

RVSA Privatization Topic For County Watchdog Group

By JENNA NIERSTEDT
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

AREA — The Union County Watchdog Association (UCWA) hosted Rahway Valley Sewage Authority (RVSA) employee Anthony Gencarelli last Wednesday at the Roselle Park Community Center to speak to citizens about the pitfalls he sees with privatizing RVSA's wastewater treatment operations.

About 20 people came to listen to Mr. Gencarelli for what he called an "informal, friendly gathering" in which he encouraged people to speak up and ask questions.

"The Union County Watchdog Association, we try to shine a light on government, and this is a part of government, these independent authorities (RVSA)," said Tina Renna, UCWA president, of having Mr. Gencarelli at the meeting.

Speaking as a "private citizen," not on behalf of RVSA, Mr. Gencarelli said he was qualified to speak about a public-private partnership involving RVSA because he is a licensed engineer, planner, professional wastewater operator and collection systems operator.

He told the audience he was not opposing privatization to protect his job. "I'm out here speaking for what I believe is in the best interest of the rate payer," he said.

Mr. Gencarelli said some of the negative impacts of privatization were rate increases and opportunities for corruption at the expense of the ratepayer.

During the meeting, Roselle Park Councilman Ricky Badillo said he was opposed to privatization at RVSA. "These companies that come in usually fire them (the authority's employees) or start to downgrade their benefits, their pay...and they do it at somebody's expense because they want more profit. I don't think that's a good mixture of for profit and the public having to pay for somebody else's profit."

Rahway Republican Chairman Pat Cassio said to audience members, "These are powerful people and... whatever is held by the public they want to sell. We all know that [State Senator Ray] Lesniak [LD-20, Elizabeth] wants to sell the Turnpike... Now they are looking at whatever is left." Sen. Lesniak is a partner in RVSA's legal counsel, Weiner-Lesniak, Kenilworth, a member community of RVSA, is in his district.

Mr. Gencarelli presented figures showing RVSA's legal fees in the past decade. In 1996, legal fees with Greenbaum, Rowe, Smith and Davis were \$91,381, but with Weiner-

Lesniak in 2006, fees were about \$540,000, an amount Mr. Gencarelli said is charged to the ratepayers. He said individual invoices for privatization alone totaled \$56,156.

Kenilworth Mayor Gregg David, filling in on the RVSA board for recently resigned Tom McHale, told Mr. Gencarelli, "I wanted to hear what you had to say, and from my perspective... my responsibility is to protect the interests of the residents of Kenilworth, and that's what I intend to do."

Mr. Gencarelli said he believed opposition to privatization would need to come from the ratepayers, who could vocalize their thoughts to the RVSA board, which consists of representatives from the member towns, including Garwood, Westfield, Mountainside and Scotch Plains.

As the meeting ended, Robert Puhak, Cranford Deputy Mayor and commissioner of public works and engineering, asked what action Mr. Gencarelli is looking for from local elected officials.

Mr. Gencarelli said elected officials should talk to their RVSA commissioners so they understand what their communities want to do about privatization: "Maybe you can't do that as an individual, maybe you have to bring it up on the agenda at a mayor and council meeting and get the mayor and council to vote as a block saying... whatever you want, but [they are] your representatives, and [they] should be voting the way you want [them] to vote."

"I was very happy to see so many elected officials come out because I really think this is going to have a long-term impact," Ms. Renna said after the meeting.

Kenilworth policeman and councilman Peter Corvelli thanked Mr. Gencarelli for what he called an "eye opening presentation."

"It gave me a new perspective that I certainly didn't have going in to this meeting," he said. "Not only the possible rate increases that will have on the taxpayers but also the lack of accountability that will happen once you privatize and send it out to a private company... that's certainly something that we have to keep an eye on."

SP's Keane Named Fashion Institute Pres.

SCOTCH PLAINS — Loretta Lawrence Keane of Scotch Plains, vice president for communications and external relations at Fashion Institute of Technology, has assumed leadership of the body in her first one-year term as president.

The announcement was made when the statewide membership met for its annual educational conference in Syracuse in June.



