



## Westfield Council Approves Four-Year Contract with PBA

By MICHAEL J. POLLACK  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — The Westfield Town Council on Tuesday night conducted second reading and subsequently approved a contract with Policemen's Benevolent Association (PBA) Local 90.

The four-year contract, reached following an eight-hour negotiation session in late December, is retroactive to 2006 and ends in 2009. Last year, PBA members worked under

terms of the previous contract, which expired at the end of 2005.

Officers will earn yearly raises of 3.5 percent, 4 percent, 4.5 percent (broken into two 2.25 percentage halves) and 3.75 percent for the final year.

In 2009, "holiday pay" will be incorporated into the base salary. Officers' pensions are calculated by their base pay.

PBA President Leonard Lugo told *The Westfield Leader* last week that holiday pay is calculated by taking

the officer's hourly rate, multiplying it by eight (hours) and then 13 (days). "It's an item already paid for...Now, it's part of pensionable pay (starting in 2009)."

In addition, beginning in 2007, salaries incorporate the addition of a \$625 clothing allowance, which used to be received separately from base salary and was not pensionable.

In other matters, Fourth Ward Councilman Jim Foerst introduced an ordinance, as chairman of the Code Review and Town Property Committee, that "codifies changes made last week" relative to the demolition-permit notification.

At last week's conference session, Mr. Foerst said the proposed ordinance would change the town code's definition of a demolition to "removal of more than 75 percent of a structure."

If a project falls under these parameters, the planned demolition-notification process would be "triggered."

At last week's meeting, Mr. Foerst said, "once a demolition is approved on a Tuesday, the next day, Wednesday, the authority will be given to the building department, which will be able to give some form that the builder and property owner would have to serve upon those people to receive notice."

"Notice would arrive through personal service or certified mail. Once the applicant is able to prove that he or she has given notice, the building department will then count three business days. At the end of the three days, they will be able to issue the permit," he said.

According to the ordinance, "adjoining properties," or those that touch or abut, would be notified; however, homes across the street from a demolition site would not be notified.

On Tuesday, Mr. Foerst said the proposed changes would make the town more "vigorous and vigilant" in regards to the process, thereby allowing neighbors to "know of the activity and prepare their family for the construction."



Benjamin B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader

IN WITH THE NEW...Two employees with the Westfield Recreation Department display the new plans for Memorial Park. Pictured above are: Joanne Colaneri and Rosemarie Degregorio.

## Memorial Park Plan Tops Rec. Commission Agenda

By PAUL J. PEYTON  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — A \$2.5-million upgrade of Memorial Park's recreation facilities is anticipated to begin in the fall of 2008, according to Recreation Commission Chairman William Palatucci.

In a sit-down interview last Thursday at *The Westfield Leader* office, Mr. Palatucci said, "There has been a very healthy exchange of information" with neighbors on the project, like what occurred in the mid-1990s when the municipal pool was expanded.

He noted that neighbors of the park are concerned about the prospect of additional visitors to it.

"At times, visitors to the park are very rude and discourteous to the neighbors' property. They cut through people's yards, they park too close to

## Police Bust WF Resident Datwani In Diet-Pill Ring

By MICHAEL J. POLLACK  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — The Bergen County Prosecutor's Office last Thursday announced the arrest of Westfield resident Arun Datwani and Frank Huerta of Upper Saddle River after busting the men's alleged multimillion-dollar illegal diet-pill ring.

Authorities allege Datwani, the owner of Roots Vitamin and Health Food Store in North Arlington, purchased, labeled and sold counterfeit Stack 2 with Ephedra at his store. Bergen officials also charged that Datwani supplied Huerta, who owns the Nutricentro Health Food Store in West New York, with the pills. The prosecutor's office alleges that Huerta then sold the counterfeit items at his store and at netnutri.com.

Based on press releases on bcpro.net, ephedra is "a major precursor to the

their driveways and they leave trash on neighbors' properties," he said. "So, the neighbors are justifiably concerned about how we police that activity. We have heard them loud and clear, and we are trying to take that into our consideration."

Mr. Palatucci said the entire park-improvement plan "is still a work in progress...It is still open to modification."

"Memorial Park will benefit thousands of residents, from tennis players to girls softball, for the next 50 years," he said, quoting former commission chairman Jim Marvin.

The Memorial Park project includes the resurfacing of five of the existing six tennis courts and the elimination of one of them, the expansion and spreading out of the four softball fields and the addition of 70 parking spaces. Mr. Palatucci said the softball fields would be spaced further apart to increase the safety of players when all four fields are in use simultaneously.

Mr. Palatucci noted that the town would bond the Memorial Park project. The town council's finance committee is currently reviewing the project.

On another project, he said recreation officials are receiving estimates for replacing the liner at Memorial Pool, which has "worn out its life" and needs to be replaced.

He said other changes would also be considered as part of that project, including improvements to the kiddie pool. He noted that the pool is a self-sustaining utility, not supported by taxpayers.

Recreation officials also look to improve Sycamore and Gumbert Fields. Improvements to the latter would focus on enlarging the baseball fields, adding more space between the pitcher's mound and the batter's box and turfing the infield. The Westfield Baseball League has submitted a proposal that the commission is currently considering.

