

Town Council Discusses Annexation Of House, Future Filming in WF

By MICHAEL J. POLLACK
Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD - A special meeting preceded Tuesday's public town council conference meeting. At the special meeting, the council held advertised hearings on two ordinances, creating the position of town planner and setting the position's salary.

During the public portion of that meeting, the council heard a resident's wishes to have her property annexed to Westfield. Later, at the conference session, officials discussed new filming plans for a residential area of Westfield, high-school parking and the matching of grants for the future master plan of Memorial Park.

After a unanimous vote Tuesday, First Ward Councilman Peter Echausse moved on second reading an ordinance to first create the position of town planner and subsequently establish an ordinance to set the position's salary.

New Town Planner Judith Thornton began as a salaried employee yesterday, September 6, at an annual salary of \$88,000.

Mayor Andrew Skibitsky said during an August 1 meeting that the

addition of Ms. Thornton, who was in attendance Tuesday evening, was "closely related" to the selection of a land-use taskforce, the goal of which is to curtail over-development.

During the public portion of the special meeting, Melanie Root of 551 Overhill Street spoke to the council concerning the placement of her child in a Westfield kindergarten despite her home's location.

Overhill Street lies in Westfield and is accessed off of Prospect Street and Madison Avenue. A "small part of" Mrs. Root's property sits in Westfield, with the majority situated in Scotch Plains, where she pays taxes. The Roots' residence is located at the end of a cul-de-sac.

Her son begins kindergarten this year, and her "concern is where (he) goes to school," she said.

She wrote a letter to all local officials, including Assemblywoman Linda Stender (LD 22) and State Senator Tom Kean, Jr. (LD 21) and spoke to boards of education in Westfield and Scotch Plains-Fanwood. The boards recommended annexing the property to Westfield.

Mayor Skibitsky told Mrs. Root

that the council unanimously decided against annexing the property earlier in the summer.

Mrs. Root said she had drawn up a petition outlining her position, which "all neighbors are in favor of," and sought to revisit the issue. She asked if "there had been any change of heart." Fourth Ward Councilman Jim Foerst said, "it wouldn't hurt" to send any new documents or petitions to Town Administrator Jim Gildea, adding "we will take that into consideration."

Mrs. Root said, "Had I had some more time, I would fill this room with people who support me, so I'd like to have that opportunity in the future."

She added, "To take my child to the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

New Traffic Signal In Westfield is Operational

By HORACE CORBIN
Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD - The new traffic light at the intersection of Central Avenue, East Broad Street and Mountain Avenue in Westfield is now operational.

The Westfield Police Department offers several reminders and cautions to the driving public.

Stopping in the lane of traffic in front of the Rialto Theatre to either let off or pick up pedestrians is prohibited, and those that stop there will be ticketed.

Stopping not only causes traffic congestion but also puts other pedestrians in the area at an increased risk, police said. Pedestrians can be dropped off behind the Rialto or down on Elmer Street, where traffic is light.

The police department expects to fine-tune the light timing as necessary. Police Chief John Parizeau has said it will take time but it will be done "as promptly as possible."

A traffic officer will be at the post to aid in pedestrian safety and to observe traffic conditions.

For more information, contact the Westfield Police Department, located at 425 East Broad Street, call (908) 789-4000 or e-mail police@wpdnj.org.



LET THERE BE LIGHT...As seen from above in the office at the Rialto Theatre, workers ready the new traffic light last Thursday in Westfield at the convergence of East Broad Street, Mountain Avenue and Central Avenue.

Courtesy of Mike Smith

Roosevelt School Renovation Plans Range From \$1.15 to \$3.03 Mil.

By MEGHAN GILL
Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD - The board of education heard a variety of proposals to renovate and expand Roosevelt Intermediate School at the board's meeting Thursday night.

Should the board approve this plan, it will be presented to the public for approval through a bond referendum.

The presentation, given by Business Administrator Robert Berman, identified three different renovation schemes and the cost of each.

The first would involve the renovation of the school, including new walls, floors and stairs. This proposal includes new lights, ceilings and six stair towers and comes with a price tag of \$1,150,000.

