

Westfield Political Debate

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ment. Mr. Leuthold promoted an architectural review. "What I propose, to address the tear-down issue — it needs to go to the body of an architectural review. Presently, the review board is somewhat advisory in nature. I feel it needs additional regulation. When a home is torn down, the new home should be consistent with surrounding neighborhood and that's the responsibility of the architectural review board."

Second Ward Republican candidate Frank Fusaro questioned the success of the South Avenue SID (Downtown Westfield Corporation). "The SID has not been successful on the South and Central Avenue corridor. We need to beautify the area and get rid of the vacancies on Central that have existed for years. There's no reason we can't attract chain stores to the Central Avenue corridor."

Second Ward Republican Candidate Vicki Kimmins said that for as long as she can recall, South Avenue has always been a problem. "It seems we're not giving enough help to. The road needs more landscaping, lighting."

She said she hoped for the DWC and Chamber of Commerce to pool together with volunteers to promote ways to revitalize the area, saying it wasn't fair for business on the south side to pay the same as on the north side. She maintained that South Avenue is needed to provide a vibrant downtown and improve quality of life.

Incumbent Republican Councilman Sal Caruana, responding to a question on raising taxes, reminded townswomen that the town council is responsible for only 10 (or so) percent of the tax bill. He said the average Westfield tax bill is \$9,900 and 65 percent goes to education. Twenty-five percent goes to the county. "Considering our quality of life, we are certainly in line with what's in the region. We need to work hard to find economies of scale and efficiencies in shared services — on road paving, snow removal, leaf removal. There is strength in neighbors."

First Ward Democratic challenger Audrey Fisch said that the current tax rate is not a lot of money, but maintained that it hurts seniors. "We drive our seniors out of Westfield and we spiral our taxes up by the new family that buys the house, has young children, which puts an additional burden on our schools and adds additional traffic."

Third Ward Democratic challenger Dave Haas said that state funding for municipalities is going down across the board. "Our taxes have gone up a third in the last four years. Other towns have done a better job managing that. We have a neighbor in (Scotch Plains) Mayor Marks who is lobbying the state legislature to have a constitutional convention to change the way the rules are for funding

schools to lower property taxes. It's free to stand up and lobby our legislators and we ought to be doing it."

Democrats focused their attention on highlighting what could be done to enhance the services DPW provides, even in light of the White Paper reports. "The DPW is basically broken and it needs to be fixed," Mr. Fusaro said. "We need accessibility to the town engineer and we need some accountability."

While Democrats continued to suggest ways to increase the operating procedures at DPW, Republicans, more or less, focused on the work of local citizens in providing an advisory group to audit the DPW. Ms. Kimmins applauded the dedicated volunteer committee that analyzed the maintenance and construction division of DPW. "I was impressed with what we had from volunteers in town. The volunteers helped us evaluate at no cost to our taxes. I see no reason they cannot help us further."

In terms of parking, Councilman Caruana criticized his "good friend David Haas, who said 'listen to Tom Jardim and his parking solutions.' Mayor Jardim had four years, an ample opportunity to develop a parking solution. What he gave us was a \$150,000 study that put us on a hamster wheel to build two decks." Councilman Caruana talked about reorganizing parking to have downtown employees park in the train station lot to redistribute parking for shoppers. He said the "behavior must change."

Mr. Haas said that Westfield could do better than its current administration, which has governed during a one-third jump in municipal taxes in four years.

"In 2003, as councilman, I asked for a referendum on the parking deck plan before the council wasted a million dollars on a study. No one else on council, including my friend Sal Caruana, who was so upset by \$150,000 a moment ago, stood up with me," he said.

The candidates forum was moderated by Betsey Burgdorf of *The Westfield Leader*. Merry Wisler represented the League of Women Voters.

Questions covered the following topics: Westfield High School parking, development, emergency planning, the shade tree commission, shoppers parking, chain vs. smaller owned stores, animal control services, taxes, the department of public works operation, selection of a new police chief, litigation and the Town of Westfield, supervisory positions at town hall, applying for state aide projects, the South Avenue business community, street maintenance, building permits, park improvements, and environmental concerns at municipal lots 1 and 8 (Elm and Prospect Streets).

Test Scores Told; Violence Vandalism Report Released

By ANNA GITHENS
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD- During the Garwood Board of Education meeting Tuesday night, Karen McCarrick, supervisor of curriculum and instruction, gave the 2004-2005 district assessment presentation. The presentation consisted of the results of three major tests that were given last spring to Garwood students: the Terra Nova for grades 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7; the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) for grades 3 and 4, and the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA).

