

Garwood 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 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 Tuesday night's meeting. The guards had heard from Councilman Jim Mathieu that a council committee had been discussing ways to reduce the municipal budget by looking at unemployment benefits given to the guards. Some of the crossing guards said they felt that Mr. Mathieu asking them questions

about their jobs was invasive.

Linda Canear, a crossing guard for 20 years, said Mr. Mathieu came to her corner and asked her about her unemployment benefits. "In 20 years, nobody has come to my corner," she said.

"Nobody should be coming to you. A councilperson should take it up with the police chief or police commissioner," the mayor responded.

"What I wanted to do was get your [Mrs. Canear] opinion. I was a little surprised to find out later on that you felt intimidated by me," Mr. Mathieu said. "Chief [Bruce] Underhill said I could not talk to you. I was basically threatened with arrest by talking to you. I think that is basically wrong. You are my constituents ... and I want to hear what you have to say. ... I'm not going to stop talking to people. ... Put me in jail if you want to."

"I never threatened to arrest him," Police Chief Underhill told *The Leader*. "He violated Title 40 by speaking to my employees."

"He is not allowed to speak to them about the terms and conditions of their employment contract," Chief Underhill added.

Several crossing guards spoke of their right to collect unemployment benefits when their services are not needed while school is out for the summer.

Crossing guard Rosemary Snow said, "Regarding the unemployment benefits for our crossing guards, I have called the governor's office and spoke to one of his aides and he said 'yes, you can collect unemployment.' I called the unemployment office and they said we can collect be-



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 Foerst, 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).

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)."



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.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7