



LIGHTING UP THE SKY...Fireworks lit up the sky over Nomahegan Park in Cranford on July 4th. The day included canoe races, the annual Firecracker 5K Run and other family-fun activities.

Brooks Crandall for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times



COMMUNITY EVENT...The Westfield Community Band, under the direction of Thomas Connors, held its annual Independence Day Celebration at the gazebo in Mindowaskin Park on July 5.

Brooks Crandall for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

GW Hears Proponents, Opponents on Field Complex

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

GARWOOD – The borough council heard from its auditor Tuesday during its workshop session about the amended bond ordinance summing \$3,257,000 for the athletic field complex that will be introduced at the next council meeting, to be held Tuesday, July 24. The complex would provide a baseball field, a turf field for field hockey and soccer, a basketball and bocce court, and a playground.

Last year's bid amount was rejected for legal reasons and the borough was forced to re-bid. The new bids, which were received last month, had a low bid of \$2,825,000, \$175,000 over last year's low bidder. Councilman Lou Petruzzelli said the hike in the bid is due to an increase in materials costs.

Steve Rogut, bond attorney, Warren Korecky, auditor, and Sandy Bruns, chief financial officer, discussed the details of the amended bond. The amended bond ordinance has increased \$1,147,000 from the original bond ordinance in 2007 of \$2,110,000.

The amended bond ordinance of \$3.2 million includes \$1.1 million in Green Acres grants. In addition, the borough was approved for a Green Acres, 15-year loan of \$600,000 at a rate of 2 percent. It is still unclear how much taxes would be raised to pay for the bond. Mr. Korecky estimated about \$50 to \$60 per \$100,000 assessed household, and said to the council he could have an exact figure by the next council meeting.

Council President Keith Sluka, Councilwoman Sara Todisco and Mayor Patricia Quattrocchi each voiced that they were in favor of the complex. Councilman Jim Mathieu said he was not in favor.

"I think the project...adds value to the community," Mr. Sluka said. "I am dead set against it because we can't afford it," Mr. Mathieu said. "I would love to see us change the project to something we can afford."

Ms. Todisco said that the complex would attract attention to potential homebuyers in the area.

Mr. Mathieu asked Mayor Quattrocchi for her view on the matter. "I would be inclined, if I were in your seat, to vote yes. I would say I am 98.9 percent sure. ... I think it would add value to the community," Mayor Quattrocchi said.

Residents also had opinions for

and against the complex.

Douglas Heintz, who coaches T-ball and has three children, said, "Please raise my taxes \$50 to \$75 based on the assessed value. I think it is an asset to the town. I think everyone will enjoy it – the seniors, the kids, the rec department, not just the ball players."

Angelo Alimonte suggested eliminating the field house to save some money, and proceed with the project. "We may never get grant money again," he said.

Richard Kane said the project would increase house values.

Tom Petis, a former choir teacher, said, "If this project wasn't approved a dozen years ago when the economy was good, I think it is ludicrous to do it now when the economy is bad."

Mr. Petis suggested sharing services for the baseball field with Westfield.

Garwood Baseball League President Scott Kessler said, "Regarding sharing services with other towns – we tried to do so. We were shut out many times."

"I am against the project," said Gudrun Minton, who lives at The Pointe on North Avenue. She said the residents of The Pointe pay the highest taxes in the borough and the taxes raised for the complex would be substantial to residents of The Pointe.

Bill Nierstedt, a candidate for borough council, said, "I support the development of the athletic field complex. It's time to provide adequate open space for our residents. I believe this complex will improve property values."

Mr. Nierstedt asked, "How much longer will Garwood survive?" considering high-school students attend Arthur L. Johnson High School in Clark and youth sports players play for other communities. Mr. Nierstedt said he felt this was a path for Garwood to become absorbed by another community.

"It is a luxury. It is not a necessity. I have lived here 30 years. The taxes have gone up and the property values have gone down," Dolores Dombrowski said. "Where are people going to get the money from that are suffering – the guy on unemployment, where is he going to get money for food? It's a wonderful project, but this little town can't afford it."

She asked what the anticipated cost was for electric, heat and water and maintenance and repair for the complex as well as the police cost.

The council also adopted a resolution for a two-year contract, with a 2-percent increase in 2013 or a 1-percent increase in salaries, whichever is lowest, for Garwood to continue its contract with the Westfield Regional Health Department.



HOLA!...Pictured, left to right, Linda Ingram, Steve West, Kevin Ingram and Ryan Ingram enjoy a family vacation and The Westfield Leader in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic at the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino Resort.

