



LEGISLATOR QUILTS... Assemblyman Neil Cohen resigned July 28 after news sources revealed he is being investigated for having child pornography on his state-issued computer. He shared an office with Senator Ray Lesniak and Assemblyman Joe Cryan located across from the Union Theatre on Stuyvesant Avenue in Union Township, pictured above.

Muhlenberg Closing

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Operating Officer for Muhlenberg Nancy Fleming drafted, Muhlenberg's emergency room is on "full divert status," meaning the emergency room will no longer admit in-patients and they are diverted to area hospitals.

"The people in the local communities are going to suffer because they are going to take them on longer runs outside of our normal radius. It's going to effect us time wise and gas wise. Fortunately, our town is paying that for us," Mr. Oatis said.

"Towns like ours where we have a basis to go the extra mile, that is literally what we are going to be doing," he continued.

Should a person call 911, the emergency medical technician (EMT) would make the decision if the injured person needs a bed. "It leaves it on us, whether it is an ALS (advanced life support) or BLS (basic life support)," Mr. Oatis said. Instances such as "bumps, bruises, burns, stitches, broken bones" routinely do not require a bed and the ER could treat the person and send them home, said Steven Weiss, spokesperson for Solaris Health Systems, the corporation that decided to close the hospital because of the institution losing more than \$10 million per year.

"It will be interesting if their bumps and bruises are the same as ours," Mr. Oatis said.

"It would be nice to know that they will be open to patients that are not bumps and bruises," he said, in cases where a patient was initially diagnosed as a BLS, but when the person arrived at Muhlenberg it was determined that it was more serious.

"If it's a serious call, cardiac, motor vehicle, maternity, the paramedics are called and they assist us in telling us what hospital to go to," he said.

Mr. Oatis said he has not heard of any instances when a person did not make it to a hospital in time, given the longer distances of other area hospitals than Muhlenberg, but said, "That is definitely a possibility with advance life support."

"There is a golden four minutes. If someone is having trouble breathing or a cardiac problem anytime over that four-minute mark you start playing with the lives of the people that are the patient. If we go over four minutes and drive a longer distance, it is definitely going to hurt, and in the long run will effect the calls we go on."

According to a press release, Overlook recently built a new \$15-million emergency department to assist in the increased patients visits, which is an increase of 3 to 5 percent yearly in the last few years. It has 46 beds, separate sections for specialties such as pediatrics, geriatrics and chest pain, a dedicated radiology area, and a system to move patients with less-urgent needs through the emergency department in less than an hour.

Trinitas' emergency department, according to its website, "has 15 acute-care beds, a six-bed observation area, a six-bed 'Fast Track' area for patients with minor illnesses and injuries, two triage rooms and a decontamination shower facility," and designated chest pain center.

Muhlenberg's satellite emergency room accommodates 20 beds, with five available for overflow.

At JFK, the ER has eight beds in its intermediary care, which handles fast track and some higher acuity patients that do not require monitoring, 12 beds in pediatric care for children 18-years-old and younger, and 21 beds in the main ER to care for higher acuity patients, and those who require monitoring. In the fall, an additional eight bays will be added.

When someone comes to Muhlenberg on his or her own admission, they would be stabilized in the emergency room, then sent to another hospital, via transportation provided by Solaris, according to Mr. Weiss. It does not have helicopter service.

MS Council

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John Post added.

Before moving into a closed session, the council discussed the sale of a 2003 Ford Crown Victoria by the borough and approved several authorizations for expenditures including funding for the borough's PTA Fall Festival and the appointment of temporary TV-35 technicians. The council also gave approval for the borough to participate in the Union County Development block grant program for fiscal year 2008-2009 and for the recreation department to apply for a county Kids Recreation Trust Grant to offset the cost of sports equipment.

The council also took some time to note that the conditions at Mountainside sports fields were better this year than they had ever been and that visiting teams had commented on how well maintained the facilities were. The Mayor said this was a testament to the community and the pride volunteers put in maintaining the fields.

