

County Plans Ferry Service From Elizabeth to NYC

By PAUL PEYTON

Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

ELIZABETH – The County of Union has announced plans to develop a passenger ferry service to connect Elizabeth with Lower Manhattan.

During last Thursday's meeting of the Union County Freeholder Board, Freeholder Dan Sullivan said the county received a \$9.5 million contract from the United States Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration to operate the 1,000-passenger ferry service.

The county plans to build a ferry terminal, slips for two ferries, a passenger waiting area and a 1,000-space parking lot on the Elizabeth waterfront near the Jersey Gardens Mall on the Newark Bay. The ferry system would be connected to the proposed light rail line that will offer service between Midtown Elizabeth and Newark Liberty International Airport.

Garwood resident and 2004 Republican freeholder candidate Bruce Paterson questioned how the county would keep the ferry service solvent with 1,000 passengers when a similar service, New York Waterway, was unable to stay in business with 15,000 daily passengers.

Freeholder Sullivan said the county's plan would take 1,000 cars off the highways each day. He said the county had been considering the ferry plan prior to the September 11, 2001 terrorists' attacks. He noted that the service would be similar to ferry services, which transport New Jersey residents from shore areas to New York City.

County officials have said the ferries would operate every 30 minutes during the morning and evening rush hours.

Freeholder Sullivan said the county has filed a request for proposals or RFP to find a private operator for the ferry service. He said the bulk of the anticipated passengers would be from western portions of Union County.

The county is currently in negotiations with OENJ-Cherokee, the owner of the property, to purchase the site. County officials estimate it would cost \$14 million to purchase the land.

The land acquisition would be financed through the Union County Improvement Authority.

In other business, the freeholders approved a contract to a company to design a closed-circuit surveillance system for the county's parks and recreation facilities.

Consolidated Construction Management Services Corporation of Colts Neck was given a \$92,000 contract to design the system that will include some 17 locations in parks and recreation facilities, Parks and Recreation Director Charles Sigmund told the board at its January 6 agenda meeting.

Mr. Sigmund has said the surveillance system is intended to reduce instances of crime such as vandalism. Although he has not identified the locations that will be monitored, he indicated that Phil Rizzuto Park in Elizabeth, across the street from Kean University, would likely be one of the locations.

County Director of Public Information Sebastian D'Elia told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* that the monitoring system was being done "as a security measure."

Mr. Paterson objected to the surveillance system, calling it "big brother." He said unless the expenditure would save the county money for police officers, he was leery about the plan. He said the board should, "take a good hard look at this."

"It just strikes me wrong," he said.

On another matter, the board approved four contracts totaling around \$80,000 to Matrix Environmental & Geotechnical Services of East Hanover. Among the contracts is one to conduct quarterly groundwater monitoring of an underground storage tank site at the county's public works facility in Scotch Plains.

Matrix will also perform an environmental investigation and remediation at the Houdaille Quarry in Springfield after an underground tank was discovered during the removal of logs. Officials said the tank must be removed per rules regulated by the state's Department of Environmental Protection.

In addition, Matrix will conduct a groundwater investigation at the Echo Lake Park boathouse in Mountainside.



NEW FREEHOLDER CLERK...Union County Freeholder Chairman Rick Proctor of Rahway, right, and Vice Chairman Al Mirabella of Fanwood present Nicole Tedeschi of Union with a resolution and a gift commending her for her services as Director of Intergovernmental Affairs and congratulating her on her new position as Clerk of the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders.

Mr. Sigmund has said the boathouse at one had a heating system that included an underground tank. Although the tank was removed the contamination remains.

In other business, Rahway resident Vincent Lehotsky recommended that the county get involved in the Cooper Road island controversy currently before the Scotch Plains Zoning Board of Adjustment.

Developer Mark Lustbader of West Orange is seeking to construct a single-family home on the island, which is located in the middle of Cooper Road. AT&T and the township own the property.

Mr. Lehotsky said the county might be able to use its open space fund to preserve the island. He suggested that a garden could be constructed possible honoring, "local legend Don DiFrancesco," a former state senator and acting governor.

Mr. Lehotsky also expressed surprise that the board did not issue a laudatory resolution to express condolences to the family of Bernard Heeny, the Westfield town clerk who died suddenly of a heart attack on New Year's Eve.

"He was just a regular guy," Mr. Lehotsky said. "He was a breath of fresh air in a room full of stuff shirts."

Elizabeth resident Dan Nozza criticized the board for raises given out in December to department heads. Mr. Nozza incorrectly identified the board as having given themselves raises to which board chairman Freeholder Rick Proctor said was not correct. Freeholders currently earn \$28,000 for their part-time positions. Department heads received an average in-

crease of four percent.