"Overall Garwood students continue to perform well above national norms at 65 percentile or higher," stated Mrs. McCarrick. National norms are at the 50 percentile. "This indicates that pupils in Garwood public schools are meeting or exceeding the expectation of annual yearly progress mandated in the No Child Left Behind legislation."

In the grade 8 GEPA, when comparing student scores from last year's scores in language arts literacy, the number of advanced proficient students increased 2.6 percent to 14.7 percent with a total of 94.1 percent of students identified as advanced proficient or proficient. While this is a decrease from last year of 5.9, these scores are still considered to be very strong, Mrs. McCarrick reported.

In science, the Garwood district has most of its students falling in the proficient or advanced proficient category (91.4 percent with 8.6 percent partially proficient). "Scores reflect the 'hands on' opportunities afforded by students at the early grade levels," she stated.

The area of mathematics warrants the most concern in the district. Of all students in the class of 2005, 68.6 percent were identified as advanced proficient or proficient, however, 31.4 percent were considered partially proficient and will require basic skills instruction at the high school level.

Mrs. McCarrick reported that Garwood has begun to revive the district's program of instruction by encouraging a more constructionist approach. The district is incorporating the Transition Math program and Algebra for all eighth graders and students who were taught the Everyday Math program will be moving into middle school.

"Our grouping level has improved to DE," stated Dr. William Murphy, Superintendent of Garwood Schools. "The district factors are based upon socio-economics of the community," he added. More testing results can be viewed at the websites of the board and the Department of Education's.

Dr. Murphy also released the Quality Assurance Annual Report. Lincoln School fell slightly short of the first objective where at least 75 percent of the students in grade 8 were to achieve proficient or advanced proficient scores on the GEPA's, (68.6 percent of students actually scored in that range). Staff changes were made in math education, according to Dr. Murphy's report, and the district adopted a new textbook se-

ries from the University of Chicago, which is better aligned to the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards.

The second objective was achieved whereby 91 percent of second grade students achieved a score of "secure" on at least 75 percent of the test. In grade 4, 82.9 percent of students scored at the proficient or advanced proficient levels.

In other business, Dr. Murphy reported on the that there were two incidents of violence, one of vandalism, and two cases of possession of weapons during the past school year. Dr. Murphy said one incident involved a student writing on a wall with a knife and the other incident involved a knife falling out of a student's backpack.

Garwood resident Karen Resetar asked, "What happened to the security officer we had last year?" Dr. Murphy replied that the gentleman retired for personal reasons and the custodial crew is rotating on security right now. "The position is posted and we hope to fill it this year," said School Business Administrator Julia DePinto-Perez. "We will be following up with the police academy in Scotch Plains as well," she added.

The Lincoln School construction project is "moving along well," according to Construction Manager James Philbin. "We are near completion of the masonry work, the next major item is getting the building weather tight," he added, "then we can start the dry wall and ceilings." Board member Linda Koenig said she would like to investigate the cost of having generators run the sump pumps.

WF Council

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eight (Elm and Prospect lots). There's no sense of urgency to act one way or the other," Councilman Foerst said he would confer with Town Attorney Robert Cockren in the coming weeks. He assured WeCare's Sharon Stockwell that "we're all over it."

Councilman Foerst said that the height restriction ordinance, which passed unanimously recently, would be finalized in two weeks. All property purchase requests are now deferred to that point. The issue of Myrtle Avenue was referred to the zoning officer to determine if the landscape business is consistent with the zoning requests in that area. Councilman's Foerst's committee will be dealing with COA (Council of Affordable Housing). Claiming that towns "are looking at us (Westfield) as the model," he assured that his committee will examine the issue before the end of the year. He said that quality-of-life issues concerning redevelopment would coincide with the next phase of planning.

WESTFIELD POLICE BLOTTER

Westfield

Saturday, October 8, Kimberly Ann Castner, 31, of Westfield was arrested and charged with driving while intoxicated following a motor vehicle accident on Dorian Road. No injuries were reported. Castner was released with summonses to a responsible adult.

Saturday, October 8, three Summit Court residents reported incidents of criminal mischief. One stated the air was let out of the tires on her motor vehicle that was parked in her driveway. The other two residents reported offensive language was painted on their respective garages.

