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FIFTY CENTS

COUNCIL TO CHECK CONSTITUTION REGARDING RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS, GIFTS

Mayor Appoints Committee To Work With Atlantic Group

By LAUREN S. PASS
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

On Tuesday night, the Westfield Town Council held a special public meeting in order to have a second reading and pass an ordinance changing the price of the permit fee for junk week from \$50 to \$65.

The council then held their regular conference session where they spent over an hour in closed conference to discuss labor relations with the Policemen's Benevolent Association (PBA) of the Westfield Police Department, whose contract is up for renewal.

During the conference session, Mayor Gregory McDermott announced that he would be signing the agreement with The Atlantic Group after the meeting. He said he has also selected the group to meet regularly

with Patrick Henry from Atlantic.

The group will consist of Democratic Fourth Ward Councilman and Public Works Chairman Lawrence Goldman, Republican Second Ward Councilman and Chairman of the Transportation, Parking and Traffic Committee (TPT) Rafael Betancourt; Democratic Third Ward Councilwoman and Chairwoman of the Public Safety Committee Claire Lazarowitz, Mayor McDermott for the First Ward; Executive Director of the Downtown Westfield Corporation Sherry Cronin and Charlie Weidman, who was the Chairman of the Parking Commission.

Meetings will also include Town Administrator James Gildea and Town Engineer Kenneth Marsh as needed.

Council members continued a con-

versation on religious symbols being placed on town property.

"We'll all have a difference of opinion because it's personal," Mayor McDermott said. He suggested that the council allow things to continue as they were before and approve those individuals and organizations that want to put up holiday items.

Democratic Fourth Ward Councilwoman Susan Jacobson said that if this was going to come to a council vote, she felt that council members should hear the suggestion from the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee, which included members of the clergy.

Councilwoman Lazarowitz stated that she had spoken to many people regarding the committee recommendation and had received positive responses.

Democratic First Ward Councilman Carl Salisbury said he believes decisions regarding what symbols have been placed on town property in the past, and what would be placed in the future, must be examined to

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Jennifer Pinto for The Westfield Leader

SOMETHING'S FISHY HERE... Westfield Patrol Officer Lisa Perrotta displays a trout before tossing it into Mindowaskin Pond. Officer Perrotta, who is organizing the Annual Fishing Derby, sponsored by the Westfield Policemen Benevolent Association Local 90, oversaw mounds of trout which were added to the pond. The derby will be held on Sunday at Mindowaskin Pond from 8 a.m. through 2 p.m. Trout and sunnys will fill the pond and prizes will be awarded. For more information, please call Officer Perrotta at (908) 789-4000.

Town Officials Report 65 Percent Completion Of Memorial Pool

By LAUREN S. PASS
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

Ground was broken on the \$1.7 million Westfield Memorial Pool Complex project in December of 2001, and construction officials have reported that 65 percent of the project is complete.

town will, however, have to get permission from Elizabeth Town Water Company before doing this.

The Westfield Health Department inspects the pool prior to its opening, and then inspects it again during the season.

Though the pH and chlorine lev-



Lauren S. Pass for The Westfield Leader

UNDER CONSTRUCTION...Construction at the Westfield Memorial Pool Complex, which includes installation of a new diving tank, is currently estimated at 65 percent completion, according to officials on site.

The old pool will open on Saturday, June 8, while the new construction of the pool is set to be open on Monday, July 15.

Director of the Westfield Recreation Department, Bruce Kaufman, told The Westfield Leader that the project includes an 8-lane competitive pool with a diving tank and two waterslides.

The Recreation Commission has already closed registration with approximately 9,000 people who registered in the first week of registration. Approximately 400 people are on the waiting list. May 1 was the first day non-residents could apply for membership.

The commission is looking into expanding the membership at the pool by approximately 150 people. This decision is applicable providing that landscaping and removal of some heavy equipment are completed.

