

Green Calls for Review of Plainfield Utility Authority

PLAINFIELD — State Assemblyman Jerry Green (D-20, Plainfield) has written a letter asking the City of Plainfield mayor and council to take immediate steps to protect residents from the impact of “ongoing operational and fiscal mismanagement at the troubled Plainfield Municipal Utility Authority (PMUA).”

A *Courier-News* investigation revealed that, following large rate hikes, the agency was plagued with exorbitant discretionary spending and that two top executives had resigned last year. The executives reportedly received \$1 million in post-employment compensation, payouts that are now under investigation by the state’s Department of Community Affairs (DCA).

“From every report that I have seen or received, the PMUA is an agency that has been out of control for some time,” Asm. Green said. “Rates and fees for collection and disposal of garbage and for wastewater services are much too high. The city needs to undertake an immediate review of the agency’s operations and finances, and consider the possible dissolution of the authority.”

Asm. Green noted that the city is empowered by the Local Authorities Fiscal Control Law to dissolve the authority if it’s first established that direct assumption of responsibility for services related to wastewater and solid waste disposal are necessary “for the health, safety and welfare of our citizens.”

In recent weeks, there has been a significant amount of public debate and outcry about the future of the PMUA amid reports of uncontrolled spending of public funds, crushing debt and bloated personnel rosters, the Assemblyman noted.

“I’m recommending to the mayor and council that an expeditious re-

view of the PMUA be undertaken by a team of independent experts, which will provide all concerned with a true picture of the authority’s status, including staffing, operations, salaries existing debt and revenue, as well as future projections,” Asm. Green said.

The city previously adopted an ordinance requiring public advertisement and request for proposals from qualified professionals to undertake the task of an independent review of the authority.

“I have indicated to the mayor and council that I believe they have a pressing obligation to undertake the process for selection of a group to commence an independent review of every aspect of the PMUA. If such a study reveals the need for the authority to be dissolved, so be it,” Asm. Green added. “If the City of Plainfield can cut the fat and waste out of the agency, and provide the same or better level of service at a reduced rate, so be it. We should not waste a single day. The city needs to act now, not later.”

Gas Prices Up 29.6 Cents From 2011

REGION — Average retail gasoline prices in New Jersey have risen 2.9 cents per gallon, averaging \$3.66 per gallon as of March 26. This compares with the national average that has increased 4.5 cents per gallon in the to \$3.86 per gallon, according to NewJerseyGasPrices.com.

Gas prices were 29.6 cents per gallon higher than the same day one year ago and are 9.6 cents per gallon higher than a month ago. The national average has increased 21.9 cents per gallon during the last month and stands 29.5 cents per gallon higher than this day one year ago.



RING THAT BELL...Students and staff from Newmark School, a private special needs school in Plainfield for grades K-9, rang the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange as part of World Autism Awareness Day on April 2. Please see story on page 18.

Norcross, Lautenberg Enter Round 2 of So. Jersey Battle

TRENTON — Round 2 of the South Jersey Democratic war with United States Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.) has been lodged by South Jersey power broker George E. Norcross, 3rd.

A statement was released last week by State Senate President Stephen Sweeney (D-3rd, Gloucester) and signed by 19 South Jersey lawmakers, including two Republican Senators and four mayors.

Mr. Sweeney’s statement followed a March 28 letter by Sen. Lautenberg asking the U.S. Department of Education on March 27 to look into Governor Chris Christie’s proposal to merge Rutgers-Camden with Rowan University, which has started a medical school at Copper University Hospital in Camden. George Norcross, who is also the chairman of Camden-based Cooper University Hospital, and Mr. Sweeney support the merger proposal. George Norcross brother, Senator Donald Norcross (D-5, Camden), signed the letter.

“Senator Frank Lautenberg’s uninformed and vengeful remarks concerning the proposed Rutgers-Rowan merger have done a serious disservice to students and parents across South Jersey,” Mr. Sweeney’s letter read. “...Since his comments have no basis in fact, and that he took this deplorable action without even discussing the matter with those who know the facts, the only conclusion is that Sen. Lautenberg is trying to avenge past political differences.”

In response, Sen. Lautenberg told newjerseynewsroom.com that it’s sad

when “elected officials will simply fall in line on orders from their political benefactors.”

That brought a quick response from George Norcross.

“Senator Lautenberg has been picking the pockets of no-bid, pay-to-play vendors at the DRPA (Delaware River Port Authority) and other public agencies throughout New Jersey for decades,” Mr. Norcross said on March 29. “Aside from the absurdity of his comments, it’s interesting to note that he never expressed these sentiments when he literally begged for South Jersey’s support in all of his campaigns for reelection. It’s the height of hypocrisy. It’s appalling that the only time Sen. Lautenberg shows any interest at all in South Jersey is when he needs campaign money and votes. He has been missing-in-action on the critical issues affecting the citizens of this region,” George Norcross said.

