

## Peyton's Peek at the Week In Politics

By Paul Peyton of The Leader/Times

### Legislators Differ On \$33.3 Billion Budget

Governor Jon Corzine last Thursday unveiled his proposed \$33.29-billion state budget, which represents a 7.2-percent increase in spending over last year. The following are comments from legislators on both sides of the political aisle:

**Senate President Richard Codey (D):** "For the State of New Jersey, this year's budget proposal is definitely good news. No new tax increases; substantial property-tax relief and increased aid for schools and towns will go a long way towards easing the burden that has accumulated on the backs of our hardworking families. The governor's proposal is both responsible and sensible."

**Senator Tom Kean, Jr., (R, Westfield):** (on school-aid figures) "Governor Jon Corzine's budget proposal continues the erroneous policies of the past five years. His proposal calls for a 7-percent spending increase in state spending, but many districts will be getting increases of less than 4 percent. The five-year school-aid freeze has helped fuel escalating property tax bills."

**Assembly Majority Leader Bonnie Watson Coleman (D):** "This budget contains record levels of property-tax relief for New Jersey homeowners. It's a budget that contains no new tax increases for the first time in five years. It's a budget that provides the largest school-aid increase since 2001...What's not to like about a budget that avoids tax increases and provides record levels of property tax relief?"

**Assembly Republican Leader Alex DeCroce:** "The governor claims this is a 'property-tax relief budget.' I have always believed that if something sounds too good to be true, then it usually is. This budget is no exception. It fails to address the concerns of New Jersey families and senior citizens. It does nothing to make New Jersey an affordable place to live for middle class families."

### Union County GOP Holds Lincoln Reception

The Union County Republican Committee held its annual Lincoln Reception last Thursday at the

Kenilworth Inn. GOP Chairman and former Cranford Mayor Phil Morin said he expects a low vote turnout this year - around 80,000 in the county. "We have some great opportunities around the county (in 2007)," Mr. Morin said. He compared this year to 2003, when he said no freeholder captured more than 50 percent of the total votes cast. "When you look at the numbers, we really can do it in 2007," he said.

### Egg Harbor Mayor Replaces Gormley

Egg Harbor Township Mayor James "Sonny" McCullough has been sworn into to replace William Gormley in the State Senate, representing the second district in Atlantic County. He defeated Assemblyman Frank Blee, who was supported by Mr. Gormley, in a special convention. Mr. Blee has announced he will not seek an eighth term in the Assembly. Rep. Frank LoBiondo supported Mr. McCullough.

### Ewing Township Settles Lawsuit of Sale of Lien

The Ewing Township Council has approved a \$40,000 payment to settle a lawsuit after the township mistakenly sold a tax lien on Trenton Mercer Airport property that it did not have the authority to sell because it was owned by Mercer County, according to *The Times of Trenton*.

### Board Suspends Ex-Mayor's Benefits

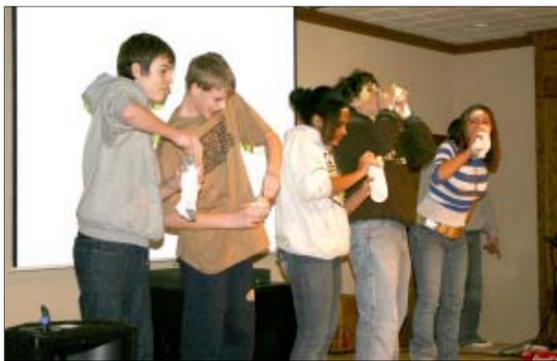
The New Jersey Public Employees Retirement System board suspended the pension and health benefits of former Brick Township Mayor Joseph Scarpelli following his recent resignation and guilty plea to accepting \$5,000 in bribes for building proposals. Mr. Scarpelli faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in jail and a \$250,000 fine when he is sentenced on Tuesday, May 29.

### Convicted Jersey City Mayor to Run for BOE

Former Jersey City Mayor Gerald McCann, who was jailed for bank fraud and tax evasion, has filed as a candidate for the city's board of education, according to *The Jersey City Journal*. The paper reported that Mr. McCann has vowed to be an "independent watchdog for the children of Jersey City."