Photo courtesy of Linda Ingram

WF Council Discusses Opting for Smoke-Free Parks

By LAUREN S. BARR
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

WESTFIELD – Several residents, along with representatives from Global Advisors Smokefree Policy (GASP), asked the Westfield Town Council at its Tuesday night meeting to make all of the town's parks smoke free.

Allen Kantz, a member of GASP and a former Westfield resident, said that his group has already appeared before the board of health and the recreation commission seeking to make all of the town's parks smoke free. However, both boards indicated that it is up to the town council.

Karen Blumenfeld, GASP's executive director, said this would be a step in preventing kids from smoking and also eliminates children's exposure to secondhand smoke.

Resident Ed Orlando said, "I definitely feel we should have an ordinance preventing smoking in all parks."

Mayor Andy Skibitsky said,

"seems like a good idea" but that he would wait for the recommendations to come from the board of health and the recreation commission, and that the issue would be heard at the committee level before seeking full council approval.

Town Administrator Jim Gillea said that the Memorial Pool Complex has been smoke free since the mid-1990s and that should the council choose to enact such legislation, it would be a simple ordinance change.

Also during public comment, resident Greg Kasko questioned the council as to what its alternate plans are for staffing the Westfield Fire Department should the town's grant application for additional manpower fall through. Mr. Kasko said that he asked at a previous meeting and was told that the town would get back to him.

Councilman Sam DellaFera, who also serves as Finance Committee chairman, stated that one alternative is to look at the 2013 budget and see where money could be found and another alternative would be to negotiate the contract with the firefighters' union.

When Mr. Kasko asked if the grant application means that the council believes that the fire department is understaffed, Mayor Skibitsky replied, "no."

In other business, the council approved a resolution allowing the mayor to sign a new contract with the Teamsters union for 2012 through 2014.

The council also approved a resolution regarding the refunding of bonds for both the town and Memorial Pool. The bonds are being refinanced at a rate of 1.14 percent, which is down from the original rate of 4.17 percent.

Resolutions additionally were approved for the demolition of homes at 40 Mohawk Trail, 820 Dartmoor Street, 10 Wychview Drive, 21 Moss Avenue and 1021 Minisink Way.

The town council also approved the expenditure of \$4,875 as 10 percent of the cost of Hands-Free Personal Safety Escape Systems for the fire department. The total cost of the system is \$48,750, and according to Fire Chief Dan Kelly, this will give each firefighter the "capability of self deployment out of a window" in an emergency.

Two ordinances were also passed on first reading. One ordinance appropriates \$160,000 for various items for the police and fire departments. These items include generators for traffic lights that become disabled during storms, a mobile light tower, a pickup truck and a portable message sign.

Mr. Gillea said that the generators for traffic signals will save the town money during storm outages as the intersections would not have to be manned by police personnel.

The second ordinance sets in place new parking restrictions in the area of Westfield High School for Edgar Road, Dorian Road, Rahway Avenue, Dorian Place, Dorian Court, Shadowlawn Drive and Nottingham Place.

Public hearings will be held on both ordinances at the public meeting on Tuesday, August 7, at 8 p.m.

The council also held closed sessions to discuss an Unfair Labor Practice Charge being brought by a police officer; firefighter contract negotiations; lease negotiations involving the Reeve House; and Sunnyside Senior Housing versus Town of Westfield, a builders remedy lawsuit.

Residents Decry Turf Field Proposal at Special Meeting

By FRED T. ROSSI
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Members of the board of education (BOE) faced a skeptical, and vocal, room of several dozen neighborhood residents on Tuesday as the board and several consultants attempted to explain its proposal to build a lighted turf athletic field behind Westfield High School (WHS).

The three-hour meeting often devolved into simultaneously shouted questions and catcalls from residents, as BOE President Richard Mattesich, board member and chairwoman of its facilities committee, Jane Clancy, and WHS Athletics Supervisor Sandy Mamary attempted to speak about the \$3.3-million project itself, but also why the board had grouped the field project with a \$13-million roof-repair proposal into one bond. The public will vote on the referendum on Monday, September 24.

The plan, which architect George Duthie stressed was still "conceptual," calls for the field to be laid out essentially as it presently is, with two softball fields and a large multi-purpose field for soccer, lacrosse and field hockey overlaying the entire 210-foot by 360-foot parcel. Seven lights on 80-foot poles would be placed around three sides of the field, with three on the east side that abuts homes on Trinity Place, two along Rahway Avenue and two along the high school parking lot.

In order to facilitate drainage, the new field would be built about three feet above the present field, Mr. Duthie explained, and be fenced in, with access from the parking lot and from Rahway Avenue.

