

Explosions Delay RVSA Cogeneration Plant Progress

By WAYNE BAKER
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD — A pair of explosions during engine testing at the Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority's (RVSA) new cogeneration facility damaged exhaust components on two of the facility's four engines, RVSA officials reported last week.

At the time of the explosions, on April 30 and May 10, the engines were undergoing testing by technicians from Caterpillar, the engine supplier. The explosions, which were equated to a car backfiring by Jim Cassella, assistant to the RVSA interim executive director, appear to have left the engines undamaged, he said.

Evaluation of damage is still underway, said RVSA interim executive director Michael Brinker, but Caterpillar is "stepping up" by accepting responsibility. Mr. Brinker told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times* the cause appears to be a communication problem. He said the engine's electronic controls sent incorrect signals to control the fuel/air mixture.

Mr. Brinker said the first explosion was more severe than the second, explaining that greater watchfulness by employees had resulted from the initial blast. The first blast occurred in two stages, with the first part being the combustion of unburned fuel in some portion of the exhaust system, believed to be the catalytic converter, and the second occurring when a flexible expansion coupling, used to stop transmission of engine vibration, blew out, permitting additional oxygen to enter the exhaust system and feeding the secondary blast.

Officials said it remains unclear

how long the blasts would delay start-up of the new facility. Mr. Brinker said the delay would flip-flop the startup of two portions of the cogeneration/sludge drying facility. Cogeneration is the process of using a heat engine to simultaneously generate electricity and heat.

Mr. Brinker said the anticipated mid-May beginning of power generation would be delayed for an undetermined period and that Komline Sanderson, the manufacturer of the sludge drying equipment, expects to test that portion of the facility by early June.

In other business, Peter Pelissier, the new RVSA commissioner from Rahway, introduced a motion to request qualifications and proposals to privatize management of the operation of the cogeneration portion of the RVSA facility.

During debate, Joan Papan, the commissioner from Scotch Plains, said, "I hate to go through this all over again." Her comment referred to the discussions of privatization last year that were put to bed following last November's Mayor's Forum, when the collected mayors of the 11 RVSA towns said such action was premature. Mr. Pelissier was not a commissioner at that time.

The board approved the proposal by a close vote, agreeing only to request qualifications from potential candidates for privatization.

Officials also announced Thursday that Kenilworth commissioner Thomas McHale, the current vice chairman who had served on the commission for 13 years, has resigned. Kenilworth is expected to appoint a replacement.



Wayne Baker for The Leader/Times
UNDER INVESTIGATION... An April 30 blast at the Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority's cogeneration plant shifted this large silencer to the left by about a foot, bending its mount and blowing apart the expansion joint, which had connected the pipe at right.



MAKING A STAND... Students and adults attended a recent hearing in Trenton on a resolution, sponsored by Assemblyman Eric Munoz, calling on the United Nations to take action to help free three Israeli soldiers being held by Hezbollah and Hamas militants. Pictured, from left to right, are: first row, Danielle Flaum, Emma Barnett, Gabrielle Flaum, Jill Sobelman and Samantha Schoen; second row, Stephen Solomon, Mr. Munoz, Jeffrey Rayvid and Nancy Kislin Flaum.

Munoz Calls for U.N. Action On Captured Israeli Soldiers

TRENTON — A resolution sponsored by state Assemblyman Eric Munoz (LD-21, Summit) calling on the United Nations to take action to help free three Israeli soldiers who are being held by Hezbollah and Hamas militants in violation of international law, has been released by the Assembly State Government Committee.

"I want Israeli citizens here and abroad and the government of Israel to know that the United States and, in particular, the State of New Jersey, stands united with them in their efforts to bring these young men home safely," Asm. Munoz said. "We need to remind people everywhere of this blatant and gross violation of international law."

In the summer of 2006, Sergeant Ehud Goldwasser and Sergeant Eldad Reggev, two reservists in the Israeli Defense Force, were kidnapped from within Israel by terrorists from the militant Islamic group Hezbollah while Israeli Defense Force Corporal Gilad Shalit was kidnapped by Hamas.

Hezbollah's refusal to return the Israelis resulted in a prolonged clash between Israeli military forces and Hezbollah in southern Lebanon last summer, Mr. Munoz said in a release.

Asm. Munoz, who sponsored the resolution, AR-244, said that neither the International Red Cross nor the families of Sgt. Goldwasser and Sgt. Reggev have been able to contact them or receive assurances that they are well or even alive.

"The U.S. has always been Israel's staunchest ally and we at the state level will continue to do our part to support our Jewish friends," said Mr. Munoz. "It's time for the United Nations to stand up and demand that these terrorists release these soldiers."

Mr. Munoz noted that American Jewish organizations throughout the U.S., including many in New Jersey, have undertaken a campaign to collect one million signatures demanding the immediate release of the three Israeli fighters.

County to Acquire Schwarz Farm in Clark for \$3.6 Mil.

