

## Westfield to Bag On-Street Meters From Thanksgiving to New Year's

By PAUL J. PEYTON  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Westfield shoppers will have the opportunity to park for free this holiday season.

As part of a recommendation by the Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC), the management entity for the downtown special improvement district, and the Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce, Mayor Andy Skibitsky and the town council signed off on a plan last Wednesday to bag 300 on-street meters from Thanksgiving until New Year's Day.

After a lengthy lapse, last year the town offered the program for two weeks. Shoppers will be able to park for free for up to two hours. Municipal lots will not be included.

"We are trying to provide a more shopper-friendly downtown," Mayor Skibitsky said at the council's October 5 conference meeting. "I personally think it is a good idea to do this."

The mayor said he wants the Chamber and DWC to communicate with downtown employees that they are to park in municipal lots and not on streets in the downtown area during the holiday season.

"There is nothing more impactful than driving through our downtown and seeing that the meters are covered," DWC Executive Director Sherry Cronin told the mayor and council.

She said Starbucks on Central Av-

enue, which bagged 100 on-street meters for a day last year, received a great deal of good feedback from that marketing decision.

"You can't measure that impact," Ms. Cronin said.

In other business, the council removed Scudder Road from the list of various road projects being completed by Schifano Construction Corp. of Middlesex. The town hired the company to mill and pave Scudder Road and numerous others in town.

Town Engineer Ken Marsh said the contractor discovered that curbing was improperly installed in the right-of-way of the road. In addition, bushes on the street created a sight problem for motorists. He also said people are parking in an area of the street that makes it difficult for motorists to pass. Fourteen homes are located on the street.

Mr. Marsh described Scudder as a "substandard road" in terms of its current condition.

"The (road) shows some very serious encroachment," Mr. Marsh told the council. "Over the years, people have put in curbing without a permit."

He said as part of the permit process, building department officials provide the location and elevation for placement of the curbing. Mr. Marsh said as a result, the Scudder Road work has been put on hold and will be re-bid as a separate project.

Under state guidelines, Mr. Marsh

said Scudder Road qualifies as a neighborhood access road and requires the street be widened from 18 to 24 feet in width to allow sufficient space for on-street parking and for cars to pass.

Mr. Gildea said all 14 residents on the street would be notified of the town's decision to widen the roadway. He told *The Westfield Leader* that the road is not consistent in width due to the curbing and brush.

The governing body also discussed updating the downtown streetscape improvement project. The town council appropriated \$75,000 last year for project. Mr. Gildea told *The Leader* the DWC came before the town council each of the past two years for capital budget requests ranging from \$1 to \$1.5 million for various parts of the improvement plan.

The council acted Tuesday night by approving a \$67,000 contract with Christopher Statile, Pa., an architectural and professional engineering firm based in Oakland. Mr. Gildea said the town is seeking reimbursement from the DWC for the contract.

Mr. Gildea said the company would update the bid specifications for each of the remaining Downtown Improvement Plan projects with current cost estimates. Doing so, the town can be act accordingly over the next few years, starting in 2006.

Once updated, Mr. Gildea said DWC officials would come before the council starting next year to request inclusion of parts of the plan in the 2006 capital budget, as well as in subsequent years. He said the entire plan would be completed over three years.

The DWC will seek grants to finance the improvement plan, which includes pedestrian walkways, new street lighting fixtures, brick pavers, new trees protected by iron fencing and a downtown sidewalk replacement plan. Parts of the plan have already been implemented, including sample lighting fixtures, improvements near the Rialto Theatre and on Central Avenue under the railroad overpass and up to South Avenue. Improvements to the East Broad Street and Elm Street intersection were also completed.

The town is looking for the DWC and/or businesses to finance half of the project, similar to the residential sidewalk replacement program, Mr. Gildea said.

Recreation Director Bruce Kaufmann attended the meeting to thank the mayor and council for their help in the successful installation of synthetic turf at Houlihan and Sid Fay Fields. The department is looking to hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the turf fields later this month.

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## BOE Reviews Policies, Accountant's Position

By BETSEY BURGDOFF  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

MOUNTAINSIDE — At the bi-monthly meeting of the Mountainside Board of Education (BOE), President John Perrin reported that a copy of the district's policies had been sent to the New Jersey School Boards Association.

"We put together a matrix of the policy," Mr. Perrin said. "Many policies needed review."

"There is a huge need for existing policies to be reviewed," Chief School Administrator Dr. Richard O'Malley added.

