

## Gatehouse Subdivision Opponents: 'Need to Invoke Whole Town in Fight'

By **BETH BUDNICK**  
*Specially Written for The Westfield Leader*

**WESTFIELD** - Nearly 50 Westfield residents gathered on Brian and Kathy Fitzpatrick's front lawn on Tuesday evening to discuss plans to prevent the pending subdivision of a Wychwood "Gatehouse" property at 200 Canterbury Road.



**CANTERBURY TALE...**Wychwood community residents examine plans for the proposed subdivision of the Wychwood "Gatehouse" property at 200 Canterbury Road at a neighborhood meeting on Monday night. The steering committee, which residents formed to present their opposition to the subdivision plan, hosted the meeting on the Fitzpatrick family lawn to talk about the presentations they will make at the town planning board's August 6 meeting, at which the gatehouse application is slated for discussion.

The steering committee, comprised of Bruce Blumberg, former mayor Garland "Bud" Booth, Jack Boyle, Madeline Dwyer, Mr. Fitzpatrick, Amy Jester, Betty List and Brian Molloy, organized the informational gathering to discuss legal options and answer residents' questions.

Mr. Molloy, an attorney, addressed the group, highlighting the importance of the upcoming planning board meeting.

"We need everyone's support be-

working since the winter, has hired attorney Jim Flynn and a traffic safety expert to represent its position at the meeting. "The real issue to hang our hats on is safety," Mr. Molloy said.

Mr. Molloy said the proposed driveway would run parallel to Wychwood and exit onto Wychwood Road, cutting across two Wychwood lanes. When asked what makes this specific driveway unsafe, Mr. Molloy responded that cars would be forced to make a wide turn into lanes of traffic in both directions. He added, "Our approach has been not a personal insult to a neighbor, but our problems with the plan."

Mr. Fitzpatrick told the group that although the hearing must start in August, "the short-term objective is to get the planning board to agree that the hearing must be put aside until (a) traffic expert conducts studies, or until October or November."

In addition to traffic and safety, the character of the area is a concern for many residents. "There are upstarts who move here who don't realize how long we have worked to preserve the history of this town. Lots of generations have worked to preserve the history, and then they come and ruin Canterbury Road," said May Furst, a 40-year Westfield resident.

Residents also voiced concerns about the real-estate values of neighboring houses; some fear prices would decrease due to the new construction.

In addition, attendees discussed how the subdivision and subsequent construction would affect the area's ambiance.

"It's going to destroy such a beautiful area," Mrs. Fitzpatrick said. Cynthia Waterbury, a Kimball Avenue resident, suggested increasing public awareness. "We should make it a real issue and get the whole town involved," she said to the group.

Having a table at FestiFall and making yard signs in favor of saving the gatehouse were among the ideas residents presented.

"This is a classic landmark in this town," said Mr. Fitzpatrick. However, without sufficient monetary funds to carry out the traffic studies and pay for attorney fees, "we're done," he said. "We need to invoke the whole town of Westfield in this fight."

## Tpk. Authority OK's Pacts to Redesign Parkway Exit 135

By **PAUL J. PEYTON**  
*Specially Written for The Westfield Leader*

**CLARK** - The New Jersey Turnpike Authority took action Monday on redesigning the traffic circle at the Clark/Westfield exit of the Garden State Parkway, exit 135, by approving construction and construction management contracts in excess of \$4.7 million. Construction is scheduled for completion in May of 2008.

Turnpike Executive Director Michael Lapolla, a Westfield resident, said pre-construction will begin by September.

"I think it's (the project) about 30 years overdue. (Exit) 135 is probably the most problematic interchange on the parkway," Mr. Lapolla said in a phone interview on Tuesday.

Tilcon New York Inc. of West Nyack, NY was awarded the nearly \$4.3 million contract for the installation of four traffic signals and two connector roads.

**Tax Bills to Be Mailed By End of Month**

**WESTFIELD** - Westfield Tax Collector Susan Noon has announced that the town has received its tax rate for 2007-2008. Tax bills will be mailed out by the end of the month.

State statute gives taxpayers 25 calendar days from the date the bill is postmarked to pay. Payments received after that period accrue interest back to the original August 1 due date.

November 2007 and February and May 2008 tax payment due dates will not change due to this late tax billing. Residents can receive e-mail reminders of quarterly tax-payment due dates by registering under tax-department notifications under "e-alert e-mail updates" at westfieldnj.gov.

The tax collector's office will be open on Wednesday, August 1, from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Residents can call (908) 789-4051, ext. 4050, or e-mail taxcollector@westfieldnj.gov.



**DIVISION CHAMPIONS...**The Westfield White 11-year-old baseball team celebrates after pulling off a 5-4 come-from-behind victory over Montville at Gumbert Field on July 22 to claim the New Providence Green League division title. See stories on pages 9 and 10.

cause this is not an easy application to deny," he said.

Mr. Boothe added, "We need to have a mob scene."

The committee, which has been

The project includes lighting improvements and the milling and resurfacing of the existing roadways within the interchange. The authority awarded Dewberry-Goodkind, Inc. a \$424,000 construction management services contract to oversee the project.

Mr. Lapolla said the project is expected to alleviate traffic backups that he said are "frightening" in terms of the safety risks they present to motorists. He noted that in addition to Clark and Westfield, the interchange provides access to roadways connecting to Rahway and Linden.

"We think this will help anyone who is traveling in the area... It will be a major improvement," he said.

Improvements will include the realignment and widening of existing northbound and southbound Garden State Parkway ramps at Exit 135 to provide better sight distance, as well as the construction of two new connector roads, according to a press release put out by the authority when the project was unveiled in June of 2006.

