



FANWOOD ORGANIZES...At Fanwood's Borough Council reorganization meeting on Sunday, from left to right, incoming Freeholder Chairman Al Mirabella addresses the crowd; Public Defender Michael Doran is sworn into office by Mayor Colleen Mahr, and members of the Fanwood Rescue Squad and volunteer fire department take the oath from Mayor Mahr.

Cornelius Vanderbilt Is 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.

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.

WF BOE

for 13 years, mentoring many young men to achieve their Eagle Scout badge. Also interviewed was Gretchen Ohlig, who noted that she was a past president of the Jefferson Elementary School PTO; that she had been appointed to the town's planning board and that she had served as president of the board of trustees for the Education Fund of Westfield. Ms. Ohlig has three children in the Westfield public schools and also was part of the Strategic Planning Committee for the district.

In her interview, she stated, "I am incredibly grateful for a wonderful experience in the Westfield schools." She also stated, "My professional training as an attorney will help me to problem solve in a rational way." She added, "My personal vision for students I would suspect is the same for all Westfield parents - to produce good citizens who act with integrity and service."

Candidate Lucy Biegler told the board that she was interviewing for the position because she wanted to "give back to the community." She has been a teacher and part of the education system in Secaucus for the last 25 years. She also noted that she currently serves as a literacy coach and member of the Intervention Referral Team in Hudson County. She added that she was an advocate for children with special needs.

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 trav-

eled all over the world working on many jobs with teams from Japan, China and India.

Candidate Peter Tsirigotis 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. Tsirigotis 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.

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to members of the Fanwood Rescue Squad and Fire Department.

"We have some of the best and brightest residents that serve us in rescue, fire, and police," Mayor Mahr said.

Vic-Chairman of the Fanwood Democratic Committee Jack Molenaar and Union County Freeholder incoming Chairman Al Mirabella, also a Fanwood resident, were on-hand to deliver speeches to the mayor and council.

Mr. Molenaar presented Mayor Mahr, Mr. Huegel, and Mr. Boris with gifts for victories this past November.

For his own part, Mr. Mirabella expressed his gratitude for the council's accomplishments. He said he felt the particular structure of the Fanwood Borough Council would not be conducive to effecting change for certain towns, but certainly worked for Fanwood despite the council's divide along party lines.

Mr. Mirabella also remarked on the makeshift nameplate that had been placed by Mr. Boris' seat on the dais.

"I hope they get you a nice, new nameplate," he joked. "I'm sure it's on order."

Westfield Mayor Decries 'Politics of Fear' In Speech

By MICHAEL J. POLLACK
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

WESTFIELD – In addition to the usual sentiments expressed in his State-of-the-Town address given on Tuesday, Mayor Andy Skibitsky used his speech to decry a "politics of fear" that he felt plagued the last election cycle.

The mayor recounted the many challenges faced by the town over the last year, from a blizzard, multiple multi-alarm fires, a hurricane and an earthquake. He said these events tested the town's mettle, and the public's patience, as everyone encountered inconveniences. Some residents' grievances were aired directly to the mayor's office, and Mayor Skibitsky told the public about one particular caller.

After logging a complaint about debris pickup, the caller asked, "why the town let Ferraro's burn to the ground?"

The caller said that a candidate told her, during the fall campaign, that the town "let Ferraro's burn to the ground because of 'cuts to the fire department.'"

The mayor said he was "extremely disturbed by the emergence...of the politics of fear and alarm." Without identifying the offending party by name, he said that anyone attempting to win by "creating a crisis," where none exists, "is doing a grave disservice to our community...there is absolutely no justification for any campaign to practice fear-mongering."

The mayor went on to detail the long-established system of mutual aid, whereby 21 local municipalities work together to share resources, especially during emergencies such as the Ferraro's fire.

"That is why, when you see a picture of the Cranford ladder truck in Westfield, as certain campaigns included in their literature, it is not cause for alarm," he said.

In the case of the Ferraro's fire, the mayor said, there were six Westfield firefighters on duty when the call was received after midnight. The battalion commander on duty assessed the situation and called for mutual aid. In total, there were 21 Westfield firefighters, as well as 22 other departments and almost 100 total firefighters, he continued.

"The extent of the damage was the result of the building construction, lack of sprinklers, ignition source and the intensity of the fire when first discovered, not because the ladder truck was not the first truck on the scene," the mayor said.

Following the meeting, the lone Democratic council member, David Haas, told *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* he was "disappointed" in the mayor for using his address to send a "political" message; since the remarks occurred in the speech, "the opposition had no opportunity to discuss the issue."

"We can have legitimate, different opinions about the budget," Mr. Haas said. "I hope everyone can respect the opinions of others, and we can come to our differing views without being political."

Mr. Haas acknowledged that the ads to which the mayor referred were "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 up-

beat; 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.

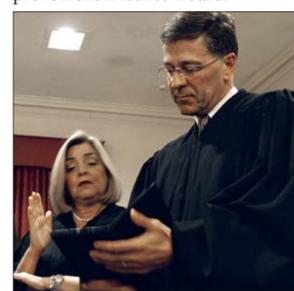
During the meeting, re-elected council members were sworn in to their new terms; Second Ward Councilwoman JoAnn Neylan and Fourth Ward Councilman Jim Foerst took turns swearing in each other. Appellate Judge Douglas Fasciale administered the oath to First Ward Councilman Frank Arena, and Third Ward Councilman Mark LoGrippo 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 qualified," 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."

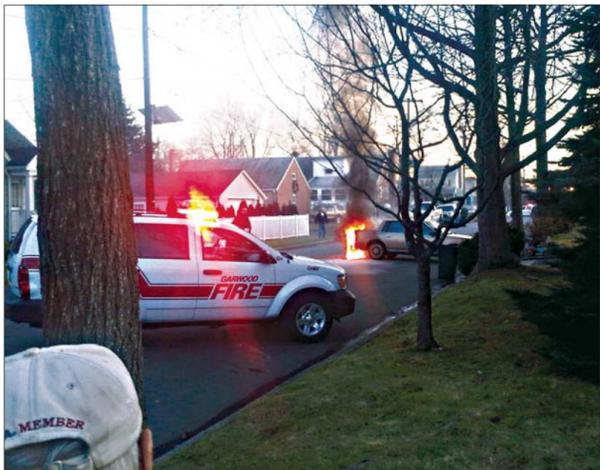
Going forward, Mr. Della Fera will chair the finance committee, with Ms. Neylan, Mr. Foerst and Mr. Arena chairing the Public Safety, Code Review and Public Works Committees, respectively. Ms. Neylan will again serve as acting mayor. Dominic Verdic, a property owner, and Robert Centrella, a resident,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



Paul Lachenauer for The Times
SWERING IN...Westfield Municipal Court Judge Brenda Coppola Cuba receives the oath from Appellate Judge Douglas Fasciale at the Westfield Town Council reorganization meeting Tuesday night.



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



Courtesy of Tom Sloan
QUICK THINKING...Garwood and Westfield Police and Fire Departments responded to Maple and Fourth Streets in Garwood on December 31 to extinguish a vehicle fire and prevent further property damage.

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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 Aduvato Nesi is sworn into office by state Senator Tom Kean, Jr. (R-21, Westfield), and Cranford Commissioner David Robinson takes the oath for mayor of Cranford for 2012 from his wife, attorney Amy Robinson.