

County Awarded \$1.1 Mil. To Redevelop Meisel Park

By PAUL PEYTON
Specially Written for The Leader and The Times

SPRINGFIELD — The County of Union has been awarded \$1.1 million by the state to redevelop Meisel Avenue Park in Springfield. The 10-acre park has been closed to the public since 2001 following the discovery of hazardous materials in the soil.

According to the county's public information department, the county spent \$1 million to cleanup the park after high levels of arsenic, lead and pesticides were found. The county hired the PMK Group, a Cranford engineering firm, to complete the work.

The county completed the replacement of topsoil at the park in 2004 and seeded the area for soil retention and protection.

The park had been the site of a chemical dye company until 1930 when the Union County Parks Commission purchased the land and created the park.

According to published reports, the chemical company is believed to have caused groundwater contamination, which was discovered after an area resident provided historical information about the site to county officials.

The county plans to redesign Meisel Park to include a six-lane all-weather track with a combination football/soccer field on its interior; softball and baseball fields for use by high school and county leagues; a fitness trail around the perimeter of the park, and restroom renovation to the existing field house.

The total cost of the project is \$2.2 million with half of that money coming from New Jersey Green Acres grant, according to the county's public information department.

The park, which was acquired by the county from the Township of

Springfield, had been home to the now defunct Jonathan Dayton High School football team.

Freeholder Angel Estrada told *The Leader* and *The Times* that although the county will have to chip in half the project cost, "it (the grant) is still very much appreciated" by the county.

The Meisel project is part of a package of 12 bills totaling \$353 million announced by Acting Governor Richard Codey on February 14.

Acting Governor Codey said, "This funding package helps us fight over development and unplanned growth and ensures that future generations may continue to enjoy our fields and farms and parks and open spaces."

State Senator Nicholas Scutari of Linden (R-22) said the recreation grants, "will go a long way toward improving the quality of life in Union County."

"Through state aid, we will be able to protect our vital environmental resources and provide recreational opportunities for generations of Union County residents still to come," he said.

Freeholder Linda D. Stender (D-22) of Fanwood added that, "These funds are more than just investments in parks and recreation - they are investments in our communities."

Other Union County projects funded through the program include \$250,000 to the City of Linden to upgrade playground equipment at six city parks to comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act; \$975,000 to the New Jersey Conservation Foundation for its watershed/greenway initiative throughout the state including the conservation of areas in Union County; \$1.4 million to expand the Arthur Kill River watershed by acquiring viable wetland systems in the area and \$67,000 to create a neighborhood park in the City of Elizabeth.



CENTRAL PARK SPECTACULAR...Ingrid McKinley and Donna Marino of Westfield with their sons Jack and Tommy visit the spectacular Gates exhibit last Saturday in Central Park. The group commented that there was something magical about the entire display and the hoards of people in the park - what a grand sight to see in winter! They did not get to see all 7500 gates. Pictured above are the carriage rides and Gates at Central Park.

St. Pat's Parade Committee To Hold Fundraiser Mar. 5

COUNTY — The Union County St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee will hold its Annual "Finnegan's Wake" and Guinness Fun Run on Saturday, March 5.

The fundraiser will be held at the Knights of Columbus Council No. 253 on Union Avenue just off Morris Avenue in Elizabeth from 2 to 6 p.m. Admission is \$20 per person, which includes food, beer, wine and soda.

There will be continuous live Irish-American entertainment featuring "The Mike Byrne Band."

For more information, please call Lynn Raymond at (908) 965-4969, the Knights of Columbus at (908) 355-2253, Kathy Rotando at (908) 352-1477, Ray Lynch at (908) 272-4940, Liz Welsh at (908) 486-7118 or Kevin Dowling at (732) 594-1763.

Registration for the Guinness Fun run cost \$25, which includes admission into Finnegan's Wake, a t-shirt and complimentary beverages, will start at 11:30 a.m. at the Knights of Columbus Council No. 253. The race will commence at 1:30 p.m. and end at the start of the Finnegan's Wake.

Area Chamber Announces Upcoming Business Events

WESTFIELD — The Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce has announced several upcoming events for the business community.

On Wednesday, March 2, the Chamber has organized a Business After Hours Networking event.

UBS Financial Services, located at 109 North Avenue, will host The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Hors d'oeuvres will be served and attendees will have the opportunity to enter to win free New Jersey Nets tickets.

The Chamber seeks all local cyclists to gather for a "Meet & Greet" on Wednesday, March 9, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at Jay's Cycle Center. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss local group rides, charity cycling events, and community projects.

Representatives will be on hand from the East Coast Greenway, the Westfield Criterium, the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's Team in Training, and Westfield B.R.A.K.E.S. (Bikers and Riders and Kids are Entitled Safety). Pizza will be served.

The next Chamber Networking Lunch featuring "8 Minute Meetings" will be held at Northside Trattoria, 16 Prospect Street, on Thursday, March 10, from noon to 1:30 p.m. All area business people are welcome. Chamber members can participate for \$12 and non-members for \$15. Seating is limited, so early reservations

are recommended.

