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WF Board of Ed. Candidates

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ished business.

"I want to make sure that the kids who are in school now and the ones who will be with us for years to come will have the same, perhaps even better, opportunities than my kids had," Mr. Friedman said in a letter to the editor.

Although there is a 2-percent budget cap each year, Mr. Friedman said the district was still able to fund roof repairs, technology investments and other infrastructure investments.

"I believe that we are good at cost control, but we must look for alternative methods of bringing the outstanding services that we currently provide in the future," he said. "Costs are always going up and we cannot continue to pass these costs along to the taxpayer."

Mr. Friedman currently serves on the board's Finance Committee as chairman and as a member of the Technology and Facilities committees.

"With your support and three more years, we certainly will be able to continue to improve on what is already one of the most outstanding school districts in New Jersey," he said.

In a letter to the editor published in The Alternative Press, David Sexton said he has experience in education as a high-school and community college teacher as well as covering local school systems for several newspapers.

"Having spent some time reporting on local school systems in the past, I was impressed with how much quiet effort the board members make every month to ensure that Westfield's tradition of education is maintained and improved," Mr. Sexton said in the letter.

A software engineer for the past 20 years with children in the public schools, he said he has attended several Westfield Board of Education meetings.

"I will do my utmost to help uphold the excellence of the Westfield schools and bring my own experience and education to bear to help continue and improve on that tradition," he said.

A retired mother of five children who are in or have been through the

Westfield school system, Peggy Oster said she is running to serve on the board because she believes in public education.



Mark Friedman — Incumbent



Peggy Oster



Chris Langhart



Anastasia Harrison

"I chose to run to leverage my personal experiences with the Westfield school system to continue to give back to the community and to work to provide the best education possible for our children," said Ms. Oster, who has lived in Westfield since 1988.

Ms. Oster said one of her main priorities is to collaborate with state legislators and examine the state's current funding formula to ensure its accuracy and look into other options.

"I feel it is important for the future for public education in Westfield to analyze those formulas and see if we can bring up more equality across all districts," she said.

While living in Westfield, Ms. Oster served as president of the parent-teacher organizations at Franklin Elementary School and Westfield High School. She is also currently treasurer of the College Woman's Club of Westfield, which provides scholarships to high-school students.

With two children already in the Westfield public schools and the other joining in a few years, Christopher B. Langhart said he wants to be involved in the school system.

"I want to have a voice in providing kids in Westfield with the best system possible," said Mr. Langhart, who works for a law firm in Roseland.

Mr. Langhart said one of his concerns is losing good teachers who plan to retire due to changes in the pension system impacted by recent state legislation. He also hopes to maintain funding for extracurricular programs including athletics, music and art.

"I think a lot of qualified people are running, and I look forward to trying to be on the board," he said.

Also running are Evan Molloy and Noreen Coleman.

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Cranford, Garwood Cands. Seeking School Bd. Seats

By LISA HAGEN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD—Six Cranford residents are seeking three seats on the board of education in this November's election while four incumbents are running for the Garwood school board.

A retired lawyer who is now a teacher, Michael Caulfield has served on the board since 2003. Now vice-president of the board, he has been a part of the Policy and Curriculum committees.

"What's motivating me to want to continue waving a flag for any particular issue is I want to continue to participate and contribute as a citizen of Cranford and participate in public education endeavors," said Mr. Caulfield, who has lived in Cranford since 1988.

Although he has several areas of interest, he said that special education is one of his main focuses since he is currently a special-education teacher in Irvington.

"Overall, my guiding principles are to make sure residents of Cranford and their children are all served in the school system and getting the very best provided to them," he said.

Mr. Caulfield also wants to continue tracking each student's progress and ensuring that all students — regardless of their academic achievement — receive equal attention.

Serving on the board for the past nine years, JoAnn Boyle described education as a "shared responsibility" that must involve both parents and community members.

"I am a parent and member of the community, and I have a core belief that giving back to your community, whether it is the schools, church or town, is imperative," said Ms. Boyle, who has lived in Cranford for 19 years and works as a health insurance broker.

Ms. Boyle emphasized the focus on personalized learning as a long-range endeavor that will customize students' education to fit their strengths and weaknesses. She believes the district has established effective programs even with funding concerns.

"I think even if we're doing well, we need to keep it up because there are always new challenges thrown at you," she said. "What I've learned in the business world is that you have to have the right leadership to lead people through that."

