



TAKING THE OATH...At the Westfield Council reorganization meeting Tuesday night, pictured left to right, Third Ward Councilman Mark LoGrippe receives the oath of office from Mark Ciarrocca as his wife, Maria, and children, Francesco and Gemma, look on. Fourth Ward Councilman James Foerst is sworn in by Second Ward Councilwoman JoAnn Neylan with his wife, Cara, and sons, Collin and James, by his side. Councilwoman Neylan receives the oath from Councilman Foerst with her husband, Kevin, and son, Kevin, Jr., beside her. First Ward Councilman Frank Arena, surrounded by his wife, Lori, and children, Christopher and Carli, receives the oath from Appellate Judge Douglas Fasciale.

Malool Backs Study Into Consolidation of SP and FW

By FRED T. ROSSI
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

SCOTCH PLAINS – Mayor Nancy Malool said on Tuesday she supports—and urged her township council colleagues to do likewise—a study to look into the pros and cons of a full consolidation between Scotch Plains and Fanwood.

Saying that after more than three years of efforts to merge various municipal departments and service, “nothing has really happened.” The mayor said the council later this month would be considering a resolution backing a full consolidation study.

The mayor made her remarks at the council’s annual reorganization meeting. She said shared services and the merging of departments, particularly the two towns’ police departments, have been studied “to death, but how have our taxpayers been impacted? Have they saved money? Has their quality of life been enhanced? Has efficiency of services improved? The answer to all these questions is undoubtedly, no.”

She said the proposed merger of the two police departments is being held up by three factors: how dispatch services will be handled, the fact that Scotch Plains police are governed by state civil service rules and Fanwood’s is not, and how a merged department will be governed.

“All three of these issues would be resolved if we were ever to merge,” Mayor Malool said. She said she regretted not pursuing such an avenue after she was elected mayor in 2008. At the time, both towns agreed to discuss merged departments rather than outright consolidation. Had the latter route been pursued, the mayor said on Tuesday, “by now we would

have known whether it made sense to merge towns and our residents might have had the opportunity to vote on whether to join the towns.”

At the council’s earlier conference meeting on Tuesday, the two council Democrats, Kevin Glover and Michael Marcus, expressed skepticism about what Mr. Glover termed “yet another study,” preferring that the two towns redouble their efforts to merge departments.

During her remarks, the mayor defended the council’s actions last year regarding the sale of the Shackamaxon Country Club, which included declaring the property as an area in need of rehabilitation as a way to block the sale of the entire property to a developer.

“If we hadn’t acted,” Mayor Malool said, “I can practically guarantee there would be 100 homes there within the year.”

She said the recently completed sale of the property (please see related story on page 3), which will include the development of a limited number of condos, contained township-imposed conditions that resulted from the earlier designation of the property.

“Because of our declaration [of the property as an area in need of rehabilitation], we were able to put conditions on the builder,” the mayor said. “We were able to control the process, to influence the future.”

In other business, Councilwoman Mary DePaola was selected to serve as deputy mayor for 2012. Mrs. DePaola was appointed as a Class III Member of the planning board. Chris Abeel was appointed to the zoning board of adjustment and Dan Sullivan was named as an alternate member.

Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr. Named New Trustee at Fairview Cemetery

WESTFIELD – William Shepherd, president of Fairview Cemetery in Westfield, has announced that Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr. has accepted a position on the cemetery’s board of trustees. Fairview Cemetery is non-profit and was founded over 130 years ago for the sole benefit of its property owners.

After graduating from Hobart College in 1967 with a Bachelor of Arts, Mr. Vanderbilt served in the United States Army for two years and was honorably discharged.

Mr. Vanderbilt has worked for Vanbro Corporation in Staten Is-

land for over 40 years and became president in 1994. Vanbro is a closely held family business that is over 100 years old. Its roots are in heavy construction of roads and sewers, which developed into a construction material supply business.

According to a Fairview press release, Mr. Vanderbilt “brings with him a broad set of skills learned from years of operating a small business.”

Neil and Barbara, his wife of 40 years, have resided in Westfield since 1973. Their daughter, Alison, resides in Marblehead, Mass. and their son, Neil, resides in Westfield.

Westfield Board of Ed

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Ms. Biegler told board members she felt she was qualified for the BOE seat because she was an educator, a mom and a community member. She stated that a student’s self-esteem was a huge part of the education process and that it was important to “have a smaller class size to make that personal connection.”

Candidate Sheila Raftery Wiggins was the fourth candidate to be interviewed, and noted she was a partner at a Newark-based law firm. She also stated that she has two young children who will attend the Westfield schools and that she currently has five nieces and nephews in the district.

Ms. Wiggins noted that she was a founding board member for an area chamber music board and also was a court-appointed mediator. She stated that as a mediator she has been able to “identify true disputes between parties that included contract disputes, employment, parking and construction.”

She concluded by noting that she wanted to help “resolve the challenges of how to maintain an excellent school system with financial restraints and to continue to assure dollars spent are spent wisely.”

Douglas MacNeil told board members that he had grown up in Connecticut, earned two bachelor degrees from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, held a Ph.D. in microbiology and worked for Merck for many years. He has two grown daughters who graduated from Westfield High School.

