

Garwood Council Sets Security Measures for Borough Hall

By **CHRISTINA M. HINKE**
Specially Written for *The Westfield Leader*

GARWOOD – The borough council agreed, Tuesday night, to install a walk-through metal detector in Borough Hall. At Tuesday night's meeting, people entering Borough Hall were asked to remove the contents of their pockets and have their bags checked. Then a police officer scanned their body with a wand metal detector.

After the last council meeting where the council adopted to freeze longevity benefits, one of the resolutions hanging on the bulletin board in the hall was slashed with a "razor or knife," Police Chief Bruce Underhill said. He said the resolution that was not passed, which opted for current employees to retain longevity benefits as contracted to upon hiring, was the resolution slashed, as well as the bulletin board.

He said the incident was not caught on camera because the surveillance system has been broken for about two years, and buying a new system has been neglected by the council when the issue has come to its attention.

"It doesn't sit well as to the small community of Garwood," said resident Bruce Paterson of the new security measures.

"We're playing catch up," Chief Underhill said. He said since the 9/11 attacks a security directive was set in motion by the state Supreme Court.

"In light of the incident that happened last week, I can't see any reason not to implement that same directive for public meetings. I can't allow any type of weapon or the possibility of an incident. I have to protect the court, the mayor and council, and all of you," the chief said.

On another matter, Mr. Paterson asked Councilman Jim Mathieu to "graciously" step down from his post on the council in light of the lawsuit filed January 31 against Mr. Mathieu by Borough Administrator/Borough Clerk Christina Ariemma for conspiracy, harassment and intimidation, among other allegations. There was some applause from the audience and one saying no. "We're looking at something more deleterious than the security issue brought up before," Mr. Paterson said.

Mr. Paterson said Mr. Mathieu had brought on a lot of "distress" to the Borough of Garwood. "I am beside myself on this," he said. "I think you have gone overboard. I have taken exception at one meeting where you attacked the mayor. A resident came in and noted that she was harassed and had the police chief involved (referring to Rosemary Snow's complaint to the police last year)."

"I don't think anybody can be requested to step down until the allegations are proved," resident Dolores Dombrowski said.

Mayor Patricia Quattrocchi said some of the cost of the attorney fees could be absorbed by the borough's insurance, with which a claim has already been filed and is under review by the insurance company.

Council President Keith Sluka announced that he would introduce a shared-service agreement with the board of education (BOE) at the next meeting. The proposal would be to share cleaning services using BOE custodial staff instead of the borough using an outside service. "I think we are both winners on this," Mr. Sluka said.

Currently, the council pays Char & Sons \$17,450 annually to clean Borough Hall, the fire depart-

ment (FD) and department of public works (DPW) bathrooms. Under the proposal, the council would pay \$22,000 annually for BOE custodial staff to do the cleaning. Cleaning of the FD's main hall would be added to the scope. Mr. Sluka said the borough's current cleaning contract expires March 1, and the council would need to go out to bid if they did not agree to a shared service. He expects bids to come in at approximately \$25,000 to \$30,000 with the additional cleaning task.

The FD had requested the additional cleaning service because borough senior citizens hold meetings at the facility at least four times a week, Mr. Sluka said.

"The FD was not being maintained properly," Ms. Ariemma said.

After the BOE last week passed by a vote of 5-2 to move the BOE election from April to November, the council approved a resolution to adopt the move.

In other business, the council also adopted an inter-local agreement with the Township of Cranford. Details were not given.

Longtime DPW employee William Pevarnik announced his retirement to the council in a letter of intent.

The library had its reorganization meeting recently, said the mayor's library representative, Councilman Mathieu. Former Secretary Maria Nierstedt was named library board president, former treasurer Christine DiGiacomo was named vice-president and former board member Walter Tucker was named treasurer.

Giuseppe Congiusta's membership application to the volunteer FD also was approved.



Benjamin B. Corbin for *The Westfield Leader*

IMPROMPTU BBQ...The Garwood ShopRite reopened Tuesday morning after a small fire in the meat department shut the North Avenue supermarket late Monday. The fire, thought to be electrical in nature, originated in the area of the meat department.

ShopRite Reopens After Fire in Meat Department

By **PAUL J. PEYTON**
Specially Written for *The Westfield Leader*

GARWOOD – The Garwood ShopRite reopened Tuesday morning after a small fire in the meat department shut the North Avenue supermarket late Monday.

According to Garwood Police Captain James Pipala, borough police officers responded to the store Monday on a 3:45 p.m. report of a smoke condition caused by an electrical fire in the area of the meat department. Upon police arrival, the fire was extinguished by employees with fire extinguishers. Captain Pipala reported that there was a heavy smoke condition in the store.

The Garwood Fire Department responded along with the first aid squad and Union County EMS. Officers on scene evacuated the

store and secured the area. One ShopRite employee was treated for difficulty breathing and released at the scene.

A Westfield Regional Board of Health representative responded to the scene and the business was closed for the remainder of the day. Liz Lope, a spokesperson for Wakefern Corp., the distribution arm of ShopRite supermarkets, told *The Westfield Leader* that the store was evacuated and closed as a precaution due to smoke conditions. She said the store was reopened following inspections by authorities, including the health department, after any exposed food was disposed of as ordered by the health inspector.

Westfield Health Officer Megan Avallone told *The Leader* that the store was reopened at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday morning.