In addition to receiving high rankings, she is proud that the school district has expanded performing-arts opportunities for students.

Trevor Shaw has spent 20 years working in education and said he believes those experiences bring different views to the board. Serving for the past three years, he is a former English teacher who is currently the director of technology at Dwight-Englewood School in Bergen County.

"I feel like I still have a lot to contribute,"



JoAnn Boyle — Cranford

Mr. Shaw said. "I think the biggest thing I bring is the ability to challenge long-standing ideas."

Mr. Shaw said board members and residents should question and challenge issues including unfunded mandates, the operation of public schools and the role of standardized tests.

"We have different challenges and the solutions are not always the same," he said. "I would like to see us communicate a little better as a district with parents and families."

Mr. Shaw has lived in Cranford since 2001 with his wife and two children, who are both in the school system.

Lisa Carbone, Daniel DeMarco and Jacqueline Carr are also seeking seats on the Cranford board.

Serving on the Garwood board since 1991, Linda Koenig said four generations of her family have lived in Garwood. She has no children, but other members of her family are currently in the school district.

"The school district here has done well for us, so it is my turn to give back," she said.

Ms. Koenig explained that due to cuts in funding, Garwood schools had to limit some of their local programs, including less language and AP courses. She said the school also has to charge for student participation in sports and other activities.

"The students are getting less and the taxpayers are paying more," she said. "We're trying to make things better here and cutting expenses without cutting programs."

Ms. Koenig is also involved in education on a county and state level, serving on the Delegate Assembly of the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA). She said she handles issues including teacher evaluations and superintendent salary caps.

After attending enough educational programs, she said she became a master board member this past year.

Aaron Watkins said he has served on the board for the last three years because he loves Garwood and its residents. A resident for the past 18 years, he said he enjoys serving his community.

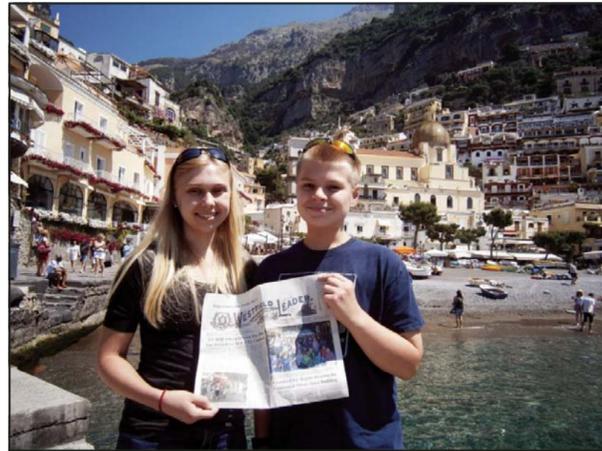
"Garwood is a beautiful town, and I know a lot of good people," said Mr. Watkins, who currently teaches social studies and religion in Elizabeth. "That's why I'm a school teacher and love education."

Mr. Watkins emphasized communicating with the students and continuing to improve education and making the schools more "pro-child" as his reasons for running for another term.

Aside from serving on the board, he volunteers at soup kitchens with his church and is an officer at Knights of Columbus.

Also running are incumbents Christine Guerriero and Kimberly Ficarra.

Mountainside Board of Education incumbent Dante Gioia is the only borough candidate to file his candidacy as Cathy Jakositz did not file for re-election.



HOMETOWN NEWS...Kristie and Justin Elbert of Westfield enjoy The Westfield Leader while on a recent vacation in Positano, Italy in June.

BH BOE Discusses Self-Assessment, Anti-Bullying

By DELL SIMEONE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

BERKELEY HEIGHTS—The board of education met July 24 and saw two PowerPoint presentations, one on the results of a district self-assessment program on anti-bullying and the other on the Mary Kay McMillin Early Childhood Center.

The anti-bullying report was presented by Michael Riley, a Columbia Middle School teacher, and anti-bullying coordinator Mary Ann McAdam, supervisor of special education.

The report consisted of a district self-assessment outlining reported cases of HIB (harassment, intimidation and bullying), investigation and confirmed cases. District investigations for the 2012-2013 school year totaled 106, with only 35 confirmed cases. In the 2013-2014 school year, 103 reports were investigated, resulting in 38 confirmed cases.

