

Westfield to Pay More Than \$1 Mil. To Settle 2009 False Arrest Case

By MEGAN K. SCOTT
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — The Town of Westfield will pay more than \$1.1 million to settle a lawsuit stemming from a 2009 incident between the Westfield Police Department and primarily Austin Rolnick and his parents, Kimberly Sorrentino and Lawrence Rolnick.

Westfield will pay \$1 million to Kimberly Sorrentino and Lawrence Rolnick; \$100,000 to Austin Rolnick and \$55,000 to Austin Rolnick's friend, Ramon Martinez. The claims of Austin Rolnick and Mr. Martinez were settled in mediation on October 19. Ms. Sorrentino's and Lawrence Rolnick's case was settled last week before U.S. Magistrate Leda Wettre. Their case was

set to go to trial on December 15.

The \$1-million settlement releases Westfield, the Westfield Police Department, and the named police officers from any and all claims, "relating to unlawful entry into the Rolnick's home, false arrest, maliciously making comments to the press, which caused significant damage to their reputation and good name, among others," the attorney for Ms. Sorrentino and Lawrence Rolnick, Donald DiGioia of Mountaintide, wrote in an e-mail.

"It was a hard long fight for our clients to pursue their constitutional rights," Mr. DiGioia said. "They were vigilant. They pursued this. I pursued this and here we are.

"So now with this settlement, our

clients feel they are finally completely vindicated because they can allow the world to know that this should not have happened."

Westfield Town Administrator James Gildea told *The Westfield Leader* in an e-mail that the municipality had no comment.

The settlement stems from an incident two days before Christmas when Westfield police responded to the 500 block of Boulevard on a report of possibly intoxicated young adults exiting a chartered bus from a holiday party in New York City.

When officers arrived and demanded the crowd disperse, Austin Rolnick, then 20, shouted obscenities and said, "This is my (expletive) house," an officer previously testified.

His mother came up to the property's gate and encouraged her son to come inside. Austin Rolnick went inside but allegedly continued to verbally assault the officers, according to the report. He was told he was being placed under arrest for disorderly conduct.

Officers then pushed the door open. Austin Rolnick continued to evade police and had to be physically removed from the property. His mother had to be "restrained from interfering" and was seriously injured, tearing the meniscus in her knee, when an officer fell on her. She was later charged with hindering arrest.

Lawrence Rolnick, who was awakened by the ruckus and allegedly joined in, was arrested at the police station while inquiring about his son.

Mr. Martinez was arrested for allegedly trying to interfere with his friend's arrest.

The charges against the defendants included interfering or obstructing law enforcement, engaging in tumultuous behavior, causing injury to police, failure to disperse, among others.

In 2011, the judge dismissed all
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Benjamin B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader

A FULL FORCE...New recruits to the Westfield Fire Department were sworn in during a ceremony at the Westfield Council meeting last Tuesday. This brings the Fire Department back to its full force.

GW BOE Affirms Election Results, Mum on Open Seat

By BRIAN TRUSDELL
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD — The board of education confirmed Amanda Langston's reelection to the board for another three-year term on Tuesday and also acknowledged write-in candidate Kat Patterson as the winner of one of two open seats.

But schools superintendent Teresa Quigley, who consulted with board members last week, would not identify the names nor the number of candidates she already has submitted to fill the remaining seat. Ms. Quigley sent the list to Interim Executive (Union) County Superintendent Roger Jinks, who will choose the person.

Ms. Quigley said she expected to hear from Mr. Jinks within a week and would have the name by the time of the board's next meeting on Tuesday, December 15.

Ms. Patterson and the person selected by Mr. Jinks will be replacing retiring board members Adele Lewis and Barbara Greet, both of whom chose not to run for another term.

Garwood Police Capt. Douglas

Stoffer and Ms. Patterson received the highest number of votes as eligible write-in candidates for Mrs. Lewis' and Mrs. Greet's seats, but Mr. Stoffer declined the position, saying it would conflict with his duties as the police department's second-highest ranking official, borough clerk Christina Ariemma informed Ms. Quigley in an e-mail.

