



Voters to Decide Fate of Local School Tax Levies, BOE Races

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Area voters, along with others throughout the state, will go to the polls Tuesday, April 18, to vote on local school tax levies and to select candidates to boards of education. Polls are open from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. in Westfield and from 2 to 9 p.m. in Scotch Plains, Fanwood, Mountainside and Garwood.

In Westfield, voters will cast ballots on a \$68,227,778 tax levy, which represents a 3.85 percent increase, or \$2,805,051, over last year. If the budget passes, the school portion of taxes would jump 14 cents per \$100 of assessed home valuation for an increase of \$253 on a home assessed at \$179,600. The tax levy would support a \$79.5 million budget.

The total budget reflects a 4.06 percent increase, or \$1,579,003, over last year's adopted budget. The tax levy is up \$2,202,777 over last year's adopted school levy. Last year, town voters, for the first time in a decade, rejected the proposed \$66-million school tax levy, 1,528 to 1,463. The town council later reduced the school budget by \$714,543, which was subsequently approved by the BOE.

Voters will also select three people among a field of four candidates for the board of education. Incumbent BOE President Anne Riegel is seeking her third three-year term. Also seeking reelection to a second term is Beth Cassie, who is chairwoman of the district's Citizen's Advisory Com-

mittee on Curriculum (CACE).

Doug Stokes, a curriculum resource teacher in Edison, and Jane Clancy, an assistant kindergarten teacher at Presbyterian Nursery School in Westfield and member of CACE, are also running.

Among the issues this year are student enrollment, students per classroom and the selection of a new high-school principal to replace the retiring Dr. Robert Petix.



BUNNY LOVE...The Westfield Lions Club Easter Bunny (alias Lions President Reverend Lois Schembs) is pictured with a young fan. The bunny will make a return visit at the annual Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 15, at 1 p.m. at Westfield's Mindowaskin Park for children up to age seven. Participants are asked to assemble in the park by 12:45 p.m.

In Scotch Plains-Fanwood, six candidates, including two incumbents, are running for three three-year terms on the board of education for seats representing Scotch Plains. There are no Fanwood seats up this year. Incumbents BOE President Linda Nelson, whose background is in school public relations, Norman "Trip" Whitehouse, a division controller for a steel mill based in Perth Amboy, and Betty Anne Woerner, a chief financial officer for a children's non-profit organization, are all seeking reelection to the three full three-year terms on the BOE.

They are opposed by David Gorbunoff, director of operations for a company that gives money to schools and libraries nationwide for Internet access and telecommunications, George Gowen, semi-retired after 17 years as a vice president of information technology at an investment company, and newcomer John Kubie. Nine-year incumbent Thomas Russo, an attorney, is running unopposed for a one-year unexpired seat currently held by Mr. Whitehouse.

Among the issues discussed in the campaign are current negotiations with the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education, selection of a new principal at Terrill Middle School and student enrollment.

Voters will also cast ballots on a proposed \$62.1 million tax levy to support a total spending plan of \$71.4 million. If passed, Scotch Plains homeowners would pay \$306, or 5.25 percent, more than last year on the average assessed home, while Fanwood residents would pay \$279, or 5.54 percent, over 2004-2005.

In Mountainside, voters will decide on a tax levy of \$11,276,433 to support the spending of \$13,966,844. According to BOE figures, the average taxpayer would experience an increase of \$392 in school taxes. The property tax levy represents 81 percent of the total tax revenue to support the school budget, with another 12 percent, or \$1,659,804, coming from dissolution of the now defunct Union County High School Regional District. Business Administrator Roderic McLaughlin said at a meeting in March that the dissolution funds have kept the school taxes from rising more for the average assessed home in the borough by \$2,016 over the past few years.

Mountainside residents will vote for two school board members out of a slate of four candidates. BOE incumbent Marybeth Schaumburg, a local realtor, is seeking reelection.

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SPRING TIME...Blossoms sprout from the trees in a brilliant magenta glow in the park at the intersection of Mountain and Lawrence Avenues in Westfield last Friday.

BOE Panel to Release Report On Enrollment at May 3 Meeting

By GINA LEVINE-LEVY
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Westfield Superintendent of Schools Dr. William Foley made a special appearance at the Franklin Elementary School Parent-Teacher Organization meeting last Thursday to discuss the Fiscal Year (FY) 2006-2007 budget and claims of rising school enrollment.

Dr. Foley said overall enrollment, 6,030 students, is the highest it has been since the early 1970's. He said first-grade enrollment is at a record 520 students, the town's largest number in more than three decades.

