

UCC Postpones Plans to Build Athletic Field in Cranford

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD — Union County College has postponed its plans to construct a sports facility for its soccer, lacrosse and track teams.

In a letter sent to Freeholder Chairman Chris Hudak on Monday, UCC President Margaret M. McMenamin said, "In light of community concerns, I have decided to postpone our plan to construct the field at our Cranford campus. In doing so, however, I am seeking your assistance and the assistance of the entire Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders in identifying

a suitable alternative location that would meet the needs of our students."

The county has given UCC access to Nomahegan Park, located across the street from the UCC campus; Shane Walsh Field in Cranford; Wheeler Park in Linden; Phil Rizzuto Park in Elizabeth; Snyder Avenue Field in Berkeley Heights; Black Brook Park in Kenilworth; Meisel Avenue Field in Springfield; Warinanco Park in Elizabeth/Roselle; Morris Avenue Field and Unami Park, which straddles Cranford, Garwood and Westfield.

Ms. McMenamin said that "having different teams practicing and playing

games at 10 different locations across the county is not what we want for our deserving student-athletes or our county college."

According to the UCC website, the lacrosse team plays at Snyder Park while the soccer program uses Wheeler Park.

In response to UCC's decision, county spokesman Sebastian D'Elia e-mailed a statement from the freeholders to *The Westfield Leader* on Tuesday afternoon.

"The County of Union and the Freeholder Board looks forward to working with Dr. McMenamin and Union County College in securing the appropriate athletic facilities and finding a solution that is mutually beneficial to both the community and student athletes at the college," the statement said. "While the County of Union does not involve itself in the operations of the college, the Freeholder Board expressed its concerns at the onset of this issue and those of the community to the college administration. The board also said it would not fund the proposed UCC athletic facility.

"At the same time, we believe it is imperative to provide access to the athletic facilities that are needed for the college's soccer, lacrosse and track teams. With this in mind, we thank Dr. McMenamin for her willingness to find alternatives and for her outstanding leadership and vision that is continuing to transform Union County College," according to the statement.

As previously reported, UCC's plans included a 100-yard by 65-yard soccer/lacrosse field, 400-meter track with high and long jump facilities, 104-seat grandstand area and lighting. A resolution from the Cranford Township Committee opposing the project stated that some 700 trees would be removed to make room for the field which would be constructed at the rear of the campus on the Cranford/Westfield border.

"...Opponents (see related story on page 10) of the college's proposed Cran-

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County Tax Hike Now \$9.5 Mil. Over 2013

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

COUNTY — The Union County Freeholder Board introduced amendments to the 2014 county budget last Thursday, now placing the tax increase over last year at \$9.5 million for a total tax levy of \$327,061,905 in support of a budget of \$504,985,705. The introduced budget had taxes going up \$13.2 million. Of the total budget, \$175,423,786 are salaries and wages.

Bibi Taylor, director of finance, said the tax levy increase has been cut by \$3.7 million, or 2.99 percent, over the 2013 budget from the spending plan introduced March 13. She said the tax levy proposed represents the lowest increase for the county in five years. Ms. Taylor said the budget is "still subject to state approval."

A public hearing on the amendments to the budget is scheduled for Thursday, April 24, at 6 p.m. in the freeholders' meeting room on the sixth floor of the county administration building in Elizabeth. A hearing and adoption vote on the budget will follow during the regular meeting the same night beginning at 7 p.m.

At Thursday's budget hearing, which preceded the regular meeting where the amendments were introduced, a number of county residents made comments.

Former Summit councilman Tom Getzendanner, representing the Summit Taxpayers Association, applauded the board's decision to privatize Runnells Specialized Hos-



LACROSSE FUNDRAISER...The Westfield High School lacrosse team captains visit Imagine, A Center for Coping with Loss. Imagine will be the beneficiary of funds raised at this year's boys' and girls' lacrosse fundraiser to be held on Saturday, April 19, at Kehler Stadium in Westfield beginning at 9:30 a.m. Pictured, from left to right, are: Standing, Imagine Executive Director Mary Robinson, Dane Huber, Chris Aslanian and Jackson Simcox, and kneeling, Alexis Kardias and Mary Randazzo.