"We are very excited," said Mr. Kaufman. "(We are going to) bring an added level of wholesome family activity to the community."

The new pool will be able to be filled under the current water restrictions because it is new construction. The old pool will be able to be completely drained and refilled for health reasons. The

els are tested by the pool staff everyday; the pool is required to contract with a private laboratory to take a sample and test the water once a week.

New Jersey reservoirs are at 56.9 percent, as of April 25. Union County has received 8.8 inches of rain in the past 90 days.



Jennifer Pinto for The Westfield Leader

WATER CHIEF...Westfield Police Chief Bernard Tracy helps Horace Corbin, Publisher of The Westfield Leader unload boxes of water conservation kits donated by Elizabeth Town Water Company.

Financial Questions Loom Regarding County and State Incinerator Debt

By DEBORAH MADISON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

On April 1, the private company that leases and operates the Union County incinerator, located in Rahway, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection.

Covanta Energy Corporation, the multi-national company based in Fairfield, and previously known as Ogen-Martin Corporation, leases the incinerator from the Union County Utilities Authority (UCUA), under a 25-year contract that began in 1997.

Spokesman for Covanta, Business Manager Howard Rothman, told The Westfield Leader and The Times of Scotch Plains-Famwood that the firm will not default on repayment of the project loan and that its solid waste management operation remains financially sound, despite the bankruptcy.

"Ogen-Martin was engaged in several less-profitable business ventures, which the bankruptcy will allow Covanta to divest itself of," Mr. Rothman stated.

However, Kerry Blanchard, Past President of Concerned Citizens of Union County, a Rahway-based citizens' group opposed to incinerators, told The Leader and The Times, "Covanta actually divested itself of Ogen-Martin's other business interests back in March of 2001. This does not agree with their reasons for declaring bankruptcy last month."

Bob Carson, President of Concerned Citizens, said he has been trying to obtain the refinancing agreement between the Utilities Authority and Ogen-Martin. However, Mr. Carson said that the Utilities Authority has repeatedly thwarted his attempts at obtaining the documents.

David Pringle, President of the Cranford-based New Jersey Environmental Federation, another citizens' watchdog group that is also opposed to incinerators, told The Leader and The Times, "The Utilities Authority and the county have been historically uncooperative and hostile in providing us with this information."

Mr. Pringle explained that there have been several bills passed in the last 10 years, which have channeled more than \$220 million in state funds into bailing out the financially failing solid waste facilities in New Jersey.

Some of that money has been received by Union County, although he could not verify how much.

Assemblywoman Linda D. Stender told The Leader and The Times, "When I was Chairman of the Freeholder Board, the Freeholders recognized the garbage crisis was looming. Owners of the landfills in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York claimed that they were close to reaching capacity and landfill prices rose sharply. As a result of this garbage crisis in the 80s, the state ordered all of the counties to assess their current

solid waste disposal methods and to devise a solid waste management plan.

"At that time, there were only three options for dealing with waste disposal: burn it, bury it or dump it in the ocean. All three presented risks and drawbacks. And all three options had opponents," Mrs. Stender explained.

"The incinerator option seemed like the best alternative at that time, and we were assured of the best, state-of-the-art pollution control technology available," she added.

As a consulting engineer who worked on several "Trash to Cash" projects, some involving those of Ogen-Martin, along with others throughout the country, Horace Corbin, Publisher of The Leader and The Times, reflected on the 1980s garbage crisis in New Jersey.

"Solid waste disposal at that time was, and still is, a major challenge for our society. In the late 80s and early 90s, landfills in Pennsylvania, Ohio and elsewhere were without competition; with claims that landfills were filled up, rates were skyrocketing," Mr. Corbin related.

"The creation of incinerators had the beneficial result of creating competition for the landfills and rates fell dramatically — staying that way today," he said.

