

Thomas Snyder Receives State Bar Service Award

NEW BRUNSWICK — Thomas Snyder, a Westfield resident and partner with the law firm of Einhorn, Harris, Ascher, Barbarito, Frost and Ironson in Denville, was honored with the New Jersey State Bar Association's (NJSBA) Distinguished Legislative Service Award at a ceremony at the NJ Law Center on February 23.



Tom Snyder

He received this award for his work on two bills of importance to the NJSBA, S-1467 (Sen.

Scutari), which adds new causes of action for divorce based on irreconcilable differences and S-1087 (Sen. Vitale), which permits adopted persons and certain others access to the adopted person's birth certificate and other related information.

On both bills, Mr. Snyder met with numerous legislators, attended meetings in Trenton and throughout the state on behalf of the NJSBA, and was involved in numerous and lengthy conference calls with various groups, including the Governor's counsel.

S-1467 was signed into law on January 20. The NJSBA is actively working to defeat S-1087. Mr. Snyder was the spokesperson for the NJSBA on WWRL-NY 1600 A.M. debating Pam Hasagawa, an adult adoptee. He participated in the taping of NJN's "Due Process" on S-1087.

The annual Distinguished Legislative Service Award is given to those NJSBA members who have made significant and outstanding contributions to promoting the association's legislative interests, historic mission and the public good.

An NJSBA member since 1993, Mr. Snyder is on the Executive Committee of the Family Law Section. He is a member of the Morris County Bar Association and volunteers as an attorney for the Jersey Battered Women's Service.

Mr. Snyder graduated with honors from Seton Hall University School of Law, and is also admitted to practice before the U.S. District Court, District of New Jersey.

The New Jersey State Bar Association, incorporated in 1899, is dedicated to the continuing education of lawyers and the public, to reforming and improving the legal system and to aiding in the administration of justice. For more information, visit the association's website at njsba.com.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY, MR. ASSEMBLYMAN...Attendees at a breakfast meeting to informally discuss government issues included more than 60 citizens, mayors, councilpersons, Sen. Tom Kean, Jr. and Congressman Mike Ferguson on February 24 at the Westfield Municipal Building. Above, Assemblyman Jon Bramnick (LD-21), who sponsored the affair, is surprised with a birthday cake. For more information, see goleader.com/photos.

Police Academy Offers Alternate Route Program

SCOTCHPLAINS—Union County Prosecutor Theodore Romankow has announced that the John H. Stamler Police Academy will offer the "alternate-route" basic police program in the next police recruit class beginning around July 20. Applicants must be between the ages of 18 to 35.

He said a goal is "to create a pool of trained officers who could then be hired by local police departments, sparing municipalities the costs associated with training a police officer."

Union County Police Chief William Dowd, president of the Union County Police Chiefs Association, said graduates are "in excellent position to obtain jobs in law enforcement."

Candidates completing a written examination and review process become part of the academy's regular police training class.

Academy Director Anthony Parenti said alternate-route recruits receive the same instruction as regular police cadets during the 20-week session. Training courses include firearms,

weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, use of force, court procedures, crime prevention, community relations, juvenile crime, domestic violence, the state criminal code, drug enforcement, crash injury management, crime-scene management and constitutional law.

Alternate-route candidates must have a minimum of 60 college credits. They are not guaranteed a position but will have met all state requirements necessary to become police officers. They can receive 12 credits if they enroll at Union County College. Tuition is \$1,270 and hardship cases may be given a year to pay.

Mr. Romankow said, "195 people have participated in the program since its inception, and so far we have an excellent placement rate."

Applications may pick up starting March 1 at the academy, located at 1776 Raritan Road in Scotch Plains. Applications must be returned by 1 p.m. on Friday, March 30.

For further information, contact Mr. Parenti at (908) 889-6112.

Runnells Deficit, Closing Wheeler Top Budget Issues

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

ELIZABETH — The potential closing of a county pool and a \$3.5-million deficit at Runnells Specialized Hospital were of most concern to the county freeholders' fiscal affairs committee as the panel began deliberations on a proposed \$415-million budget.

County Manager George Devanney told the panel last Wednesday that the county's 3,000-person workforce would drop by 50.

"This will be accomplished through elimination of vacancies, early retirement and attrition," he said. He said early retirements would save the county \$973,000.

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Director Charles Sigmund said John Russell Wheeler Pool, located in Linden, is running a \$50,000 deficit and needs \$600,000 in repairs, including a new \$250,000 pool liner.

Mr. Sigmund proposed reconfiguring Wheeler into a water park geared towards a younger population. He said Wheeler users could use the Walter Ulrich Memorial Pool in Rahway.

Freeholder Angel Estrada said he was concerned about the county starting to "take away opportunities for children." He said the county should promote the pool to area schools.

Freeholder Al Mirabella, committee chairman, said, "I want to see the trend over the last five years." He asked Mr. Sigmund to submit specifics on improvements needed, along with usage numbers.