MS Mayor, CFO Compare Taxes To Other County Towns

By KATE BROWNE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

MOUNTAINSIDE — Mayor Paul N. Mirabelli, Chief Financial Officer Jill Goode and Borough Administrator James J. Debbie, Jr. recently met with a reporter from *The Westfield Leader* to discuss misperceptions which may have arisen from a recent *Star-Ledger* article on property-tax bills in Union County in 2013.

The article, which was published last month, listed the average home value and property taxes for the 21 towns which comprise Union County. The article reported that Mountain-

side residents have the seventh-highest property taxes in the county, with an average tax bill of \$10,604 and stated that the average Mountainside home had a market value of \$568,896.

Ms. Goode told *The Leader* that

her analysis revealed that these figures were based on the average assessed value of the homes in the county, which may be misinterpreted due to the large disparities in home

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Janice Kovach Running For 7th Congressional Seat

By SARA MAGNOLA-TANER
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

REGION — Democratic Clinton Mayor Janice Kovach is running against two Republican candidates — incumbent Leonard Lance and David Larsen — for the 7th Congressional seat.

After working in the financial sector as a marketing project manager for a decade, Ms. Kovach and her husband decided to move back to her hometown of Clinton in 2002 to raise their growing family.

Prior to becoming the mayor of Clinton in 2012, Ms. Kovach served on the town council from 2004 to 2006, and then went to Trenton to serve as director for the New Jersey Division on Women until 2010.

"I wasn't happy with things in

town, so in 2011 I ran for mayor," she told *The Westfield Leader*.

"Clinton is a heavily Republican town, but I knocked on every door."

Despite an all-Republican council, Ms. Kovach says they work well together because the focus is on what is in the best interest of the town — not getting reelected.

An advocate for women's rights and issues, Ms. Kovach's decision to run for Congress came out of her frustration with a lack of progress.

"Women bring something different to the table — we are more willing to work together and that is something that is missing in Washington right now," Ms. Kovach said.

"Clinton is a microcosm (of the district). It is Main Street America,

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Christina M. Hinke for The Westfield Leader

OPPOSED...Colby Lane resident Felicia Van Ostenbridge asks the Cranford Township Committee for its support in motivating the community to oppose the turf field proposed by Union County College.

WF Zoning Officer's Decision Upheld on Subdivision

By DELL SIMEONE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — The board of adjustment heard an appeal last Wednesday evening challenging the zoning officer's decision on a subdivision in the Manor Park section.

Denise Jenner, an attorney of Irving Avenue represented the residents of the Manor Park Historic District, who are challenging the decision of Zoning Officer Kathleen Neville, who approved a subdivision of one lot into three on Elizabeth Avenue. One of the lots, described as lot two, is irregular and pie-shaped, Ms. Jenner said. She stated that the pie-shaped lot backyard would cause it to run adjacent to already established front

yards and be awkward. She further stated that the zoning officer misinterpreted the code in relation to front- and rear-yard setback, which, Ms. Jenner said, would be incompatible with other homes in the neighborhood.

"The rear-yard line for lot two is imaginary and intersects existing lot lines," Ms. Jenner said.

At present, the lot contains a single-family residence with a carport and a shed. Proposed is the same home plus two new single-family homes. The appeal contained the signatures of 54 Manor Park residents of Irving and Elizabeth Avenues and the adjacent streets.

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BUNNY LOVE...A young boy gets advice from the Easter Bunny on how to collect the most eggs at the Westfield Lions Club's Annual Easter Egg Hunt. The Lions Club's 79th Annual Easter Egg Hunt will take place this Saturday, April 19, at Mindowaskin Park in Westfield. Participants are asked to assemble in the playground area at 12:45 p.m., as the hunt starts precisely at 1 p.m. See article on page 7.



Paul Lachenauer for The Westfield Leader

EGG HUNT...Children gather brightly-colored Easter eggs during the Scotch Plains Easter Egg Hunt held Saturday morning on the Alan Augustine Village Green.

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For Listings
Joyce Taylor

Congratulations to Our
March
Sales Associates of the Month!

For Sales
Anne Weber

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