

County Sends Out Layoff Notices To 280 In Bid to Close Budget Gap

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

COUNTY — Union County sent layoff notices out to 236 employees last week, on top of 44 notices delivered in February, as the county looks to trim its payroll by June 1 to close what Freeholder Fiscal Affairs Committee Chairman Dan Sullivan described as a “very significant budget deficit.” In addition to the layoffs, another 72 vacant positions are being eliminated.

“During the past few years, we have exhausted our options in preventing layoffs, but unfortunately this year, given the significant budget deficit,

there is no alternative,” Mr. Sullivan said in a prepared statement read at Thursday’s freeholder meeting.

The layoffs follow program cuts highlighted by the cancellation of MusicFest, Rhythm & Blues by The Brook and Kids Kingdom. Mr. Sullivan also said the county would end funding to the Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Union County and eliminate the Union County Division of Consumer Affairs, as well as freeze spending at 2011 levels for the Freeholders Scholars, Senior Scholars and College for Teens programs. The freeholders, however, have opted to keep the Summer

Arts Festival concerts, approving a \$59,600 contract to promoter This Is It! Productions of Hoboken.

Mr. Sullivan said all department directors were told to cut their budgets by 5 percent from 2011 adopted budget levels. In addition, Mr. Sullivan said the freeholders, county manager and department directors “all agreed to take a three-day salary reduction equivalent to what three unions already accepted.” The county police, county police superior officers and Local 68 Engineers bargaining units accepted the reductions.

He said all these measures combined have reduced the county’s 2012 budget deficit by \$10 million. County Manager Al Faella is expected to release his executive budget on Thursday, April 5.

Michael Bukosky, a Hackensack-based attorney representing Council 8, the largest county union, said he came before the freeholders in February to be able to work with the county to avoid layoffs.

“Yesterday (March 21), I got the phone call from my union that said ‘we got a notice that 135 people are being laid off.’ I said ‘what the heck happened? What’s going on here?’” Mr. Bukosky said. He said the union was only given one meeting with county representatives the day the layoff notices went out.

“Don’t just give us the notice that dinner has been served and we’re on the plate. That’s not fair, that’s not right,” Mr. Bukosky said.

Council 8 President Ed Lozinski said 159 of his 800 members are being laid off. He said Council 8 members are the lowest paid of the county’s seven unions. He has heard the county intends to privatize some operations at Rumlins Specialized Hospital.

“What is the savings on the privatization? I still haven’t seen a piece of paperwork on any savings on a privatization plan,” Mr. Lozinski said.

Mr. Lozinski said his members could not afford the concessions sought by the county. “I think you should cut more of the fat and leave the working guy alone,” he stated.

Renne Wilder, president of the Communication Workers of America (CWA) **CONTINUED ON PAGE 10**

GOP Picks Kyrillos, Lance; Names Freeholder Candidates

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD — Union County Republicans on Saturday gave the party line in the Tuesday, June 5, Primary Election to two-term Congressman Leonard Lance from the Seventh District by a 139-16 vote over businessman David Larsen.

Delegates also gave the Republican Party organizational line to former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney for president; to Monmouth County state Senator Joseph Kyrillos for United States Senate; and to Middlesex County businessman Eric Beck in the race for Congress from the 12th Congressional District. Also, Diane Barabas of Westfield, Chris Nowak of Cranford and Stephen Kozlovich of Union were selected to run for three seats on the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders.

The 90-minute convention drew 216 delegates to Orange Avenue School in Cranford. Among the highlights of the morning were statements by Rep. Lance and Mr. Larsen, who Mr. Lance defeated in a four-candidate field Primary in 2010.

“It would be foolish of me to expect that you would give me the line because we all know how party politics work,” Mr. Larsen said. “America is heading in the wrong direction. Well, you have a clear choice to change the direction of America on June 5 (Primary Election).”

He said he has run a successful business for 35 years where he has



Paul Peyton for The Westfield Leader
SAVE OUR JOBS.... One of the 280 Union County employees who have received layoff notices pleads with the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders last Thursday to reconsider their decision.

WF BOE Passes \$95.4 M Budget; Votes to Go Out for Bond Ref.

By KIMBERLY A. BROADWELL
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — The Westfield Board of Education unanimously passed the 2012-2013 budget in addition to a resolution to seek a bond referendum to replace approximately 80 percent of the district’s roofs at Tuesday evening’s BOE meeting. According to the Board’s Interim Business Administrator, Vincent Yaniro, the district’s budget of \$95,360,622 includes a tax levy of \$87,194,608. This, Mr. Yaniro reports, represents a 1.9 percent increase over last year’s budget of which, he stated, “is within the 2 percent state cap.”

