



BIKE REGISTRATION...The Westfield Police Department conducted their annual bicycle registration with third graders from Franklin Elementary School. Detective Lisa Perrotta, Officer Mark Cierpial and volunteer Lindsay Garner taught bicycle safety rules and regulations to the students and presented them with certificates of registration. The program is occurring at all Westfield elementary schools.

Anna Githens for The Westfield Leader

Mayor Marks Proposes Public Forum to Discuss Property Tax Reform

By BETSEY BURGDOFF
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

SCOTCH PLAINS – Scotch Plains Mayor Martin Marks, in a press release sent to *The Scotch Plains Times*, proposes to hold a public forum to discuss the issue of property tax reform.

He is calling out to local legislators as well as *The Times* to join him in this forum, which will be televised on Channel 34.

"In light of the attention the recent property tax summit received, I feel it is important to keep the issue fresh on our citizens' minds. I make the following three-part challenge. First, I invite my fellow elected officials, in particular District 21 and 22 state legislators, Union County Freeholders, area mayors and board of education members to join me in an open to the public forum on property taxes and the prospect for reform.

"Second, I challenge *The Westfield Leader/Scotch Plains Fanwood Times* to be the facilitator of the event. Third and most importantly, I challenge my fellow citizens in this region to attend the event and interact with their elected officials on the issue of property tax reform," Mayor Marks' release said in part.

The Times has agreed to support Mayor Marks and will be moderating the event to be held in the Scotch Plains Municipal Building. Another venue may be sought if the municipal building proves to be unable to house the forum.

"The paper will definitely support the mayor's call," *The Times* publisher Horace Corbin said. "Such an issue is important to our readers."

Senator Tom Kean, Jr. (R-21, Westfield) told *The Times* that he would also participate. "We have been trying for property tax reform since I have been in the Assembly," Senator Kean said. "I am just as frustrated as Mayor Marks."

"I think the legislature should do

their job," Senator Kean continued. He noted that one key issue contributing to skyrocketing property taxes, or "corruption tax," as he labeled it, is the Pay to Play, a system where contractors give donations to elected officials and in return get lucrative government contracts.

"If there is an opportunity to discuss this issue, I am happy to be there," he concluded.

Assemblyman Jon Bramnick (R-21, Westfield) said, "That is exactly what we need because the Democrats control the government."

"I have asked for this discussion on the floor of the Assembly," he continued. "If you could get the legislators together, I think that would be great. I would really love to do it."

Scotch Plains Board of Education President Linda Nelson echoed Senator Kean's and Assemblyman Bramnick's responses.

"The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education shares the public's concern over steadily increasing property taxes and the challenge of maintaining a quality school district without overwhelming local taxpayers," Mrs. Nelson said.

"We welcome an opportunity for public study of the many factors involved in the current property tax crisis in New Jersey. Certainly we all can benefit from the kind of in-depth look at the issues that Mayor Marks is proposing."

Mrs. Nelson stated that a discussion of how public education is funded would be an item on the board's June agenda.

"Our concern is how to bring about the relief that taxpayers need while insuring equitable funding for all school districts that maintains educational quality," she concluded.

The forum is in the planning stages. *The Times* will keep residents informed as more information becomes available.

DWC Highlights Main Street Conference; Examines Goals

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Martone told *The Westfield Leader*. Mrs. Cronin announced that the renovation of Cosimo's is almost complete and the renovations are "first class all the way."

Mrs. Cronin also announced that Game Stop is "getting back on track and moving along." They will be moving into 121 East Broad Street in the near future after renovating the location. "This is an opportunity to put into effect our historic preservation aspect of our facade program."

Mrs. Cronin reported that vacancies will be handled in a new manner stating, "We need to take a fresh look at internal policies."

In the future, inquiries involving a vacant downtown property will be directed to the landlord or a handling broker.

Apartments in the Special Improvement District (SID) were also discussed. The DWC will be inquiring as to how many apartments there are, how many need to be rented, and the reasons they are not being rented. In the past, it has been reported that parking could be a key issue in why certain apartments remain vacant.

The PGA Tour to be held at Baltusrol Golf Club in Springfield this August was also discussed. The DWC would like to incorporate Westfield into the venue as a "premier destination," Mrs. Cronin stated.

The DWC is proposing to have attendees park in Westfield and either take a trolley, or bus to the event.

Board member Lee Hale suggested that the DWC target "players, offi-

cial, season ticket holders – the real hard core."

Mrs. Cronin announced that the 5K event, which will be held on Wednesday, July 27, has its first Gold Sponsor in Horizon Blue Cross/Blue Shield. They will be sponsoring the event with a \$5,000 donation. The event is expected to attract close to 1,500 people. Last year, 900 runners crossed the finish line.

Signature Moments, a premier memorabilia store will hold its Grand Opening on Saturday, June 11. Tom Seaver, a Cy Young Award winning retired pitcher for the Mets, will be on hand for the event to sign autographs.