### Organization and club leaders:

Check and update your organization's information at [goleader.com/organizations](http://goleader.com/organizations). A directory of all current information will appear in 2007's *This Is Westfield* edition this spring. Spread the word!



Greg Ryan for The Westfield Leader and The Times

**FIGHTING FAMINE...**Ten area churches sponsored their 16th annual 30-Hour Famine last weekend. Teenagers who participated sacrificed food in solidarity with the conditions the world's poorest people experience every day. Above, a group performs a demonstration in front of participants.

## Chief Dowd Addresses Westfield Old Guard

WESTFIELD - Kenilworth Police Chief William Dowd was the guest speaker February 22 at the weekly meeting of the Old Guard of the Westfield Area. Chief Dowd also is president of the Union County Police Chiefs Association.

The chief discussed how police departments today are electronically

interconnected with each other as well as with the Union County Prosecutor's Office, the New Jersey State Police and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Instantaneous information can now be sent to an officer in a police car at the scene of an accident or crime scene investigation.

The Old Guard is comprised of retired men who meet at 9 a.m. each Thursday at the Westfield Area "Y," located at 220 Clark Street in Westfield, with a presenter at each meeting.

Retirees from the Westfield area and surrounding towns are invited to join the organization. Anyone interested in becoming a member is asked to call Jack McHugh at (908) 233-1539 or Walter Halpin at (908) 889-2074.



**GUEST SPEAKER...**Kenilworth Police Chief William Dowd tells the Old Guard of the Westfield Area about modern police work during the group's weekly meeting on February 22 at the Westfield Area "Y." Chief Dowd also is president of the Union County Police Chiefs Association.

## Mascolo of Westfield Forms Law Firm

WESTFIELD - Jay Mascolo, a resident of Westfield, recently formed the law firm of Rebenack, Aronow and Mascolo. The firm, located in New Brunswick, provides services for personal injury litigation, small business consulting, construction litigation, wills and estates, real estate transactions, family law and municipal court.

Mr. Mascolo had previously been with the law firm of Hoagland, Longo in New Brunswick and is certified by the Supreme Court of New Jersey as a Civil Trial Attorney.

Mr. Mascolo can be contacted at (732) 247-3600 or [jmascolo@ramlawnj.com](mailto:jmascolo@ramlawnj.com).

Reading is good for you!



[goleader.com/subscribe](http://goleader.com/subscribe)

## Hospital Agrees to Reduce Bill for 2 Inmates to \$254,726

By STEVEN REILLY  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

COUNTY - The Union County freeholders discussed a range of issues at their February 22 public meeting, among which was the ongoing inquiry of a deed service fee a private company has charged county residents who use the company to obtain a deed copy.

Union County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi called fees charged by National Deed Service Inc. of Washington D.C. "price gouging" and said that residents can easily get a copy of their home deeds over the county's website.

"I think the residents should be aware of the services that are already offered to them by the clerk's office," Ms. Rajoppi told the freeholder board.

National Deed Service, Inc. sent a letter to area property owners last month offering to get a certified copy of property deeds from the county for a fee of \$79.50. Ms. Rajoppi stated in the past that the clerk's office charges \$8 for the first page and \$2 for each additional page. The first page of a deed can be accessed on the clerk's website at [clerk.ucnj.org](http://clerk.ucnj.org) for free.

Ms. Rajoppi noted that most property owners have copies of their deeds along with bank records and said most real estate transactions include the cost of the deed service.

She said the service and fees charged by NDS do not break any laws but that the Union County Prosecutor's office is looking into the company's services.

Union County Finance Director Lawrence Caroselli asked the board to approve a \$254,726 payment to St. Michael's Medical Center in Newark for the emergency medical treatments of two inmates at the county jail.

According to Mr. Caroselli, the inmates were taken to the medical center on unrelated heart problems. Both inmates underwent treatment at the Newark hospital and incurred a cost of more than \$400,000.

Mr. Caroselli told the freeholders that St. Michael's has agreed to accept a reduced payment of \$254,726 on the condition that the payment be made within the next week.

During the public comment session of the meeting, Cranford resident Tina

Renna, president of the Union County Watchdog Association, raised two issues to the freeholders. Ms. Renna criticized the cost of automobile insurance paid by the county, which totaled \$984,654 for 2007-2008.