The Leader and The Times asked the Utilities Authority to confirm the amount of the outstanding bond obligation of Covanta, along with other terms of the lease agreement, and

whether the Utilities Authority has verified the financial stability of Covanta.

Public Information spokesman for the county, Sebastian D'Elia, said it would take his office several weeks to provide The Leader and The Times with this information. No one from the Utilities Authority returned calls from the newspaper.

Mr. Carson told The Leader and The Times that none of New Jersey's five incinerators have been financially sound since a Supreme Court ruling in 1997 overturned existing flow control legislation. Flow control was a mandate that assured the incinerators a high volume and steady stream of garbage. The incinerators charged towns and private haulers fees high enough to meet their loan repayment obligations.

When flow control was ruled unconstitutional, towns and private haulers were permitted to contract with less costly landfills out of state. The five counties, including Union County, which built incinerators then were thrust into a position of economic disadvantage.

Because of this, the UCUA was required to refinance the bond for the Rahway incinerator. The county also entered into a lease agreement with Ogen-Martin, which incorporated a "put or pay" requirement that obligated the county to provide a minimum tonnage or pay the difference.

Currently, the State of New Jersey

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Freeholders Unveil 2002 Budget Containing Spending, Tax Hikes

By FRED ROSSI
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

Last week, the Union County Freeholders introduced a 2002 budget that is higher than the proposal submitted in January by then-County Manager Michael Lapolla. This year's \$324.488 million spending plan is 2 percent higher than last year's budget, but the proportion that will be funded by local property taxes will be higher than in the past several years.

None of the Freeholders commented publicly on the budget at last Thursday's regular meeting. The public hearing and vote is set for Thursday, May 23. Official property tax levies on the county's 21 municipalities, which are set by the Board of Taxation, were not available at last week's meeting.

More than half the budget, \$173.8 million, will be funded through property taxes. This represents 54 percent of the spending plan, a level last seen in 1997. Slightly more than one-fourth of the budget will be funded by county revenue, while 14 percent will come from state and federal revenues and just under

5 percent will come from the county's anticipated \$15 million surplus, which is one-third lower than last year.

The biggest portion of the county budget, about 28 percent, will be earmarked for health and welfare programs and services administered by, among others, the Department of Human Services and the Divisions of Youth Services, Aging, and Social Services. General government functions account for almost 20 percent of this year's budget, while regulatory functions such as the County Sheriff's Office, Public Safety and the Taxation and Election Boards make up about 17 percent.

In the three months between Mr. Lapolla's submission of his budget proposals and last week's formal introduction, several areas saw increases in their final appropriations levels, including judiciary, regulation, roads and bridges, health and welfare and recreation.

The county's capital budget will total just under \$60 million, of which about three-fourths will be derived from county funds, such as bonds and notes, with the bulk of the remaining \$15.5 million coming from grants and Open Space Trust Fund revenue.

In other business at its meeting, the Freeholder Board introduced a bond ordinance to authorize construction of a new \$14 million academic building at the Union County Vocational-Technical School in Scotch Plains.

The Freeholders also honored Victoria Fosdal and James Alfano, students at Terrill Middle School in Scotch Plains, by naming them to be among the first recipients of the county's Volunteer Recognition Program.

The two students spearheaded a fundraiser for a Scotch Plains family

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Tax Collector to Resume Normal Office Hours

WESTFIELD - The Office of the Tax Collector, located at 425 East Broad Street in Westfield, will resume normal office hours from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. today, Thursday, May 2. Interest will be charged after Monday, May 6.

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FRIGHTENING EXPERIENCE...Westfield resident Roberta Pinkien escaped with minor injuries last Thursday when her 1988 Volkswagen slid on wet pavement at 12:59 p.m. and flipped over while she was traveling westbound in the 800 block of East Broad Street. She was transported to Overlook Hospital in Summit by the Westfield Volunteer Rescue Squad.