Before closing out the public portion of the meeting, Mayor Vigilanti took time to praise the Director of Public Works, Ronald Romak, for the work being done on Mountain Avenue to replace faulty pipes. The Mayor said "the repairs did not cost us a nickel" after Mr. Romak was able to get the county to replace them after pointing out that they had not been installed properly in the first place.

The next regular public meeting of the borough council will be held Tuesday, August 19 at 8 p.m. at Mountainside Borough Hall.

New Manager Calls SP Post 'Opportunity of a Lifetime'

By FRED T. ROSSI
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

SCOTCH PLAINS — Michael Capabianco, who will be formally introduced next week as the new township manager, calls Scotch Plains "one of the best towns in the state" and says it is "the opportunity of a lifetime to be able to lead this town."

Mr. Capabianco, whose appointment was unanimously agreed to by the township council late last month, spoke with *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* earlier this week. His appointment will be announced at next Tuesday's meeting and his first day on the job will be August 18. He will succeed Thomas Atkins, who is retiring at the end of this month after 28 years of running the day-to-day operations of the municipal government and overseeing 123 full-time and about 50 part-time township employees.

Since May 2007, Mr. Capabianco, who is 31-years-old, has been the shared services coordinator for the Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce, where he has worked with 26 municipalities and mayors, as well as 30 school districts. He was borough manager for two years in Folcroft, Pa. and served as assistant director of municipal planning for nearly four years in Norristown, Pa. Mr. Capabianco grew up in Summit and earned master's degrees in criminal justice from St. Joseph's University and public administration from Kean University.

He said his top priority will be to "learn as much as possible" in an effort to replace the "28 years of lost experience" resulting from Mr. Atkins' retirement. In addition, initial work on the 2009 municipal budget will start soon after Labor Day. Mr. Capabianco calls his budgeting experience "decent, but not exceptional," but Mayor Martin Marks noted that Mr. Capabianco will be able to rely on township personnel like chief financial officer Lori Majeski and the township auditors as the budget process moves forward into next year.

Asked whether he would be as conservative in the use of the township surplus as Mr. Atkins has been, Mr. Capabianco said it would depend on the circumstances of that particular budget year, but he added that it was "important to look down the road three, four or five years" to see what longer-term expenses might need to be addressed.



Michael Capabianco

Mayor Marks said Mr. Capabianco was "going to have a challenge" with next year's budget. "We were aggressive with the surplus this year," the mayor said. "But if it's not regenerated, there's going to be a hole" in next year's budget.

Mr. Capabianco said he favors further shared services initiatives "if they're fair and equitable." He said such arrangements should "improve the services, while lowering or maintaining the costs."

Mr. Capabianco said he has done some work with Special Improvement Districts (SID) in previous positions and will be available to offer any "guidance, assistance or hands-on experience" to the board of the newly-enacted SID. Deputy Mayor Nancy Malool, who will be a member of the SID board, wants Mr. Capabianco to meet with the SID board once the groups begin meetings this fall.

Addressing the heated political rhetoric that over the past two years has made Mr. Atkins a target of some local Democrats, Mr. Capabianco said his goal would be to lay out the "pros and cons of an issue and then make recommendations. I'm a bureaucrat. I'm not a politician."

Mr. Capabianco called Scotch Plains "a fantastic place to be and work," noting that it has "one of the best school systems, one of the best parks and recreation departments, and it's one of the safest towns."

"This was not an easy decision," Mayor Marks told *The Times*. "We were not looking for someone to replace Tom, because he is irreplaceable." Instead, he said the council was "looking for someone competent and intelligent to succeed Tom." The mayor called Mr. Capabianco "an intelligent guy and a personable guy" who is enthusiastic and able to deal with the public. "We have a young Tom Atkins on our hands, perhaps."