Amidst the often-chaotic nature of residents' interruptions and shouted questions and comments throughout the PowerPoint presentations by Mr. Duthie as well as Robert Zoeller, a lighting consultant, and Perry Di Piazza, whose company would supply the artificial turf itself, the primary concerns seemed to be the impact of the new facility on traffic in the neighborhood, noise from the fields, especially at night, whether lights were necessary and the general impact on the quality of life for those residing in the neighborhood.

Mr. Mattesich was often the target of residents' ire, as he was accused of failing to provide an adequate amount of specific information about the project, as well as not explaining to their satisfaction why the field and roof projects were lumped together into a single bond. Many residents said they were in favor of the roof repair bond, citing it as a needed expense, but would vote no in the September referendum because of the inclusion of the field project. He promised that the board would soon include on its website a section answering frequently asked questions and that a video presentation about the project would be produced

for TV-36.

Mr. Zoeller of Musco Lighting said the lighting system would be state-of-the-art, with hoods on the tops of the poles to better aim the lights down at the fields below and to minimize light flowing outward into neighboring properties. He added that the way the light poles are situated would mean that all seven poles would never be lit at the same time. The board has yet to decide on a time when the lights would be turned off at night, but Mr. Mattesich said it is likely the 9:30 p.m. time currently in effect at Houlihan Field would be adopted for the high school field. Mr. Mattesich also noted that resident complaints about the Houlihan lights have been non-existent since that project was completed several years ago.

Mr. Di Piazza, with the firm of FieldTurf, told residents that an artificial field "increases usability" and eliminates most maintenance costs, among them watering and cutting grass, buying and applying chemicals. And he cited studies showing that turf fields are safer for student athletes than natural-grass surfaces.

The board members in attendance – besides Mr. Mattesich and Ms. Clancy, BOE Vice-President David Finn and board member Rosanne Kurstedt also were present – seemed open to the possibility of holding another community meeting to further discuss the bond referendum and the field proposal. But despite calls from residents to separate the two projects, Mr. Mattesich said the referendum would be voted upon as a single package.

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the seating, but not enough spaces allotted for the employees according to the agreement.

Mr. LaCosta said a variance would be needed, but since he is adjacent to a municipal lot, Xian Lin needs to prove that the parking is "adequate." Mr. Lin said that there are at least two available spaces in municipal parking lot number 2 that would satisfy the requirement in the ordinance.

Board member Jeffrey Strauss questioned issues regarding water and sewers. Board Attorney Philip Morin said it is "valid to raise detriments," but since no neighbors came in for discussion, the applicant wants to avoid another hearing.

The board was only faced with the parking issue and is not responsible for any issues like sewage that may come up since no one came to speak or complain.

With no objections from the public, the board approved the restaur-

DePaola

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ational logistics, and then take the necessary steps to get from Point A to Point B." She added that, overall, she was interested in problem-solving and consensus-building – with her fellow council members, with residents and with neighboring towns.

The mayor said it is "important to define goals early on" because "four years pass in the blink of an eye and then all of a sudden, you don't get things done. Government is slow to move." She expressed her hope that the coming political season will not stand in the way of hiring a new manager or moving forward with the police department merger.

Mrs. DePaola will run for mayor on the Republican ticket alongside former Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education member Edward Saridaki, who is being appointed to the council to fill the seat formerly held by Mrs. DePaola. They will face Councilman Glover and his running mate, Colleen Gialanella, on the Democratic side.

Township Democratic Chairman Lou Beckerman told *The Times* his candidates will be talking about, "Mayor DePaola's failed leadership when it comes to things such as the out-of-control property taxes, the sewer tax and the debacle that was the proposed town hall switch at Shackamaxon [Country Club]." He said that Scotch Plains voters "have been crying out for change. They have had enough of the Republican control of town hall and want to give our candidates a chance to prove themselves."

Mrs. DePaola said that while Mr. Glover had been focused on preserving and raising funds for the annual summer concert series, which she called "a great event" that she is "all in favor of," she had been busy "sitting in a room and making phone calls trying to make change."



HOWDY PARTNER...The Westfield Leader takes a break to enjoy the scenery looking out on the Arizona – Nevada border about 16 miles south of Hoover Dam on a recent cross country trip.

Photo courtesy of Greg Ryan

4th of July Cranford Canoe Races



HEAR YE, HEAR YE...The Westfield Town Crier, right, and members of the Sons of the American Revolution take a seat at the annual Independence Day Celebration held at the gazebo in Mindowaskin Park in Westfield on July 5.

Brooks Crandall for The Westfield Leader



WAITING FOR FIREWORKS...Families gathered on July 4th at Nomahegan Park in Cranford for the annual fireworks display.

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