

WF's John Morgan Reflects On Years as Parking Director

By CHRISTIE STORMS
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

WESTFIELD — There are many things John Morgan will miss now that he has resigned as Westfield's parking director, a position he held for the past three years.

"The best part of my job was that I got to be downtown everyday," said Mr. Morgan, who recently began his new position as national sales manager with the Metric Group in Cranbury, the company that installed the pay stations throughout Westfield's parking areas. He has spent the past three years collaborating with them as town parking director.

Leaving the position is bittersweet, he said. "It's not something I was looking to do."

However, when Metric presented their offer, it was too good to refuse. Mr. Morgan described the challenges he faced when he first took the helm as Westfield's parking director in February 2003. At that time, he had already been serving the town for almost 30 years as a member and eventually captain of the special police.

"We had some meters that were 10 years old, and some that were 50. You could get two hours for a quarter on some, and on others it was 50 cents for an hour," Mr. Morgan recalled. "It was a dysfunctional situation."

He said some meters either didn't work at all or had been removed and never replaced. Also, collecting the revenue from each individual meter was a time-consuming task.

The Metric Group's pay stations

had reportedly already been purchased, but were not being used.

What concerned Mr. Morgan the most was that parking functions were spread all over town. If someone had a question or a problem, he or she was redirected to several different departments.

He discussed these concerns when the town approached him about becoming parking director, replacing Barry Sommers, who had left the position within a matter of months.

Mr. Morgan reported that he got nothing but cooperation from the past and current mayor and town councils.

The parking department he helped create has five enforcement people who rotate between enforcement, traffic control and collecting, as well as four part-time employees in the office.

As the director of parking services, Mr. Morgan oversaw all parking operations. This included issuing permits, selling parking tokens and cards, handling parking enforcement and collecting revenue, as well as handling all parking-related phone calls.

Mr. Morgan cited the many benefits of the new pay-station parking system that he implemented with the Metric Group.

"People used to complain that they got a ticket because they didn't have any change for the meter," he said. "Now you have pay stations that take coins, tokens and dollar bills."

Meter capacity has extended from two hours to four hours for short-term meters, and there is a "10 minutes free" parking at on-street meters for quick trips.

"Metric also has the only system where you can monitor everything by computer," Mr. Morgan said, explaining that every machine is connected to the main server at the police department via wireless network.

From his desk, Mr. Morgan can get an instant reading on how many spots are empty and can monitor which areas are the busiest.

The system will notify him instantly if a maintenance issue arises, such as when a new roll of receipt paper needs to be added, while a second printer will still continue to print receipts.

He spoke of the two dedicated parking vehicles that house a networked computer and can immediately map out "who's paid and who's not." Plus, it takes a lot less time to collect revenue from three pay stations than from 140 individual meters in a lot.

"If you look downtown today, we have not only replaced every meter mechanism, but we are two-thirds of the way finished replacing meter housing and poles to black ones that match the new lamp posts and streetscape," he said.

Mr. Morgan said that he used the old existing inventory, bargaining with the supplier to take back the old ones in exchange for the new at no charge.

He reported that this past January, approximately 72,000 people used the pay stations.

While he feels he and his department have accomplished much, he believes there is still more to be done.

"We are still in phase one of trying to increase the inventory by 100 spots or more," he said, adding that remediation of lot eight is already underway.

Mr. Morgan reported that at this time, the decision has been made to dissolve the parking director position.

"They have a sergeant in the parking department who will take on the day-to-day responsibilities that have already been put in place," he stated.

"But I'm not going anywhere," Mr. Morgan said, noting he will continue on in the special police. "I've volunteered my time in Westfield for 32 years, and I'm not going to stop now."

WACC President Allison O'Hara Resigns

By CHRISTIE STORMS
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

WESTFIELD — Allison O'Hara, president of the Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce (WACC), has officially announced her plans to resign effective Friday, April 28. Ms. O'Hara said that her husband has received a job transfer that will relocate their family to Colorado.

After serving two years as executive director for the chamber, Ms. O'Hara had recently been promoted to president this past November.

Ms. O'Hara said she is pleased with the progress the chamber has made during her years of leadership.

"We've increased participation and attendance in events like Spring Fling and Festfall, and brought in 'This Is It Productions' to brand the events," she said. "We also revitalized the farmer's market with a new day and time and have seen a lot more activity."

One of Ms. O'Hara's proudest accomplishments is the "Speed Networking" monthly meetings she developed. This allows merchants to meet one-on-one for a few minutes at a time, speaking with approximately 10 individuals an hour.