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

ELIZABETH — The Union County freeholders board is expected to vote tonight to purchase the 4.25-acre Schwarz Farm on Old Raritan Road in Clark and Westfield for \$3.6 million in addition to another .60 acres located on Wildwood Terrace in Union Township for \$417,000. The Union property, according to a county-issued press release, is contiguous to Elizabeth River Parkway.

With the Schwarz Farm acquisition, Union County will have purchased more than 185 acres of parkland and/or open space purchased in Clark over the past few years.

Two weeks ago, the board voted to purchase 13 acres of undeveloped land behind St. Agnes Roman Catholic Church in Clark for \$8 million. That property abuts the 142-acre Clark Reservoir, which the county has agreed to acquire from the township for a dollar. The county is about to close on the \$6.25-million purchase of a 14-acre parcel from Hazelwood Cemetery and is in the process of developing for recreation use the former 13-acre Esposito Farm property, bought by the county for \$2.9 million in 2003. The county also owns Milton Lake and dam.

Once all the deals are completed, the county will have bought 300 acres of land since its open space fund was established in 2000, with 61 percent of the purchased land in Clark.

"Every acre of green space is precious in Union County, which is located in one of the nation's most densely populated regions," said Freeholder Dan Sullivan, chairman of the county's Open Space, Recreation and Historic Preservation Trust Fund.

County Manager George Devanney said the Schwarz property is adjacent to the reservoir. He described the purchase as another "great acquisition" by the county.

"This had been a working farm," said Victoria Drake Durbin, director of the county's open space, recreation and historical preservation fund.

"This action [tonight] will allow us to go under contract with (the Schwarz) property," Ms. Durbin said. She said the reservoir, Hazelwood, St. Agnes and Schwarz property purchases would be completed soon.

"I anticipate by September we will have taken over and closed on all those properties," Ms. Durbin said.

At last Thursday's agenda meeting, the board considered a resolution for the first change-over for construction work at the 1,300-seat Union County Arts Center in Rahway. The change is for the pre-construction design phase, which has since been completed. The change order would increase the contract by \$65,800 to \$377,800.

The work is part of a \$6-million upgrade to the theatre that will include renovations to dressing rooms, backstage expansion and a new loading area for set and production equipment deliveries. The county purchased the theater in 2004 for \$6.2 million.

"It was very labor-intensive work," said Ms. Durbin in explaining the need to increase the contract.

She said the newly renovated 1928 Vaudeville theatre would open in October. An addition is being added to the back of the theater, and air conditioning will be installed. She said the air will come through the floor instead of the ceiling in an effort to preserve the inside facade of the building.

Frank Guzzo, director of human services, said the National Association of Counties (NACo) seeks approval of a resolution by Union County to support reinstatement of federal benefits to inmates in county jails. According to an article in the NACo newspaper, anyone charged with a crime loses his or her Medicare or Medicaid benefit eligibility and Social Security.

"Union would be the first county to put this on (the agenda)," Mr. Guzzo said. He said counties currently must fund healthcare benefits for inmates.

FEMA Closes Center At Cranford Twp. PD

CRANFORD — The Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) at the Cranford Police Station closed May 18, federal and state disaster officials announced last week. The Cranford DRC has assisted more than 100 Union County residents since opening May 3. For assistance, go visit fema.gov or call 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or TTY 1-800-462-7585 for the speech and hearing impaired. Both lines are operational from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily, until further notice.

Watchung Squadron Tells 2007-2008 Officers Slate

AREA — The Watchung Sail and Power Squadron, a unit of the United States Power Squadrons (USPS), held its annual Change of Watch ceremony on April 14 at the Primavera Restaurant in Stirling.

The Change of Watch is traditionally held to induct newly elected squadron officers. The elected bridge officers for the 2007 - 2008 term are: Theodore Wallace, commander; Anthony Carbone Jr., executive officer; Richard Sendell, education officer; Rocco Fuschetto, administrative officer; Marlene Oslick, treasurer; Richard Swackhamer, secretary, and Glenn Milden, assistant education officer.

Organized in 1914, USPS is a non-profit organization dedicated to making boating safer and more enjoyable by teaching classes in seamanship, navigation and related subjects. As a local unit of USPS, Watchung Sail and Power Squadron conducts public safe boating classes throughout the year that are

sanctioned by the State of New Jersey. And, in a cooperative program with the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, qualified Watchung Sail and Power Squadron members provide courtesy vessel safety checks of boats to boat owners upon request.

During National Safe Boating Week, May 19 to 25, and throughout the boating season, WSPS members will be out in the community to promote the importance of safe and responsible boating.

For information on safety boating courses or to sign up for a WSPS course, contact Squadron Education Officer Richard Sendell at (908) 453-3835, e-mail rsendell4@comcast.com or William Foy at (908) 370-8157 and e-mail yof123@aol.com.

Boat owners who wish to schedule a safety check of their vessel should contact Commander Ted Wallace at (908) 925-6807 or e-mail chiefwallace@yahoo.com.

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