Dr. Foley added that kindergarten enrollment for next year is already at about 350 students. And although the Citizens Advisory Committee (CACE) will not present its official report on enrollment until the May 2 school board meeting at Thomas Jefferson Elementary School, Dr. Foley did assure residents that based on these latest figures, the board will have to look for additional rooms.

"The biggest problem will be the intermediate schools," he said.

Dr. Foley said that whatever plan is put into place, it would not be implemented until the fall of 2007.

"What I don't want is for you to leave here being anxious that you're going to get a letter in the mail that your new school is ...," he told parents.

But he said the reality is that "there are some very real problems of crowding and space in some of our schools."

Dr. Foley did not give details of the committee's report, but indicated he is exploring several possibilities. He said he is in the process of doing a

cost analysis of possibly selling the district's Elm Street property, which houses the administrative offices, and relocating the offices.

"It could help reduce our expenses and it could put a valuable ratable on our tax roll," he said.

Dr. Foley said the sale, which would include the adjacent parking lot but not the athletic fields, could help cover the cost of building a new school.

But, he added, "at the end of the day, it may not make sense ... I just think it's my responsibility to look at these things."

Ultimately, the decision to sell the Elm Street facility would be up to the board of education and would not have to go to public vote, Dr. Foley said. He added that the board would, however, conduct a public meeting on the issue and give residents the opportunity to voice their opinions.

When asked where he might consider building a new school, Dr. Foley mentioned the possibility of building on property already owned by the district.

He mentioned that there is vacant property on the Jefferson and Washington elementary school sites where a 5,000-to 10,000-square-foot school could be constructed without removing the athletic fields.

Dr. Foley encouraged residents to "stay tuned" for the committee's detailed report, which will be available to the public after the Tuesday, May 2 board meeting.

Dr. Foley walked attendees through the \$75 million operating budget for FY 2006-2007. The total budget is \$79.5 million.

Since almost half of the district's

students are in the elementary schools, the budget includes four new elementary teachers to keep class sizes "within policy."

Some district highlights he pointed out are the new phonics program in kindergarten and first grade, which will extend into second grade, new replacement computers going into fourth grade and the new broadcast journalism and television program at the high school.

Dr. Foley also stressed that Westfield's high starting teacher salaries help recruit "the best people."

However, one significant area of increase was maintenance and operations, which jumped 7.2 percent.

He said roof-repair projects, as well as maintaining the district's 80 acres of property, account for much of that cost.

A concern of some in attendance was the \$15.6-million in the special education budget.

Dr. Foley said about 1,000 students, or 16.6 percent, receive special education services.

Westfield has about 100 students in "out-of-district" placement at a cost of about \$58,000 per student. Dr. Foley said he is trying to place more students in-district to reduce costs.

"It's an area that we have to work on and we're trying," said Dr. Foley, adding that he scrutinizes "all of the (special education student) classifications that come through."

The special education budget is "not something that I can unilaterally cut," he added, emphasizing that the state has very specific mandates for special education.

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Garwood BOE Approves Three-Yr. Teachers Pact

By MARIA WOERH
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD — Garwood's Board of Education (BOE) ratified a new three-year contract with the local teachers' union that will give educators a 3.75 percent increase in salary for the 2006-2007 school year and a 4.5 percent salary increase for the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years.

School officials said the increase included the school budget, the tax levy portion of which goes before voters this Tuesday, April 18.

"The children come first," said Superintendent of Schools Dr. William Murphy. "I am happy that the board and teachers have reached an agreement."

In other business, officials announced that the borough would have an open house for the new borough library on Wednesday, April 29, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. However, the board expressed concern over the doors to the library, which still have to be modified because they are "difficult to open."

Signage for the building is currently being discussed. Options are to place a sign by the parking lot or to put a sign on the building itself. The Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) will help to fund signs for the new library, officials said.

BOE member Debbie Courtney announced that PTA candidates for next year will be Sue Baron, president; Patty Puentes, first vice-president; Ann Jacewicz, second vice-president; Angela Villarant, treasurer; Diane Smith, recording secretary, and Kathleen Pender, corresponding secretary.

According to BOE President Adele Lewis, The Education Foundation of Garwood will host the second annual appreciation dinner to honor Garwood Public School's Teacher of the Year, Teresa Burchlund; Garwood Military Personnel who have served in Iraq, and Alice and Richard Lefebvre, owners of the Crafty Kitchen. The dinner will be held at the Westwood, April 27 at 6:30 p.m. The proceeds will go toward children's education.