"This facilitates them to identify potential customers, mentors and strategic partners," she said.

Ms. O'Hara reported that the chamber is hoping to introduce the Westfield Gift Card program this spring. Cards could be bought for any amount and used at participating stores.

"The biggest challenge we will continue to face is maintaining the membership and activating the memberships," she said.

Getting businesses to talk with

other businesses, as well as providing services for new businesses that are "just getting off the ground," will also continue to be goals.

According to Hans Winberg, chairman of the WACC, there is no formalized system in place for finding a new president.

Informally, he has begun asking members to identify the qualities most important to them for a new candidate. He stated he would ideally like to find someone well before Ms. O'Hara leaves so as to provide a seamless transition.

"I've really enjoyed working with Allison, and she's going to be a very difficult person to replace," Mr. Winberg said. "She really brings a lot of talents to the table, but I am glad for her family and their opportunity."

Ms. O'Hara reported that the new president may or may not be someone who is already on the board. She cited how she had not been a board member when chosen as director due to her previous years of commitment to community service.

"We see this as a positive opportunity for positive change," Ms. O'Hara stated. "We welcome suggestions from chamber members and we will be working with other community agencies to look for help in the transition and to work on creating some kind of partnership for the future."

The WACC was established with the purpose of serving as an economic development resource that provides opportunities for businesses to succeed. The chamber currently has more than 320 members.



Allison O'Hara in Fall 2005

FW Council

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of the neighborhood.

After discussion and debate, the council ultimately decided not to make a change at this time. Councilman Jack Molenaar suggested waiting to take any action until the results from a grant-funded South Avenue corridor planning study are finalized and made public within a few months.

"I think we're putting the cart in front of the horse," he said, pointing out that the planning study is being coordinated with the borough's master plan.

Although Councilman Walsh emphasized that the local planning board has asked the mayor and council to change the zoning of the two properties to residential, he agreed that it makes sense to see the results of the planning study first. The mayor and council also want to see what becomes of an application being considered to develop townhouses on the two properties.

Council President Dolce also indicated that there is no sense of urgency to act now and advised against being too hasty in reducing Fanwood's limited amount of property zoned for light-industrial use.

The council discussed a resolution regarding adoption of a mandated National Incident Management System and a proposed ordinance pertaining to domestic partnership.

The mayor and council's regular monthly meeting is set for 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 14, at Borough Hall on North Martine Avenue.

SP Budget

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Mr. Atkins said he has also budgeted money for another deer-management program, likely late this year. And the township will continue its inter-local agreement with Rahway for health and nursing services, which costs about \$27,000 per year.

College Club Fashion Show Is Time-Honored Tradition

SCOTCH PLAINS — The College Club of Fanwood and Scotch Plains will continue a tradition of support for education with its fashion show fundraiser on Sunday, April 2, from 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Shackamaxon Country Club in Scotch Plains.

Members of the community are invited to attend the event, which also will feature lunch, raffles and a silent auction. Three of the recent additions to the list of silent auction items include four bedrooms for four days at a Victorian

bed and breakfast at Avon-by-the-Sea, tennis lessons for four and lunch at the Plainfield Country Club and two designer twin set duvets and pillows. Background music will be provided by Skip Ungar of Cafe Vivace fame.

The College Club's first fashion show fundraiser was held in 1930, three years after the founding of the club. With a lapse of only a few years, this fundraiser has continued, although the format and fashions have changed. In its early days, the benefit was a dessert-bridge fashion show featuring homemade desserts and beverages that was held in a school gymnasium. Tables were carried and set up by members, centerpieces crafted and "Jane Smith" of Westfield did the show.

Fashion Show Coordinator Marty Jo McDevitt reported that once again this year, Westfield stores will lend a hand, with 10 businesses providing the fashions. They include Banana Republic, The Gap, Esprit, Joseph A. Banks, Nirvana, Anthology, the Leader Store, Blair Delmonico, Mademoiselle and Anais.

All profits from the event will go towards scholarships for local girls. Since its founding, the club has awarded a total of approximately \$440,000.

Two of the featured models at this year's event will be past award winners Annie McDevitt Cummins and Daniela Nizzardo Sellinger. Ms. Sellinger, now a member of the club, remarked that "without the financial help of the College Club, I would not have been able to go to college."

Ms. Cummins noted that, "the College Club gives emotional support as well, with a gift of their community calendar, a newsletter each month and a care package at exam time."

Tickets, which are \$35, may be purchased by calling Ginger Rachko at (908) 889-4105 or in person at DiFrancesco Realty next to the Fanwood Post Office.

