



SUNNY SWING...Aisling Gill (left) and Brian Christman of Scotch Plains enjoy the terrific August weather at Greenside Park last week.

## Westfield Considers Future For Sycamore Property

By KATIE NEWINGHAM  
Specially Written For The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

WESTFIELD — The town is currently negotiating with a Westfield resident interested in selling his property on the corner of Central Avenue and Sycamore Street between Fire House Number Two and Sycamore Field.

Mentioned at the July 25 town council meeting, the property is valued at \$109,500. "The house is like a little island bordered by town property," said Councilman Mark Ciarrocca, "It's a unique piece of property because there are no houses adjacent to it. The question now becomes: is this something the town is interested in purchasing? We understand that it is unique, but the question is: what would it be used for?"

The proposal is now in the hands of the council's finance committee, which will begin to deliberate whether the money is available and how the property can be allocated: Discussion of whether it will remain a house, rental property, work space, expansion of the fire department or expansion of the 1.5 acre soccer and lacrosse playing field continues.

"Wisdom of this council may be different from wisdom of a future council; they may find use for the property that this council cannot even envision," said Councilman Jim Foerst. Councilman Peter Echausse said part of the assessment of the property is talking to Fire Chief Dan Kelly along with Recreation Director Bruce Kaufman to see if they view it as a valuable asset to either of their

departments.

Town Administrator Jim Gildea said that he, along with the town council, will hear from the Fire Department and Recreation Department about their thoughts on the use of the property in September. Mr. Gildea also said, "It's a unique thing for the town to be offered property along with an interesting location, at the corner of a busy county road along with being in between town property. This is definitely something the town should look at for the present as well as 10-20 years down the line."

If the town of Westfield decides to purchase the property, there are two different ways it could be dealt with financially. One would be a bond ordinance, and the other would be through the Sale of Assets Fund; the premise of the fund is similar to a personal savings account. This account has reached an estimated \$3 million, said Mr. Foerst, and has not been used in three and a half years.

Mr. Ciarrocca said money goes into the fund through selling property and money goes out of the fund when purchasing. "We would never use our rainy day fund (Sale of Assets Fund) to cover other operating extensions," said Mr. Foerst.

Mr. Echausse said usually the approach to buy property comes from the town and not the owners; most requests for property involve building on the property and have been denied for the past three to four years.

Mr. Kaufman declined commenting and directed any questions to Mr. Gildea.



Benjamin B. Corbin for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

IN NEGOTIATIONS...The Town of Westfield is negotiating with the owner of the Central Avenue-Sycamore Street corner property adjacent to the fire station and the soccer field. The owner is interested in selling the property.



SHARING IS CARING...Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs Susan Levin (center) presents a COUNT grant of \$104,500 to Union County Freetholders Bette Jane Kowalski (left) and Chester Holmes (right) and State Senator Raymond Lesniak (center) at the Kenilworth Senior Center on Monday. The county will be using this grant to fund a Shared Services Coordinator.

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## MVC Probes Estrada's Role In AG's Boyfriend's Ticket

By PAUL J. PEYTON  
Specially Written For The Westfield Leader

TRENTON — The New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC) has launched an investigation of the actions of its employees in assisting state Attorney General Zulima Farber's boyfriend to reactivate his driving privileges, which had been suspended for an alleged unpaid parking ticket on May 2, 2005.

Ms. Zulima resigned effective August 31 following the release of Special Deputy Attorney General Richard Williams' report on August 15 that determined she violated the state ethics code of the department of law and public safety by going to the scene of the May 26, 2006 motor vehicle stop of her boyfriend, Hamlet Goore, who was found to be operating a vehicle with a suspended license and an expired registration.

Mr. Williams, a retired judge, said Ms. Zulima's actions "creates a serious risk of raising public suspicion about the legitimacy of those decisions."

In addition to the attorney general's resignation, *The Record* of Bergen County reported last week that Mr. Goore would not be returning to his \$82,000 per year job as director of community development for the City of Irvington. The two reportedly had combined salaries of \$222,000.