BOE member Barbara Greet, BOE student-teacher committee chairperson, announced that Allison Diacomio of Garwood was named Arthur L. Johnson High School, Clark, student of the month.

The Garwood Student Council was present at the BOE meeting and informed the board of its current activities in a broadcast television-like presentation. The student council is currently collecting money for diabetes, holding karaoke and movie nights, and will be selling school spirit bracelets for \$3 at the end of April.

The board approved a policy ban-

ning rollerblades, skateboards, and heeies (sneakers with rollerblades that pop out) from school grounds for the protection of school property. The new policy will be added to the student handbook next year.

"I think supervisors of events will be pleased," said BOE member James Matheson. "There is always concern that a child could get hurt."

It was announced that the BOE would spend \$35,000 on technology, with a significant portion devoted to replacing computers that are over six years old. The majority of the machines to be replaced are in the computer lab.

"Forty percent of our machines are ancient," Mr. Murphy said. "We should put a five-year cycle in place."

Following public concern at the previous meeting, the Garwood BOE has recently updated its website with pictures of current events and the latest information for the public.

Four Candidates Vie For Three Seats On the Westfield Board of Education



Anne Riegel, for 3 Years, Inc.



Doug Stokes, for 3 Years



Jane Clancy, for 3 Years



Beth Cassie, for 3 Years, Inc.

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Where To Vote in the Area

WESTFIELD

First Ward:
Districts 1 and 2: Roosevelt Intermediate School Gym, 302 Clark Street.
Districts 3, 5 and 7: Franklin Elementary School Auditorium, 700 Prospect Street.
Districts 4 and 6: Westfield Memorial Library, Program Room, 550 East Broad Street.
Second Ward:
District 1: Union County Annex, 300 North Avenue.
District 2, 3 and 6: Washington Elementary School Auditorium, 900 St. Marks Avenue.
District 4 and 5: Wilson Elementary School Auditorium, 301 Linden Avenue.
Third Ward:
District 1: Westfield Rescue Squad, 335 Watterston Street.
Districts 2, 3 and 4: Edison Intermediate School Gym, 800 Rahway Avenue.
Districts 5, 6 and 7: Jefferson Elementary School Auditorium, 1200 Boulevard.
Fourth Ward:
Districts 1 and 2: McKinley Elementary School Auditorium, 500 First Avenue.
Districts 3 and 4: Westfield High School Lobby, 550 Dorian Road.
District 5: Jefferson Elementary School Auditorium, 1200 Boulevard.

SCOTCH PLAINS

Districts 1, 2 and 3: Park Middle School Boy's Gym, 580 Park Avenue.
District 4 and 5: Scotch Plains Library, Children's Room, 1927 Bartle Avenue.
Districts 6, 7 and 8: Evergreen School, Third Grade Hallway, 2280 Evergreen Avenue.
District 9: Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School, Front Hall by Auditorium, Westfield Road.
District 10: Brunner Elementary School, Front Lobby, Westfield Road.
District 11: St. John the Baptist Church, 2387 Morse Avenue, Fellowship Hall.
Districts 12 and 13: McGinn Elementary School, Room 10, Roosevelt Avenue.
Districts 14 and 15: Union Catholic High School Lobby, Martine Avenue.
Districts 16 and 21: Union County Vocational-Technical Schools, 1776 Raritan Road, Baxel Hall (The Commons).
Districts 17 and 18: Terrill Middle School Auditorium Lobby, 1301 Terrill Road.
Districts 19 and 20: Coles Elementary School, Lobby, 16 Kevin School.

FANWOOD

Districts 1 and 2: Fanwood Borough

District 3: Children's Specialized Hospital, 330 South Avenue.
District 4 and 5: Terrill Road Bible Chapel, 535 Terrill Road.
District 6 and 7: Fanwood Memorial Library, North Avenue and Tillotson Road.

GARWOOD

District One - Firehouse Building, 415 South Avenue
District Two - Borough Hall, 403 South Avenue
District Three - Lincoln School, 400 Second Avenue
District Four - Lincoln School, 400 Second Avenue

MOUNTAINSIDE

District 1 and 6: Municipal Building, Court Room, 1385 Route 22.
District 2, 7 and 8: Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Church, 300 Central Avenue.
District 3, 4 and 5: Presbyterian Church, Assembly Room, Deerpath and Meeting House Lane.

Other Stories, See Page 10

Garwood and Mountainside Borough Council meeting reports are on page 10. The Westfield Town Council and the Westfield Board of Education did not meet this week due to spring break.