Mr. Sigmund said his department requests a 3-percent budget increase over last year to \$23.9 million. He requested an additional naturalist at Trailside Nature and Science Center in Mountainside and two maintenance staff for the soon-to-open new juvenile detention center in Linden.

The director said 70 percent of the \$4.5-million revenue generated by parks and recreation comes from the county's four public golf courses.

"We have agreed not to raise fees for golf," he said. "The trend (for golfing) was a down one for the last year and a half."

County Manager George Devanney asked Mr. Sigmund to consider increasing the number of out-of-county residents playing at Union County courses. Those golfers are charged twice as much as county residents.

Freeholder Dan Sullivan asked what impact new parks — the Sevell property in Scotch Plains, Esposito and Hazelwood Park in Clark — would have on the county budget.

"All the parks we are developing are really neighborhood parks," Mr. Sigmund said, adding that nearby municipalities could maintain the parks.

He said Scotch Plains would maintain the Sevell property, while Springfield and Berkeley Heights have agreed to do the same at county parks in their towns.

In terms of capital requests, Finance Department Director Larry Caroselli said department heads initially submitted a capital budget debt of \$46 million, which he said was "totally unacceptable." The debt was reduced to \$28 million.

Joseph Sharp, director of Runnells Specialized Hospital, said a change in how the county is reimbursed through Medicare would generate an additional \$750,000 to \$1 million. Runnells currently receives \$2 million in Medicare funding.

Mr. Sharp said the hospital's long-term care unit had a 91-percent occupancy rate in 2006, a number he wants increased to 95 percent.

Three hundred of Runnells' 369 beds are located in long-term care. The 44-bed psychiatric unit had a 98-percent occupancy, while the 25-bed rehabilitation wing was 80 percent full.

Mr. Sharp recommended the hospital utilize electronic media to promote the hospital, as well as work with surrounding hospitals and assisted-living facilities, to increase the long-term care occupancy rate.

"This is a really quality institution. We just need to do a better job at letting people know about it," Mr. Sullivan said.

Freeholder Chairwoman Bette Jane Kowalski called Runnells "one of our hidden jewels."

Dennis Kobitz of the county's election board said the county's 500 voting machines would be retrofitted to produce a "paper trail" at cost of \$2,000 per machine. The state will pay the \$1-million cost.

The election board's budget request for 2007 is \$2.72 million, compared to \$2.62 million in 2006.

Al Faella, director of economic development, said the county would save \$20,000 on cell-phone usage through an agreement with Verizon. His department seeks a \$284,848 budget increase to \$4,769,569.

He said information technology and website coordination are among shared services that would be "the easiest" shared services the county could offer municipalities.

Mr. Devanney announced the county has received a three-year, \$300,000 state grant to generate shared-services programs. He said the county would offer Berkeley Heights e-mail and webpage hosting services as part of a pilot program that would save the township \$50,000 annually while the county would receive a service fee.

County Counsel Robert Barry's proposed budget is down \$622,2898 to \$1,752,881. Last year, the office handled more than 175 tort claims and 55 lawsuits and helped settle eight suits against the county.

Joseph Graziano, director of engineering and public works, trimmed his initial capital request from \$16 to \$8.1 million. Fourteen million dollars is planned for road improvements, with another \$6.5 million for bridge enhancements. Mr. Graziano said the dredging project at Echo Lake, currently drained, should be completed by the end of the year.

The department's operating budget has increased almost \$500,000 to \$2.8 million.

County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi requested \$80,000 in her budget for a sheriff's officer at the Westfield clerk's office annex during the three week-nights it is open. Her operating budget is up \$207,000 to \$2.1 million.

Scotch Plains Residents Graduate PD Academy

AREA — Two Scotch Plains residents have completed their 22-week intensive training at the Essex County College (ECC) Police Academy in Cedar Grove.

Cameron Cox has joined the Rutgers University Police Department, while Sean Pfeifer is now a member of the NJ Transit Police Department.

Fifty-one new officers, representing a number of local police departments and regional law enforcement agencies, graduated from the academy on February 15.

ECC has operated the academy since 1999. In addition to training new officers, the academy offers continuing-education courses for law-enforcement personnel.

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Managing Multiple Demands ~
Advice for the Sandwich Generation

Monday, March 12th at 6:30 PM

If this describes you then we invite you to join us for some invaluable information. Keynote speaker, Carlton Annis, CPA, Register Guardian and Partner of The Stirling Care Group will provide tips which will help you to:

- talk to your aging parents without meeting resistance,
- work through family dynamics, and
- reduce caregiver strain.

Take the night off and join us for an evening out!

Seating is limited and registration is strongly recommended. Please call (908) 580-3800 to guarantee your seat today.

This seminar will be held in the Community Center of Fellowship Village, 8000 Fellowship Road, Basking Ridge. Light refreshments will be served.

Fellowship Village is a Continuing Care Retirement Community located in the rolling hills of Bernards Township. If you are interested in more information on this and/or other upcoming special events, please visit us on the web at www.fellowshipvillage.org or call 908-580-3800.

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