Among those MVC employees whose actions are under review is Angel Estrada, a Union County freetholder who manages the Elizabeth Motor Vehicle Agency. Mr. Estrada, according to Mr. Williams report, contacted the court's suspension unit, which determined Mr. Goore paid the fine for the parking ticket in question but the courts had not contacted the suspension unit to reactivate Mr. Goore's license.

"It is clear that the attorney general and Hamlet Goore sought out Angel Estrada to help in expediting the resolution of Goore's problems concerning his driver's license and registration," Mr. Williams reported. "In light of that longstanding friendship, it does not appear that the attorney general was using her official position to secure Estrada's help."

In terms of Mr. Estrada's involvement, Mr. Williams said, "Mr. Estrada's handling of this matter before Hamlet Goore arrived at the MVC

agency raises questions about the propriety of his practices and whether they were in compliance with MVC procedures."

"Although Goore had neither signed the certification on the application nor provided payment for the \$137 fee, Estrada instructed Susan Brito of his staff to renew the registration in the MVC computer records," according to Mr. Williams' report. He said the license was reactivated at 11:04 a.m. on May 26, although Mr. Goore did not arrive at the MVC Elizabeth office until 12:09 p.m. when he submitted the payment.

"The attorney general did not need to call Mr. Estrada. There is no reason to believe that Mr. Goore could not have addressed this matter himself," Mr. Williams reported.

MVC Executive Director Sharon Harrington in announcing the investigation of MVC staff said in a prepared statement: "Upon completion of Judge Williams' investigation, the Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC) began an internal investigation into commission-related issues covered in the Judge's report. MVC is working expeditiously to complete this investigation. At the end of this process, MVC will take action, if warranted."

Phil Morin, chairman of the Union County Republican Committee, said in a letter dated August 16 to MVC Executive Director Sharon Harrington, "The report raises serious questions about Mr. Estrada's actions that day, including his instructions to a subordinate to renew Mr. Goore's registration in the MVC computer and record that a payment had been made."

"The report, however, unequivocally demonstrates that Mr. Goore did not arrive at the Elizabeth office and did not sign the necessary documents or submit a check in payment of the registration."

Mr. Estrada was elected to the freeholders in 1999 and reelected in 2002 and 2005. He previously served six years on the Elizabeth Board of Education.

Mr. Estrada said he was instructed not to comment about the investigation. The county spokesperson, when contacted by *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*, said the county would not comment because it is not a county matter.



Angel Estrada

## WF Quiet Zone Whistle

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collisions between automobiles and on-coming trains.

The final ruling allows for municipalities to establish quiet zones where the train whistles would not be blown. Towns wishing to do this must follow FRA procedures for proposing and implementing supplementary safety devices at rail crossings, such as the new median islands on Rahway Avenue.

According to Westfield Town Administrator Jim Gildea the town submitted its proposed plan for the necessary physical changes, including striping the roadway, increased signage and the dividing islands, to the FRA in 2004. After receiving approval on the plan, the town implemented the changes, the last of which were completed a few weeks ago. The medians are a safety precaution, since they "will prevent illegal turning, once the gates at the tracks have

come down," Mr. Gildea said.

The town is now waiting for the FRA to inspect the alterations, which Mr. Gildea "assumes should be approved on the site since they were approved on paper."

The town council members, along with Town Attorney Robert Cockren, are researching what the final steps to what Mr. Gildea described as a "confusing, lengthy and tedious process" will include. "The bottom line is we're doing everything we can to complete what we need to, to get the whistle blowing stopped to improve the quality of life (for the residents)," Mr. Gildea said.

Third Ward Councilman Mark Ciarrocca told *The Times* he has spoken with the mayor and they have been working with Rep. Michael Ferguson's office "if there are problems with the FRA."

As a resident of Connecticut Street, located approximately three quarters of a mile from the Rahway Avenue crossing, Mr. Ciarrocca said while he and his fellow residents are "concerned with how (the whistle blowing) affects the quality of life (we) can appreciate the progress the town has made" towards developing a quiet zone.

The issue will be discussed at the Tuesday, September 12 town council meeting. Meetings begin at 8 p.m.