Jenna Nierstedt for The Westfield Leader and The Times
TO PRIVATIZE OR NOT TO PRIVATIZE... At last Wednesday's Union County Watchdogs Association meeting, Anthony Gencarelli, Manager of Regulatory Compliance at Rahway Valley Sewage Authority (RVSA), vocalizes his reasons for opposing privatizing RVSA's wastewater treatment operations. About 20 local citizens, including Tina Renna of the Union County Watchdogs Association, Rahway Republican Chairman Patrick Cassio and Kenilworth Mayor Greg David, attended the session.

Utilities Authority OKs Audit for Incinerator

By STEVEN REILLY
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

RAHWAY — The Union County Utilities Authority (UCUA) approved the 2005-2006 financial audit for the Rahway incinerator during their July 18 public meeting.

The audit was conducted by the accounting firm Suplee and Clooney of Westfield. According to Thomas Brennan, the UCUA Comptroller, the audit found no areas in need of attention.

"There were no recommendations regarding the operation of the facility," Mr. Brennan said. "We are very pleased with the audit."

The UCUA showed total assets of \$220,142,254 for 2006, down from \$227,069,994 in 2005. Total liabilities of \$275,891,921 in 2006 were also down from \$285,001,235 in 2005.

The UCUA took in \$41,552,273 in operating revenues and spent \$26,757,829 in costs for a net operating income of \$14,794,444. According to the audit, the net income is up from \$14,154,806 in 2005.

Alan Harleston, the facility manager for the incinerator, said he was pleased with its performance. "This is a great performing facility," he said. "We have been operating at full capacity for the past several years now. This is a very, very good operation."

Commonly known as the Rahway incinerator, the Route 1&9 facility takes in more than 500,000 tons of household trash each year and converts it to clean energy for 30,000 homes.

Once the site of an uncontrolled dump more than 20 years ago, it em-

ploy 88 workers and provides its own energy for day-to-day operations. Besides providing a clean energy source, it also promotes alternative energy sources.

"This is an extremely positive operation for our residents," James Kennedy, Rahway mayor and UCUA chairman said of the audit. "We are right where we want to be to serve the county's needs."

The UCUA Rahway Resource Recovery Facility is one of five of its kind in New Jersey. The energy it produces is added into the Penn-Maryland-Metro power grid, which supplies energy to utility providers such as PSE&G. Besides generating clean energy, the facility also recovers more than 1,000 tons of recyclable metals that are sold for use in manufacturing operations.

State Grants NJIT \$463,938 for Patents

NEWARK—Researchers at New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) will soon find it easier to research, apply for and obtain patents thanks to the New Jersey Commission on Science and Technology, who awarded \$463,938 to NJIT last month.

Last year, NJIT received nine new patents. The research ranged from nanotechnology to biomedical engineering. NJIT currently has 137 new patent applications in process. With projected research expenditures greater than \$80 million for 2007, NJIT ranks as a leader in size and growth of research programs among the nation's technological universities.

Pre-Design to Begin on Stanford Drive Park in BH

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

ELIZABETH—The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders are set to approve a \$378,000 contract to T&M Associates of Middletown to begin the pre-design phase of the Stanford Drive Park Improvement Project in Berkeley Heights. The contract is being funded through the county's Open Space, Historical Preservation & Recreation Trust Fund.

The county and Berkeley Heights jointly purchased the 17-acre property for \$13 million in 2006, with the county paying \$8 million and the township \$5 million.

Following last week's agenda-setting meeting County Manager George Devanney, a Berkeley Heights resident, said, "We expect remediation to be completed any day now."

The property previously housed Shaw Plastics and Barry Oil Service/Duffy Fuels. As condition of the sale, the property's owner was ordered to clean up the land, which contained asbestos and oil.

Mr. Devanney said that once the remediation process is completed, the pre-design and construction phases begin. The county manager said the project is expected to take two years before it is completed.

The former industrial property is being developed into a senior citizen center for Berkeley Heights, a playing field and a recreation area. The township will operate the senior center on the four acres of the land it owns. The township will also maintain the playing field and recreation area that the county will develop on its portion of the land.

A developer had sought to develop the property for 259 residential housing units.

The board also discussed a resolution for an inter-local service agreement with Elizabeth. Joseph Graziano, director of engineering and public works, said the agreement would enable the county to have roadwork done on the extension of Acme Street, which lies in Warinanco Park, by a contractor hired by the city for roadwork.