Mr. Atkins, who was born and raised in Scotch Plains, told *The Times* that Mr. Capabianco should "not be expected to walk in here and know Scotch Plains" in as great a detail as Mr. Atkins does. Mayor Marks added that Mr. Capabianco will be able to rely on Mr. Atkins in his first weeks on the job and then on "the fantastic staff of department heads" in the municipal building.

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year.

Summit Court residents should expect the "neighborhood roundabout" installed by the end of August. The roundabout, to be placed at the Arthur Place intersection, would act as a "traffic-calming device."

During public comment, Lisa Quackenbush questioned when Verizon FiOS customers could expect to see "Blue Devil TV" which is broadcast from the high school, on channel 36. Other TV-36 programming is run through town hall and can already be seen by FiOS viewers.

Town Administrator Jim Gildea said Comcast and Verizon continue to "battle" over an interconnectivity agreement, which the two sides have not been able to reach. Town representatives, the TV-36 Advisory Committee and the board of education have talked to Verizon, and a solution should occur this month, allowing FiOS customers to view Blue Devil TV prior to interconnectivity occurring.

Former Councilman Kenneth MacRitchie recommended that the existing park at the end of Windsor Avenue be named after Dr. Virginia Apgar, who lived on Carleton Road, not far from the park. Dr. Apgar is regarded as the founder of neonatology, which has significantly reduced infant mortality.

A Day With Linda Stender

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picnic was Mark Alexander, the senior advisor to Senator Barack Obama's Presidential campaign.

During the picnic, Mrs. Stender met and spoke with supporters who were able to ask about her stance on issues. She admitted that the topic she speaks about the most is the Iraq War because her opposition is why she decided to run for Congress in 2006 and again this year.

"The country spent so much money over there," she said. "We went from a record surplus to a record deficit."

According to Mrs. Stender, people are uneasy because they aren't confident the government can provide the functions it's supposed to.

Mrs. Stender said the country needs energy independence and to concentrate on conservation and efficiency "for the economy and the environment."

However, when asked about her opponent, Senator Leonard Lance, Mrs. Stender admitted to a lack of knowledge about his campaign.

"There doesn't seem to be a strong campaign going," she said. "He doesn't have a campaign headquarters. He doesn't have a campaign phone. We haven't been getting a lot of feedback about him."

Mrs. Stender's own campaign seems to be going strong, according to Ms.

Curran.

As of June 30, the last date of Federal Election Commission (FEC) financial reporting, Mrs. Stender's campaign had \$1.2 million cash on hand to spend. Mr. Lance's campaign had \$80,000 cash on hand after listing contributions of \$385,238 after winning a seven-candidate primary four weeks prior to the FEC quarterly filing deadline.

"There's a real sense on the ground that this is the year that she's going to do it," Ms. Curran said.

"There's a real sense of enthusiasm on the ground, and you can feel the energy as Linda's traveling around," she added. "She really hears from families who are struggling, who are worried about the high cost of gas or facing skyrocketing health care costs or worried about their homes. The Bush Administration has left our economy in shambles, and we need new leaders in Washington to clean up the mess."

Even though these summer months are what Mrs. Stender called "quiet," Ms. Curran said she has noticed more involvement.

"I feel that voters really know that we need a change, and they're getting involved earlier," she said. "So even in the slower summer months, there's definitely an increased interest and level of activism from years past."



LEARNING FIRST-HAND... Westfield Mayor Andrew Skibitsky, fourth from left, spent the evening of July 30 with members of the Essex-Union Auto Theft Task Force.

POLICE BLOTTER

Westfield

Wednesday, July 30, George Robinson Jr., 55, of Plainfield was arrested after a motor vehicle stop on an outstanding Scotch Plains warrant for \$158. He posted bail and was released.

Wednesday, July 30, Richard Colligan, 51, of Plainfield was arrested during a motor vehicle stop at the intersection of North Avenue and Clark Street for an outstanding warrant of \$250 from Somerville.

Wednesday, July 30, report of theft of a bicycle from the 400 block of North Scotch Plains Avenue. The bike had an estimated value of \$200.

