noted that he walks to the train station and is not on any of the lists for commuter parking permits.

"We have to move forward and we have to do it now," said 31-year resident Carol Cohen of Roanoke Road.

In other business, the council adopted an ordinance approving the town's participation in this year's Union County Improvement Authority lease program. The Authority will float \$15 million in bonds to help purchase equipment and vehicles for participating towns in the county.

Westfield is utilizing the program to purchase \$955,870 worth of equipment for the Public Works, Fire and Police departments. Included is a new pumper truck for the Fire Department and \$235,000 for sewer and catch basin trucks for the DPW.

Also, Mayor McDermott announced that he was appointing Darielle Walsh to fill out the term of Richard Solomon on the TV 36 Advisory Board. Mr. Solomon, whose term expires December 2003, was recently elected to the Westfield Board of Education and will now serve as school board Liaison on the TV 36 Board.

Mrs. Walsh had been the Board of Education representative on the TV 36 board from its inception.

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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