Mr. Graziano told the board that the project would include 300 feet or one block of roadway including curbing, milling and resurfacing. The county would reimburse the city \$30,000 for the work. He said it made sense for the city to have the work done since the county is already doing work on municipal streets.

In a similar agreement, the county would include 160 feet of Stanley Terrace, a township street off of Stuyvesant Avenue in Union, as part of the county's 2007 million and resurfacing program. Union Township would reimburse the county for the work estimated at \$8,500.

The board is also set to approve a

resolution to increase the contract for replacement of safety mentoring devices for Paratransit vehicles from \$2,458,066 to \$2,541,930, an \$80,539 increase. The entire cost of the equipment is being funded through a state grant.

In other business, the board announced that the county would distribute \$75,000 in Union County HEART (History, Education, Arts Reaching Thousands) grants to 35 local groups and artists. The county developed the program in 1998.

Among the awards, to be voted on July 26 as part of a resolution by the board, are former Westfield mayor Garland Boothe, \$1,000; the Jewish Community Center of Central New Jersey in Scotch Plains, \$2,500; the Mountainside-based August Symphony Orchestra, \$2,500; Westfield Symphony Orchestra, \$2,500; the Theater Project at Union County College in Cranford, \$2,250; and Four Centuries in a Weekend 2007, run by the county's Office of Cultural & Heritage Affairs, which received the largest grant of \$7,500.

Tom Plante of the county's public information department said that since there are fewer applicants this year for the grants, this will be the only distribution of HEART funds this year. In previous years the county gave out two rounds of awards, one in the spring and one in the fall.

NJ Legislators' Voting Records Posted Online

TRENTON — The voting records of each elected official for all bills in the New Jersey Legislature in 2007 have been posted online at njleg.state.nj.us.

The records from the legislature website are zip files containing data in CSV format. The Westfield Leader and The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times imported the files into database and spreadsheet programs for analysis. The spreadsheet files of the newspaper can be downloaded at goleader.com/features.

Several database queries were conducted for the data, which contains 10,360 records for the state senate and 28,080 for the state assembly. Records of committee votes were also retrieved but are not part of this study. Assembly committee data comprise 8,709 records, and senate committee data comprise 5,429 records.

Reviews were conducted of the voting records for bills presented in final form for passage. Other interim votes, such as for tabling or amendments, were not reviewed.

In both the senate and the assembly, all votes presented for final consideration passed; none were defeated. In the assembly, all 286 bills presented for final passage were approved. In the senate, all 187 bills presented for final passage were approved.

there's more at
goleader.com

No one knows the local market like a local.



Mortgages

We offer a full range of mortgages, and since we're from the area, we have an insight and understanding of the local market you won't find anywhere else. We'll be there every step of the way, to make sure the process is simple, you get the right mortgage, with no surprising fees, and a great rate. With a decision this big, you deserve the attention you'll get with a real community bank.

Mortgages / Re-Financing / Home Equity Lines and Loans



FREE CHECKING / SAVINGS / CDs / MORTGAGES / LINES & LOANS / BUSINESS BANKING

520 South Ave. Westfield, NJ 07090 908.301.0800 / 44 Elm St. Westfield, NJ 07090 908.518.9333

www.townbank.com



STRONG GUARANTEE.

Looking for a secure place to grow your money? Get a guaranteed yield with a fixed rate CD from State Farm Bank.* For information, call me today.

4.65%
90-DAY CD

5.30%
2-YEAR CD



Christine Cosenza
State Farm Agent
Westfield, NJ 07090-2148
Bus: 908-233-9100
christine@christinecosenza.net



LIKE A GOOD NEIGHBOR, STATE FARM IS THERE.®



Member

FDIC

*Annual Percentage Yields as of 07/25/07, rates subject to change without notice. Minimum balance to open an account and obtain the stated APY is \$500. A penalty may be imposed for a withdrawal prior to maturity. Certificates automatically renew at maturity of the then current rate for the same term. Some products and services not available in all areas.

FD0211

State Farm Bank • Home Office (Bloomington, IL) • statefarm.com® 01/03

PERSONAL INJURY LAW



Call

JON M. BRAMNICK

CERTIFIED TRIAL ATTORNEY

BRAMNICK, RODRIGUEZ, MITTERHOFF, GRABAS & WOODRUFF, LLC

WWW.JONBRAMNICK.COM

1827 East Second Street, Scotch Plains
908-322-7000