## Martine Ave.

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and would be more specific and detailed.

The mayor said the board needs "to get focused on what it is we want" with regard to the ordinance, so "decisive action" can be taken at the board's next meeting.



Sara Magnola for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

PEACE AND QUIET?...Improvements to the railroad crossing on Rahway Avenue in Westfield adjacent to Houlihan Field have been completed. Residents now await the Federal Railroad Administration to approve the quiet zone in order to stop freight trains from blowing whistles during overnight sleep hours.



STEPPING UP ENFORCEMENT...Westfield police are participating in the state's crackdown on drunk drivers through Labor Day. Pictured, left to right, are: Officers Michael Walsh and Robert Bartkus and Sergeant Chris Battiloro.



## POLICE BLOTTER

### Scotch Plains

Tuesday, August 15, a student at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School reported that his bicycle was stolen while he attended track practice. The bicycle was valued at \$300.

Tuesday, August 15, a customer at an East Second Street business reported being the victim of theft. He stated that one or more unidentified individuals entered his motor vehicle while it was parked and removed his cellular telephone. The telephone was valued at \$140.

Tuesday, August 15, a resident of Swans Mill Lane reported being the victim of criminal mischief. She said one or more unidentified individuals damaged her mailbox. It appeared that a vehicle struck the mailbox and fled the scene.

Thursday, August 17, a resident of Orchard Drive reported being the victim of criminal mischief, saying one or more unidentified individuals threw eggs at his house.

Thursday, August 17, a resident of Portland Avenue reported being the victim of criminal mischief. She stated that one or more unidentified individuals broke the glass on the driver's side door of her car while it was parked in front of her house.

Friday, August 18, a resident of Perth Amboy reported being the victim of criminal mischief. He stated that while driving on Park Avenue, he got into an argument with another motorist when the unidentified male exited his vehicle and struck the victim's window with his fist, causing it to crack. The suspect then drove off.

### Fanwood

Wednesday, August 16, Lawane D. Mosley, 31, of Virginia Beach, Va. was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on North Avenue on an outstanding Teaneck warrant.

Thursday, August 17, Jesse Brooks, 40, of Fanwood was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on South Avenue on an active body warrant out of South Carolina.

Thursday, August 17, three cars parked in the vicinity of Montrose Avenue and Birch Street were vandalized. Witnesses saw a group of unidentified juveniles running from the area at approximately 11:30 p.m. Authorities have asked anyone with information to call the police department at (908) 322-5000.

Friday, August 18, Jihad S. Reese, 28, of Plainfield was arrested following a motor vehicle stop for allegedly driving with a suspended license, hindering apprehension and providing false information to police. He was charged with hindering apprehension after he allegedly fled on foot following the stop.

Sunday, August 20, Regina Ayler, 45, of Plainfield was arrested on an active Pleasantville warrant following a motor vehicle stop on Martine Avenue.

Monday, August 21, Kenneth L. Hardin, 40, of Plainfield was arrested on an outstanding body warrant out of Monmouth County after a field investigation.

### Westfield

Tuesday, August 15, a Kimball Circle resident reported the theft of four wristwatches from the master bedroom of his home. Three have since been returned, but a Frank Muller Chronograph watch had not been accounted for.

Tuesday, August 15, Shanae L. Major, 20, of Plainfield was arrested at Elm Street and Dudley Avenue on a traffic warrant issued by the Scotch Plains Municipal Court. Major was released after posting \$482 bail.

Tuesday, August 15, a North Avenue-based real estate agency reported receiving a counterfeit postal money order for rental payment on property owned by the agency located in North Plainfield.

Tuesday, August 15, Michael Ruiz,

19, of Edison was arrested at Rahway Avenue and Montauk Drive and charged with possession of less than 50 grams of suspected marijuana. Ruiz was processed at Westfield police headquarters and later released with a summons.

Wednesday, August 16, Craig Ritchwood, 45, of Roselle was arrested at East South Avenue and charged with driving while intoxicated (DWI). He was released to a responsible individual pending an August 23 court appearance.

