

GW Freezes Longevity Benefits, Rejects Athletic Field Bids

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD – The borough council on Tuesday for the second time voted 4-2 to adopt freezing longevity benefits for non-bargaining unit employees. Councilman Victor DeFilippo and Councilwoman Sara Todisco dissented.

Last year, the council put forth the same vote, and subsequently Mayor Patricia Quattrocchi vetoed the council vote to approve freezing longevity benefits.

Tuesday night, ordinance 12-02 was passed. It is the same ordinance by definition the mayor vetoed in December 2011. The council voted on two ordinances, 12-02 and 12-03, introduced two weeks ago, to revise the longevity benefits to non-union employees.

Under ordinance 12-02 the borough would no longer provide longevity benefits to any present or future non-bargaining unit employee. Ordinance 12-03 was defeated 4-2. It would have prohibited new employees in the non-bargaining unit hired after January 1, 2012, to receive longevity benefits. Non-bargaining unit borough employees hired prior to January 1, 2012 would continue to receive benefits. Ordinance 12-03 was introduced January 10, 5-1 with Council President Keith Sluka dissenting.

"I'm disappointed with the way it went tonight," Mayor Quattrocchi told *The Westfield Leader*. When asked if she would veto the vote again, she replied, "I don't know."

Longevity benefits activate when a borough employee has been employed for five years.

During the public meeting, Mr. Mathieu reproached Mayor Quattrocchi for having "poor communication" by not putting forth this ordinance, 12-03, last year. "I wonder why this solution was not proposed by you, mayor, last year?" Mr. Mathieu asked. "I think that this points to a larger problem in our leadership."

In relation to personnel, Ms. Todisco proposed an employee evaluation policy for non-union borough employees.

The council also rejected the bids for the Athletic Field Complex Project and authorized Borough Clerk Christina Ariemma to re-advertise for the project. As a result, the Little League will be having its season at the field, Athletic Field Complex Project Committee Chair Louis Petruzzelli said.

During committee reports, Ms. Todisco said the finance committee would have a preliminary budget this week. March 9 is the deadline to introduce the budget with adoption on April 20.

School Board Liaison Sluka said Garwood residents would receive a discount to fees for services at the Westfield Area Y location to open in the Washington School. The Garwood Board of Education announced last week that they have agreed to a five-year lease agreement with the Y to use the school for preschool, day care, after-school programs, a fitness center and other programs.

Board Attorney Joseph Triarsi in the workshop meeting said he expects the

litigation with The Pointe to culminate in the spring. The judge assigned to the case, he said, feels she needs testimony in regards to the internal roadways or driveways of The Pointe.

Mary Wolf of North Avenue, who lives on a bend, said her vision of the roadway when exiting her driveway is blocked because of cars and SUVs parked on the street. She asked the borough to have someone come and look at the problem.

"We'll tackle that as well in Laws and License meeting," Mr. Sluka said.

Mark Enz of Cedar Street in Cranford asked the borough to seek more train stops in Garwood on weekends. Mayor Quattrocchi responded that she is currently working with NJ Transit on adding stops.

WF Council

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the plans before coming back to the full council. He said while he thinks there is support for the project, he wants the committee to "look through [the] details very carefully."

Resident Debby Burslem said she was "very disturbed" to hear about these clocks again. She raised concerns about the location at East Broad and Elm Streets due to traffic, as well as a noise concern for residents downtown. Mrs. Burslem also pointed out that the Garden Club already has planters at the intersection that have been there for 60 years. She suggested that the intersection of North and Central Avenues might be a better location.

The council gave the go ahead for the DWCC's annual list of events, including the Summer Jazz series, two "Girls Night Out" events, two restaurant weeks and the annual 5K and Pizza Run.

The Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce was approved for Spring Fling on Sunday, May 6 and FestiFall on Sunday, September 23, as well as the Farmers' Market at the South Avenue train station from July 7 through October 27.

Additionally, the Westfield Neighborhood Council was approved for three street fairs in the South Avenue train station parking lot on June 9, August 25 and October 13.

The council then went into closed session to discuss the town's lease with the Westfield Historical Society for the Reeve House and Mark Angelo v. Town of Westfield, a lawsuit stemming from a planning board subdivision denial.

At the start of Tuesday night's meeting, Fire Chief Dan Kelly gave a report on Sunday's fire on South Avenue, West (see story on this page). Mayor Skibitsky thanked the chief and all of the firefighters for their work.