Financial Questions Loom Regarding County and State Incinerator Debt

is developing legislation to bail out financially troubled county incinerators. Mrs. Stender said that current legislation would not benefit Union County, because it was designed to bail out only those incinerators that are financially failing, which is no longer the case in Union County, since the refinance agreement was made.

"This bill punishes Union County for having done the right thing two years ago," Mrs. Stender commented. She said attorneys are reviewing the details to see if Union County can somehow be reimbursed for the refinancing agreement.

The financing and operation of waste disposal in New Jersey has had a long history marked by federal probes and indictments of public officials on charges of fraud, bribery and corruption.

A grand jury investigation, launched in 1994, into the funding of the bonds that financed the construction of New Jersey's five incinerators, resulted in subpoenas, arrests and plea bargains for several public officials, who were cabinet members of then Governor Jim Florio.

Securities firms that financed the projects were accused of making bribes. The federal probes also charged that public officials improperly used their influence to initiate construction of each of the \$250 million incinerators and that they then hired firms that they owned to provide legal and financial services to the utility authorities in several counties, reaping millions of dollars in profits.

Environmental groups, such as the Green Party and Concerned Citizens, claim that recycling could eliminate 70 to 90 percent of New Jersey's incineration needs, but doesn't get supported as long as the incinerators need to be fed.

Concerned Citizens' chief opposi-

tion to the incinerators involves environmental and health concerns.

Mr. Corbin commented that the viability and performance of any such system depends on several factors.

"Financial soundness, political stability, technical excellence and efficiency of management are required on a long-term basis," he said. "Of course, generating less trash would help the country greatly. Looking at a box of Cheerios, anyone can see that the amount of wrapping versus actual cereal represents a significant part of the garbage problem."

"Even though New Jersey now has some of the best recycling laws, at that time, it was not an option for dealing with the majority of New Jersey's garbage," Mrs. Stender remarked.

"In order for recycling to become a viable alternative, consumers as well as packaging producers would have to drastically change their methods of packaging and discarding of waste," she stated.

"That alternative, although gaining impetus, will take many years before it can be a replacement for burning or burying the millions of tons of garbage produced by New Jersey every year," Mrs. Stender added.

"Now that the Staten Island Landfill is closed and New York City trash is entering the picture, this adds tremendous pressure to New Jersey's system of solid waste disposal — we're the largest garbage crossroad in the world," Mr. Corbin noted.

Westfield resident and former Mayor Garland "Bud" Boothe was Vice Chairman of the UCUA during the 1980s. He worked with the Freeholders and other legislators in planning and implementing the incinerator for Union County.

Mr. Boothe also served on the Union County Solid Waste Authority Commission (UCSWAC) for eight years. He was intrinsically involved in all

aspects of planning not only the Rahway incinerator, but also Union County's recycling programs for hazardous waste and computers, before he became Mayor of Westfield.

Mr. Boothe explained that in the 1980s, the garbage crisis was critical. Landfills in Pennsylvania and New Jersey were suddenly all being shut down.

"Pennsylvania didn't want our garbage trucked into their state and our truckers were being harassed," Mr. Boothe recalled. "The crisis got so bad that we held discussions about how we could stockpile garbage in Westfield if it came to that," he said.

After extensive research, with input from engineering experts, and after visiting many different facilities, Mr. Boothe said it was concluded that building the incinerator was the best, most economical and sound decision.

The incinerator was well run and very financially viable before flow control was stopped, Mr. Boothe said. The profits made from selling the electricity offset the cost of running the facility and defrayed the tipping fee charges considerably.

It was only after flow control was stopped that the tipping fees had to become more competitive, Mr. Boothe said. "You can always find some hole in the ground in another state that may be cheaper, but is that really the best solution, to depend on another state for our waste problem?" he asked.

"We tried very hard to work with the environmentalists from the Concerned Citizens group, but they were intractable," Mr. Boothe remarked.