In a March 29 letter to Governor Christie and Sen. Sweeney, Sen. Lautenberg said, “Several groups and numerous constituents have contacted me in an effort by everyday people to uncover the facts about this deal. As of today a petition organized by the group R2RMerge to stop the merger of Rutgers-Camden and Rowan University has been signed by more than 12,500 people. A Rutgers-Eagleton Poll conducted last month found that 57 percent of New Jerseyans opposed the merger of Rutgers-Camden and Rowan, compared to only 22 percent who supported it.”

Union County Donates Free Trees to Local Schools

COUNTY — Union County schools can celebrate Arbor Day with a free ornamental pear tree from the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders. Available on April 17 and 18 following a training seminar from 12:30 to 2 p.m. at Williams Nursery on Springfield Avenue in Westfield, the white flowering trees can be used by schools to beautify their grounds and provide shade.

“We hope that the schools will involve students and parents in planting the trees on their grounds,” Freeholder Chairman Alexander Mirabella said. “It’s a great way for people to learn how important they are to our environment.”

Training for students and accompanying adults will be provided by members of the Union County Shade Tree Advisory Board. Participants will learn how to effectively plant and care for the five- to six-foot tall trees. Schools may attend on either day and students in third grade and

older are welcome.

The pear trees are donated by the Union County Freeholder Board through Williams Nursery, while training sessions are sponsored by the Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Union County with support from the Shade Tree Advisory Board.

Trees will be given on a first come, first served basis while supplies last. To register, or to receive a tree without attending the training session, contact Barbara Knapp at (908) 789-3653 or via e-mail at bknapp@ucnj.org. For additional information, contact Rutgers Extension agent James Nichandowicz at (908) 654-9854 or by e-mail at Nichandowicz@aesop.rutgers.edu.

In addition to Arbor Day donations, Union County supports local tree planting efforts through the Greening Union County grant program, which provides matching funds for municipal trees.

Reopening of Elizabeth DMV Sought by State Lawmakers

ELIZABETH — State Senator Ray Lesniak, Assemblyman Joseph Cryan and Assemblywoman Annette Quijano, all Democrats representing the 20th Legislative District, have sent a letter to Governor Chris Christie asking him to reopen the Elizabeth motor vehicle services agency as they had previously requested.

Larsen Files Petition For Congress

TEWKSBURY — David Larsen has filed his nominating petition to have his name placed on the Republican Primary ballot for Congress in New Jersey’s Seventh Congressional District, challenging two-term incumbent Rep. Leonard Lance (R-7th).

“I am grateful for the support of all those who have signed petitions to place my name on the ballot and I am looking forward to a spirited campaign,” Mr. Larsen said. “Voters throughout the district are telling me they are ready to change the direction of our nation and want an economy-tested businessman with experience creating jobs, and the grit to lead with conservative principles to repeal and defund Obamacare.”

“Today’s (Monday’s) announcement that New Jersey residents will be required to submit further proof of identification for the new federal license requirement is a cause of great concern for our constituents. Chief Administrator (Raymond) Martinez’ decision to close the City of Elizabeth’s DMV Office has forced the majority of our constituents to use the Springfield and Rahway locations, who have a record as being the sixth and seventh busiest offices in the state. As a result, the current wait times at these locations have been reported as several hours, and there is little doubt that these new guidelines will certainly increase that wait time.”

“In addition, the Motor Vehicle Commission’s decision to re-open offices on Monday’s and extend hours during the week has not provided any assistance in rectifying the poor customer service being received in Union County. The re-opening of this office has become a necessity, so that Union County drivers no longer have to suffer the consequences of what has clearly been a short-sighted executive decision,” they concluded.



Janet Krasowski

Krasowski Named Top Exec. at Provident

SCOTCH PLAINS — Janet Krasowski of Scotch Plains has been named executive vice-president and chief human resources officer at The Provident Bank. In this position, she is responsible for strategic resources planning and overall management of the bank’s human resource department. She also serves on the bank’s executive leadership team.

Ms. Krasowski has more than 30 years of banking industry experience. Before joining Provident, she was senior vice-president and chief human resources officer at Atlantic Bank of New York. Earlier, she worked at Dime Savings Bank as senior vice-president and benefits director, and as senior vice-president and human resources director at American Savings Bank.

She received a bachelor’s degree cum laude from Brooklyn College/CUNY and holds a master’s degree in industrial relations and human resources management from Pace University. She is a member of the Society for Human Resources Management and the New Jersey Bankers Human Resources Committee.

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Errands ♥ Do you need someone to drop-off or pick-up at the pharmacy, post office, dry cleaner, etc.?

~n~ ♥ Want someone to shop, do laundry or prepare a light meal?

Chores ♥ Recovering from surgery/illness and need a helping hand?

LLC ♥ Need someone to stop in regularly to check on your safety, take casual walks or help with reading your mail?

♥ Need a trustworthy house sitter or someone to check on your house, bring in your mail/papers or water your plants while you’re away?

♥ I also file paperwork; wait for deliveries/repairmen; clear clutter or just help with tasks.

♥ *I’m here to help, just let me know what you need!*

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Elizabeth Marasco 908-906-0604 liz@errandsnchores.net