CF Mayor Vows to Block Birchwood Development

By FRED T. ROSSI
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD – Mayor David Robinson said on Tuesday that he personally was "not hopeful" that Cranford would prevail in its bid to have a judge reconsider her December ruling that the controversial Birchwood Avenue housing development could go forward. But he said the township's recent legal maneuverings and efforts were part of the municipality's strategy for "building the best case we can for any appeal" if its bid for reconsideration is turned down. "We want to win," the mayor said at Tuesday's township committee meeting. "We want to prevail." He said the township government will "exhaust any remedy we have" to prevent the development from proceeding.

Last Friday, Superior Court Judge Lisa Chrystal heard arguments from the township and from Cranford Development Associates LLC, the Birchwood Avenue developer, in the latest round of the municipality's opposition to the plan to build 360 housing units in what local officials and many residents see as a severe flood zone. At Tuesday's committee meeting, Township Attorney Phil Morin said no decision was rendered at last week's hearing but that he expects a written opinion "within a short period of time." He expressed thanks to residents who provided input to him about effects of flooding on the Birchwood neighborhood, noting that many comments were incorporated into the township's legal brief filed last week.

Mayor Robinson – in response to a resident's query about the Cranford Board of Education (BOE) possibly weighing in on the potential impact of 360 housing units on the local school system – said he would be surprised if the BOE did so. Another resident said it was important to make the court aware of the increased costs to the township if the development goes forward.

In other business, the township committee passed a \$1.173-million bond ordinance that Deputy Mayor Andis Kalnins said would be used to fund the various tax appeals that were settled in 2011. He pointed out that the municipal government is responsible for financing all of the tax appeals even though more than three-fourths of local property taxes go not to the local government but to the board of educa-

tion and the county government. The township committee also introduced an ordinance increasing various swimming-pool utility fees, with a public hearing set for Tuesday, February 28. The committee additionally appointed Robert P. Donovan to provide alternate municipal prosecutor services.

Two resolutions were passed authorizing bids for the refurbishment of the lower level of the municipal building that was severely damaged by Hurricane Irene last August. That portion of the building "took quite a beating," said Commissioner Kevin Campbell. He said a trailer in the rear parking lot is supplying the building's heat. Mr. Campbell said the township's insurance is covering the costs involved with operating the parts of the municipal building that were damaged. But, he added, "we're a bit under the gun" to complete the repairs, because the insurance coverage will not be available next year.

At the beginning of the meeting, members of Boy Scout Troop No. 75 led the committee in the flag salute.

WF Fire

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on Sunday.

"By the time I got down there, it looked like an arcade," he said. "The roads were all closed and there were fire engines from all different towns and ambulances and EMTs were already on the scene."

He stated that he has owned the South Avenue property, which spans from Clyne & Murphy to the Sound Station, for "45 to 50 years." He stated that years ago he ran Roots Confections, a corner store that sold everything from sundaes to toys to cigarettes.

"I have a lot of childhood memories of Roots' store there on the corner," Chief Kelly said.

When asked if he plans to rebuild, Mr. Root stated, "I sure hope so." The future of the location is in the hands of his insurance company, he stated, adding that he also hopes Clyne & Murphy will return to the location.

WF Board of Adjustment

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Dr. Maus said the demand for his practice's services are not being met and also cited safety issues. He said he is doing away with the boarding service because, "I think it's time I focus on what I provide best...the best available medicine and surgery," he said

The second floor would be the hospital, where all surgery would take place. It would include one surgical room with two tables and one dental room with two tables, a post-operative room, an isolation room with five "suites" for animals with communicable diseases, a patient-under-care room with 12 "suites" for animals, a digital imaging room, a chemotherapy room, physical therapy areas and an intensive care unit.

Animals would have "suites" to stay in while under care at the facility, instead of steel cages, said Dr. Maus. He likened the suites to a hospital room. Cat suites would have a bedroom and a separate bathroom where the litter box would be contained.

"Our surgery room has one surgery table. Our dental room has one dental table. We can only do one procedure at a time," which keep animals waiting for surgery, Dr. Maus said of his current veterinary facility.

He would also offer new services of chemotherapy and rehabilitation services, such as acupuncture and physical therapy. Dr. Maus said there would be no radioactive materials on site, including isotopes.

The third floor would be used for administrative purposes, such as a conference room, an exercise room and a break room. The basement will be used for storage.

The building will be constructed of steel and brick with cast stone trim, Ms. Vincentsen said, and would be thickly insulated. It would reduce noise and a new HVAC system will have 10 zones and be ventilated in a way to control odor.