Dr. O'Malley stated that there were three policies that required immediate attention. The Gifted and Talented policy, the building use policy and the personnel policy all were mentioned as priorities. He assigned committees that evening, comprised of board members, to handle each policy review.

"If the need should arise where a policy needs to be reviewed, it will be passed on to the appropriate committee," Dr. O'Malley said.

Dr. O'Malley also announced that writing prompts will begin this week in the third grade, keeping in line with the district's curriculum goal for the Terra Nova standardized test. The goal is for students to be 85 percent proficient within two years in writing.

Students will be given a prompt and will be instructed to complete and turn in a sample of their writing. Samples will be sent to Summit where they will be reviewed and graded, giving the district an "authentic feel for how our district is doing," Dr. O'Malley said. "It's a good opportunity to compare ourselves with another school district."

It also was reported that the district would participate in the NJSSI (New Jersey Statewide Systematic Initiative) along with Berkeley Heights. "We're going to piggy-back and share some of the cost (with Berkeley Heights)," Dr. O'Malley said.

The NJSSI consortium will give the district access to low cost mathematics and science workshops. "We're glad that we've been selected to participate in this," Dr. O'Malley stated.

No acts of violence or vandalism were cited in the annual district report for the 2004-2005 school year. "God bless Mountainside," Mr. Perrin said.

A motion to change the part-time position of accountant to that of a full-time position was met with opposition from board members Carmine Venes and Pat Knodel.

"People in this community would be very surprised what the administration costs are for this district," Mr. Venes said. "We have 700 students and when you calculate what our legal and administrative costs are — we may be flagged by the state."

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## Mountainside Acts on Leaf, Stormwater Regulations

By KIMBERLY A. BROADWELL  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

MOUNTAINSIDE — Tuesday night at the monthly agenda-setting meeting, the Mountainside Council discussed extensive stormwater and leaf regulations to be voted on next week, appointed a new assistant recreation director, approved a volunteer recognition day and issued commendations

for youth sports.

To comply with state-mandated stormwater regulations, Mountainside must adopt several ordinances at next week's regular council meeting including control of litter, prohibition of illicit connections, prohibition of yard waste in streets, requirement of leaves and grass to be containerized and prohibition of dumping into the stormwater system.

Mayor Robert Viglianti and all council members voted to start an annual Volunteer Appreciation Day to recognize those serving on boards, commissions, rescue squad and fire department.

The proposal includes closing the community pool one Friday evening in August to provide a catered meal and a "DJ" for the event. All those volunteering for the borough and their spouses would be invited.

Adam Leib was appointed Assistant Recreation Director effective Monday, October 24. Kevin Donnelly was appointed to this position on August 15 but resigned a few days later.

A bid of \$4,858 was approved for the 2003 Crown Victoria owned by the borough.

Resolutions of commendation for the Boys 11-year-old Baseball All-Stars, which placed 1st in the Roselle Park Tournament, and for the Mountainside PAL Girls Softball Team, which captured the Elmora Youth League Title, will be read at next week's meeting.

The next council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 18, at 8 p.m.



POPULARITY... Rudy Giuliani campaigns Wednesday afternoon for New Jersey gubernatorial candidate Doug Forrester at the Knights of Columbus on North Avenue in Scotch Plains. The former New York City mayor introduces Mr. Forrester and draws an enthusiastic cheer. Heavy rains forced moving the event from outside the Westfield Municipal Building on East Broad Street. Pictured, from left to right, are: Asm. Jon Bramnick, Scotch Plains Mayor Martin Marks and Mr. Giuliani.

## WF Council Passes Height Limits On First Reading

By MICHAEL J. POLLACK  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — On Tuesday, the Westfield Town Council passed parking restrictions on Codding Road, discussed implementing pre-construction surveys and passed an ordinance on first reading to lower the maximum building height.

On second reading, the council approved unanimously an amendment to town parking restrictions. The ordinance curtails parking on Codding Road's west side, between Rahway and a point north of Hyslip Avenues between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m. on school days.

Fourth Ward Councilman Jim Foerst said that the Code Review and Town Property committee developed a new amendment requiring an applicant to submit a property survey before construction so the town can check for grade changes and "see problems before they happen. We are aware of, and we made immediate changes to the process."

On first reading, the council passed unanimously an amendment amending the land-use ordinance and lowering the maximum building height from 38 to 35 feet. Councilman Foerst said this was the second part of the plan to control McMansions — he hoped the first, the corner lot ordinance, will give the town "relief from shoehorning."

During public comment from citizens, Sharon Stockwell of We Care stated that more parking permits could be issued to wait-listed townspeople.