"We asked them for another solution, but they had none. And I don't agree with them that incineration discourages recycling. Just look outside on recycling days. Everyone's recycling whatever they can, but that doesn't solve the whole problem," he said.

Mr. Boothe added, "I think that we made the right decision, and 30 years from now, people will say that we did the right thing, unlike New York City, which has had their head in the sand and are now unprepared to handle their own garbage problems."

Pollution control regulations, along with environmental studies cited by the opposition groups and supported by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, will be explored in the next installment of this series.

Westfield Writer Nominated for Award

WESTFIELD—Shane Tourtellotte, writer and longtime resident of Westfield, has been nominated for a Hugo Award, the longest-standing award in science fiction writing.

He was nominated for his story, "The Return of Spring." He is one of five nominees in the Best Novelette category, for stories between 7,500 and 17,500 words in length.

The Hugo nomination is his second science fiction writing award nomination. He was nominated for the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer in 2000, finishing third.

"The Return of Spring" appeared in the November 2001 issue of *Analog* magazine, the highest-circulation science fiction magazine in America. His latest story, "First Impressions," ran in the May issue.

Freeholders

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that lost a parent in the September 11 attacks. In addition to raising more than \$10,000, the two students also organized follow-up assistance for the family, including babysitting and the establishment of a scholarship for the family's children.

In other business, Holly E. Wetscher of Westfield was among three individuals reappointed to three-year terms on the county's Advisory Board on the Disabled. The county will also donate \$2,500 to Project Graduation at the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School next month.

Peggy Doerr Inducted Into Phi Eta Sigma

WESTFIELD—Furman University in Greenville, S.C. has reported that Peggy M. Doerr of Westfield was inducted into the Phi Eta Sigma National Honor Society.

Peggy is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Doerr of Westfield.



CELEBRATING GRADUATION...Pictured, left to right, are: Lewis Mingo, Jr., Chairman of the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders, and County Sheriff Ralph Froehlich spoke at Union County's Operation Recognition on Tuesday, April 30.

Westfield Council to Check Constitution Regarding Religious Symbols and Gifts

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

see if they comply with the Constitution.

"As a governing body we have a sacred obligation to comply with Constitutional requirements," he stated.

Councilman Goldman agreed with Councilman Salisbury, as Town Attorney Robert Cockren stated that he will look into these Constitutional statutes.

The council will also have the first reading of three ordinances next week, which will all be for 2002 projects. These new ordinances change the language to allow the town to better control debt service.

According to Mr. Gildea, this new language will allow all projects to be lumped into one, so that the monies will be available and projects can begin right away, rather than waiting on separate ordinances for each.

Mr. Marsh commented that there would be a new ordinance authorizing the Fire Department to establish fire zones and lanes throughout Westfield for safety reasons.

The council also debated approval for the Chamber of Commerce to close part of the South Side Train Station lot for the farmers market. Due to the fact that the parking has changed, they will not allow the entire horseshoe to be closed.

The council also discussed a change to the ordinance on curb assessments. It has been decided that if a road project has been initiated by the town, the town will replace or install curbing, but if a resident initiates the project they will be charged for 50 percent of the assessment for replacement curbing and 100 percent for new curbing.

Councilman Betancourt gave his TPT report. He stated that the Rahway Avenue project is due to be completed at the end of May. He went on to say that residents voiced their

concerns about the difficulty negotiating a left hand turn onto Clifton Street with the bump outs; and a resident's complaint regarding not being informed of the project.

Mr. Marsh stated that the bump outs seemed wider right now because the cones are there and construction is in progress. He added that on South Avenue in Plainfield the road is 22 feet wide, and the narrowest point on Rahway Avenue will be 28 feet wide.

Mayor McDermott and the council concurred that the project was discussed in public meetings and was in the newspapers.

Councilman Betancourt also reported the possibility of closing South Chestnut Street for 30 days in order to study the traffic patterns.