Superintendent of Schools Margaret Dolan stated, “The budget is constructed to meet the needs of

the students and to support the district’s strategic plan by maintaining all academic, support and extra-curricular programs.” She added that the budget also supports “increasing high school enrollment, professional development, counseling services, maintenance of facilities, a pilot program to introduce Mandarin Chinese and technology.”

Board member and Technology Ad-Hoc Committee Chairman Mitchell Slater noted that the technology equipment line of the budget has increased by \$840,292. In past meetings it was noted that most **CONTINUED ON PAGE 10**

GW Resident Questions Petruzzelli’s \$22,000 Benefits

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD — Borough resident Angelo Alimonte asked the borough council Tuesday night why Councilman Louis Petruzzelli is receiving \$22,000 in healthcare benefits. Mr. Alimonte stated his opposition to paying benefits to council members and the mayor.

The borough needs to “prevent this from happening again” by creating an ordinance, Mr. Alimonte said. “Our community is too small to pay medical bills for the council and mayor,” he said.

Mayor Patricia Quattrocchi told The Westfield Leader that Councilman

ers Guide to Spending, Westfield spends approximately \$1,800 less per pupil than the state average for K-12 districts. This, she stated, was “a stunning example of Westfield’s prudent spending.”

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Petruzzelli is the sole council member to receive benefits. He is the longest serving councilperson and is in his second term. Though amendments to state law prohibit the practice, he has been grandfathered to receive medical benefits from the borough. His \$22,000-per-year benefits include medical, eyeglasses and dental insurance. Should he run for mayor, or otherwise have his council tenure interrupted, he would lose those benefits, the mayor said.

After hearing rumors that they could lose their unemployment benefits, the borough’s crossing guards also appeared before the council at **CONTINUED ON PAGE 10**



Christina Hinke for The Westfield Leader
DON'T TOUCH OUR BENEFITS... Garwood crossing guards attend Tuesday's Garwood Borough Council meeting to address rumors they might lose unemployment benefits during summer months when they are not working.



David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader

A JOB WELL DONE... Senator Tom Kean, Jr., center, presented retiring Cross-County/Track Coach Jack Martin, right, and Assistant Coach Chris Tafelski with a resolution from the state Senate acknowledging the Cross-Country Team’s third consecutive Group IV State Championship, third consecutive State Sectional Title, third consecutive County and Conference Title, second place in the Meet of Champions, and their being in the National Cross-Country Championships in Eugene, Ore. The Senator also presented the team and Mr. Martin with copies of the citation.

WF Sets Town Cleanup, Hears Concerns of Break-Ins

By LAUREN S. BARR
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — Mayor Andrew Skitbitsky announced at Tuesday night’s Town Council meeting that the council and the town’s Green Team will be holding a “town clean up” on Saturday, April 21, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in selected areas, including Brightwood Park, the Tamaques Park picnic area, Clark Park, Benson Place and several others. The town is looking for volunteers to assist in the cleanup efforts, and more information on the event will be available on the town’s website.

Several members of the public spoke at the meeting on a number of issues including the longstanding Central Avenue pedestrian crossing signal debate and on recent thefts and home break-ins.

John Allen said he feels the town has issues that it needs to deal with besides the pedestrian crossing signal. “Homes are being broken into and cars are being broken into,” Mr. Allen stated and asked the council to increase the

visibility of the police force to ensure the safety of the town. Mayor Andy Skitbitsky encouraged all residents to report any suspicious behavior to the police department and said he would be happy to attend a neighborhood watch meeting.

Maria Carluccio spoke to the mayor and council regarding the seventh accident in the vicinity of the controversial light, where a car “barreled right through my neighbor’s backyard fence.” She said despite the fact that the council had listed Central and Clover Street as a traffic “hot spot” they had made it a “hotter spot,” adding, “its not the light per-se, but its the entire configuration.”

“I don’t know how you sleep at night,” Mrs. Carluccio told the governing body.

Adina Enculescu said, “It is not a matter of if a tragic accident will happen...but when.” She also said she wants to see Councilman Mark LoGrippo leave his children to cross by **CONTINUED ON PAGE 10**



Paul Peyton for The Westfield Leader

GOP ENDORSEMENTS... State Senator Tom Kean, Jr. (R-21, Westfield) speaks on behalf of Mitt Romney for president at the Union County Republicans Convention on Saturday at Orange Avenue School in Cranford. Pictured, from left to right, are: Westfield Councilman James Forst, Scotch Plains Republican Chairman Bill McClintock, Garwood Mayor Patricia Quattrocchi, Rep. Leonard Lance (R-7th), 12th Congressional District candidate Eric Beck, Kenilworth Mayor Kathi Fiamingo and Assemblyman Jon Bramnick (R-21, Westfield).



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George Kraus
Branch Vice President

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