



MENTAL HEALTH CARE...Rep. Leonard Lance (R-7th) hailed a new law on April 7 in Washington, D.C. that includes provisions of his Excellence in Mental Health Care Act. Rep. Lance said improving the nation's mental health care system is more important than ever following the shooting at Ft. Hood in Texas.

Residents Urge Freeholders To Oppose UCC Field

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

COUNTY — Cranford residents living near Union County College (UCC) in the township urged the Union County Freeholder Board last Thursday to do all it could to stop the college from proceeding with constructing a sports complex at the rear of the campus on the Cranford/Westfield border, saying the project would only make matters worse in the flood-prone township.

Plans call for a 100-yard by 65-yard soccer/lacrosse field, 400-meter track with high and long jump facilities, 104-seat grandstand area and lighting. It has been estimated that 700 trees would be removed in a wooded area consisting of 4.3 acres to make room for the complex.

Cranford Committeeman Thomas Hannen, Jr. said the college has sent out a solicitation mailing seeking donations for the project just a week after the freeholders decided to include the \$2-million project in the county's capital budget.

"It's a concern of the township and its residents to prevent a bad situation as regards flooding from becoming worse. The removal of the 700 trees will make that bad situation in Cranford worse," Mr. Hannen said.

He said the towns along the watershed sustained \$60 million in damages from Hurricane Irene. Mr. Hannen said construction of the field would "discharge additional water into Nomahegan Lake (located across the street from the college) and into the Rahway River."

Mr. Hannen asked the freeholders to work with Cranford to find alternative locations for the field, "that will not adversely impact flooding in the Township of Cranford."

Westfield resident John McCormack, who resides on Coolidge Street within 300 yards of the proposed field on the UCC campus, said the project would "over stress the infrastructure and reduce the quality of life in both Cranford and Westfield."

He said removal of 700 trees would "considerably increase the water runoff of this area."

Mr. McCormack also said that his street is "monopolized by student parking." He said students sleep and eat in the cars and throw fast-food waste in the street.

"If this project goes through, you're

not only going to have daytime parking and traffic, you're going to have evening traffic and parking. You're going to have it on the weekends," Mr. McCormack said.

He said the project would also produce noise, stadium lighting and displacement of wildlife.

"I hope you take this under consideration and look at the downside. There's got to be another alternative," Mr. McCormack said.

Several Colby Lane residents, who live directly behind the campus where the field is proposed, also spoke at the meeting.

Chemda "Mindy" Kipness said 1,600 homes in Cranford were under water from Hurricane Irene, noting rafts were needed to remove residents from homes.

She said Union County College's plan has rain water "piped into Nomahegan Lake," resulting in an additional seven million gallons of water going into the lake as the 700 trees will no longer be absorbing rain water.

Randy Lowe added that, "it has been one storm after another" impacting Cranford. He said the UCC plan "doesn't make sense." He also asked the board to go on record with a resolution opposing the project.

"Cranford has always been a good neighbor to the college. They are not being a good neighbor to Cranford," Mr. Lowe said.

Freeholder Angel Estrada said the freeholders are not a reactive board, noting that the proposed field is a "difficult issue" for the board. He and other freeholders said they have to get all the facts on the project before taking a position, although Freeholder Bette Jane Kowalski, a Cranford resident, said she is opposed to the project.

Another resident, Mike Norman, said a petition opposing the project has already generated 900 signatures.

Freeholder Vice-Chairman Mohamed Jalloh said the board has to make sure the project is "sound," "makes sense" and to see if the board can provide any influence on the college regarding the project.

He said the college could construct the field regardless of whether the county opposes the project.

SP Zoning Board OKs PSE&G Substation Upgrade

By FRED T. ROSSI
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

SCOTCH PLAINS — The zoning board of adjustment last week gave its approval to PSE&G's plans to renovate and upgrade its Front Street substation in order to meet higher electrical demand.

After a four-hour hearing on April 10 that ended after midnight, the board gave its assent for the utility to construct several new structures that will help it meet an expected 12 percent increase in demand by 2022. About 15 residents, mostly from adjacent Malanga Court, attended the hearing and voiced concerns about the new structures' impact on their property values and quality of life.