At the public participation portion of the meeting, business owner Robert Saunders addressed the board on renderings that architect Margaret Westfield, commissioned by the DWC did for his building located at 241 North Avenue. Ms. Westfield did not consult Mr. Saunders before making her renderings.

"That is a sore spot with us," he told the board. We actually were not able to use it. Our disappointment was that we were not included," Mr. Saunders said.

"It is a pretty significant building. We still stand committed to the project," Mrs. Cronin said.

Mr. Martone and Mrs. Cronin both agreed that the DWC is eager to work with Mr. Saunders and his partner Richard Parness on his facade project whenever they are ready to move forward.

"We're anxious, we're ready," Mr. Saunders said.

Dr. Richard O'Malley Takes Helm as Mountainside CSA

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perintendent to lead and nurture all members of the school staff and to communicate effectively with parents, members of the community, and colleagues in other districts and schools," Dr. O'Malley stated.

He also served as the former research assistant for the Education Committee of the New Jersey State General Assembly.

While serving as Assistant Principal of Cavallini Middle School in Upper Saddle River, prior to becoming principal at Stony Brook, Dr. O'Malley reported, "I gained a strong foundation in school administration. I developed educational presentations for teachers and PTO members, participated in an effort to expand students' use of computer technology, and enhanced performance evaluation process of teachers."

Dr. O'Malley began his career as an elementary school teacher in South Toms River Elementary School where he taught all subject areas to sixth grade students and reading and mathematics to students in the federally funded Excel program, which is an after-school basic skills program.

"I demonstrated proficiency in adapting teaching techniques to diverse learning styles of students," he said.

He also introduced strategies to promote parental involvement in classroom activities.

"I consistently encouraged students' use of computer technology by assigning Internet research projects, placing tests on computer and using a variety of computer activities to develop and reinforce math and lan-

guage skills," he stated.

Dr. O'Malley and his wife Christine reside in Flemington and have three children: Ryan, 5, Kaitlin, 3, and Emma Claire, 1. Christine is fortunate enough to be a stay-at-home mother.

Dr. O'Malley, a lifelong resident of New Jersey and a self-confessed sport fanatic, added, "I love all sports – baseball, basketball, but especially golf." He was sporting a summer-like tan that he stated he got from the golf course.

When past Board of Education President Peter Goggi introduced Dr. O'Malley to the district on March 22, he said, "Dr. Richard O'Malley is an innovative administrator and consensus builder, very inclusive with staff, parents and the community, who will be charged with taking this district to the next level."

The terms of Dr. O'Malley's contract were very specific in articulating expectations from both him and the school board. His contract is different from previous contracts in that it is a four-year term, "demonstrating the commitment to Dr. O'Malley as our educational leader," Mr. Goggi said. It also allows for performance-based incentives that will allow the district to "reward the achievement of stretching goals and targets that will drive the district to the next level."

"I am delighted to be part of the Mountainside Schools," Dr. O'Malley said. "I welcome your ideas and energies as the work of our educational agenda moves forward. I look forward to sharing this journey and adventure ahead with each of you."

Asian Student Group Cited In Raising Funds For Tsunami Relief

By MATT MARINO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

SCOTCH PLAINS — The tsunami disaster in Asia affected people throughout the world, including here in the local area. Through much hard work and dedication, the Asian Student Association – a student-run club at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School – managed to raise over \$24,000 for tsunami relief during a telethon held earlier this spring.

At their meeting held last Thursday evening, members of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education (BOE) witnessed the ceremonial check presentation to the Tri-County American Red Cross.

Robin Wong and Janet McNally, the two adult coordinators of the telethon, both commented that much of the telethon's success was due to the students' perseverance and determination. That, said Mrs. Wong, led to an overwhelming response from those watching the telethon in Scotch Plains and Fanwood.

"We could not have asked for a better reception," commented Mrs. Wong.

Gina Lewis, who represented the Red Cross at the meeting, expressed admiration for the amount of time and effort put into the telethon, especially by the students.

"I've never been so impressed with students in my entire life," said Ms. Lewis.

In praising the students and others involved with the telethon, Janet McNally also publicly "challenged" both Mayor Martin Marks of Scotch

Plains and Mayor Colleen Mahr of Fanwood to present the students with some kind of public distinction.

"These students deserve it," noted Mrs. McNally.

In other board business, the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs informed the board via letter that two grants were approved, totaling \$35,000. The grants will be used in conjunction with the Sharing Available Resources Efficiently (SHARE) program to conduct a study regarding shared parking services and shared public works.

Along that same front, the board is expected to endorse the construction of a shared field maintenance storage building at the site of the Scotch Plains Public Works garage, located on Plainfield Avenue in Scotch Plains.

The board will pick up 40 percent of the cost for four bays (storage garages) that will house field maintenance equipment and materials. This cost is expected to be approximately \$32,000.

At the next meeting scheduled for Tuesday, May 24, the board is also expected to approve reception of funds totaling \$118,577 to be put toward the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) grant program. The money will be divided among three programs – Title II (Part A), Title IV and Title V.