Attorney Steve Hehl said the new facility will have a state-of-the-art sprinkler system.

The new business sign is planned to be seven-and-a-half feet tall sitting on a two-and-a-half foot high wall, Mr. Quinn said. The "logo" currently on the outside of the building and the business sign that depicts a puppy and kitten chasing butterflies will be retained in some fashion on the facade of the new building as well as the sign, Dr. Maus told *The Westfield Leader*. "It has such a warm and fuzzy feeling," he said.

WF BOE

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15-percent of registered voters who participated in the last general presidential election sign a petition. She also noted that if a school election is moved to November, it must remain in November for a minimum of four years.

Mrs. Cary stated that members of the legislative committee weighed the pros and cons of moving the election. She noted that the cons were that there were no risks of program cuts due to budget defeats and that on average, an April turn out rate brings 18-percent of registered voters while November brings on average a 44 percent. She also stated that an April election costs the district approximately \$30,000. Mrs. Cary noted that if moved to November, the cost would be shared by the board of education.



INFERNO...Flames and heavy, black smoke fill the air on Sunday when a six-alarm fire ripped through a row of businesses on South Avenue, West, in Westfield. Photo courtesy of Dan Kelly, Sr.

Resigned Mtsd. BOE Pres., School Super Form Business

By DOMINIC A. LAGANO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

MOUNTAINSIDE — Scott Schmedel, a former Mountainside Board of Education (BOE) member, and current resident informed the BOE Tuesday night that former BOE chief school administrator (CSA) Jeanette Baubles, ex-BOE president Marybeth Schauberg and former supervisor of curriculum and instruction, Thomas Conroy, "have formed a business, with a rather elaborate website."

"They are marketing their experiences, much of those experiences gained while they were here...I would like to know, and I think the community would like to know and needs to know, when they began forming this business and when members of the board became aware of this...and when these three people each notified the board of what they were doing and what their intentions were," Mr. Schmedel said.

The business, named Shaping Educational Excellence LLC (SEE), was formed on May 10, 2011. According to its website, SEE's mission is geared towards "improving teaching and learning in both the public and private sectors...SEE team members facilitate high quality professional development sessions for aspiring and practicing paraprofessionals, teachers, administrators, and board of education members."

Ms. Schauberg, Ms. Baubles and Mr. Conroy are pictured on SEE's website and are labeled as SEE team members. The three were listed as members/managers in paperwork filed with the state treasurer on May 10, 2011.

Current Board President James Ruban responded to Mr. Schmedel's questions. "This board was unaware of any of that until after the fact, far after the fact, after they all left," he said. Mr. Ruban also stated there was "no disclosure" from the trio, but he was aware of rumors regarding the new business.

The board was made aware of the formation of the new business via e-mail from an undisclosed source.

Mr. Ruban stated that the matter was brought to the attention of the board's attorney. The board also approved several new regulations this past Tuesday evening seemingly aimed at ensuring this type of event does not occur again without the board's knowledge.

Board member Jeane Parker initially brought this information to the rest of the board. "I just got the information and gave it to these guys [BOE members]. What struck me as odd was that I just

thought that you would have to disclose that. So I wondered if it had been disclosed and that it seems like there's kind of a...maybe not black and white, but maybe some gray area, which is why we revised the policies."

Ms. Schauberg, who had served on the BOE for 11 years, resigned from her BOE seat on September 6, 2011. Ms. Schauberg was ousted as president of the board during its reorganization meeting last May, ironically, the same date SEE was formed. Mr. Ruban replaced her as board president.

After her resignation, Ms. Schauberg sent a letter to *The Westfield Leader* stating she was "truly saddened and frightened by what the future holds for the Mountainside children."

In response, the remaining members of the board wrote their own letters to *The Leader* refuting Ms. Schauberg's dire predictions. "To incite a sense of fear within our community is unproductive and completely unprofessional," wrote BOE member Cathy Jakositz.

Ms. Baubles also resigned from her position as CSA in July, while Mr. Conroy submitted his resignation at the end of the school year in June. Due to time considerations, the three could not be questioned regarding their new endeavor, school officials said.

In other news, new CSA Nancy Lubarsky reported on the success of the Mountainside Girl Scout troop's efforts in their recent gift drive. As covered in a previous edition of *The Leader*, the Scouts held a gift drive in December to provide toys and other items to underprivileged children during the holiday season.

Mountainside Girl Scouts Emma Nordstrom, Caitlyn Splaine and Kristen Splaine were on hand to receive recognition from Ms. Lubarsky. The Scouts collected over 1,100 toys and such items as clothing and toiletries and donated them to the day care center and after-school program at the YMCA of Eastern Union County in Elizabeth.