She said residents "cannot afford" to continue to pay for "freeholder perks" such as the insurance, residential Internet service and Blackberries.

She expressed interest in a proposed county study that would categorize the amount of services a municipality receives from the county as compared to the total amount of property taxes paid by homeowners.

## Travelers Should Apply Early for Passports

WESTFIELD - Union County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi reminded residents to apply for passports at least 11 weeks before travel to avoid complications.

She said that "because of the new federal passport regulations, the demand for new documents has created a slower response time from the federal passport agency...Even the more expensive expedited delivery option can take four weeks for delivery."

Passport forms are available at the clerk's main office in the Union County Courthouse at 2 Broad Street in Elizabeth or at the annex at 300 North Avenue East in Westfield. Applications can be found online at [ucnj.org/ctyclerk/passport.html](http://ucnj.org/ctyclerk/passport.html).

New regulations stipulate that a passport is required for all air and sea travel to or from the United States. By January 1, 2008, a passport will be required for all air, sea and land border crossings in the Western Hemisphere.

For domestic travel, teenagers over 13 and adults without a driver's license can obtain a photo-identification card at the clerk's office with an original birth certificate and proof of residency.

The Westfield annex is open from 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Mondays and Fridays. The phone number is (908) 654-9859. The Elizabeth office is open from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and can be reached at (908) 527-4966.

**Art Ammermuller**  
"Helping People"

[benefitsnj.com](http://benefitsnj.com)

- Life Insurance
- Disability Insurance
- Long Term Care
- Employee Benefits

888.541.2200

# COMING SOON!



Westfield Cosi  
102 E. Broad St.  
Westfield, NJ  
(908) 654-1130

Hours: Mon-Sat 6:00am - 10:00pm  
Sun 6:30am - 9:30pm

You're just a few days away from getting Cosi

For breakfast, lunch, dinner, dessert, coffee and everything in between - eat-in or take-out - Cosi is coming soon to Westfield. Stop in and try one of our freshly tossed salads, crackly crust pizza or a delicious sandwich served on our warm artisan flatbread. We can't wait to welcome you to Cosi.

STOP BY FOR  
**FREE COFFEE**

Bring in this coupon and get any Tall House Blend Coffee FREE before 11am

**TRY US**  
YOU'LL LIKE US

Here's \$2 towards the taste of Cosi

VALID ONLY AT THE WESTFIELD COSI LOCATION. Limit 1 FREE beverage per person, per visit. Not valid with any other coupon or discount offer. NO reproduction or internet distribution allowed. Not redeemable for cash. ©2007 Cosi, Inc. Offer expires 6/30/07



Offer valid on any sandwich, pizza or salad. Limit 1 coupon per person per visit. Not valid with any other offer. Must present coupon when ordering. No reproduction or internet distribution allowed. Not redeemable for cash. Applicable taxes and gratuity must be paid by consumer. ©2007 Cosi, Inc. Offer expires 6/30/07



SANDWICHES SALADS PIZZA DESSERT

When's the best time to give your parents all they deserve?



Today, at  
**Park Place**  
Assisted Living

Your parents deserve the best that life has to offer. Park Place is pleased to provide it for them. If your parents are no longer able to care for themselves or their home, or if they're becoming more isolated, it's time to consider Park Place. We offer upscale Assisted Living for those who are used to the finer things in life. Residents enjoy superior amenities and many opportunities for socialization within a close-knit, friendly community. Plus, with personalized healthcare options, you can rest assured that your parents will receive the best care possible. Whether it is for a **short-term respite stay** or a **long term solution**, visit us today and find out why more people are choosing Park Place at Fellowship Village.

- Registered Nurses on-site 24 hours/day
- Physician, Nurse Practitioner & other Specialists on-site
- Alzheimer's & Dementia Services
- Separate Medicare Certified Skilled Nursing & Rehab on-site

Call 908-580-3824  
or visit [www.fellowshipvillage.org](http://www.fellowshipvillage.org)  
for information or to schedule a tour.

9000 Fellowship Road, Basking Ridge, NJ 07920



Equal Housing Opportunity