Last year's assessment rubric was revised and distributed by the New Jersey State Commissioner of Education. The district HIB specialists met with the HIB coordinator to review changes to the document. The HIB specialists met with their school safety teams to complete the assessment. Results were scored and forwarded to the anti-bullying coordinator. The results are included in an electronic report due to the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) by the end of September. Once the reports are reviewed and approved by the NJDOE, districts are required to post the score on the district website.

In meeting the goals of the program, a perfect score would be 78. The district average in 2012-2013 was 62/75, which equals 83 percent of the goals being met. In 2013-2014, the district average was 67/78, which equals 86 percent of the goals met.

Student programs and staff training consisted of the school-based group Rachel's Challenge; Paula Rust; a parent group, as well as suicide-prevention and bimonthly coordinator meetings.

Board member Doug Reinstein asked why there is a surge in incidents in the upper grades. Ms. McAdam said, "That's when the students, for the first time, have their own phones and a lot of the HIB incidents are done on the Internet."

"A lot of this is beyond our control; it's difficult to explain. There are new websites out there. Many things happen on social media. At the high school, we had a problem with texting. We met with small groups. The kids have to know what their legal responsibilities are," she added. She said, "last year was our first year for self-assessment."

District Superintendent of Schools Judith Ratner said, "The results this year are 50 percent lower." She added, "There were fewer cases in the lower grades and in the high school; they were tied to social media. We're responsible to investigate what takes place on the weekends, even if the kids are on vacation. The good news is it hasn't gotten worse."

When asked by Mr. Reinstein how the district can judge the effectiveness of the programs, Ms. McAdam replied, "We do it on a monthly basis, piece by piece. It's impossible to know everything that's going on."

The next PowerPoint presentation was given by Anne Corley-Hand, the principal of the district's Early Childhood Center (preschool through first grade). The presentation was based on field and informed position statements by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the Children's Defense Fund, the NJDOE Division of Early Childhood research review and observational data.

Ms. Corley-Hand said the NJDOE is asking the district to be in a pilot program and to consider what students need for first-grade success. The state pilot program is asking districts to consider a full-day kindergarten, transitional primary programs, and putting k-1 back in elementary schools.

The state now expects kindergarten students to be able to solve addition and subtraction word problems, and to add and subtract within 10 numbers. Ms. Corley-Hand said the expectation used to be within five numbers. The state also wants the children to be able to analyze and compare two- to three-dimensional shapes in different sizes and orientations.

A half-day program starts at 8:45 a.m. and goes until 11:45 a.m. A full-day program begins at 8:45 a.m. and goes until 3:10 p.m., with a 30-minute lunch break.

A survey of parents shows that most feel that children would be better prepared for first grade if they attended a full-day kindergarten. The Children's Defense Fund in

2013 stated that a full-day kindergarten is a necessary component of a comprehensive early learning continuum to boost children's cognitive learning, creative problem-solving and social competence.

Included in the presentation was a quote from Dr. Ellen Wolack of the NJDOE, "A half-day program is inadequate to teach the common core, let alone master it."

Ms. Corley-Hand, however, disagreed with that statement and said, "Common Core is changing what we expect from a child. I feel that the demands of the Common Core Curriculum are too much for the kindergarten students. They need time to play together, to get to know one another and learn to interact with one another. That is very important. It's not for the children at risk. They show signs of stress by acting out. I am thrilled that we are part of the pilot program, but there are a lot of things to talk about and consider."

Ms. Ratner said, "This is the first time the community is seeing this. I don't know if we have all the answers this evening." It was suggested by board members that there should be a committee within the district to do in-depth research about enhanced readiness for first grade.

Regarding the full-day kindergarten idea, the board felt there are many considerations, such as space, personnel and costs.

The state suggests that the district form a committee of board members, administrators, staff and parents, look at space and costs, possibly restructure school configuration (k-2, 3-5) and develop a plan by June of 2015 regarding full-day kindergarten.

The Berkeley Heights Board of Education will meet next on Wednesday, August 27, with an executive meeting at 7 p.m. and combined conference and regular meeting at 8 p.m., in the Columbia Middle School music room, located at 345 Plainfield Avenue.

MS Council

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increase the FAR. Mayor Mirabelli noted that a possible compromise, which might ensure that homes "fit nicely" on their lots would be to link any increase in the FAR to a corresponding increase in the side-yard requirements.

