

Freeholders Oppose FAA Airspace Redesign Plan

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

ELIZABETH – The Union County freeholders last Thursday officially opposed the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) proposed New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia Airspace Redesign Plan.

"The proposed integrated airspace alternative-flight plan will increase low-altitude aircraft traffic over densely populated residential areas and communities, reducing the overall altitudes for arrivals and introducing low-altitude holding patterns in the metropolitan area," according to the resolution.

At Thursday's meeting, Freeholder Nancy Ward said she attended the FAA's April 25 hearing in Newark and asked FAA representatives if the proposed plan had been given to the state's Homeland Security Office.

"There answer to me was no... They were not required to," she said. "That's not a good thing."

"How can you secure the homeland when you don't know the flight patterns?" she asked.

In their resolution, the freeholders recommended the use of larger aircraft and flight schedule changes that would not cause interminable delays during peak hours.

During the public portion of the meeting, Jeremy Jay of Summit presented a plan to fight terrorism and asked the board to share copies of his plan with Trenton and Washington officials.

"If Manhattan is destroyed by a smuggled nuclear bomb, Union County would suffer greatly... Freeholders have a duty to prevent terrorism; freeholders must hold them accountable," Mr. Jay said in prepared remarks.

Heather Taylor of Cranford, communications director for Metuchen-based Citizens Campaign, inquired as to whether the board had reviewed the organization's proposed ordinance to open the process to fill seats on county boards and commissions as presented to the board at its April 19 meeting.

The group reported at that meeting that there are 130 vacancies out of 652 positions on some 51 boards in county government.

"We feel this is a great opportunity to get the word out" (on board and commission vacancies, Ms. Taylor said. "That information can really cultivate getting the best and brightest (people)."

Board Chairman Bette Jane

Kowalski said the proposal had been turned over to the county counsel's office for consideration.

"It's certainly being carefully looked at," Ms. Kowalski said.

Ralph Steinhart of Westfield said the county's April 21 recycling event for electronic equipment and old tires at the Union County Vocational-Technical School in Scotch Plains was not handled properly. He said only one line for motor vehicles was available although there was sufficient room for three lines, causing him a two-and-half-hour wait.

"It was apparent that there was poor planning," Mr. Steinhart told the board.

Freeholder Dan Sullivan said the nice weather that day might have increased the number of people attending.

"I just think that given the weather...there was just an unusually larger number of people (that turned out)," Mr. Sullivan said, adding that on-going construction at Vo-Tech also caused changes from previous years.

Tina Renna of Cranford said at last week's meeting, following up on comments she made at the April 19 meeting, that she was not afraid to attend freeholder meetings in Elizabeth but that residents in suburban towns who have not lived in a city, unlike Mrs. Renna, might not be comfortable going there. She suggested opening county employee parking areas at the county administration building for residents attending board meetings, who now must park blocks away.

"I'm sure I will be attacked (by the board) again. But I'm not afraid of bullies," she said.

Mr. Sullivan said Mrs. Renna was scaring county residents from attending meetings in the county seat. He said Mrs. Renna has "become a public figure."

Mrs. Renna, from her seat, asked for permission to respond. "You are misrepresenting me," she said.

With Ms. Kowalski using her gavel to stop audience participation during freeholder comments, Mr. Sullivan continued.

"You (Mrs. Renna) can't handle criticism. You now want to put fear into people coming here," he said.

In other business, the board passed a resolution supporting state legislation to increase the personal-needs allowance from \$35 to \$50 per month for persons residing in nursing facilities, state hospitals or state developmental centers who are eligible for Medicaid or Supplemental Security Income.

Freeholder Deborah Scanlon, a two-time cancer survivor, presented a resolution to representatives of the American Cancer Society for the organization's Relay for Life event, which raises money for cancer research and education. The resolution proclaimed May 1 as "Paint Your Town Purple" Day in Union County.



GIFTS GO FAR...Jack Walker, 3, helps the Westfield United Way say "thank you" to Westfielders for "making it happen." By reaching 100 percent of the WUW's fundraising goal, the organization's 19-member agencies will receive funds to provide a wide variety of services to Westfield and other local communities.