Mr. Palatucci said the town is also



Horace R. Corbin for The Westfield Leader

PRESIDENT'S DAY...Bill Sanders of Mountainside, founder of the Portraits of Patriots project, discusses his efforts to put pictures of President George Washington back into schools with Victoria McCabe, technology of *The Westfield Leader*, at the *Leader* office last Thursday. See [goleader.com/video](http://goleader.com/video) for video of the interview.

## Homeowner Agrees to Look At Alternatives for Driveway

By MARYELLEN PALERMO  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — An East Dudley Avenue homeowner agreed at last week's board of adjustment meeting to look into alternatives to recent modifications he made to his driveway.

At its January 8 meeting, the board instructed David Barbosa of 400 East Dudley Avenue to obtain testimony from Town Engineer Kenneth Marsh, as well as from surrounding neighbors, concerning a newly paved area that increased the width of the driveway and created a walkway by the garage.

The applicant said the town engineer sees no problem with what he did "to fix the drainage problem."

Neighborhood resident Cynthia Foulke of 334 Dudley Avenue said ordinances exist to prevent a homeowner from doing "whatever he or she wants." She claimed she could not sit on her back porch, kitchen table or dining room without looking at what Mr. Barbosa has done with



Mika Pollack for The Westfield Leader

OUTSIDE THE SNOW'S COMING DOWN...Snow blankets Mindowaskin Park on Tuesday night in the midst of a "wintry mix" storm that continued through the night and into yesterday, closing local schools.

## Bd. of Education, School Officials Discuss Special-Education Costs

By CAROLINE KOELLHOFFER  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Robert Berman, business administrator, and Theodore Kozlik, assistant superintendent for pupil services, on Tuesday night presented the board of education with the proposed budget for the special-education program.

Mr. Kozlik outlined projected expenses for two new classes, a class for young autistic students and a Westfield High School class, which he said he expects to save the district an estimated \$130,000. He said the current per-pupil tuition for those included in a specialized program for autistic students is \$67,000, while the average tuition for each high-school special-education student is \$43,000.

By educating the students internally, the new classes would benefit

the students and the budget, he said.

"Mr. Berman and I conducted a little analysis. And what we found was interesting," he said. Mr. Kozlik said educating internally yields a lower hourly rate for special-education services across the board, including speech, physical and occupational therapy.

Board President Anne Riegel asked, "Does this suggest that we should hire more for internal services?"

"The time we lose for lunch, for travel — these are all factors in higher costs for external services," Mr. Kozlik said.

"However, one of the issues we face right now is a space issue. We are bursting at the seams. We are at a place now where speech therapists are working in closets," he

said.

He said the issue could be reevaluated once the Westfield's early-childhood center at Lincoln School is complete, allowing for more space in the elementary schools.

Ms. Riegel asked, "Do we have the space for the new class for next year?"

Superintendent of Schools William Foley responded that the most likely place for the new autism class would be Franklin Elementary School.

Board member Beth Cassie asked Mr. Kozlik about the 77 paraprofessionals (class aids) currently employed by the district. Ms. Cassie said she is concerned about the "significant" number of salaried employees who must

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## Officials: Viral Meningitis Case Not Health Concern

By GINA LEVINE-LEVY  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

BERKELEY HEIGHTS — A central office administrator at Governor Livingston High School in Berkeley Heights (BH) has been "preliminarily" diagnosed with viral meningitis, as of Tuesday.

Richard O'Malley, chief school administrator (CSA) of the Mountainside school district, issued a press release last Friday indicating the employee is a borough resident and has a child "enrolled in the Mountainside school district."

The press release said that "there are no known health concerns for the students and staff."

It said the student "has shown no signs or symptoms." (Please see a letter from Mr. O'Malley on page 4.)

Neither school physician Dr. Ronald Frank nor Mr. O'Malley would comment further on the case. The borough is a member of the Westfield Regional Health Department.

Department Health Officer Robert Sherr said parents "should not be concerned." He said viral meningitis is "not a major concern," unlike bacterial meningitis.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website defines meningitis as "an infection of

the fluid of a person's spinal cord and the fluid that surrounds the brain."

The website calls viral meningitis "generally less severe" than bacterial and says it "resolves without specific treatment, while bacterial meningitis can be quite severe and may result in brain damage, hearing loss or learning disability."

While Mr. Sherr said each type "presents itself the same way," viral meningitis is monitored and usually short-lived. He said it is not considered a "reportable illness."

Mr. Sherr said until a case is diagnosed, it is always assumed to be bacterial to "play it safe."

According to the CDC, bacterial meningitis "can be treated with a number of effective antibiotics," and treatment must "be started early in the course of the disease."

The CDC website lists the following symptoms of meningitis for anyone over age 2: high fever, headache, stiff neck, nausea, vomiting, discomfort looking into bright lights, confusion and sleepiness.

For children under 2, symptoms may include fever, headache, stiff neck, slow or inactive behavior, irritability, vomiting or poor eating. It could also cause seizures in all age groups.

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Horace R. Corbin for The Westfield Leader

REC ROOM...Paul Peyton, assignment editor of *The Westfield Leader*, left, interviews Westfield Recreation Commission Chairman William Palatucci in the Patriots room at the *Leader* office last Thursday. For interview clips, see [goleader.com/video](http://goleader.com/video).



Benjamin B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader

DANGEROUS SITUATION...Construction is underway at a Central Avenue location. As seen above, the fence goes all the way to the curb line, leaving pedestrians no place to walk other than the street. This location is about five blocks away from Westfield High School.

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