The second proposal includes the renovation plus an expansion of the cafeteria that would add approximately

1,100 square feet to the existing structure, making the cafeteria 4,260 square feet, at a cost of \$2,163,500.

The third proposal, costing \$3,032,140, includes the above plans and expansion of the library that would add about 1,200 square feet to the existing room, making the library 4,000 square feet.

All three components would require a bond referendum, officials said.

Roosevelt School Principal Stewart Carey addressed the board. "I'd ask the board to consider the third option. Our enrollment is climbing...It's difficult the way the library is configured to bring in two classes into the library," he said.

Mr. Carey said currently the space in the Roosevelt library cannot accommodate any classes. At Edison Intermediate School, teachers have

space to bring in a class for computers, as well as two additional classrooms.

"I see this as a package to improve Roosevelt," Superintendent of Schools William Foley said. "I think it's time. I think it is an appropriate issue to bring to the community."

In response to the proposal, board member Richard Soloman said, "We really never discussed the library until recently."

Mr. Soloman said that the library proposal would "improve the quality of life and program at Roosevelt."

Mr. Foley told the board they did not need to make a decision at the meeting, but he wanted to give them a dollar amount for the proposals.

In other business, Mr. Foley's report on enrollment showed that "all numbers are within the policy" of a class-size range of 18 to 25 students per section.

A handful of third-grade McKinley School parents attended the meeting to express concern on class sizes for the two sections of 24 students. "I have no recommendations for any changes," Mr. Foley said. He said McKinley parents could send their children to Jefferson School to "balance it out a little."

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Margaret Dolan presented the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) report to the board under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) guidelines. All of the district schools have met the adequate yearly progress requirement under the statute, she said.

The board also approved the school nutrition policy and the resignation of Maria Schmidt as district human resources specialist.

In addition, the board officially approved the appointment of Stephen Maczynski as director of guidance at Westfield High School at an annual salary of \$120,000.

Two new supervisors have also been hired; Noel Baxter, who will oversee the social studies program district-wide at an annual rate of \$80,000, and Andrea Lo, who will fill the new position of special education and basic skills supervisor for kindergarten to grade 8 at an annual salary rate of \$99,000.

The next board meeting will take place on Tuesday, September 12, at 302 Elm Street at 8 p.m.



CLEARING THE AREA...Firefighters evacuated residents from two apartment buildings on Sunday morning after a leak in a basement gas line in Ferraro's caused a flash fire. No one was injured.

Horace Corbin for The Westfield Leader

Linden Man Indicted In SP Accident That Killed Friend

SCOTCH PLAINS - A 20-year-old Linden man was indicted by a Union County grand jury on Friday in connection with a fatal motor vehicle accident that claimed the life of his friend in Scotch Plains on March 11.

County Prosecutor Theodore J. Romankow said Edward Hamilton was charged with second-degree vehicular homicide and third-degree assault by auto in connection with the death of Mark Costa, 21, of Clark.

Police told *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* in March that Hamilton's Dodge pickup truck and another vehicle sideswiped each other on the Martine Avenue extension at noon. The pickup truck veered off the road, striking a tree on the passenger side where Mr. Costa was sitting, police said.

Hamilton was arrested in April following a Scotch Plains police investigation, which reported he was under the influence of narcotics at the time of the accident.

"He is charged with reckless conduct that resulted in the crash in that he was up all night, had used significant amounts of cocaine and marijuana, and was allegedly under the influence of narcotics when he lost control of his 1998 Dodge Ram

pickup truck and left the road and struck a tree," Mr. Romankow said. He said Mr. Costa died from brain injury from the "blunt force trauma" of the crash.

According to Assistant Prosecutor Rob Vanderstreet, who is assigned the case, the defendant is free on bail and the case will now be assigned to a state superior court judge in Elizabeth for trial.

Scotch Plains Detective Sergeant Ernesto Hernandez, who conducted the follow-up investigation, signed charges against the defendant a month after the fatal accident. Mr. Costa, the front-seat passenger, was pronounced dead at the scene despite efforts by emergency workers, according to a press released issued Tuesday by prosecutor's office.