At the end of the month, Westfield Interiors, located at 305 South Avenue, will serve as host for the next Business After Hours on Wednesday, March 30, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

For more information, please contact the Chamber at (908) 233-3021.

Freeholders Set to Move on Home Improvement Program

By PAUL PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

ELIZABETH — The Union County freeholder board is set to take action tonight to approve a contract to initiate the county's new Senior Home Improvement Program.

The board is expected to approve a contract to Development Directions, LLC, of St. Georges Avenue in Rahway, in an amount not to exceed \$500,000 to administer the program. Of that amount, \$100,000 is for administrative fees with \$400,000 balance for program costs.

Under the program, income-eligible senior citizens can apply for grants of up to \$5,000 for basic home repairs such as fixing a roof and upgrading their home's plumbing or electrical systems. Funding for the program is being allocated through the county's Community Development Block Grant program.

The program is one of the initiatives for 2005 by Freeholder Chairman Rick Proctor of Rahway. In his annual chairman's address in January, Freeholder Proctor said the funding would be allocated as "forgivable loans" to seniors as long as they remain on their property for three or more years.

Freeholder Dan Sullivan said at the February 17 meeting that, "The program will be up and running in March."

"The program itself is outstanding," he added.

In other business, the board is set to approve a resolution to execute arts grants to some 50 organizations throughout the county. The Union County Arts Grant Program is fully funded through a state grant from the New Jersey State Council of the Arts for \$112,395, according to county officials.

Among those receiving grants this year are: Celebration Singers, Cranford, \$2,550; Children's Specialized Hospital, Fanwood, \$2,300; the Chinese-American Cultural Association (CAME), Westfield, \$1,700; Community Players of Westfield,

\$3,450; First Congregational Church of Westfield, \$1,900; Garden State Cultural Association, Fanwood, \$1,800; Holy Trinity Interparochial School, Westfield, \$1,800; New Jersey Workshop for the Arts, Westfield, \$2,700; Temple Emanu-El of Westfield/I Have a dream of Plainfield, Union, \$3,000, and the Union County Educational Services Commission, Westfield, \$3,300.

Department of Economic Development Director James Daley explained that applications from arts groups are reviewed by a panel and passed on to an advisory board of professionals which approves the applications.

Freeholder Vice Chairman Al Mirabella requested additional information on the total allocation for last year and a list of those groups that received grants in 2004 and 2005.

The board also is set to approve a contract to Photo Science of Exton, PA for \$95,760 to provide high resolution color digital ortho-photography of 18 municipalities in mostly the western parts of Union County. The contract extends through January 31, 2006.

The photography work has already been completed in Elizabeth, Linden and Rahway in the eastern part of the county, Mr. Daley told the board.

Mr. Daley explained that another vendor bid \$165,000 and later came back with a lower price of \$99,000, which was still higher than Photo Science.

"We have every confidence that we will be the same quality of service" as previously done in the county by another company," Mr. Daley said.

The board is also set to approve two change orders of contracts to the Louis Berger Group, Inc., of East Orange for intersection upgrades at Kenilworth Boulevard and Salem Road; at Five Points in Union and for traffic signal improvements at the intersections of South Avenue with Union Avenue, High Street, Walnut Avenue, and Centennial Avenue in Cranford.

The Five Points contract has been reduced by \$12,444 to \$54,744 while the Cranford project has been lowered by \$19,471 for a contract total of \$38,084.

Department of Engineering and Public Works Director Frank Dann said generally when a contract is reduced, it is due to the contractor being more efficient in the length of time they are able to complete the work. Louis Berger was hired as the construction manager for both projects.

Freeholder Chester Holmes questioned whether road signs would be improved on Kenilworth Boulevard, noting it is hard to read the signs at night.

Mr. Dann noted that anytime the county completes road resurfacing or other road work, new street signs are installed as well as overhead road signs hanging from the traffic signal.

It was also announced that Karen Fountain of Westfield, the wife of former Mayor Tom Jardim, has been appointed to the Union County Commission of the Status of Women.

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WESTFIELD — Town residents Richard F. Ricci and Lawrence M. Rolnick, members of the Roseland-based law firm Lowenstein Sandler PC, have been ranked among America's top lawyers in the 2005 - 2006 edition of *The Best Lawyers in America*, a referral guide to the legal profession in the United States.

Mr. Ricci is listed in the Environmental Law Section and Mr. Rolnick is listed in the Business Litigation Section of the publication.

Mr. Ricci is Chairman of the firm's Environmental Department. He has experi-

ence in negotiations and litigation of environmental and construction issues. He works on a broad range of matters, including Superfund and toxic tort litigation, injunctive and penalty proceedings, construction, environmental and commercial litigation.

Mr. Rolnick is Chairman of Lowenstein Sandler's Securities Litigation & Enforcement Practice Group. He has experience in the area of commercial litigation, with particular emphasis in securities and class action litigation.



Richard Ricci



Lawrence Rolnick

Beer Industry Releases Business Figures

According to the website at www.beerservesamerica.org, the Seventh Congressional District, which includes Westfield and the region, receives 3,814 jobs with wages totaling \$136,576,885 and \$375,218,293 in total economic impact from the beer industry.

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