Noreen Merainer, a professional planner with PSE&G who oversaw the preparation of its application to the board, spoke extensively about the project, which will include construction of two 115-foot high A-frame structures to carry wires from the existing transmission towers to the new buildings that will support the increased power output. New lightning masts will also be installed to protect the substations, which have been situated at that site since 1956. PSE&G will be erecting fencing—varying in height from 10 feet to 20 feet—along the right-of-way it occupies in an effort to not only keep noise from the upgraded substation away from nearby homes, but also to keep its facilities secure. The utility will plant a number of trees along its property line as well.

The transmission lines running through Scotch Plains have been in place since 1928, and are part of a network that extends southward from Chatham Township over Route 78 and then extends through Scotch Plains and Fanwood, then through the Ashbrook Reservation and into Edison Township down to Route 1.

During her presentation, Ms. Merainer noted that the facility presently serves about 1,400 customers including the commercial properties in the downtown business district. She said the upgraded facility would be serving a "public benefit" by providing more reliable electricity service. PSE&G's attorney, Glenn Kienz, said the newer and more powerful substation would help to ensure against black-

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peared to be made up or simply "plugged in" every year, such as the sheriff's office, where the 2013 "anticipated" and "realized" revenue were both listed at \$1 million in 2013. He said the county anticipates \$1 million again in 2014.

"That seems really lucky," Mr. Bury said.

He also questioned how the county's Open Space debt went down "exactly" a million dollars from \$5.6 to \$4.6 million.



EAGLE SCOUT...Dan Hannen, the son of Cranford Commissioner Tom Hannen, Jr., was honored on receiving his Eagle Scout Award on April 8 at the township committee meeting. Patrick Lynch and Richard Barry also received Eagle Scout Awards.

SP Recreation Commission Plans Survey of Residents

By FRED T. ROSSI
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

SCOTCH PLAINS — The township recreation commission plans to conduct a multi-part survey of residents in order to gauge satisfaction with recreation facilities and programs, get an idea of additional needs and interests and have an accounting of who is using parks and ballfields, as well as taking part in the recreation department's programs.

Recreation Director Ray Poerio told the commission at its meeting on Monday that the objective of the survey "is to gauge the public and see what their interests are." Surveying residents, he said, "gets everybody involved in the process."

The survey will be conducted in three parts, with the first one focusing on recreation facilities such as parks and ballfields. Subsequent questionnaires will focus on golf programs at Scotch Hills Country Club and on recreation programs. Mr. Poerio said the surveys will also provide demographic information on who is using which facilities and programs, which members of a family are taking part in various programs, when they are tak-

ing part and how often they are doing so.

With the recreation department's five-year capital program currently being updated, Mr. Poerio added that the survey would be particularly useful in alerting recreation officials to larger expenditures that might be required in the coming years.

In other business, the new pavilion at Brookside Park will be installed in advance of the summer day camp programs getting underway. The new irrigation system at that park will be installed in the fall. The parking lots at Memorial Park and Kramer Manor Park will be repaved this spring, and Mr. Poerio said he expects the lots to be shut for no more than two days to allow for the new asphalt to be paved and then dry before line-stripping is done. The cart paths at Scotch Hills Country Club will also be worked on this spring.

All township parks and recreation facilities will be evaluated to determine any compliance issues with federal Americans with Disabilities Act standards. Mr. Poerio told the commission that federal community development grant money is available to fund any necessary repairs or upgrades that may result from the compliance audit.

Scotch Plains will join the TryCan organization, which is made up of several area towns and sets up various recreation events specifically for handicapped persons. Mr. Poerio said the group organizes "a ton of fantastic programs." Information on the program will be available soon on the recreation department's website and in the recreation newsletter.

The recreation department will soon install GPS systems in all of its vehicles, allowing the tracking and monitoring of those vehicles during the work day and also during weather emergencies. Mr. Poerio also said an automated time-card system for workers will be put into place. Both of these upgrades will help to verify whether township vehicles are being used properly and will also aid greatly in verifying township activities and clean-up efforts when federal or state money is available to help defray the costs of storm recovery.