Mr. Vanderstreet said the charges carry a potential of up to 10 years in state prison upon conviction.

Mr. Costa was a junior at Montclair State University, where he was class president and a member of the track-and-field and swimming teams. He was a 2002 graduate of Arthur L. Johnson High School in Clark.

A backseat passenger, Anthony Branhan, 22, of Rahway, sustained "various fractures" in the accident. Hamilton suffered facial injuries.

Gas Line Explosion Postpones Opening Sunday at Ferraro's Restaurant on Elm St.

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD - Eight residents of two apartment buildings were evacuated for three hours on Sunday morning following a gas explosion in the basement of Ferraro's Restaurant at 14 Elm Street.

On arrival at 9:08 a.m., firefighters discovered "elevated levels of gas" in the restaurant "[that] required the evacuation of two adjoining apartment buildings," said Fire Chief Dan

Kelly said the "flash fire" was caused by "a leak in a gas line in the crawl space below the kitchen area in the basement." Upon investigation it was determined the explosion was "accidental in nature," he said.

He said the restaurant called an electrician to repair burned wiring and a plumber repaired the gas line. Elizabethtown Gas was on the scene along with the Union County Fire Task Force and the Westfield Police Department.

State Shutdown, Auction Highlight Newsy Summer

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader

Area residents returning from summer vacations missed a busy news summer both locally and statewide. Here is a summary:

July

The July Fourth weekend was absent of New Jersey Lottery ticket sales, and on July 5, Atlantic City casinos and state parks closed, as state government shut down for a week over a budget stalemate between Governor Jon Corzine and Assembly Democrats.

In the end, a \$30.9 billion budget with a 10-percent increase in spending passed, including an increase of the state sales tax from 6 to 7 percent. Assembly Democrats opposed Governor Corzine's sales tax increase but agreed to a compromise to put revenue generated by the sales tax increase toward property tax relief.

The Chemidlin family in Scotch Plains received good news with the release of Michael Chemidlin from Sierra Leone. The missionary and National Guard staff sergeant was arrested on April 29 for conspiracy while taking pictures of the United Nations court complex, which was holding former Liberian President Charles Taylor. Police had charged Mr. Chemidlin and multiple nationals with trying to free Taylor, who was being held for war crimes during the country's civil war.

Westfield Police Officer Gregory Kasko was suspended with pay pending a third disciplinary hearing on department charges of lying during a department disciplinary hearing and the internal affairs investigation that preceded the hearing. The officer was previously suspended without pay for sleeping on the job and failing to back up a fellow officer at a motor vehicle stop and for "arrogant and disrespectful behavior" against Town Administrator Jim Gildea and publicly criticizing actions of former Police Chief Bernard Tracy.

The Westfield Town Council hired Judith Thornton as the town's first town planner. She replaces the town's planning consultant, Blaise Brancheau, who is expected to leave at the end of the year. Ms. Thornton held a similar position in Cedar Grove.

August

The Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority (RVSA) board deadlocked 5-5 in a vote to decide if the RVSA should proceed with a proposal to turn over operations of its facilities to a private company. Later in August the board proceeded with a vote to add a new position to assist RVSA's interim executive director. East Rutherford Mayor James Cassella, a Republican, was approved at a salary of \$75,000.

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education named Margaret Hayes

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



BAND CAMP...Westfield High School Marching Band members, under the direction of Michael Fackelman, load up busses for five days of band camp in Greeley, Pa. on August 27. The band rehearsed long hours preparing for the upcoming football season and band competitions.

Courtesy of Greg Ryan

PAGE INDEX					
Regional	2-3	Obituary	8	Real Estate	11-19
Editorial	4-5	Education	9	Classifieds	19
Community ...	6-7	Sports	11-17	A&E	20-22



SPIN ME 'ROUND...Local residents get an upside-down thrill at this weekend's festival at St. Bartholomew the Apostle Roman Catholic Church in Scotch Plains.

David Samsky for The Westfield Leader