School Budget Election Calendar

TRENTON — The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) has announced the school budget development calendar for the FY 2007 year. Local school districts have begun the development process leading up to the annual school election, scheduled to be held on April 18.

Key dates are as follows: Tuesday, March 14 Last day for districts to submit itemized budget to County Superintendent.

Tuesday, March 21 Governor's Budget Address. Certification of State Aid and Release of State Aid Notices (within two days of Address).

Thursday, March 23 Last day to advertise for earliest public hearing (four days prior).

Monday, March 27 Earliest day to hold public hearing.

Thursday, March 30 Last day to hold public hearing.

Friday, March 31 Deadline to adopt budget.

Saturday, April 1 (noon) Deadline to submit question to county clerk for preparation of absentee ballots and election machines (17 days prior to election).

For more information, please see www.nj.gov/njdoe/finance/.

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POLICE BLOTTER

Scotch Plains

Tuesday, February 28, a resident of Clydesdale Road reported being the victim of theft. The victim reported that someone removed mail from his mailbox and then cashed several checks that were in the mail.

Friday, March 3, a Route 22 gas station reported being the victim of theft. The attendant stated that an someone purchased gas and fled without paying for it. The amount of gas stolen was \$26.50.

Saturday, March 4, a resident of Union Avenue reported being the victim of fraud. The victim stated that someone opened a credit card in his name and made several charges.

Sunday, March 5, a resident of Algonquin Drive reported being the victim of a suspicious phone call. The victim stated that she received a call from an someone asking if she could come out and play. No other words were spoken.

Fanwood

Tuesday, February 28, David Djurdjevic, 26, of Detroit, Mich. was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on Terrill Road at Stewart Place for providing false information to police. He was also charged with numerous outstanding warrants.

Wednesday, March 1, Randolph E. Reina, 45, of Edison was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on Martine Avenue at North Avenue, which revealed outstanding warrants. Kimberly D. Knight, 35, of Scotch Plains, a passenger in the motor vehicle, was also arrested for possession of drug paraphernalia, hindering apprehension by giving false information and outstanding active warrants.

Monday, February 27, Alfredo G. Villanueva, 43, of Avenel was arrested in the 400 block of Tremont Avenue and charged with driving while intoxicated (DWI). He later was released to a responsible individual.

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property tax increase" for every Scotch Plains resident.

At its regular meeting next week, the council expects to renew its participation in the Union County Sheriff's S.L.A.P. (Sheriff's Labor Assistance Program) initiative, which makes non-violent offenders available to municipalities to perform certain jobs, such as cutting grass along roads, litter pick-up, light stream clean-up, etc.

The program, in which Scotch Plains participates in a shared arrangement with Westfield and Clark, will cost the town \$13,276, which will pay for county law enforcement officers that accompany the individuals working in the program. Under the year-long agreement, the program will provide a sheriff's officer and about six S.L.A.P. workers for five days per week to the three towns on a rotating basis.

Next week, the council is also expected to approve a resolution authorizing an additional payment of about \$1,170 to Wildlife Management Services (WMS) for the service it provided in last month's deer-reduction effort in the Ashbrook Reservation. A year ago, the council had awarded an \$11,460 contract to WMS in anticipation of a deer-reduction program. While such a program did not occur in early 2005, WMS did perform some preparatory work a year ago and, last month, removed more deer from the reservation than what had been authorized last year.

The township plans to hold an auction on April 4 to sell four unclaimed vehicles that have been impounded by the police department. Mr. Levine said the township, which has obtained titles to the four cars through the state Motor Vehicle Commission, must auction the vehicles in accordance with state statute, which says that impounded vehicles that have been left unclaimed for more than 15 days can be sold at a public auction.

Two of the vehicles, a 1994 Ford and a 1987 Buick, will be auctioned at the municipal building, while a third car, a 1992 GMC, will be auctioned at Sevell's Auto Body in Westfield and the fourth, a 1993 Mazda, will be auctioned at Plains Auto Body.

Ferguson to Set Up Mobile Office In SP

SCOTCH PLAINS — Staff members of Rep. Mike Ferguson, (R, 7th), will host a mobile office stop today, March 16, at the Scotch Plains Municipal Building to meet with area residents and assist them with any questions they have with federal agencies.

The hours will from noon to 3 p.m. the municipal building, located at 430 Park Avenue.

Rep. Ferguson's staffers will meet with residents to discuss the constituent services Congressman Ferguson's office provides.

