

Route 1&9 Construction May Hinder Haulers

By SARA MAGNOLA
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

RAHWAY — The Union County Utilities Authority heard a presentation from CME Associates representative Ed Trainia on the Route 1&9 realignment during their August 16 meeting.

The construction, which spans the stretch of road from Interstate 287 to the Route 1&9 Bridge, has been ongoing for over two years. UCUA Officials said the state Department of Transportation (DOT) informed the authority that they would be paving the section of the roadway, where the current entrance to the Union County Resource Recovery Facility is located, within the next two weeks.

Since the electric gate for the new entrance is not yet available, the DOT will provide a guard to monitor daytime and nighttime activity. The exit ramp from the facility to the highway will also be repaved in this time frame.

Campaign Quote by Tom Kean, Jr.

"I am concerned by a story in the Washington Post Tuesday detailing the expected cost of the misguided immigration legislation passed by the United States Senate and supported by Bob Menendez. The Washington Post reports that if granted outright citizenship, illegal aliens could claim nearly \$50 billion in federal benefits such as the earned income and child tax credits, Medicaid, and Social Security...If an American citizen falsifies a Social Security card in order to get a job, they can be arrested and prosecuted...I will oppose any bill that provides Social Security benefits to those who have broken our laws and entered our country illegally."

According to the projected timeline, the entire \$270-million project is to be completed by the middle of 2008.

Sunil Garg, UCUA executive director, said that the "DOT has just dropped this on us in the last week" but they have spoken with Covanta Energy, the company who runs the facility under a 25-year agreement with the UCUA.

UCUA Chief Operations Officer Charles Crane reported that officials at Covanta said, "They will be informing all of the haulers of the upcoming entrance and exit changes."

Mr. Garg reported to the authority on the monthly coordination meeting with Covanta Energy saying, "Once again the operations of our facility are right on track compared to 2005. The (burning capacity) in July was actually 99.9 percent." The facility, which is located in Rahway, generates enough renewable energy to be self sustaining, as well as powers several neighboring homes and businesses, according to Mr. Garg.

In other news, the statewide solid waste management committee, which consists of two commissioners and the authority's legal counsel and consulting engineer, met again to work towards developing an amendment to the county's disposal strategy.

"We have reviewed all of the open points ... and had two representatives from the county (with us) who will be working on the major portion, which will be recycling and how it coordinates with all the municipalities with in the county," said UCUA Comptroller Tom Brennan, who is serving on the committee.

He said officials hope to have a draft of the amendment prepared to present at the authority's September's meeting.



ROADWORK DISRUPTION...The Union County Resource Recovery Facility on Routes 1&9 will be disrupted during the realignment of the highway by the New Jersey Department of Transportation.

Amateur Astronomers Schedule Sept. 15 Meeting

CRANFORD — The Amateur Astronomers Inc. will conduct its monthly membership meeting on Thursday, September 15 at 8 p.m. in the Main Lecture Hall of the Nomenegon Building at Union County College located at 1033 Springfield Avenue in Cranford. At 9 p.m., a lecture on "Bicycling on Other worlds" will be given by Lonny Bunis.

Mr. Bunis is a designer, space artist and amateur astronomer. He will discuss close up impressions of the planets as viewed during a bicycle trip through the Solar System.

Following the lecture, attendees will be invited to the William Miller Sperry Observatory and will have the opportunity to speak with club members and tour the facility. Refresh-

ments will be served. If weather permits, a celestial viewing of two globular star clusters, M13 and M92, in the constellation Hercules will be conducted using the club's telescopes.

In addition to the monthly meetings held on the third Friday of each month, September through May, informal meetings are held on the remaining Fridays at Sperry Observatory. At 7:30 p.m., younger audiences discuss the constellations and phases of the moon. Arrangements can be made for groups to attend at 7:30 p.m. by contacting Anthony Espinoza at symmetry57@hotmail.com. At 8:30 p.m., programs for the public are presented on such topics as cosmology and astronomy software. All meetings are free and open to the public. For information, see asterism.org.

Assistant Prosecutors Seek Better Pact From County

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

ELIZABETH — Thirty members of the Union County Assistant Prosecutors Association attended last Thursday's freeholders meeting to seek a better contract than has been offered by the county thus far during negotiations.

