

## WF BOE Discusses Bond Ref., Introduces New Bus. Admin.

By KIMBERLY A. BROADWELL  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD – After the moment of silence held at the Westfield Board of Education meeting on Tuesday evening for all the victims of the September 11, 2001 tragedy, members of the board and the audience discussed the upcoming bond referendum for Monday, September 24. The \$16.9-million bond referendum is for new roofs for Westfield school buildings and a lighted multi-use turf field at the high school.

According to a presentation given by Superintendent Margaret Dolan, the average age of the Westfield school buildings is 73 years and “years of

fixing, patching and repairing lasted longer than expected, but they are still old.” She also stated that all 10 school buildings would have their roofs replaced by the summer of 2013 and that the roofs would upgrade the insulation of the buildings, thus “conserving energy” and also would make it ideal for solar power.

In the presentation it was noted that in the last 12 years, Westfield’s total population has grown 3.2 percent, enrollment in schools has risen 17.4 percent and that Westfield High School Athletics has grown 31 percent. It also was stated that the new field would provide physical education for the almost 2,000 students at the high school

and would provide competition-size fields for soccer, field hockey, lacrosse and softball.

When addressing the lighting it was noted that the field lighting would have targeted lights for specific sports, would only be on during use, would have a remote access by district employees, would cease nightly by 9 p.m. and would not be used Sunday evenings.

Robert Zoeller of Musco Lighting, the district’s lighting expert, spoke to the audience about the lighting, stating that the lighting that would be used for the new field would “provide light on the field only and darkness around the field.” It was noted that the lighting effects for the area, which are measured in foot-candles, would not exceed 0.6 foot-candles at its highest measurement in the neighborhood. He said moonlight has a measurement of .1 foot-candle while the average streetlight has a measurement of 3.0-4.9. Mr. Zoeller stated that the measurements taken at and around the field were reported at 0.0-0.2 foot-candles with a reading of .06 at the base of one property near the school.

Resident and former board of education member Gary McCready stated that he felt the field lighting was comparable to “stage lighting” and that when the field was done other towns would have “field envy.”

Superintendent Dolan said the reason for the referendum was that “major capital projects cannot be funded within a school operating budget, subject to a 2-percent cap.” She also noted “a bond can only be used to fund long-term major capital projects and cannot be used to fund teachers, technology and textbooks.”

Resident Sharon Stockwell said she thought the board had done a good job in providing information for the public, but felt the two projects should have been separated for the public to vote on.

BOE Facilities Committee Chairwoman Jane Clancy stated that since the field study completed in 2009 on district needs, “these were the two projects that have always been the most important.” She also noted that recently through readings on what other towns have done for their schools, she had found that many other schools had

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Paul Lachenaier for The Westfield Leader  
NEVER FORGET... Mayor Andy Skibitsky reads a speech at a service held at the September 11th Memorial in Westfield on Tuesday night.



Paul Lachenaier for The Westfield Leader  
IN LOVING MEMORY...A wreath is laid at the September 11th Memorial in Westfield on Tuesday night, the 11th anniversary of the terrorist attacks, to honor those who lost their lives that day.

## WF Council Honors 9/11 Victims; Discusses Fire Dept., Turf Fields

By LAUREN S. BARR  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD – Westfield’s Town Council meeting began with Mayor Andy Skibitsky reading the speech he gave at the September 11th service earlier in the evening, along with a moment of silence for those who perished in 2001.

Mayor Skibitsky noted that the community was “united in remembering and supporting our fellow citizens” and paid special tribute to the victims’ families for their “remarkable fortitude.”

During the public comments portion of the meeting, resident John Blake questioned why the town has hired new police officers and not new firefighters. He also asked why the town is applying for grants to increase the size of the fire department staff if the town believes

the current staff is adequate. Mr. Blake also criticized the use of the mutual aid system, calling it “disgraceful” that towns are “too cheap” to pay for additional firefighters.

Mr. Blake said that other municipalities, such as Springfield, are not hiring additional firefighters and are using neighboring towns to back them up on calls.

Town Administrator Jim Gildea said that the town currently has four

platoons with seven firefighters each, plus a deputy chief and a chief. Mr. Gildea said this is the minimum staffing level that the town is willing to have. He said the town has set a minimum of 52 police officers, and that the town fell below that number, prompting new hires. He said that despite budget constraints, “public safety remains a priority.”

Third Ward Councilman Dave Haas

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## Sluka, Mathieu Oppose Garwood Police Contract

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD – The borough council Tuesday night adopted, by a 4-2 vote, an ordinance which provides for the compensation of regular police officers of the borough under the new contract with the local Police Benevolent Association. The three-year contract gives a 2-percent raise the first year and a 1.75-percent raise thereafter, as well as longevity benefits after serving five years on the force. Council President Keith Sluka and Councilman Jim Mathieu both opposed the ordinance.