Mayor McDermott had previously contacted the Mayor of Garwood, because with Garwood's permission, the Department of Transportation (DOT) would allow the town to close the street, but Garwood denied the request due to a change in traffic flow near the schools.

The council will be passing a resolution to close South Chestnut Street during baseball season, now through October, from 5 to 8 p.m. daily, as well as the current closures that take place on Saturday and Sunday.

Mr. Gildea will also contact the DOT so that they may investigate the possibility of posting four-hour time limits in the Gumbert Park parking lots to deter commuter parking. Also, Union County will be contacted regarding making Birch Avenue a dead end at North Avenue.

The next public meeting of the council will be held on Tuesday, May 7, at 8 p.m.

Sean Adams Accepted Into Stevens Program

WESTFIELD—Kathleen Hadford, Director of Pre-College Programs at Stevens Institute of Technology, Castle Point on Hudson, in Hoboken, has revealed that Sean Adams of Westfield has been accepted to participate in the ECOES 2002-Exploring Career Options in Engineering and Science Summer Program to be held at Stevens.

A junior at Westfield High School, Sean is one of 64 top students from across the nation to attend this program. He was chosen because he has demonstrated interests and a high ability in mathematics and science. His personal statement and the recommendations he submitted also made Sean a part of the exclusive program.

While enrolled in the program, Sean will have the opportunity to learn about engineering and science through a variety of educational, social and recreational activities. He will participate in a research project, a civil engineering design project and hands-on laboratories in several engineering and science disciplines.

Sean will be visited by representatives from local corporations and agencies involved in manufacturing, research and development, meeting engineers, scientists, managers, faculty and students involved in technical professions.

Sean is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Bill Adams.



SEEING STARS...Last month, in celebration of National Astronomy Week, the Westfield Y's Children's Center, located on Elm Street, brought Star Dome, a portable planetarium to the children. Gary Muzio, the owner of Star Dome, is pictured above with several students after a stargazing show that included a multitude of stars and identified constellations.

WESTFIELD POLICE BLOTTER

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3

• Kenneth S. Kloss, 47, of Westfield was arrested and charged with two counts of endangering the welfare of children, according to police. Kloss was released on a \$20,000 bail and will appear in court at a date to be set.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17
• Hub caps and center rings were reported stolen from a motor vehicle on Park Street. The approximate value of the stolen items was \$250.

FRIDAY, APRIL 19
• Allegra Fiore, 22, of Westfield was arrested on Dudley Avenue and charged with driving while intoxicated and with possession of drug paraphernalia. She was released on her own recognizance.

SATURDAY, APRIL 20
• Richard Johnson, 42, of Plainfield was arrested and charged with possession of less than 50 grams of marijuana on Windsor Avenue. He was released on his own recognizance with a summons.

SUNDAY, APRIL 21
• Larissa Luciano, 18, of Mountainside was arrested in the 600 block of South Avenue and charged with possession of less than 50 grams of marijuana. She was also taken into cus-

tody on a no-bail warrant issued by the Union County Sheriff's Department.

She was released on her own recognizance on the Westfield charge and turned over to the Sheriff's Department.

TUESDAY, APRIL 23
• Franklin Hardy, 59, of Plainfield was arrested in the 600 block of Boulevard and charged with driving while intoxicated. Hardy, who was held pending release to a responsible party, was also charged with refusal to submit to a breathalyzer test. He was released on his own recognizance with a summons.

SATURDAY, APRIL 27
• Kevin Feath, 26, of Middlesex was arrested at Central Avenue and Washington Street and charged with driving while intoxicated. He was released on his own recognizance.

SUNDAY, APRIL 28
• Timothy Greenlaw, 19, of Westfield was arrested at Central Avenue and Raritan Road and charged with driving while intoxicated. He was also wanted on an active warrant issued by the Scotch Plains Municipal Court. Greenlaw was released on his own recognizance on the Westfield charge. Bail on the Scotch Plains warrant was set at \$133.

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