On Sunday, April 27, the recreation commission, in conjunction with the Girl Scouts, will sponsor a tree-give-away for the Plant-A-Tree campaign. Free trees will be distributed to residents in front of the municipal building from 3 to 5 p.m.

MS Taxes

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prices in each of the towns located in Union County. According to the data in *The Star-Ledger* article, the average value of a home in Summit in 2013 was \$892,098 while the average home value in Roselle was \$206,146.

Mayor Mirabelli explained that he did not feel that *The Ledger's* data had compared "apples to oranges" and he asked Ms. Goode and her team to calculate the average property-tax bill for a home purchased for \$570,000 which is the average sales price for a home in Mountainside. The results were significantly different from those reached by *The Star-Ledger*. Ms. Goode's analysis revealed that Mountainside had the second lowest property tax bills in the county at \$10,624, which is \$133 less than Summit.

According to Mayor Mirabelli, a family who purchases a home in Mountainside for \$570,000 will have an annual property-tax bill of \$10,624, while a family who purchases a \$570,000 home in Fanwood, where, according to *The Ledger*, the average home is valued at \$407,565 would have an annual property tax bill of \$15,002.25 and a family in Roselle would pay \$25,327 in property taxes on a home purchased for \$570,000 using 2013 tax rates.

The next meeting of the Mountainside Borough Council will be Tuesday, April 22, at 8 p.m. in Borough Hall. The mayor urged residents to attend the meeting which will include a public hearing on the 2014 budget. Copies of the budget are available for review on the borough's website and at the municipal building and the borough's library.

Westfield Board of Adj.

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The Manor Park residents maintain that lot two violates requirements of the town's land use ordinance and is atypical because it has no definite rear lot line. Ms. Jenner also said the residents received notice of the zoning officer's decision on January 24, 10 days before the planning board hearing scheduled for February 3, but the meeting was cancelled because of snow. Because the land use ordinance does not contemplate appeals from interested parties, the 20-day time period should run from the date of notice.

Michael Mahoney, LLC, is the owner of the three lots included in the subdivision.

After much discussion, the board agreed that lot two is highly irregular. Town Planner Bill Drew said the lot is inconsistent with the neighboring conforming lots. Mr. Mahoney did not speak, nor was he represented by an attorney. Board Attorney Vincent Loughlin asked Mr. Mahoney if he would like to return before the board with an attorney, but he declined. Neighborhood resident Mark Swerzie told the board the whole subdivision was inappropriate.

In the end, the board voted to uphold the decision of the zoning officer with board member Robert Burslem voting against it.

In other business, the following applications were approved:

Robert Dragon, of Overhill Street, sought approval to construct a rear deck on the upstairs level of his bi-level home, contrary to code requirements for a backyard setback, and a

light increase in allowable building coverage.

Michael and Marielyce Watner, of Highland Avenue, sought to add a two-story addition to their Tudor-style home, which would include reconfiguring their kitchen area to include a breakfast area. On the second floor, they wish to expand their master bath.

James and Judy Ng, of Cleveland Avenue, sought to construct two first-story additions and a second-story addition. Side-yard setback and building coverage are proposed to be slightly larger than the code allows.

James M. Foerst, of South Scotch Plains Avenue, sought approval to enclose an existing covered porch and add new landing steps contrary to code. His architect, James L. Ramenthal, said the applicant lives on a corner, which makes their back yard a side yard.

The following appeals were carried to the Monday, May 12 meeting: Jon Alex Corp. d/b/a/ We Collect Clothes for a Cause, Elm Street; The Bar Method of Westfield, Quimby Street; and Marc and Rachel Nissim, Pine Grove Avenue.

A special meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 23, to hear the application of Cradles to Crayons Learning Center, Inc., West Broad Street. The applicant proposes to demolish the existing building and construct a new building to contain a kindergarten and child-care facility.

All meetings take place at the Westfield Municipal Building, 425 East Broad Street.



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