“We have made a conscious effort not just this year at council and last year, but previous years because longevity was taken out of the DPW [Department of Public Works] contract long before I was here. That is the part of that contract that concerns me. I don’t understand the philosophy behind it, in the sense that the employee is already getting a raise and we’re just getting him an extra raise on the purpose of being here,” Council President Sluka said.

“I can’t vote for raises for employ-

ees when townspeople are losing jobs,” Councilman Mathieu said.

“There should be a moratorium on raises until we settle the lawsuit filed [against Mr. Mathieu and the borough] by the clerk [Christina Ariemma]. ... You are compromising the borough’s position,” Mr. Mathieu said.

The borough council is to vote on a new bond totaling some \$223,000. During the workshop meeting, Councilwoman Sara Todisco discussed a bond for capital items, which she said would be introduced at the Tuesday, September 25, council meeting. She told the public that she did not know the tax impact or length of the term of the bond.

The capital items include police car computers, a borough hall generator, portable generators, a repeater, DPW radio upgrades, a recording sound system, a telephone system, a computer system, an SUV for the police department, building surveillance cameras, traffic signal upgrades, and Jaws of Life and infrared cameras for the fire depart-

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Brooks Crandall for The Westfield Leader  
CAMPAIGN KICKOFF...The board of trustees of the Westfield United Fund hold their 2012 campaign kickoff this past Saturday at the home of Anne and Keith Wargo on Hillside Avenue in Westfield. The event saluted members of the United Fund’s Pillars Club.

## County Initiates Study Of Runnells Operation

By PAUL J. PEYTON  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

COUNTY – The Board of Chosen Freeholders is set to vote tonight on a \$60,000 contract with a Pennsylvania company to review operations at Runnells Specialized Hospital in Berkeley Heights, a county-operated facility, and to develop operations at the hospital, which has been running annual deficits of between \$10 and \$11 million.

The study follows the privatization of occupational, physical and speech therapy services, dietary, housekeeping and laundry services over the past few months.

Frank Guzzo, director of human services for the county, told the freeholders at their agenda-setting meeting on September 6 that the study by Complete Healthcare Resources – Eastern, Inc. of Dresher, Pa. would be completed within two months. He said lower Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement rates have made it “extremely difficult” for counties to continue to operate nursing home-hospitals.

“The thought by the board and the finance [committee] chairman this year was to look at this to see if there are options available to us to maybe reduce that deficit and look at other ways to bring in revenue. That is what this study does,” Mr. Guzzo said.

“This will study everything. It studies the [lower Medicaid and Medicare] reimbursement right up to and including whether or not it would be feasible

to sell the hospital,” Mr. Guzzo told the board. “So it will have everything in there. It will provide options available to the board and will detail what those options are relative to reduction of the deficit and whether we should continue to support that with county dollars.”

The county also has initiated studies for the county jail and Watchung Stable to consider privatization of those operations.

Also on tonight’s agenda will be a \$1.5-million contract with Let It Grow of River Edge to restore Nomahegan Park Lake in Cranford. The project is part of a four-lake restoration that includes Rahway River Park, Briant Park in Summit and Meisel Avenue Park in Springfield. The Nomahegan project is expected to take nine months. Work on Rahway River also is scheduled for this year while the Briant and Meisel Avenue projects are on tap for 2013.

It also was announced by First Assistant Prosecutor Albert Cernadas, Jr. that the Union County Prosecutor’s Office (UCPO) has received a \$1.3-million DNA backlog reduction grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice for the county’s forensic laboratory in Westfield.

Mr. Cernadas said the county is using the grant to purchase additional equipment and add forensic scientists to its staff.

“This will allow us to move forward.

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## Mason To Be Named Full-Time Cranford Administrator

By FRED T. ROSSI  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD – The township committee expects to formally name Police Chief Eric Mason as township administrator in the coming weeks.

At the committee’s regular meeting on Tuesday, Mayor David Robinson, in response to a query from former mayor Mark Smith, said he expects Mr. Mason to be formally named to the position “in the coming weeks” once his retirement papers with the police department are filed. Mr. Mason, who has

been acting administrator for the past year, was set to be appointed to the post on a full-time basis last spring; however, that move was delayed by questions over pension benefits for which Mr. Mason was eligible in his dual role of police chief and acting administrator. The state government will be issuing new regulations clarifying this issue, a move that will allow the appointment to move forward.

In other business at the committee’s hour-long meeting, Township Attorney Phil Morin

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Paul Lachenaier for The Westfield Leader  
SALUTE...A lone trumpet player performs at the September 11th Memorial in Westfield on Tuesday night at the annual commemorative ceremony.

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