The connector roads will allow traffic to take advantage of four traffic signals to be installed at the intersections of Central Avenue and the Garden State Parkway ramps, officials said.

## GW Schools Superintendent Will Not Return For 2007-08 Year Due to Medical Condition

By **MARYELLEN PALERMO**  
*Specially Written for The Westfield Leader*

**GARWOOD** - At Tuesday night's board of education meeting, officials confirmed that Superintendent of Schools William J. Murphy's present medical condition would prevent him from returning to his position for the 2007-2008 school year.

Regarding the chief school administrator's contract, Board Attorney John Geppert explained for pur-

poses of compliance that the borough had provided the public with adequate notice; however, due to the personal nature of the situation, discussions of the superintendent's position would continue in a private executive hearing, closed to the public.

Acting Superintendent of Schools Teresa Quigley addressed a change that will be made to the school calendar in order to maintain the structure of four even marking periods. Without the change, middle-school students would lose a week's worth of class time during their cycles because of the Thanksgiving holiday falling earlier than usual this year. For example, she said, "If your child loves art, they would be shortchanged."

She also pointed out Garwood's high percentage of student attendance, saying how "Garwood students like to come to school."

The acting superintendent described the month of July as a "pivotal month" and a "time for reflection" regarding what was accomplished throughout the year and what improvements can be made for the future.

Borough resident Bruce Paterson of Willow Avenue said he would like to see a program that encourages students to walk to school. He referenced an article that appeared in *The Westfield Leader* discussing a similar



**MISCHIEF MANAGED...**Beth Budnick of Westfield, dressed as Hogwarts Headmaster Albus Dumbledore, celebrates after winning the raffle to be the first Muggle to receive "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" at Westfield's Town Book Store at midnight on Friday. Earlier in the evening, her Dumbledore outfit won the book store's costume contest.

## Police Arrest 'Mad Hatter' Suspect In Maplewood After 18th Heist

By **ALLISON GIBBONS**  
*Specially Written for The Westfield Leader*

**UNION** - A man matching the description of the "Mad Hatter," a robber who struck 18 different banks in New Jersey and accumulated more than \$60,000, was apprehended Monday after a bank robbery on Sunday in Union Township.

Eileen Walsh, assistant prosecutor for Union County, confirmed that the suspect, James Madison, 50, of Maplewood, was arrested Monday after allegedly robbing a Bank of America inside a shopping center on Route 22, West in Union Township.

Detectives from the Union County Prosecutor's Office, Union Township Police, the Morris County Prosecutor's Office and agents from the FBI went to a Valley Street residence in Maplewood at about 10:30 p.m. Sunday night and found the car parked in the rear of the building, according to the Union County Prosecutor's Office.

They performed surveillance on the car until about 6 a.m. Monday when an individual, later identified as Madison, walked up to the car and began to get in, authorities said. Madison was detained for questioning and came voluntarily to FBI headquarters

in Newark, authorities said. The arrest warrant was issued at the FBI building in Newark, FBI Special Agent Sean Quinn said.

"We suspect him of the other robber-

scene of the Sunday robbery and took down the license plate number, Mr. Romankow said.

He said the car was registered to a woman who listed her address as Elizabeth, but that address was found to be outdated. Police later found that the woman lives in Maplewood.

Madison was working as a machinist in a shop in Maplewood, authorities said. Since September 2006, the Mad Hatter has hit 18 banks up and down Route 124, spanning Morris to Union Counties. Police were baffled by his ability to hide in plain sight, with only grainy images of the suspect captured on security cameras.

While he robbed more than nine banks in Union County, including ones in Springfield and Union, the Mad Hatter never struck in Westfield, Cranford or Fanwood, where Commerce has bank branches. Madison has an estranged son in Westfield, who declined to be identified.

Thirteen of the robberies occurred at Commerce Banks in Springfield (two branches), Union Township (two branches), Summit, Berkeley Heights, Roselle, Morris Township, Cedar Knolls, Livingston, Montclair, Metuchen, and Woodbridge. Other banks robbed included Chase Bank, Washington Mutual Bank, Hudson City Savings Bank, HSBC and Bank of America.

In two previous robberies in Woodbridge and Montclair, dye packs were put into the moneybags by bank tellers, according to police reports.

The robber was dubbed the Mad Hatter due to the fact that he wore a different cap or hat during each of the



**HATS OFF...**Union County and Morris County detectives and FBI agents apprehended James Madison, the alleged "hat bandit" bank robber, at his Maplewood home on Monday morning. Surveillance photos above show the "Mad Hatter" robbing various banks during a robbery spree that spanned 11 months.

ies that we have generally attributed to the 'Hat Bandit' or 'the Mad Hatter,'" Mr. Quinn told *The Westfield Leader*.

The U.S. Attorney's Office brought the charges against Madison. "He has been charged with that (Union) robbery," Ms. Walsh said.

At a press conference on Monday in Newark, Union County Prosecutor Theodore Romankow said, "There were hundreds and hundreds of man hours, possibly thousands, that were devoted to this investigation."

Madison was captured after a bank employee saw the car leaving the



**NO SENIOR FEES...**The Cranford Township Committee met on July 17 to discuss waiving fees for seniors at the Cranford Community Center. Pictured, clockwise from the top, are: Mayor Michael Plick, Commissioner George McDonough, Commissioner George Jorn, Clerk Tara Rowley, Administrator Marlena Schmid, Commissioner David Robinson and Deputy Mayor Robert Puhak. See story on page 3.

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