Wednesday, July 30, Mervin Ramos, 24, of Rahway, was arrested for an outstanding warrant out of Linden for \$144.

Police said Ramos was arrested in the driveway of 1000 Central Avenue at the Duncan Hills Apartments, following several calls of a disorderly person kicking a car window. Police said Ramos was kicking his own car door.

Thursday, July 31, Michael Woodward, 43, of Philadelphia, Pa., was arrested in the parking lot of 1000 Central Avenue, on a warrant out of Hamilton Township in the amount of \$500. He was arrested following a call of a suspicious group of people loitering in the parking area driveway. He was released after posting \$500 bail.

Thursday, July 31, officers responded to Plainfield police headquarters where they took Alex Montiz, 26, of Elizabeth into custody for an outstanding Westfield warrant of \$99. Montiz was unable to post bail. He was turned over to the Union County Sheriff's Department.

Thursday, July 31, Salvador Sepulveda Jr., 41, of Perth Amboy was arrested during a motor vehicle stop at Central and Starlight Avenues. He was charged with having a suspended driver's license and for an outstanding warrant out of Perth Amboy for \$620. He posted bail and was released.

Thursday, July 31, officers arrested Jerry Pine, 28, of Mountainview, Calif., for outstanding warrants out of Mount Laurel in the amount of \$500 and Monroe County, Fla. in the amount of \$2,000. He was held pending his turnover to the Mount Laurel Police Department.

Friday, August 1, Bryan Ackerman, 23, was arrested on the 900 block of Woodmere Drive for outstanding warrants out of Livingston in the amount of \$1,000 and Emerson in the amount of \$250. He was processed and was held in custody.

Saturday, August 2, officers arrested Danielle Hazel, 32, of Union for an outstanding warrant out of Kenilworth for \$81 following a motor vehicle stop in the area of Livingston and South Avenue. Hazel posted bail and was released.

Saturday, August 2, Maria A. Nunez, 38, of Plainfield was arrested for outstanding warrants out of Elizabeth for \$250 and Linden for \$550 following a motor vehicle stop in the area of South Avenue and Tuttle Parkway. She was released after posting bail.

Saturday, August 2, Richard Ingram, 55, was arrested for an outstanding warrant out of Westfield for \$200 following a motor vehicle stop at the intersection of East North Avenue and St. Paul Street. He posted bail and was released.

Saturday, August 2, Christopher Rodriguez, 18, of New Brunswick, was arrested at Middlesex County jail pursuant to contempt of court warrant issued by the Westfield municipal court. He was transported to Westfield Police Headquarters where he was processed and released after posting bail.

Mountainside

Friday, July 11, Raymond C. Stark, 39, North Plainfield was arrested and charged with credit card fraud. According to police, he stole a credit card from a Springfield Avenue suite and attempted to purchase a computer at Walmart in Union. According to police, bail was set at \$6,500 and Stark is being detained at the Union County jail.

Tuesday, July 29, Majlassa Forbes, 31, of Newark was arrested and charged with attempting to pass a bad check to the Mountainside court in the amount of \$500.

Tuesday, July 29, Heather Hines, 27, of North Plainfield was arrested and charged with driving with a suspended license after being involved in a motor vehicle accident on Route 22 East.

Tuesday, July 29, Antandras C. Jackson, 34, of Newark was arrested at the Essex County jail for an outstanding Mountainside warrant.

Tuesday, July 29, officers responded to Woodland Avenue on a report of a rabid raccoon. According to police, when they arrived at the scene a large raccoon was attacking a small raccoon injuring it. Police then witnessed the rabid raccoon attacking a small dog at which point they sprayed it with Oleoresin Capsicum (OC), better known as pepper spray, in order to get it to release the dog, police said.