Westfield United Way Sets Annual Meeting for May 14

WESTFIELD — The Westfield United Way (WUW) will elect members to serve on its board of trustees at its 50th annual meeting and awards presentation, to be held Monday, May 14, at 7 p.m. in the municipal building's community room.

The nominees for first-time election are Sharilyn Brown, Anthony Cerami, Susan Cook, Colleen Echausse, Jennifer Jaruzelski, Kathleen Lynch, Rick Malacrea and Rick Ragoza. Nominees for re-election are David Foltz, John Ripperger and Paul Zoidis.

Bramnick Sponsors Assembly Bill 3425

WESTFIELD — Assemblyman Jon Bramnick (LD-21), a civil trial attorney, has joined with Assemblyman Sean Kean (Monmouth County) as a sponsor of legislation which would bar direct solicitation letters from attorneys to accident victims and other persons.

"Increasingly, certain attorneys are sending solicitation letters to victims of motor vehicle accidents, drivers who receive traffic tickets, and persons charged with offenses. The attorneys obtain these people's names, addresses and other personal information through public information sources such as police reports and court records, and send the letters in an attempt to solicit business. This practice increases the public's mistrust and suspicion of the legal profession," according to a press release from Mr. Bramnick.

This bill would prohibit attorneys from sending any written communication soliciting professional employment on the attorneys' own behalf to any person whose name, address or other personal information was obtained from a public record such as a police report, accident report or court record.

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Community Business News It's Important Where We're Going and Where We've Been

By Kara Shovlin

Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce

Webster's dictionary cites one word in the definitions of both growth and development. That word is evolution. That is what I see when I look around this town that I was born and raised in.

The downtown is constantly changing and evolving as the times change. I can remember having ice cream at Hill's when I was in junior high (that's what we called middle school way back then), choosing between the Rialto and the Westfield Cinema when I wanted to see a movie and going to my after-school job at Westfield Drugs (now Liberty Travel) when I was at WHS.

Some things have remained, but most of what used to be downtown has long gone. The neighborhoods are always evolving as well. I see these beautiful new homes going up where old ones once stood. And while change can be hard, there is a lot that is good about that.

When a new home goes up, it tells us that the owners of that house want to be here and will invest their money in this town. They're going to have to because when a new home is built, taxes will roughly double for that property. This translates into more money for the town and the schools.

Builders say that someone building or buying a new home is likely to be a good neighbor, take care of their property and be active in the community. A new home is also going to add value to all the other homes on the block, so it allows for others to feel more comfortable about investing money into their homes. The new homes that go up are typically much more efficient, which means they are nicer to the environment and less costly to run.

About 200 jobs are created when a house is being built, and those jobs go to local people. Supplies come from

the area, and the materials are mostly made in America. Most builders say they do their best to keep the growing pains to a minimum. They try to keep the worksite clean and safe and complete the exterior as quickly as possible.

One builder tells me that most contractors do what they do because they truly love to affect what they feel is positive change in their community. Since many of the builders who work around here also live around here, this is their community.

All in all, since the year 2000 there have only been 251 knockdowns for redevelopment out of a total housing stock of 9,200 homes. Some years are higher than others, but that is a reflection of the state of the economy, and every town has its evolutionary curve.

As our needs change, our town changes. When I was a child growing up on Crescent Parkway, I would have been happy if nothing ever changed, but eight years ago my parents sold that house to retire to parts south and I no longer had a say in what happened to it. As that house approaches 100 years old, the day might come that someone chooses to knock it down and "redevelop."

I will be sad to see it go, but also excited for the future possibilities. That is an attitude I try very hard to hold close in our ever-changing times. On the flip side, it gives me comfort when I drive around town to see evidence of the historical and architectural heritage of the town. It is nice to know that many people choose to invest their monies into preserving our history.

One of Westfield's unique characteristics is its commitment to both embrace the future and celebrate the past. At the end of the day, almost as important as where we're going, is where we've been.

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