Juan Fernandez, president of the association, said the union's previous contract expired on December 30, 2005. He told the freeholders that, while the county prosecutor's office has among the highest conviction rate in the state, assistant prosecutors rank 11th in salaries.

"All we are asking is to be treated fairly," said Mr. Fernandez.

The New Jersey Public Employment Relations Commission (NJPERC) denied the assistant prosecutors arbitration in their contract dispute on August 10. The commission ruled in favor of Prosecutor Ted Romankow's motion that the state's Police and Fire Public Interest Arbitration Reform Act does not cover assistant prosecutors. That act states that law enforcement officers and firefighters have the right to an "alternate, expeditious and binding procedure for the resolution of disputes."

According to a copy of the commission's decision, the assistant prosecutors association filed the petition on May 30. Mr. Romankow moved to dismiss the petition on June 19.

"When the parties were unable to reach an agreement on a successor agreement, the association filed the instant petition," according to the litigation.

Mr. Fernandez, in a statement obtained by The Westfield Leader and The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times told the freeholders, "For nearly a year now, we have been negotiating with the county for a fair and reasonable contract. We have been advised by the county representatives that this board has allocated a certain sum within which a contractual agreement can be reached with this unit, frankly, the unit was extremely disappointed about."

The union president told the board that the county's assistant prosecutors "have fallen behind in pay while all other law enforcement units in Union County have been compensated, commensurate with the superior services they have performed for the county." He said while county detectives are ranked fourth in the state in salaries and support staff fifth, "it is unfortunate, that as we sit here tonight, the assistant prosecutors rank 11th in salary."

He said starting salaries for detectives in their contract are \$39,512 and will increase to \$70,827, or 56 percent, by the end of their current five-year contract, which is "more than half of (what) the prosecutors in the unit currently earn."

"Furthermore, the average cost of the detectives contract on an annual basis is more than the total amount the county is offering the assistant

prosecutors over a three-year period," Mr. Fernandez said.

According to a list of county salaries obtained by The Leader and The Times, as of March, assistant prosecutors earn between \$48,666 and \$134,000.

Freeholder Chairman Al Mirabella responded to Mr. Fernandez, "I'm sure we will have a chance to look at the information you submitted."

On another issue, Valerie Argental of Rahway and member of Humane Union County approached the board to discuss the Canadian geese population at county parks.

Ms. Argental counted geese at county and municipal parks and found 240 adult geese and 60 goslings at Warinanco Park, 75 geese and 45 goslings at Rahway River Park and 10 geese at Wheeler Park in Linden.

"Whatever is being done to control the Canada geese population isn't working," she said. Ms. Argental said the county should work with GeesePeace, a Falls Church, Va.-based company that provides non-lethal methods for controlling the population of Canadian Geese.

Ms. Argental also said people should stop feeding the geese. She suggested that "visible signs in the parks telling people not to feed birds" are needed. In addition, she said she has "seen and heard from other concerned citizens that they are mistreated by young people and children who throw rocks and sticks at them."

Freeholder Mirabella said the county has worked with GeesePeace but has yet to implement these programs.

Freeholder Nancy Ward reported that she participated in a three-day program in Plainfield entitled, "The Truth About Gangs." She said 45 teenagers participated ranging from kids in or waiting to be placed in foster care.

Another program is scheduled in a few weeks to be held at the county's juvenile detention center. The Violence Prevention Institute, based in East Orange, helped facilitate the program.

"This program in my opinion is a great success," Freeholder Ward said. "We are going to continue to make this an issue (in the county)."

Freeholder Chester Holmes, who attended the conference, said, "To keep me from 12:30 to 6 on a Saturday pro-bono; it had to be good."

The board passed several amendments to a previously approved bond ordinance totaling over \$37.51-million bond ordinance acquisition and improvements for county facilities including \$339,900 for improvements to the Ash Brook Golf Course Clubhouse in Scotch Plains and \$1.34-million to install lighting at Galloping Hill Golf Course facilities in Union and upgrading the irrigation system at Ash Brook.

The board also approved several ordinances by the Union County Improvement Authority for the Linden Airport Redevelopment Project.



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