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Mountainside BOE OKs Revised Bond Referendum

By DELL SIMEONE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

MOUNTAINSIDE – The board of education, on Tuesday evening, unanimously adopted a resolution for a new bond referendum to be presented to voters on Tuesday, March 11. The new referendum cancels out the district's previous request for \$19 million plus in a grant of state aid. The grant would require the district to pay interest at 40 percent of the amount. The new referendum asks the voters to approve a request for \$19 million plus in debt service from the state for interior repairs and improvements for the borough's Deerfield and Birchwood Elementary Schools. If the debt service application is approved, the state would pay the 40 percent.

According to Anthony Pannella, the board's bond counsel, of Wilentz, Goldman and Spitzer of Woodbridge, in September, the district sought the money needed for the work by applying for the \$19 million plus in state aid. The district learned that the state would give them a grant of \$15 million, \$5 million less than requested, not by a letter from the state, but by seeing a published list of grant allocations for state aid. At that time, on advice of counsel, the board sought to seek debt service aid and cancelled the state aid request and previous public referendum which was held on January 28.

The board then revised their request to the state and asked for debt service rather than a grant. Debt service is another source of funding in which the state pays the interest on the money given to the district. In a bizarre twist, the state responded and approved the first request for state aid made months ago (minus \$5 million) and has yet to respond to the new request for debt service. Board mem-

ber Christopher Minks called the move "inexplicable."

Another aspect of this situation which makes it a nail biter, is that the referendum, as it will appear on the ballot, must be delivered to the Union County Clerk's office by the end of the day Friday, February 1. According to Mr. Pannella, "Due to the fact that we don't have the debt service approval letter in hand, with the exact wording of the referendum, including the amount of money being sought, we must confirm approval by the NJDOE (New Jersey Department of Education) before the referendum can be submitted to the clerk's office." Mr. Pannella said, "If we don't choose the debt service, we can't go ahead with the \$19 million project."

The referendum is asking voters to approve the request for \$19,484,628 in state debt service aid, with 40 percent interest on the total amount to be paid by the state. The various proposed improvements for district facilities will entail physical plant, security and technology improvements at the Deerfield and Beechwood Schools.

The board has determined that Beechwood needs improvements, including an exterior building envelop with a new roof and a new secure entry vestibule. Interior improvement include plumbing, electrical, hot water heating system, IT/AV, security, phone clock, PA an fire system and ceiling and floor improvements.

The following improvements are planned for Deerfield: a new roof and door and window replacements, security vestibule, conversion to electrical heating system, hot water, plumbing, new boilers, new phone clock and fire systems, asbestos abatement and new media center and locker room improvements.



SCIENCE OLYMPIANS...Westfield High School's Science Olympiad teams returned from the regional competition at New Jersey Institute of Technology with medals for top six finishes in six events. The medalists, many of whom are pictured in their original designed t-shirts for the competition, include pictured, left to right, Jessica Doyle, Sophia Palia, Mark Gillespie, Alex Mossawir, Andrew Annitsakis, Michael Roggenburg, Alistair Kapadia, Alex Beals, Pat Woods, Matthew Cohen and Jack McKinley.



HIGH ACHIEVERS...Union County College student athletes are congratulated for achieving high academic honors while participating in UCC's many sports programs. Pictured along with the students are: Union County College President Margaret McMenamin, left, and Freeholders Alexander Mirabella, second from left, Linda Carter, second from right, and Christopher Hudak, right.

Garwood Council

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Nierstedt agreed, saying he felt it was a waste of Borough Clerk Christina Ariemma's time to prepare a request for proposal (RFP) to solicit bids for hiring a project manager. However, Mr. Nierstedt said he would not vote against such a proposal.

The issue consumed more than half of an hour of discussion, with Mr. Guarriello suggesting the cost could be "six figures."

"Right now, I think it's like closing the barn door after the horse got out," Mr. Guarriello said. "The project is probably through all the bumps at this point. Everything seems to be moving along, other than the fact that we're restricted by weather. I really don't see what you'd gain out of spending that kind of money at this point in time."

While the bond that is funding the project has approximately a \$100,000 contingency fund for cost overruns, that money is earmarked for payment to the builder, Flanagan Construction.

Councilman Mathieu enthusiastically supported the idea, telling the council that there are "a thousand and one details" that need to be checked and that without a single person responsible, many can get overlooked. With so many delays already, Ms. Palmer was dubious of the April 1 deadline and questioned any date put forth by Flanagan.

"We have no faith in that April date," Ms. Palmer said.

"We don't have a new schedule and we don't know what that new schedule could be. It could be September, December, we don't know," she added, drawing sarcastic laughter.

MS Council

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The meeting concluded with the council members and the mayor stating that during the recent snowstorms many members of the community had contacted them to express their happiness with the snow removal and sanding services provided by Department of Public Works.



BACK IN TIME...Lisa Wilkins and Chuck Winch, above, will sing authentic Civil War songs during "Songs of the Civil War: History and Myth," a presentation for adults on Thursday, February 13, in the Deserted Village in the Watchung Reservation from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. See story on page 19.

CF Police Officers Advance; Josh Furer Recognized

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD — A ceremony was held Tuesday during the township committee public meeting for Police Officers Guy Patterson and Craig Marino, who were advanced to the rank of lieutenant. Town Hall was filled with family, friends and fellow police officers in support of their promotions. Lt. Patterson has served the Cranford Police Department for 15 years and Lt. Marino for 24 years.

