

# 2013 Year In Review: June Through November

## JUNE

### Cranford

The township committee approved an amendment to the 2013 municipal budget that pared expenditures enough to reduce the municipal property-tax increase from 2.8 percent to 2 percent.

An independent report commissioned by the Township Committee found that there was no conflict of interest in Phil Morin's representation of Cranford on the Lehigh Acquisition site plan hearings relating to 555 South Avenue or the Birchwood Avenue/Cranford Development Associates affordable-housing litigation.

Union County was set to begin significant roadway rehabilitation along an 1,100-foot section of Centennial Avenue, which would be widened in an effort to reduce traffic congestion. The portion of the roadway to be widened by up to 10 feet is between Wall Street and the Lehigh Valley railroad overpass.

### Garwood

Borough council members decided not to pursue litigation against a proposed townhouse development in Westfield along the borough's western border, determining the result – even if successful – did not warrant the cost. Borough Attorney Bob Renaud said a lawsuit challenging a zoning variance that allowed a more densely populated project on Grandview Avenue between Myrtle and Spruce Avenues in Westfield would likely not be winnable in court.

## JULY

### Cranford

Union County College officials said construction of a new \$14-million student services building on the Cranford campus would begin in May of 2014 and take 12 to 18 months to complete.

The township committee decided

not to go forward with the formation of a charter study commission to examine new forms of government.

Dreyer Farms was approved by a unanimous vote by the township's zoning board of adjustment to tear down the existing farm stand and single-family residence on its property and to build a single two-story structure to house its retail operations.

A proposed development on Centennial Avenue was approved by the planning board by a 7 to 1 vote on July 17. The multi-use subdivision will consist of a commercial space on the first floor and five one-bedroom apartments on the second floor, all yet to be rented. A two-family home existed on the lot.

### Garwood

The borough council announced it would investigate privatizing garbage pickup and conducting a borough-wide property reassessment, sparking an array of responses.

Council members introduced a \$170,000 bond ordinance to purchase a new dump truck, plow and spreader to replace a 28-year-old vehicle.

## AUGUST

### Garwood

The borough council held a special meeting to pass a resolution awarding a special service contract, in the amount of \$12,500, to Hatch Mott MacDonald of Millburn for additional soil testing of the new athletic field complex.

Tax Assessor Annmarie Switzer recommended against re-evaluating property values, arguing the action carried a high risk of increased county taxes without providing much benefit to the municipality or its taxpayers.

The owners of the virtually abandoned industrial sites on North and South Avenues were so far not interested in selling their prop-

erties for the price buyers are willing to pay, according to Mayor Patricia Quattrocchi.

### Cranford

The township committee welcomed Gary Merwede, Douglas Petschow and Matt Seitz as new appointees to its fire department and promoted Lt. Daniel Thorn to the rank of captain. Mr. Merwede will represent the third generation of his family to serve the department while Mr. Petschow and Mr. Seitz both will be second-generation Cranford firefighters.

## SEPTEMBER

### Garwood

Borough council members agreed to prepare resolutions directing the planning board to conduct redevelopment studies on the virtually abandoned industrial sites on North and South Avenues. The study, proposed by Councilman Bill Nierstedt, will determine

whether Casale Industries and the old Garwood Paperboard plant meet the criteria to be declared as areas in need of redevelopment under the state's Local and Redevelopment Housing law. The declaration is needed before the borough can rezone the property.

Parents and guardians of Garwood teenagers who attend Clark's Arthur L. Johnson (ALJ) High School voiced their concerns overcrowding on school buses. After changing from a three-bus system to just two, teenagers attending ALJ have complained to their parents that the buses are more crowded, though none are over the maximum capacity of 54 students.

### Cranford

The planning board passed a resolution to recommend the Complete Streets program be considered by the township committee. The recommendation followed a

presentation by Rebecca Hoeffler of Cranford and Ranjit Walsia, a planner from Clark, who said the program would make Cranford more convenient for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and public transportation riders.

## OCTOBER

### Garwood

Council members asked Borough Attorney Bob Renaud to investigate the plausibility of an ordinance requiring property owners to remove a building's foundation within a set time period after the structure has been declared uninhabitable and razed. The matter stemmed from properties on Second Avenue and Center Street being destroyed by fire in the past year. Both have been leveled to the foundations but have remained dormant since their destruction.

The athletic field complex will be ready for use by the last week of April, nearly a year after it originally was scheduled to be open, the borough council was told. Councilman Louis Petruzzelli, the board's liaison to the project, made the announcement, saying he had been presented with a calendar of stage-completion dates by builder Flanagan's Contracting Group.

Loss of order interrupted the Garwood candidates' debate. Three candidates — incumbent Republican Jim Mathieu, Republican Mike Martin and independent Democrat Bruce Paterson — had gathered to debate at The Pointe apartment complex's clubhouse. The candidates were competing for two open seats on the borough council.

### Cranford

The director of the Office of Business and Economic Development for the township, Kathleen Miller Prunty, led a discussion with the planning board that focused on the future of the downtown. She said the downtown should ideally attract empty-nesters and 20-

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13-07-11: WATERBREAK...The Cranford Canoe Club's annual Fourth of July canoe race drew a large crowd of participants who were eager to get in the water in order to beat the heat.

Paul Lachenauer for *The Westfield Leader*