Mr. MacNeil said he was in a position in his life, now that his children were grown and successful on their own and that his job hours were very flexible, to help more with public service. He noted that he wanted to help the district with his “strong science background,” saying he felt his years of science experience could help to foster the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) program for the district. He said he has 100 published works spanning the last 30 years and holds 15 patents. Mr. MacNeil noted that he had traveled all over the world working on many jobs with teams from Japan, China and India.

Candidate Peter Tsrigotis stated that he wanted to serve on the board because of the positive experience he and his wife have had with their current fifth and fourth graders at Wilson Elementary School. “My kids are getting a private school education at a public school,” he said.

Mr. Tsrigotis noted that he is an attorney. He said he works with many different people on a daily basis,

stating, “It is my responsibility to pull people together.” He noted that in conflict resolution, “everyone needs a chance to express their views.” He also stated that his vision for Westfield students is to have not only strong academics but a strong extracurricular life also. He added that, “Our students need to graduate to be self-sufficient.”

The last candidate to be interviewed, Keith Hertell, who previously sat on the board from 1994 to 1997, noted that he is a 43-year resident of Westfield and had three children go through the Westfield schools. He stated that now not only did he want to help civically, but that he had a vested interest being that he has three grandsons in the district. “I represent the senior population,” he added.

Mr. Hertell noted that as a retired member of the community, he has the time to put into being a board member. He also said he served on the committee to pick two new superintendents, including current Superintendent Margaret Dolan. He added that he would bring a unique perspective to the BOE in that, since he had served before, he could jump in a little faster than someone else who had never served on the board.

Sona Jepsen was scheduled for an interview via skype at 8:50 p.m. because of her current visit to India. Members of the board kept the line open until 9:15 p.m. in hopes of reaching her. After almost a half hour they cancelled the interview.

The BOE will announce its selection to fill the board vacancy at its Tuesday, January 10, meeting, which will begin at 8 p.m.

Westfield Town Council

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“hard-hitting” about the issue of fire staffing, but that they in no way said the town let a building burn down. In addition, he said, they “accurately reflected the candidate’s views” about manning levels.

The rest of Mayor Skibitsky’s message to the citizenry was upbeat; despite 2011’s economic and meteorological unrest, Westfield continues to “flourish,” he said.

The mayor said he “intends to stay the course on fiscal restraint and sustainability.” Going in to the New Year, Westfield is locked into \$18.2 million of statutory and contractual obligations, including \$3.5 million to the Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority.

During the meeting, re-elected council members were sworn in to their new terms; Second Ward Councilwoman JoAnn Neylan and Fourth Ward Councilman Jim Foerst took turns swearing in each other. Appellate Judge Douglas Fasciale administered the oath to First Ward Councilman Frank Arena, and Third Ward Councilman Mark LoGrippe was sworn in by his predecessor, Mark Ciarrocca, now a judge in Union County Superior Court.

Among those attending this year’s meeting were former Mayor Allen Chin and former council members Kevin Walsh, Ken MacRitchie and Betty List.

Councilman Haas spoke before the first round of appointments, saying that he would be abstaining throughout the process.

“I have no doubt the people named are competent and quali-

fied,” he said. “I didn’t see the names until late [Tuesday] afternoon, so I feel it would be inappropriate of me to vote for or against them.”

Going forward, Mr. Della Fera will chair the finance committee, with Ms. Neylan, Mr. Foerst and Mr. Arena chairing the Public Safety, Code Review and Public Works Committees, respectively. Ms. Neylan will again serve as acting mayor. Dominic Verdic, a property owner, and Robert Centrella, a resident, will sit on the Special Improvement District Board.

CF Council

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control of the governing body for 2012 – Mayor Aschenbach, who lost his bid for re-election in November, briefly reviewed the finances of the township, saying that the fund balance had been drawn down too much in 2011, which he said was “not a good thing.” He urged a policy to be put into place calling for the fund balance to be maintained at a level equal to 10 percent of the municipal budget. Given the \$30 million township budget, that would mean a fund balance of about \$3 million.

The mayor estimated the current balance is closer to \$700,000, and noted that a good deal of the fund balance in 2011 was spent due to unanticipated events like Hurricane Irene in late August and the October 30 blizzard that caused downed trees and power wires.



PLANNING THE FUTURE...Scotch Plains officials met on Tuesday night to reorganize the governing body and discuss the upcoming year. Pictured, left to right, Union County Republican Chairman Phil Morin, Scotch Plains Councilman William Vastine, Scotch Plains Mayor Nancy Malool and former Governor Donald DiFrancesco, gather before the township council reorganization meeting.



DOWN TIME...The White and Kornfeld families, both of Westfield, take a break from skiing at Windham Mountain to enjoy The Westfield Leader.



ANOTHER TERM...Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr takes the oath of office from former Governor Brendan Byrne to begin her third term as mayor as her children look on during Sunday’s reorganization ceremony at Borough Hall.

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NEW CRANFORD LEADERSHIP...Pictured, from left to right, State Superior Court Judge Karen Cassidy, the assignment judge for Union County, swears in her husband, Mark Cassidy, to another term as municipal judge in Cranford; new Cranford Commissioner Andis Kalnins takes the oath of office from Rep. Leonard Lance (R-7th); newly elected Commissioner Lisa Aduabato Nesi is sworn into office by state Senator Tom Kean, Jr. (R-21, Westfield), and Cranford Commissioner David Robinson