At the start of the meeting, Mayor Andis Kalnins presented Joshua Furer, 12, with a certificate of proclamation for spearheading an effort in Cranford to raise funds to victims of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. Joshua raised over \$3,000 for the Philippine Disaster Recovery Foundation's Brick by Brick project.

Mayor Kalnins said he and former mayor Dan Aschenbach are working on a video together to air on TV-35 to explain the township's flood control efforts and what residents can do in their own property to alleviate flooding.

Mayor Kalnins said over 150 people attended the public hearing by the Department of Environmental Protection for permit applications to develop 215 and 235 Birchwood Avenue. He and his fellow commissioners thanked the people for their support in opposing the development.

"It shows so much about our town that so many were here to tell your story," Commissioner Mary O'Connor said.

The Roosevelt Park Committee will give a presentation at the Monday, February 10 township committee meeting, Deputy Mayor Lisa Aduabato said. The township purchased the property on Orange Avenue where the Roosevelt School was once erected. The township plans to build a park there.

The committee, as part of its consent agenda, rejected the sole bid received for a flood mitigation project at 510 Riverside Drive. The \$191,800 bid by Sakoutis Builders and Land Developers was above budget.

The township also issued bids for the Cranford Flood Mitigation Project-Home Elevation of 205 Edgar Avenue. Lowest bidder KM Construction formally requested to withdraw its \$187,000 bid due to a clerical error. The township committee rejected its request for withdraw. Subsequently, the township rejected all three bids for the elevation under the recommendation of the general manager for the project, and will re-issue bids.

The committee authorized the Department of Public Works to purchase a mason dump truck in the amount of \$67,380.

Current Zoning Officer Robert Hudak was appointed to the position of Director of Planning/Zoning Officer at a salary of \$74,043 while Kelly Demcher was appointed to the position of senior payroll/financial specialist within the Finance Department at a salary of \$53,657. Karyn King was appointed to the position of full-time senior account clerk within the Finance Department at a salary of \$40,000.

The township committee selected McElroy, Deutsch, Mulvaney & Carpenter, LLP to provide labor attorney services for 2014 at a fee not to exceed \$20,000.

Commissioner O'Connor said the Cranford Fire Department has asked residents to ensure their home heating unit is in good working order, to not use the stove to warm up their homes as it can cause carbon monoxide to be released in their homes, and not to use kerosene space heaters. Space heaters should be UL approved and be at least three feet away from combustibles.



SCORE...Goalie Benjamin Handwerker of Westfield and forward Hudson Gorski of Scotch Plains, members of the NJ Devils Youth Hockey Club, read *The Westfield Leader* following a victory on January 17 at the JWK Winter Classic in Rhode Island. Photo courtesy of Gavin L. Handwerker

Downtown Westfield Corp.

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will honor Mr. Chaves for his years of service at the next DWC meeting.

Ms. Cronin also announced that Frank Isoldi would replace Mr. Chaves on the board. "Mr. Isoldi was appointed to a three-year term as a business operator on the board of directors at the town's annual reorganization meeting. The mayor and town council appointed Frank. Although I know Frank through Coldwell Banker and his interest in Bittersweet Designs, I look forward to working with him more closely in the future."

During the promotions portion of the meeting, Ms. Cronin advertised the first of two Restaurant Weeks to be held in 2014. The dates scheduled for the year's first Restaurant Week are February 17 to 28.

According to Ms. Cronin, 15 to 20 restaurants in town will offer a two-course lunch for \$10; a two-course dinner for \$20 or a three-course dinner for \$30 depending upon the restaurant. The promotion does not extend to Friday and Saturday nights of

those two weeks.

A complete list of restaurants participating in Restaurant Week is available for viewing on the DWC's website, located at westfieldtoday.com.

"It is a very popular event that draws people to eat out during those two weeks and to perhaps try restaurants that they may never have experienced in the past," stated Ms. Cronin. "We also have CoolVines and The Liquor Basket offering wine specials during Restaurant Week. Bakeries and dessert places also offer specials to accompany Restaurant Week."

Ms. Cronin also wanted to make the public aware that several local retailers in town have a policy of remaining open later on Thursday nights, as do some of the national retailers. Ms. Cronin stated that she would conduct a survey to determine how many businesses practice this and how late they stay open.

The DWC's next board of directors meeting open to the public is scheduled for Monday, February 24, at 7:30 p.m. The DWC office is located at 105 Elm Street. For more information on these topics and other events in town, visit WestfieldToday.com.

WF Council

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the painting," stated Mr. Arena.

The council discussed the impact additional tennis courts could have on parking at Tamaques Park. Mr. Gildea reported that there is a proposal to add additional parking spots in another location in the park, which would alleviate parking congestion.

In other news, the council approved the demolition of single-family dwellings located at 515 Kimball Avenue and 725 Willow Grove Road and a detached at 414 Washington Street.

The next town council conference session is scheduled for Tuesday, February 4, at 7 p.m., at the municipal building located at 425 East Broad Street. The conference session will be immediately followed by the council's regular public meeting at 7:45 p.m.



Dominic A. Lagano for The Westfield Leader
ACTING MAYOR...Councilwoman Jo Ann Neylan leads the Westfield Council meeting on Tuesday night as acting mayor in Mayor Andrew Skibitsky's absence.

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