



Political Election Coverage 2001



Westfield Council Susan Jacobson (D)

Susan Jacobson, candidate for a Fourth Ward seat on Westfield Town Council, has heard many complaints during her door-to-door campaign. "Many Fourth Ward residents believe that their ward is continually being ignored," Mrs. Jacobson said. "Living in the Fourth Ward is similar to being at the end of the road. It seems the further you are from the center of town, the less attention you get," said one Fourth Ward resident to Mrs. Jacobson.

Mrs. Jacobson said she heard numerous complaints regarding the many roads that are in dire need of paving. She also found a number of streets with potholes during her neighborhood walks. Other residents complained about the increasing traffic and noise on their streets.

"Rahway Avenue was mentioned time after time. We have been promised that traffic calming devices will be installed," Mrs. Jacobson said, "but we have yet to see any progress regarding these measures on Rahway Avenue."

"Creating more equity in the budgeting process would help," Mrs. Jacobson said. She said she has heard many comments that certain projects that have been promised for the Fourth Ward for almost a year are still not complete.

One of these projects is the blinker light on the corner of Osborn Avenue and West Broad Street. Mrs. Jacobson said she first heard that this blinker was supposed to be installed shortly after last year's elections.

"Last month the Fourth Ward residents received another promise - but still no blinker."

Matthew P. Albano (R)

Careful planning and management are the keys to injecting fiscal responsibility into Westfield's budget according to Second Ward Councilman Matthew P. Albano.

Mr. Albano, who serves as Chairman of the Finance Committee, noted that he presided over a budget process this year that resulted in the lowest municipal tax increase in 10 years, only .9 percent.

"As a public official, there are some spending decisions you can control, and others, due to economic circumstances, you need to plan for. To control taxes and to budget effectively, you need to have a fiscal blueprint that recognizes uncertainties in future budgets and plan accordingly," he said.

For example, in 2001, operating expenses rose by nearly \$700,000, partly due to circumstances beyond the council's control such as substantial increases in health insurance premiums, Rahway Valley Sewage Authority costs, and higher utility bills.

The council also made a decision to invest more on Department of Public Works staffing in order to maintain and enhance the town's parks and fields. To keep taxes stable, Mr. Albano said the council had to work to find ways to save money, such as entering into shared services agreements with the county and neighboring towns.

Some examples include the vehicle-leasing program with Union County and sharing leaf disposal with Scotch Plains. "We've worked hard to find creative ways to keep taxes stable without reducing municipal services," said Mr. Albano. "We've been fortunate enough to have enjoyed a strong economy over the past few years. Clearly, we entered a slowdown in 2001, which is why the Finance Committee is moving forward with establishing a methodology for handling municipal surplus and establishing a debt management plan."

Mr. Albano also said he took steps to reduce the town's reliance on the sale of town assets, since, in his opinion, preservation of the town's assets is an integral objective to the town's overall financial management. In prior years, some of the money from such sales was used to keep taxes down. At some point in the future, he said, this source will be depleted resulting in gaping holes in the budget.

"This is another example of proactively planning for future budgets," Mr. Albano said. "If we're following policies that are unsustainable, the time to make changes is now, not when the problem becomes too large to handle and taxes are forced higher. We'll continue developing prudent fiscal policies that work, and despite challenging economic conditions, I'm optimistic that we can continue to budget for Westfield's future needs while keeping tax rates steady."

Peter M. Echausse (R)

Recent efforts to limit early garbage pickups are just the latest council initiatives to improve the quality of life in Westfield, according to First Ward Councilman Peter M. Echausse.

He said currently haulers drive through some residential streets at 2 to 3 a.m., and at 5 to 5:30 a.m. on his home street, Tuttle Parkway.

"Many of my constituents were telling me that early garbage pickups were an issue and I agree with them," said Mr. Echausse. "We are currently drafting a proposal on Town Council that would restrict haulers from beginning their work until 6 a.m. in residential areas and until 4 a.m. around schools and downtown."

"I think this strikes an appropriate balance between allowing haulers to do their job before most people are on the roads and allowing citizens some peace and quiet in the early morning hours," the councilman stated.

Another area of focus for Councilman Echausse this year has been ensuring safe playing fields for children. Toward that end, he said the council hired three Department of Public Works employees who will be solely dedicated to maintaining and improving the condition of Westfield's ball parks.

"Many of our playing fields are over-utilized and under-maintained," said Councilman Echausse. "With our additional resources in the Department of Public Works, we will be able to properly thatch, aerate, irrigate and rotate the use of our fields to avoid deterioration. This will not only save taxpayer dollars in the long haul, but it will help ensure our children can play safely on our fields."

A related public safety issue is speeding enforcement on residential roads throughout town. Councilman Echausse said enforcement is up dramatically, "thanks to police vigilance under the leadership of Police Chief Barney Tracy and Captain Robert Compton."

"With continuing education and additional resources dedicated to encouraging people to drive within safe limits, we're making progress on making our streets safer throughout town. In fact, accidents that cause injury are down 40 percent town-wide since the police department started Operation Safe Operating Speed (S.O.S.) this past April."

Councilman Echausse said that although all New Jerseyans rank quality of life issues as a top concern in this densely populated state, Westfield citizens, in particular, value the quality of living found within Westfield's borders.

"From our schools and our downtown, to our playing fields and parks, Westfield residents deserve to have town government provide them with the best possible services and facilities for their tax dollars," he said. "I look forward to doing just that for our town for the rest of this year and in 2002."

S. Plains Council Guy Celentano (R)

As a member of the Scotch Plains Environmental Commission and Planning Board, Republican Township Council candidate Guy Celentano said this week that he recognizes the importance and challenge of maintaining open space in suburban communities such as Scotch Plains.