Wednesday, August 16, Kimberly Charlesworth, 27, of Scotch Plains was arrested at Central and Lenox Avenues and charged with DWI. She was released to a responsible individual pending an August 23 court appearance.

Wednesday, August 16, Sonya Vinson, 35, of Irvington was taken into custody at the Essex County jail on an outstanding criminal warrant issued by the Westfield Municipal Court. She was released on her own recognizance.

Wednesday, August 16, Kevin Cabell, 43, of East Orange was taken into custody at the Essex County jail on an outstanding criminal warrant issued by the Westfield Municipal Court. He was released on his own recognizance.

Thursday, August 17, Thomas Toye, 26, of Scotch Plains was arrested at North Avenue and Crossway Place and charged with DWI. He was released on his own recognizance to a responsible individual pending an August 23 court appearance.

Thursday, August 17, Catherine Kerr, 20, of New Hope, Pa. and Allison Mandell, 20, of Yardley, Pa. were arrested and charged with possession of less than 50 grams of suspected marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia following a motor vehicle stop at North and Central Avenues. Both were released on their own recognizance with summonses pending an August 30 court appearance.

Thursday, August 17, George Nowicki, 4th, 27, of Scotch Plains was arrested on an outstanding warrant issued by Elizabeth for \$210 following an accident investigation on Springfield Avenue. He was released after posting bail. No injuries were reported as a result of the accident.

Thursday, August 17, Christopher M. Gallego, 18, of Westfield was arrested and charged with providing alcohol to underage persons and keeping a disorderly premises following investigation of a drinking party at his Woodbrook Circle residence. He was subsequently released to a responsible individual.

Thursday, August 17, Thomas Taylor, 18, and Andrew Demos, 18, both of Westfield were arrested and charged with hindering apprehension following a police investigation on Woodbrook Circle.

The pair allegedly provided police with false information regarding their identities and where they were coming from. Both were released with summonses pending an August 30 court date.

Friday, August 18, Cedric Roach, 21, of Westfield was arrested in the 100 block of Brightwood Avenue on a criminal warrant issued by Westfield. He was committed on default of bail in the amount of \$500.

Friday, August 18, Andrew Streaman, 19, Walter Lau, 19, and Joseph Geissler, 19, all of Westfield were arrested during a motor vehicle stop at Sunnywood and Woodmere Drive and charged with possession of less than 50 grams of suspected marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia and underage possession of alcohol.

Geissler additionally was charged with possession of fraudulent identification. All three men were released on their own recognizance with summonses pending a court appearance.

## DWI Enforcement to be Conducted in Westfield

WESTFIELD — The Westfield Police Department announced the town will participate in a statewide impaired driving enforcement program. "You Drink and Drive, You Lose," through Labor Day, September 4.

"The end of the summer season is traditionally a time of social gatherings, which often include alcohol. The goal of the program is to raise awareness about the dangers of drinking and driving through high-visibility enforcement and to arrest motorists who choose to drive while impaired by drugs or alcohol," a press release submitted by the police department said.

According to the release, impaired drivers kill nearly 18,000 people on American roads each year. In New Jersey, 31 percent of motor vehicle fatalities are alcohol-related. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports that nearly 97 percent of Americans view drinking and driving by others as a threat to their families and themselves.

"Indeed, Americans support tougher enforcement and rank drunk

driving ahead of healthcare, poverty, the environment and gun control as an important social issue," according to the press release.

Law Enforcement agencies participating in the "You Drink and Drive, You Lose 2006" campaign offer the following advice:

Be responsible and don't risk drinking and driving, if one plans to drink, one should choose a designated driver before going out. Take mass transit or a taxicab or ask a sober friend to drive home or spend the night where the activity is held.

Other drivers are urged to report impaired drivers to law enforcement and to buckle up — "it's your best defense against an impaired driver," police said.

"We have come a long way in the past 20 years in terms of drunk driving, but the work is clearly not finished," said Roberto Rodriguez, director of the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety. "The law enforcement community of the state is committed to eradicating impaired driving from our roads once and for all."