ATTIC ABLAZE...A fire in the attic of a home located at 602 Stanley Avenue in Westfield on Wednesday morning required the assistance of numerous surrounding towns in an act of mutual aid. The cause of the fire is under investigation.

Benjamin B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader

WF Council Awards Houlihan Contracts Despite Objections

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between the ages of 5 and 14 – 2,341 kids – are playing soccer with the association.

"Every new program we've introduced has just exploded," he said. "We are bursting at the seams."

Tom Maher of Forest Avenue, also supportive of the turf and lights, commented, "This is the right direction for Westfield."

Abby Abromowitz of Summit Court had a differing view indicating that some neighboring residents will not be able to sit out on their porches during the evening due to the increased use and hours of the field.

"It's just very upsetting to the neighborhood," she said.

Vivian Strano of Summit Court said lights are not needed at Houlihan.

"I don't thank they (children) should be playing after dark," said Ms. Strano.

Resident David Sanders of Genesee Trail said he believed a lighted field would give local kids something to do at night other than hanging out in the downtown.

Gio Palatucci of Washington Street, a senior at Westfield High School and a soccer team member, said the student athletes "need a safe place to play" and that turfing Houlihan Field is one solution to the problem.

Michael Giordano of Summit Court said area residents "have some serious issues" with the lights at Houlihan such increased traffic safety issues at the intersection of Rahway Avenue and Lamberts Mill Road. He said the lighted field would not solve the problem of additional usage on town fields. He said the town should instead increase its inventory of fields.

"We are a bedroom community. We would like to stay that way," said Mr. Giordano.

Former Mayor and current Democratic contender for his old job, Tom

Jardim of Walnut Street, urged the council to sit down with area residents impacted the most by the project prior to voting to approve the lights.

Fourth Ward Councilman Larry Goldman, the lone dissenter on the Houlihan project, said lighting both fields but only turfing Houlihan "to me does not make a lot of sense."

Councilman Goldman favored rebidding the project to turf both fields and to remove the lights from the scope of the work or at least postponing the vote on the project until the officials could meet with neighbors.

"There are numerous ways we can compromise and make the residents of that area a little more comfortable about the noise and the lights," he said.

Councilman Goldman requested that the council consider specific lighting restrictions for the park prior to the installation of the lights.

Fourth Ward Councilman Jim Foerst, in voting in favor of the project, said he weighed the positive impact of the project would have on the town versus the detriment it might have on the surrounding neighborhood. In the end he felt the turf and lights were "best for the town as a whole."

Mayor Greg McDermott said he felt it was important the project is completed to gain additional usage for games for the various leagues while allowing time for some fields be taken out of use temporarily to improve their playing condition.

Town officials have asked the recreation department to look for other sources income such as Union County grants and donations from sports organizations that utilize the fields.

Mr. Gildea said both the Tamaques and Houlihan/Sid Fay projects would begin by June and with a completion deadline at the end of August in time for the fall sports season.

Council Passes Resolution For School Budget Cuts

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a mother of several young children at Tamaques School, said she was concerned over the proposed budget cuts. She urged the governing body to "help us find the funding" to find education for children in Westfield.

Nina Otis of Washington Street, also a Tamaques School parent, indicated that increased class size could impact negatively on the town.

Other residents said money being spent for lights at Houlihan and Sid Fay Fields could have been better used to maintain the town's education system.

Councilman Echausse emphasized that no existing staff would be cut and that any final decisions on the school budget would come from the Board of Education.

Councilman Echausse said he would like the council to work together a number areas to save money including joint purchasing, insurance practices and field maintenance.

"We need to continue to work together," said Councilman Echausse.

School Board President Anne Riegel said the board would be look-

ing to make improvements next year in the budget process including expanding voting hours.

As part of the council's resolution, Dr. Margaret Dolan would be moved to the position of Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum. Her current position of assistant superintendent of human services will become a director's position to be filled at a later time. The change would save \$35,460.

A new jazz band planned at the high school will be cut from the budget, as well as line items for a fifth grade trip to Sandy Hook, multimedia carts, new athletic uniforms, new musical instrument purchases, and a new district-wide sixth grade assessment test.

A physical education teacher at the intermediate grade level will be eliminated to save \$94,000, and an administrative secretarial position of \$42,079 will not be filled following a retirement. An unfilled vacancy for a gifted and talented teacher will also be eliminated from the budget.

Of the total reductions, \$403,235 will come through budgeted staff positions, \$72,446 in classroom technology, and \$25,032 in fine arts technology and \$71,450 in equipment, uniforms and textbook purchases.

The school board was to have voted on the proposed tax levy reductions on a resolution last night, Wednesday, May 18, after *The Westfield Leader* went to press.



SUNDAY, MAY 8

Neil Slattery, 26, of Clark was arrested at Park Street and Central Avenue and charged with driving while intoxicated. He was released on his own recognizance.

Christine Kessler, 19, of Point Pleasant was arrested at Tuttle Parkway and West South Avenue and charged with possession of a controlled dangerous substance (less than 50 grams of suspected marijuana) and possession of drug paraphernalia. She was released on her own recognizance with summonses.

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