That is why he said he supports and if elected, looks to build upon the number of recent steps the Republican-controlled council has taken to maintain open space.

Mr. Celentano noted that this past year the council has implemented a number of creative planning measures to deal with open space, the first of which was to establish a Conservation Zone.

"As a member of the Planning Board I endorsed the Conservation Zone concept, which allows public properties to be designated so that there can be no future development and they are maintained in a pristine condition," stated Mr. Celentano. At the time the ordinance was adopted, a property was designated for Conservation preservation and at its October 23 meeting the council will consider preserving two additional pieces of land under this zone.

Mr. Celentano indicated the Environmental Commission is actively doing an inventory of properties, which may identify additional land to be preserved.

Scotch Plains also recently acquired a commercial piece of property on Plainfield Avenue on which it plans to build two new ball fields.

"Not only are we creating open green space, that could have been commercially developed, we are using the property to help meet the growing recreation needs of our community," Mr. Celentano emphasized.

The most recent example of the council's aggressive efforts, which Mr. Celentano also endorsed as a

member of the Planning Board, was the decision of the council at its last public meeting to rezone a property which could have been developed with over 200 apartments.

The new zone, which was adopted, only allows for no more than 65 single-family homes for individuals over the age of 55, Mr. Celentano stated.

"The council has made great strides this year in taking steps to maintain the residential character of our community and I look forward to the opportunity to build on their achievements," the candidate stated.

Fanwood Council Lindsey, Trumpp (R's)

A candidates forum, sponsored by *The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood* and the League of Women Voters is scheduled for Thursday, October 25, at 8 p.m.

To be held in the Fanwood Borough Council Chambers, Fred Rossi of *The Times* will be the moderator.

Republican candidates Dr. Chester R. Lindsey and David Trumpp said they are looking forward to debating the important local issues, such as downtown revitalization, new senior citizen facilities and improved recreation facilities, with their opponents.

State Legislature District 21

Bagger, Kean, Munoz (R's)

CRANFORD — On the banks of the Rahway River on October 10, New Jersey's largest and oldest environmental groups, the New Jersey Environmental Federation (NJEF) and the Sierra Club, announced their endorsements of Assemblyman Richard H. Bagger for State Senate as well as Assemblyman Tom Kean, Jr. and Dr. Eric Munoz for State Assembly in the 21st Legislative District.

"Rich Bagger has been a key leader in the campaign to stop sprawl and protect our waterways. Tom Kean and Eric Munoz have used their environmental and health backgrounds to hit the ground running even though they've been in office for just six months," stated David Pringle, a Cranford resident and NJEF Campaign Director. "They are the Republican Green Dream Team!"

The groups' endorsement processes included completing questionnaires, interviews, and an extensive review of the candidates' records and



SUPPORTING JARDIM...A fundraiser supporting Democratic candidates for the State Assembly was recently held in Westfield. Pictured, left to right, are: Sal and Pat Antonelli, Bryan Miller of Ceasefire New Jersey, Assembly candidate Thomas C. Jardim and Nina and Rich Rosenberg.

commitments.

"The 21st district is surrounded by the Passaic, Raritan, and Rahway Rivers, sources of drinking water are too polluted due to sewer plants and sprawl. Further this sprawl has brought floods and traffic," added Jeff Tittel, Sierra Club, New Jersey Chapter Director.

"Regardless of who the next Governor is, we need to send these three legislators back to continue the fight for smart growth, clean air, and better transit," he stated.

The 21st Legislative District includes portions of Essex, Morris, Somerset and Union Counties. The Rahway — a source of drinking water, floods and recreation — runs throughout it. The groups cited the following data, documenting some of the threats to the district that include urban sprawl which, they say, has been the key factor in the recent deterioration of the State's waters, and the most unhealthy air to breathe of any state.

NJEF is the state's largest environmental group including 3,000 members in the 21st Legislative District. The Sierra Club is the oldest and largest environmental group in the country with 23,000 members in New Jersey.

Jardim and Hern (D's)

Bryan Miller, the Executive Director of Ceasefire New Jersey, has announced the endorsement of Thomas C. Jardim, the Democratic candidate for General Assembly in the 21st Legislative District, at a fundraiser co-hosted by Richard and Nina Richard Rosenberg and Sal and Pat Antonelli on October 12. The event was held at the Rosenberg residence in Westfield.

"In order for a candidate to get the

Ceasefire New Jersey endorsement, he or she must answer three questions in the legislative questionnaire correctly, which would place that candidate with the bulk of 21st District voters," said Mr. Miller. "Tom Jardim will vote for child proof handgun legislation, against the loosening of concealed carry laws, and against any weakening of New Jersey's assault weapons ban. We know that the people of New Jersey place gun control at the top of their list of concerns. Tom Jardim has shown how much he cares about the citizens and children by supporting sensible gun violence prevention," stated Mr. Miller.

"It's very gratifying to receive the endorsement of a group that has worked so hard to make our state a safer place in which to live," said Mr. Jardim, the former two-term Mayor of Westfield and the first Democrat elected to that position since 1909. "The goals of Ceasefire are the same goals that most New Jerseyans believe in: common-sense gun laws that serve to protect New Jersey's law abiding citizens."

J. Brooke Hern, Mr. Jardim's running mate who also attended the event, promises to vote against legislation that effectively weakens New Jersey's assault weapons ban. Mr. Hern served as a former aide to members of Congress and the New Jersey Legislature.

An active member of the New Jersey Business and Industry Association, he was the former Project Director of the New Jersey Citizens' Flood Relief Project, which aided flood victims in Bound Brook and Manville.

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