

\$3.2 M. Athletic Field Complex; PBA Negotiations Complete

Mathieu, who voted against the cost of the AFC.

"It's unfair to go ahead with this project when so few people don't know the numbers," said Mr. Mathieu.

"Only in government can we come up here and say let's do our dream project and come up with the money later," said Mr. Mathieu. He suggested letting the voters decide and, should it be denied, creating a field using solely the surplus funds.

Councilman Timothy Hak said, "The last time I saw this many people in this room was seven years ago...the line was out the door. Everyone wanted to push forward with this project. Now here we are so many years later, my son has already gone through baseball, so he will never see the total advantage of the field. How many kids are going to be pushed aside?"

There is likely to be another bond ordinance introduced before the end of 2012, Councilwoman Sara Todisco, chairwoman of the finance committee, told *The Leader*. During her committee report, she said various borough departments have said they would like a bond, and she told *The Leader* they are to submit to the committee a wish list for equipment and upgrades to their departments.

According to capital project requests from last year, the DPW would like to replace its 27-year-old dump truck, about \$150,000; replace an existing 1991 bucket truck, \$130,000; replace an existing 1991 wood chipper, \$55,000; replace a 1983 Borough Hall phone system, \$35,000, and would like \$30,000 for a sidewalk-repair program. The fire department has said it would like to replace its 25-year-

old Jaws of Life device, which costs about \$15,000 to \$25,000, Mr. Mathieu told *The Leader*.

In other news, a Police Benevolent Association (PBA) negotiation agreement was passed, 5-1, by the council.

The new agreement includes longevity benefits for new hires as of January 1, 2012; they will receive \$2,145 after serving five years on the police force, \$3,414 after serving 10 years, \$4,267 after serving 15 years and \$5,121 after serving 20 years.

"Normally, longevity is based on a percentage and compounded over years of service and saved the borough a bit of money," said Councilman Victor DeFilippo, head of the PBA negotiations committee.

Salary raises will be retroactive to January 1, 2012, at 2 percent, and go up 1.75 percent in 2013 and 1.75 percent in 2014.

Officers with less than 20 years of service as of June 28, 2011 will not receive Medicare Part B.

"This does save the borough...in the long term. As it stands now the officers, when they retire, Medicare is paid for the husband and spouse up until death. That will stop. All incoming officers will not share that," said Mr. DeFilippo.

Mr. Mathieu was opposed to the new PBA contract because of yearly raises when layoffs, unemployment and Social Security freezes are seen throughout the borough, and the police force is down one officer, and he is against including longevity benefits when new borough employees are no longer entitled to longevity.

He also said payouts for retiring officers this year were about \$200,000. "We have to stop paying people not to work," Councilman Mathieu said.

Birchwood Developer Files Challenge To Dept. of Environmental Pro. Requirement

By DELL SIMEONE

Specialty Written For *The Westfield Leader and Th Times*

CRANFORD — The Cranford Township Committee held a special meeting on Monday night, at which it was supposed to award a contract for restoration of the lower level of the municipal building on Springfield Avenue, which was damaged by excessive flooding last year during Hurricane Irene.

The committee was also supposed to award a contract for clerk of the works for the reconstruction. However, that did not happen. The committee went into executive session immediately after the meeting convened. The session lasted two hours and 15 minutes.

When the meeting opened up again, Mayor David Robinson announced that matters pertaining to the repair of the lower portion of the municipal building would be addressed at a another special meeting to be held Monday, August 1, at 7:30 p.m., at the municipal building.

Township Attorney Philip Morin announced that at 5 p.m. on Monday, the township was notified of a motion before the court by the Cranford Development Associates, (CDA) of the S. Hekemian Group of Paramus, the company that wishes to develop the Birchwood project, a 360-apartment unit complex with 60 affordable to be built at 215 Birchwood Avenue along with a five-story parking garage, challenging a requirement by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) that they are deficient in not having a second road with access to the Birchwood prop-

erty. The DEP also requires that CDA elevate the road a foot above the flood plain.

CDA has filed a motion with state Superior Judge Lisa F. Crystal to be heard on Friday, August 3, before the site plan review, which is to take place on Wednesday and Thursday, August 8 and 9, at 10 a.m., before retired Superior Court Judge Douglas Wolfson at the Union County Courthouse, 2 Broad Street, Elizabeth. Both the CDA and the Cranford Township Committee have requested the hearing to be held in Cranford.

"They're looking for a motion on short notice in advance of when the court would hear a motion," Mr. Morin said. "A motion should not be heard prior to the next hearing date. We believe this a DEP matter and should not be before the court."

"The CDA is trying to make an end run around the DEP authority. We're going to object, and ask that this motion be rescheduled to allow us time to respond," Mr. Morin said.

The CDA sued the township using a builder's remedy lawsuit, by which it claims that Cranford has not met its quota for affordable housing units, and is trying to prevent the CDA from building apartments which would include affordable units. Judge Crystal ruled in favor of the developer.

The township, on the other hand, is objecting to the development because of the fear of more flooding caused by more people and inadequate infrastructure to accommodate a 360-unit apartment building on environmentally sensitive land. The township is appealing Judge Crystal's decision.



Photo courtesy of Jim Lowney/County of Union
GRADUATION... Union County Sheriff Ralph Froehlich presents a graduation certificate to Officer Timothy O'Grady and K-9 Reese during graduation for Class 12-01 from the Sheriff's K-9 Training Academy. Five new police K-9 teams graduated during ceremony at Union County College in Cranford.