Friday, March 3, Mark P. Harris, 42, of Plainfield was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on South Avenue at Locust Avenue, which revealed outstanding warrants. Kim Y. Williams, 40, of Sayerville, a passenger in the motor vehicle, was also arrested for outstanding warrants.

Friday, March 3, Herbert L. Holman, 62, of Plainfield was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on Terrill Road and Midway Avenue, which revealed numerous active warrants.

Saturday, March 4, Darnell H. Huggins, 22, of Orange was arrested after a motor vehicle stop on Terrill Road at South Avenue revealed outstanding warrants.

Saturday, March 4, Tyshaun L. Davis, 37, of Plainfield was arrested on active warrants following a motor vehicle stop on South Avenue at Old South Avenue.

Saturday, March 4, Jeanette Sanchez, 36, of Elizabeth was arrested and charged with possession of a stolen motor vehicle.

Sunday, March 5, Sean E. Ward, 20, of Plainfield was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on Terrill Road at Seventh Street for possession of a controlled dangerous substance (CDS).

Sunday, March 5, Dominic E. Casseus, 34, of Irvington was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on South Avenue at Terrill Road revealed outstanding warrants.

Monday, March 6, Roy A. Williams, 31, of Scotch Plains was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on South Avenue revealed outstanding warrants.

Westfield

Monday, February 27, Alfredo G. Villanueva, 43, of Avenel was arrested in the 400 block of Tremont Avenue and charged with driving while intoxicated (DWI). He later was released to a responsible individual.

Tuesday, February 28, Abdul Muhammed, 37, of Middlesex was arrested at Central Avenue and Sycamore Street on an outstanding motor-vehicle warrant from Newark for \$250 and an outstanding criminal warrant from Plainfield for \$1,488. He was turned over to the Plainfield Police Department.

Tuesday, February 28, Clayton C. Ferrara, 22, of Scotch Plains was arrested at South Avenue and Drake Place on traffic warrants from Fanwood, for \$279; Roxbury Township, for \$430; Hillside, for \$81; Bridgewater, for \$304, and Watchung, for \$145, totaling \$1,239 bail.

Tuesday, February 28, Salvador Sepulveda, Jr., 39, of Perth Amboy was arrested in the 600 block of South Avenue on an outstanding criminal warrant issued by Perth Amboy. He was released after posting \$500 bail.

Wednesday, March 1, Mildred J. Kressner, 59, of Westfield was arrested and charged with DWI after being involved in a one-car accident at North and Edgewood Avenues. No injuries were reported and Kressner later was released to a family member.

Thursday, March 2, Kenneth W. Pope, 29, of Newark was arrested at South Avenue and Downer Street and charged with possession of less than 50 grams of suspected marijuana.

Authorities also learned there were outstanding warrants for him, including one criminal warrant and one traffic warrant from Newark totaling \$500, and a criminal warrant from Livingston for \$1,000. Pope was released on his own recognizance with a summons for the Westfield charge and turned over to the Livingston Police Department.

Thursday, March 2, Floyd Sandifer, 53, of Plainfield was arrested on Central Avenue near Grove Street on an outstanding traffic warrant from Paramus. He was released after posting \$55 bail.

Thursday, March 2, Crystal Roane, 37, of Westfield was arrested on a Cranford traffic warrant for \$555 at Westfield police headquarters. She later was turned over to Cranford authorities.

Thursday, March 2, Duwan Singletary, 20, of Linden was arrested at Westfield police headquarters on an outstanding Newark traffic warrant. He was released on his own recognizance with a new court date per Newark authorities.

Thursday, March 2, Tramaine Johnson, 29, of Brooklyn, N.Y., was arrested at the Rahway Police Department on an open criminal warrant from Westfield for \$500. Johnson was committed on default of bail.

Friday, March 3, a resident of the 800 block of Lenape Trail reported an attempted burglary at her home. An exterior window was discovered broken but entry to the premises was not gained.

Friday, March 3, a burglary was reported at a residence in the 800 block of Clark Street. Police said the individual or persons responsible entered the home through the basement and ransacked several rooms, although the homeowner was uncertain as to what had been taken.

Sunday, March 5, Suzanne M. Sullivan, 47, of New Providence was arrested at South Avenue, West, and Boulevard and charged with DWI, refusal to submit to chemical testing and consuming alcohol in a motor vehicle. She was released to a responsible individual.

Sunday, March 5, as the result of a motor vehicle stop at Lamberts Mill and Dorian Roads, Daren Brown, 20, of Edison was arrested and charged with possession of less than 50 grams of suspected marijuana. Brown was released with a summons.

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