Monday, October 10, Antonio Andrade, 54, of Linden was arrested and charged with driving while intoxicated in the 1000 block of Central Avenue. He was released to a responsible adult.

Monday, October 10, Perry Jones, Jr., 41, of Plainfield was arrested at West North Avenue and Crossway Place and charged with hindering apprehension for allegedly giving police a false name during a motor vehicle stop. Jones was released on his own recognizance with a summons.

Monday, October 10, an Edison resident reported that on October 7 her motor vehicle was damaged through criminal mischief while parked in the 200 block of Winyah Avenue. The driver's side mirror was removed by unknown means and discarded by the side of the road.

Monday, October 10, Dawan Thompson, 36, of Piscataway was arrested at South Avenue and Hort Street after it was revealed during a motor vehicle stop that an active South Plainfield traffic warrant existed for him in the amount of \$240. Thompson posted bail and was released.

Friday, October 14, a burglary was reported at an East North Avenue dwelling in which approximately \$500 worth of property was taken from a second-story bedroom. The missing items included a men's gold bracelet, gold and silver cuff links and a Bulova men's watch.

Saturday, October 15, Richard Sandberg, 22, of Westfield was arrested at South and Central Avenues and charged with driving while intoxicated, possession of less than 50 grams of suspected marijuana and disorderly conduct. He was released to a responsible adult.

Sunday, October 16, James Brown, 3rd, 26, of Westfield was arrested at Elizabeth and Central Avenues and charged with driving while intoxicated. He was released to a responsible adult.

Sunday, October 16, William Lykin, 22, of Garwood was arrested and charged with driving while intoxicated at Central Avenue and Dakota Street. He was released to a responsible adult.

Mountainside
Friday, October 7, seven juveniles were charged with criminal mischief.

During a routine patrol of Deerfield School the juveniles were spotted near the jungle gym behind the school. A police officer reportedly overheard the individuals talking about lighting something on fire. After identifying himself to the juveniles he recovered three water bottles filled half way with gasoline, police said.

The individuals were taken to headquarters and released into the custody of their parents, police said. The investigation was turned over to the juvenile officer for further investigation.

Thursday, October 13, a teenager was arrested and charged with theft of services for stealing \$6 worth of gas from the Exxon station located on Route 22 East. Police said the victim stated that the suspect received \$10 worth of gas on paid the attendant \$4 in quarters. When the suspect was later apprehended he stated that he left his wallet at home and didn't have enough money to pay for his purchase. The suspect was taken to headquarters and released to his parents.

Saturday, October 15, an officer responded to a call from Loews Theatre regarding criminal mischief. The victim told police that upon exiting the theatre she discovered the passenger side window on her Dodge Caravan was shattered. There were no signs of entry and nothing was reported missing at this time, police said.

Sunday, October 16, Devon J. Samaroo, 23, from Montclair was arrested after stealing property from the Children's Specialized Hospital, police said.

Security called the police to report the suspect had gained entry into the building via a rear entrance. Police said the suspect was seen wandering through the hallway when he was approached by security. The suspect fled out of the rear of the building and into the wooded area behind the hospital. He was charged with theft of a movable object.

Sunday, October 16, an officer responded to the Getty Gas Station on Route 22 West following a report of theft of services. Police said the attendant stated that a black female in a red Plymouth Neon requested \$25 worth of gas. She reportedly received the gas and drove off without paying. Police said the vehicle fled North on Summit Road. The driver was described as a heavy set, black female approximately 20 years old. The incident is under investigation.

Sunday, October 16, an officer responded to the Getty Gas Station on Route 22 West following a report of damaged property. An individual driving a commercial box truck on Summit Road told police he lost his rear right tire.

The tire rolled onto Rout 22 West striking the concrete divider. It bounced off and deflected to the storefront of the Getty Station, police said. The wheel reportedly struck the building causing a large glass pane to break. There were no other reports of injury or damage.



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Mayor Andy SKIBITSKY

Listening. Working. Getting Results.



Promise Kept: Control Development.

Andy Skibitsky promised us he would take measures to protect the character of our neighborhoods. And in four short months—he has.

Skibitsky and the Westfield Council recently passed tough new regulations to place height restrictions on construction and establish tough, new guidelines on what can be built on corner lots to prevent overdevelopment.

And that's just the beginning. Additional initiatives are already underway to further protect the quality of life in our neighborhoods.