The next BOE meeting open to the public is scheduled for Tuesday, February 7, at 7:30 p.m., in the Deerfield School gymnasium. This meeting will be the annual BOE community roundtable. School Business Administrator Daniel Saragnese will deliver a presentation on next year's budget.

The next regular BOE meeting open to the public is scheduled for Tuesday, February 21, at 7:30 p.m. in Deerfield's Media Center.

Union County Freeholders

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will serve as jail population manager until Mr. Riordan designates someone for the position.

Luminosity was given a \$55,704 contract last year to complete the jail population analysis study. Among the recommendations from the Luminosity report are for the county to work with the courts, probation and public defender's offices, prosecutor's office and sheriff's office to clear up tie-ups in the processing of prisoners.

Mr. Riordan said the software package would be used to "put us in a position to evaluate on a daily basis not only the number of inmates we have in the county jail, but also to break that total population down into subsets that we can utilize and better organize and better track case management of the prisoners through the judicial system."

He said that between 2005 and 2010, Union County had 2,000 fewer admissions to the jail than in 2005, yet the average daily population at the lockup was unchanged. He said 8,800 prisoners were processed in 2005 within 46 days on average. He said processing now averages 58 days.

"The system is not moving at the speed it was moving in 2005, and I don't know why," Mr. Riordan told the freeholders.

On another matter, Union County Board of Elections Administrator Dennis Kobitz said his office was still waiting to see how many towns will move their school elections from April to the General Election in November. In addition, residents can submit a nominating petition requiring the signatures of at least 15 percent of total registered voters in the last General Election when Assembly seats were on the ballot, which was 2011.

Mr. Kobitz said the county would likely save on overtime costs needed to reset election machines for the Primary Election in June. He also said towns are likely to save "thousands of dollars."

The freeholders are expected to vote on a resolution tonight to approve an agreement with Conrail for the installation of a traffic signal at Rahway Avenue and Lamberts Mill Road.

Joseph Graziano, director of engineering, public works and facilities, requested the resolution for an agreement with Conrail for the preliminary engineering and inspection of a proposed traffic signal at the intersection of Rahway Avenue and Lamberts Mill Road. The Town of Westfield requested the signal, Mr. Graziano said. The light would be located 325 feet north of Conrail's Lehigh Line in Westfield. The county hired an outside engineer to design the intersection last year. He said Conrail has to make changes to permit the traffic signal to "interface with their railroad crossing" equipment.

Mr. Graziano said the timing will be done so that the new light and the existing light at Westfield Avenue and Terminal Avenue will interface with each other and the railroad crossing on Rahway Avenue. The estimated cost for the engineering work is \$69,883.

In other business, it was announced that Freeholder Clerk Nicole DiRado is moving to the Union County Clerk's Office, replacing Deputy County Clerk Alan Falcone, who is retiring as of next month.

The board is expected to vote on a resolution tonight appointing James Pelletiere as the new freeholder clerk at a salary of \$80,000. His term will run from February 1, 2012 through January 31, 2015. He most recently was working in the public information office.

In addition to Mr. Falcone, the director of administrative services, Elizabeth Genievich, is retiring as of February 1. She is a former freeholder clerk of the board. Mr. Falcone had been head of the recording division of the clerk's office under County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi.

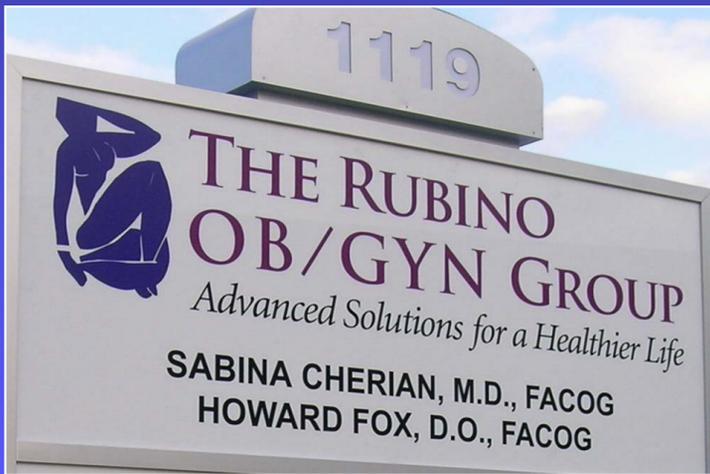
There's A New Woman in Town.



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