Mr. Paterson was critical of the \$75,000 salary paid to new freeholder clerk Nicole Tedeschi. He said the new salary was \$12,000 more than she earned as the county's director of intergovernmental relations.

It was also the same amount paid to Sharda Badri who previously served in the role. She was promoted to Director of Citizen Services.

Health Department Seeks Response Team Members

WESTFIELD – The Westfield Regional Health Department is recruiting members of the public interested in being a member of the Public Health Emergency Response Team (PHERT), serving Fanwood, Garwood, Mountainside, New Providence, Roselle Park, Springfield and Westfield.

PHERT members are health care professionals and lay citizens who will give critical support to local public health personnel to conduct mass prophylaxis/immunization clinics to prevent naturally occurring or communicable diseases as a result of an intentional release associated with terrorism.

Active and retired professionals with backgrounds in medicine, nursing, pharmacy, veterinary medicine and allied health experience, as well as lay citizens and individuals with backgrounds in transportation and security, are needed to supplement the public health workforce.

Volunteers will have the opportu-



Scotch Plains Recreation Department Events Calendar

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Dining with Dazzle, (Ages 7-12), Wednesday, February 16, 5 to 7 p.m., Snuffy's in Scotch Plains. Topics will include understanding the place setting, dinner conversation, setting a proper table, cutting and chewing food, ordering from the menu, hosting and serving guests, and acceptable behavior at the dinner table. The fee is for the program is \$35 per person.

Maracas, Wednesdays, 9:30 to 10:15 a.m., until February 23. This interactive Spanish language program for children ages three to five accompanied by a parent or guardian consists of themed classes aimed at encouraging children and parents to explore Spanish. Maracas uses motion, repetition, and music in a comfortable learning environment.

Bowling (Ages 5-14), through Wednesday, March 30. This program will be held on Mondays at 4 p.m. at Linden Lanes Bowling Center on North Stiles Street in Linden. Children ages 5 to 7 will bowl in a special bumper division. This 12-week program consists of two games, use of rental shoes, lightweight balls and instructional assistance. Bowlers will

pay \$2 for missed weeks. The fee is \$6 to be paid each week at the bowling center. Participants were to pre-register at the Scotch Plains Recreation Department in Room 113.

Bumper Bowling – For Pre-K and Kindergarten-Aged Children. Held at Linden Lanes on Wednesdays and 9:30 a.m. or noon. This program is for children and their mothers or guardians. Fees are \$6 to be paid at the bowling alley.

Babysitting Training (Ages 11-16), Saturday, February 5, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Towne House. Topics for this program will include feeding, formula and bottle preparation, and holding, burping, playtime activities, diapering and dressing. Participants will gain first aid skills, accident management and prevention as well as handling choking emergencies.

Senior Aerobics (14 classes), Tuesdays and Thursdays, January 11 to February 24, Towne House, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. This aerobic program incorporates standing exercise routines with the use of hand-weights (25-pound maximum).

Jazzercise, Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, 7 to 8 p.m., Scotch Hills Country Club and Saturdays, 8:30 to 9:30 a.m., Towne House, through March 8. This original dance exercise features 60-minute classes offering a blend of jazz dance and exercise science choreographed to today's hottest music, including Top 40, jazz, country, funk and classics. Easy-to-follow choreography includes a gentle warm-up, 30-minute aerobic workout, muscle toning and strengthening segments with weights, and a stretch finale. The fee is \$105 per person.

Foxwoods Casino, Connecticut, Wednesday, February 23. The bus will depart the Scotch Plains Municipal Building parking lot at 8 a.m. and return at around 7 p.m. for this trip. Participants will receive a \$25 package upon arrival at the casino, which includes coins and coupons. Registration for township residents will be held through Friday, February 4. The fee for non-residents is \$28.

Franklin Mills Outlet Shopping Trip, Friday, February 26. The coach bus will depart from the Scotch Plains Municipal Building at 8:30 a.m. and travel to the Franklin Mills Mall in Philadelphia where participants will enjoy a day of shopping at many discount outlet stores with name brands. The bus will return to the parking lot at approximately 5 p.m. Registration is being held through Friday, January 21, at a fee of \$18 per person.

Murder Mystery, "Deadly Beloved" at Scotch Hills Country Club, Friday, March 18. Doors open at 7 p.m. Tickets for this trip must be purchased at the Recreation Department by Friday, February 18. Tickets are \$45 per person and include a buffet dinner. Seating is limited for this trip.

Girls Softball League (third-eighth grades), Season runs from April 16 to June 11. This is basic instructional league is based on teaching skills and drills in a non-competitive format. Teams will be formed and practices and games will be played on township ball fields twice a week. Leagues will depend upon registration numbers. Parent volunteers are needed to coach to umpire. Early registration will be held through Friday, February 4 at a cost of \$45. Regular registration will be held from Monday, February 7, through Friday, March 4. Cost: \$55.

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