## Planning Board OK's Building Height Limit

By KIMBERLY A. BROADWELL  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Before the start of the planning board's regular monthly meeting last Wednesday, members voted unanimously to amend the land use plan, intended to restrict overdevelopment in town. The amendment, which the town council must act upon, would restrict the maximum height of homes in smaller residential zones to 35 feet, a reduction of three feet from the current provision.

Board member and Fourth Ward Councilman James Foerst said the amendment was an attempt "to control the volume of new construction." He also said amending the height restriction would have the "biggest impact in the shortest amount of time" and that other restrictions, such as the Floor Area Ratio (FAR), might have "unintended consequences to current homeowners."

During board discussions in August, Mr. Foerst cited situations where houses were too big and overpowering for the neighborhood but the board could not deny a developer because it was within the scope of the town's land-use ordinance. At that time, he said sometimes the board's "hands are tied by the municipal land-use law." He said, "Builders have to have integrity; most do, but there are some who abuse the system," adding that since 2001, 150 demolitions took place in Westfield, or 1.5 percent of

Mrs. Stockwell said she combed the town's parking areas at roughly 11 a.m. on Tuesday morning and noticed that 196 spaces were not being utilized. She asked the council how the rates of oversell are determined.

Third Ward Councilman Mark Ciarrocca responded, "No specific target number is used. The transportation committee meets regularly and monitors the amount of permits sold. To look at one day as a snapshot doesn't tell the whole story."

Mrs. Stockwell said that while her sample size may be small, she noticed "routinely on a basis of three weeks that two rows in lot three (south side train station) are empty before noon."

Allen Solomon of Orenda Circle spoke concerning the pay stations. Acknowledging that his expertise involved "unofficial surveys" conducted across from the post office, Mr. Solomon said he questioned residents as to their opinion on the pay stations. According to Mr. Solomon, "95 percent hated them. I know they were brought in as a revenue generator to support the garage, which is dead. So, why did it go forward?"

Councilman Ciarrocca explained that the pay stations are part of a three-phase parking plan that began implementation between March and May and included the approval of changes to lots one and eight and the repaving of lot three. "They (pay stations) were brought out many times. It's efficient, and not just from a revenue standpoint. But this was not

done in the dark of the night. It was presented to the public."

First Ward Councilman Sal Caruana told Mr. Solomon that he was "the first person in a year and a half to say 'you don't like it (the pay stations).'"

The council stressed that the computerized meters are accessible from anywhere in town and present a more aesthetically-pleasing and modern approach.

To begin Tuesday's council meeting, Mayor Andy Skibitsky and the town council honored Chris Miele, a Westfield soldier returning after serving just over a year in Iraq. Promoted to sergeant major, "a very unique accomplishment for such a young soldier" while in Iraq, Sergeant Major Miele received a standing ovation before Mayor Skibitsky bestowed the commendation. On behalf of the town and council, the mayor "officially welcomed Chris home."

Mayor Skibitsky said that the 250th Battalion would soon be returning from Iraq. In an effort dubbed "Operation Yellow Ribbon," Mayor Skibitsky said the town is coordinating plans to decorate streets and overpasses with yellow ribbons, (red, white and blue) banners and flags to honor returning soldiers. Interested parties are asked to contact Joan Mondon at mondon33@aol.com.

## Heavy Rainfall Disrupts Kehler Field Turf

WESTFIELD — Air/water pockets developed underneath the synthetic turf field at Kehler Stadium Tuesday as a result of heavy rainfall, requiring suspension of a soccer match.

According to Robert Berman, Business Administrator of the Westfield Public Schools, research conducted Wednesday by engineers determined that the field construction and drainage system are okay.

The storm sewer that the field drains into did not handle the high rate of water coming off the field and the runoff water had no place to go.

It is believed that air backed up the drainage pipe due to the overloaded stormwater system.

The school district's architect and engineer are working with the town to come up with a solution.



DON'T LET YOUR GUARD DOWN...The Westfield Area Old Guard, led by Director Roy Bowman, toured the new forensic center at the Ralph Froehlich Public Safety Building on Westfield's North Avenue. Union County Emergency Management Coordinator Ben Laganga (above, right) met with the group and answered questions about the local emergency management plan following a tour by Lieutenant Ron Esposito.

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WELCOME HOME...Sergeant Major Chris Miele of Westfield, with his wife and children, is honored by Mayor Andy Skibitsky Tuesday night for his service in Iraq as part of the 250th Signal Battalion from the Westfield Armory.