The raccoon then ran across the street into the back yard of an adjacent property at which time the officer was able to safely destroy the animal with two shots from his duty weapon, authorities re-

ported. According to police, the raccoon was placed in a plastic bag and transported to headquarters where the Humane Society picked it up for testing. The dog was transported to veterinarian for treatment and testing and the small raccoon was not located, police said.

Wednesday, July 30, a Mary Allen Way resident reported that someone removed the front license plates from two of her construction vehicles. According to police, the victim is uncertain whether the plates were lost or stolen.

Wednesday, July 30, a Sunny Slope Drive resident reported that the wheel of a large truck drove on his property leaving a rut approximately 20 feet long and six inches deep in his front lawn near the curb.

Saturday, August 2, a Foothill Way resident reported that someone opened a Verizon account using his personal information but bearing a Brooklyn, NY address.

Scotch Plains

Friday, August 1, Alisha Simon, 19, of Elizabeth, was arrested on an outstanding warrant after being stopped for a motor vehicle violation. According to police, she was processed and released.

Friday, August 1, Rabine A. Cook, 25, of Plainfield was arrested on an outstanding warrant after a motor vehicle stop. According to police, he was processed and released to the Union County Sheriff's Department.

Friday, August 1, Kyle Briggs, 22, of Plainfield was arrested on an outstanding warrant after a motor vehicle stop. According to police, he was processed and released.

Friday, August 1, Troy Jones, 31, of Newark was arrested on an outstanding warrant after a motor vehicle stop. According to police, he was processed and released.

Friday, August 1, an employee of a Park Avenue business reported that someone struck the driver's side quarter panel of her vehicle that was parked on the street. The hit-and-run occurred between 2 and 4 p.m. According to police, there were no witnesses to the incident.

Saturday, August 2, Patricia A. Collins, 41, of Plainfield was arrested for an outstanding warrant after a motor vehicle stop. According to police, she was processed and released.

Saturday, August 2, Robert Campora, 28, of Woodbridge was arrested on an outstanding warrant after a motor vehicle stop. According to police, he was processed and released.

Saturday, August 2, Melissa Perez, 32, of Rahway was arrested on an outstanding warrant after a motor vehicle stop. According to police, she was processed and released.

Sunday, August 3, Robert Ribot, 32, of Perth Amboy was arrested for an outstanding warrant after a motor vehicle stop. According to police, he was processed and released.

Sunday, August 3, Christian Valencia, 24, of North Plainfield was arrested for an outstanding warrant after a motor vehicle stop. According to police, he was processed and released.

Sunday, August 3, Sharif Dismuke, 31, of East Orange was arrested for an outstanding warrant after a motor vehicle stop. According to police, he was processed and released.

Sunday, August 3, Juan Bustamante, 27, of West New York was arrested and charged with driving with intoxicated (DWI) after being stopped for a motor vehicle violation at which time officers said they noticed his eyes were red and his speech was slow and slurred.

According to police, Bustamante failed several field sobriety tests and was placed under arrest. He was processed and later released.

Sunday, August 3, Dudley Dempaire, 31, of Hillside was arrested and charged with possession of a controlled dangerous substance after a motor vehicle stop at which time officers said they smelled the odor of burnt marijuana in the vehicle. According to police, a small amount of marijuana was found in the vehicle. Dempaire was transported to headquarters where he was processed and released.

Fanwood

Thursday, July 31, Crystal G. Fagardo, 22, of Plainfield was arrested on an outstanding Plainfield warrant after a motor vehicle stop on Terrill Road. According to police, she was processed and released.

Thursday, July 31, Sergio D. Custodio, 28, of North Arlington was arrested for allegedly providing police with false information after a motor vehicle stop. According to police, he was processed and released.

Saturday, August 2, Aisha S. Williams, 28, of East Orange was arrested and charged with possession of stolen property after she was found allegedly driving a stolen vehicle. According to police, she was processed and released.

Tuesday, August 5, Shavonne B. Delaney, 26, of Newark was arrested on an outstanding Newark warrant after a motor vehicle stop on South Avenue. According to police, she was processed and released.

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