The council also considered a report from Borough Engineer Michael Disko on a proposed change to the Rahway Valley Sewage Authority (RVSA) ordinance. Mr. Disko explained that Mountainside had, over several years, expended a considerable amount of financial resources and personnel to insure that the borough was fully compliant with the regulations regarding discharge outflow. Mr. Disko expressed concern over the proposed RVSA revisions, which would increase member municipality outflows without any concomitant increase in fees.

Borough Attorney John Post noted that an across the board increase could potentially have a disparate impact on smaller communities such as Mountainside and noted the borough had never exceeded its contractual capacity with the RVSA. The council agreed further investigation and analysis of the issues associated with the proposed outflow increase was required before any further action could be taken.

In other business, council members heard reports on the planning, which is underway to commemorate New Jersey's 350th anniversary. Among the activities which will occur in Mountainside on Saturday and Sunday, October 18 and 19, include children's art projects, a pumpkin carving contest, and the creation of a portrait of the state flower with community member's thumbprints placed on each flower petal. Mayor Mirabelli noted that the council and TV 36 would fully support and publicize these efforts.

The council also voted to authorize a \$500 donation to PTA Fall Festival and also approved raffle applications from the Our House Foundation, the Mountainside PTA, Our Lady of Lourdes, Community Access Unlimited and ARC of Union County.

Mayor Kalnins

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a half-mile of the train station. "You know that's where development belongs—in the downtown, where people can walk to the train, walk to the restaurants, walk to the stores. Birchwood doesn't make sense to put four stories, 360 units in the middle of a single-family, residential neighborhood secondary, tertiary streets (with) no real stores."

The mayor said the Birchwood development would result in its residents having to take their cars to go into town, thus utilizing what he called "ill equipped" streets "and on top of that it is in a flood zone."

"You couldn't have picked a worse spot," he said.

Speaking of the Riverfront development, he said the township's new engineer, Maser Consulting of Red Bank, is looking at plans associated with the development, following recent flooding there after heavy rain deluged the area in June.

"That area has always been a chronic flooding issue. So they are going back, making sure the development was built to the specs and, assuming it is, come with some recommendations on how we can improve on that situation as well as several other locations where we've had much more severe chronic flooding," he said, citing Cranford's intense thunderstorms that have occurred over the past few months.

The township has asked Maser and the Department of Public Works to see if the flooding is because of a maintenance issue such as clogged storm sewers or if it is caused by design issues, which would require "a longer-term fix."

Also, PSE&G will elevate its equipment at its South Avenue substation above flood levels that resulted during Hurricane Irene in 2011, a storm that caused severe flooding in Cranford. The mayor said he also hopes that some of the substation's infrastructure will be upgraded.

The township has allocated \$4 million in its capital budget this year to focus on deteriorating roads in the township that have not been worked on in a number of years. He said the money

will be used for both resurfacing as well as drainage improvements. Mayor Kalnins said road improvement projects approved over the past few years are being worked on this summer, with the 2014 roads projects expected to begin in September.

Speaking of the UCC athletic complex, he said Cranford "fully supports" the college in its efforts to build the athletic complex for its soccer, lacrosse and track programs at Oak Ridge Park in Clark where the college opted not construct the complex at its Cranford campus following heavy opposition from the township and neighbors. He said details of UCC's plans at Oak Ridge still have to be worked out.

"I have not heard anything that would lead me to believe that they (UCC) are coming back to Cranford," he said.

The mayor said Cranford has settled contracts with all six of its employee unions, which include police, firefighters, public works and white-collar unions. He said all the contracts were settled within the state's 2-percent cap on salary increases.

"I think it was fair. We made some headway on some of the insurance issues," he said. He said the township was able to get some concessions on the cashing in of sick days and duplicative coverage.

He said he hopes with a new chief financial officer in place that Cranford can begin to do some longer-term financial and debt planning, "where we can look ahead and continue some of these capital programs so that this (the 2014 \$4-million capital budget) is not a one-time shot that we spend [a lot of] money and fix the streets and end up in a worse spot than we are today."

Mayor Kalnins said the goal is to "maintain a decent capital program without driving taxes up."

On Cranford's downtown, he noted that the township's vacancy rate "remains extremely low" at below 3 percent, noting that storefronts at the Riverfront have been leased including to a new Italian grocery store, Starbucks and Subway, which moved from North Avenue.

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