

Cranford Committee Passes Ordinance For Birchwood Development Project

By DELL SIMEONE

Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD — After a two-hour long public hearing Tuesday night in which member of the public begged, accused, and challenged the Cranford Township Committee not to amend a supplement to the township's land-use ordinance to create an inclusionary multi-family residence zone, the Committee adopted the ordinance. Committeeman Kevin Campbell cast the lone dissenting vote.

"I have to vote no, this is not meant to be a criticism of my colleagues, but it (the measure) does not meet the statutory requirements of the land-use law," Mr. Campbell said.

Other committee members, especially Lisa Adubato Nesi, explained the reason the committee had to vote yes before the Committee could appeal the decision by state Superior Judge Lisa Chrystal who ordered Cranford to amend the ordinance to coincide with a proposed development on Birchwood Avenue. Residents living in the Birchwood Avenue neighborhood, who, along with hundreds of others suffered the ravishes of Hurricane Irene this past summer, rallied against the amendment, showed pictures to the committee of flooded streets, told of days without electricity, and accused the committee of not standing up for the citizens of Cranford.

"Our justice system doesn't work that way. It is not held to public opinion," Ms. Adubato Nesi responded to the residents.

Township Attorney Phil Morin explained that the ordinance is the first step necessary to bring Cranford Township into compliance with the New Jersey COAH (Council on Affordable Housing)/Fair Share Housing requirements.

Judge Chrystal ordered the township to adopt the ordinance on December 9, 2011.

The Cranford Development Group, a subsidiary of the S. Hekeman Group of Paramus, owners and prospective developers of the property known as at 235 Birchwood Avenue, brought a builder's remedy lawsuit against the township, which was vulnerable because it had not met its fair share of low and moderate income housing obligation mandated by the state under the Mt. Laurel agreement.

"The ordinance will provide Cranford with a policy document, with a housing element, and a vision for future development regardless of the Birchwood matter," Mr. Morin said. "It provides an analysis of the number of units and a view of demographics and employment statistics based on the 2010 Census data."

"The housing element addresses the 360 units of which 54 are to be for low-moderate income families. The unit numbers are to be in ratio to the area median income designed to bring Cranford in compliance with the Fair Share Plan, and regulates how each project will be constructed. The goal for total compliance is 2018," Mr. Morin added.

Opponents to the change in the land use ordinance fear that the change would allow development in an area that is environmentally sensitive and prone to flooding. They also fear an increase in traffic and an overburdening of the school system.

In other business, the final reading and public hearing on the \$33.7-million budget for 2012 was postponed to the Tuesday, June 12 meeting, due to an error in the ordinance.

The Committee will also vote, on

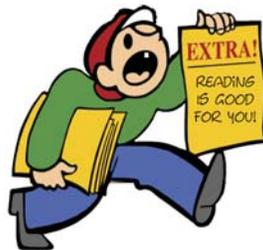
June 12, on an amendment to the budget to include a state Clean Communities Grant of \$400,000 from the State Payment In Lieu of Taxes Program (PILOT).

An ordinance authorizing the elevation of houses at various locations in, by, and for the township, appropriating \$4,182,012, which will be raised from federal grants from FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) and insurance payments from the affected property owners was adopted by the committee. The homes being raised were destroyed during Hurricane Irene.

Another bond ordinance was adopted by the Committee to authorize the reconstruction of the lower level and other improvements to the Cranford Municipal Building due to damage by Irene. The move will appropriate \$3,500,000 to pay for the cost, make a down payment, authorize bonds to finance the appropriation, and to provide for the issuance of bonds, and anticipation notes in anticipation of such bonds.

The Committee also honored Eagle Scout John Hollier of Troop 75 and his fellow scouts for landscaping and power washing done at the First Methodist Church of Cranford.

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The Pointe vs. Garwood Litigation Concluded

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE

Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD – Litigation between The Pointe and the borough concerning snow and garbage removal was concluded as of last Friday, after a hearing that lasted about eight months, Borough Attorney Joseph Triarsi said Tuesday at the Garwood Borough Council meeting. Mr. Triarsi said he expects to hear the judge's written decision in about two weeks.

In other business, Councilman Lou Petruzzelli, committee representative for the \$2.1-million Athletic Field Complex, which will replace the Little League field off of South Avenue between Oak Street and Rankin Avenue with a large and diverse field for an array of athletics, said addendums were added after the pre-bid meeting took place. The addendums included clarifying the extent of the environmental work that needs to be undertaken at the site and to set a new date of Thursday, June 7, to receive bids.

During public comment, Richard King asked if it was true that the Athletic Field Complex was being "squashed."

"No, it's not true," Mayor Patricia Quattrocchi said. "Since there was adequate monies to handle construction...the project is going forward."

Albert DelConti, who inquired at the last council meeting about the rat problem on the 400 block of Willow Avenue, where he owns property, said he had met with the health inspector and had resolved his issues with her. He asked what the borough was doing to correct the issue. Councilwoman Sara Todisco said the borough has a plan in place to remove weed overgrowth along

the entire brook on Friday, May 25, and then poison will be set out for the rats.

The council introduced a bond ordinance in the amount of \$340,000 to authorize the 2012 road and drainage improvement project. Councilman Jim Mathieu abstained because he said his employer instructed him to abstain from voting on bonding ordinances.

The borough has signed on with Nixle alert system, where residents can sign up to receive text or e-mail messages for priority notices about public safety issues from the Garwood Police Department.

The council awarded a contract to Nature's Choice Corporation for the removal of brush and mixed yard waste at the quote of \$490 for a 30 cubic yard roll off-container and \$14.95 per yard delivered to the transfer station by the Department of Public Works (DPW) for a one-year term beginning Friday, June 1. The council also awarded a contract to Grinnell Recycling to dispose of street sweepings and spoils for one year beginning June 1 at the quote of \$660 per load of a 20-yard cubic yard container.

Ms. Todisco announced that the Memorial Day ceremony will take place at the Knights of Columbus at noon, and that hot dogs and chips will be served. Garwood will take part in Cranford's Memorial Day parade beginning at 9 a.m.

Also on the consent agenda was a liquor license transfer from Little Joe, Inc. – Eric Hirsch, president, to Joseph M. Polyak. Little Joe was a liquor store and bar, now closed, situated next to Kings Supermarket, where GNC is now located. Mr. Polyak was the former owner of Little Joe, which was transferred to a corporation