Ms. Patterson and the yet-to-be announced board member-elect will be seated on Monday, January 4, the date set by the school board on Tuesday as the date of its annual reorganization meeting.

Tuesday's meeting was delayed 13 minutes because only four members, one short of a quorum, were present. Board member Brendan McDermott finally arrived, enabling board president Christine Guerriero to call the meeting to order.

With a short agenda, the board heard from Ms. Langston, who attended the New Jersey School Board Association's annual convention in Atlantic City in late October. She reported on the vari-

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Paul Lachenaier for The Westfield Leader

A DOG'S DAY...The Acosta family with "Kiki, Regis, Nelly, Shea and Oliver" enjoy the Greyhound Friends of New Jersey's 19th Annual Pet & Craft Expo held this past weekend at the Westfield Armory. The show also presents an educational program about retired greyhounds and an application to adopt them.

Twisted Mustache to Roam Westfield During Holidays

By DOMINIC A. LAGANO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — The barbershop quartet "Twisted Mustache" will roam the downtown as an addition to this year's holiday festivities sponsored by the Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC).

The singers will join Santa Claus, carolers, a bagpipe band, and other entertainment as part of the effort to "fuel the Westfield economy," DWC Executive Director Sherry Cronin on Monday told the board of directors of the management entity of the Special Improvement District (SID).

Ms. Cronin said Small Business Saturday on November 28 will kick off the DWC's holiday events.

"We do this every year," Ms. Cronin said. "This year, because we didn't do (a second) Girls Night Out event, we've ramped up our entertainment for Small Business Saturday.

"So we have Santa and Mrs. Claus, of course. The Yuletide Carolers, members from the New Jersey Workshop for the Arts and the Harmonics all will be there on that day."

The groups are featured each year by the DWC during the holidays.

Ms. Cronin stated that the town also is granting free parking for all shoppers on Saturday, November 28, in an effort to further encourage business.

"That weekend is our marathon weekend of the holiday kickoff," Ms. Cronin said. Santa will be available for photographs on Friday from 1 to 7 p.m., Saturday from 1 to 7 p.m. and Sunday from 1 to 4 p.m. On Sunday, the tree lighting will be held at 5:30 p.m.

"And then beyond that for the holiday season, we have the Harmonics who roam around town on Thursday nights singing; we do the Yuletide Carolers on Saturdays; we do the Watson



Happy Thanksgiving

GIVING THANKS...More than a century ago, this Westfield family gathered to share their joy in being together and to give thanks for their many blessings. Happy Thanksgiving everyone from the staff of *The Westfield Leader*.

Four-Story, 300-Unit Project Proposed For Casale-Petro Site

By MEGAN K. SCOTT
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD — Planning board members got a glimpse of a preliminary vision for the largely abandoned Casale/Petro properties on South Avenue, a four-story, 300-plus residential-unit mixed-use development, complete with a parking deck, pool and putting green.

Board planner Victor Vinegra on November 12 unveiled the conceptual design by Russo Development of Carlstadt, N.J., which has purchased the Petro property. It is based on a board subcommittee's suggestions and

input. The move was the latest step in the town's long-sought redevelopment of the hulking obsolete eyesore.

"We kind of mimic the Pointe but even better," said Mr. Vinegra, referring to the mixed-use development on North Avenue across from the ShopRite supermarket. "We're picking up the game."

"We just don't want apartments. We want some retail, and we want a civic component (open space) and we want affordability."

The 5.3-acre redevelopment area consists of five properties along the north side of South Avenue and the western side of Center Street. Those include Petro Plastics at the western end of the proposed development site; two Casale properties including both the industrial manufacturing plant and an office building; Personal Best Fitness and a small parcel of municipally-owned land near the railroad tracks along Center Street.

A 37-page transit-oriented "South Avenue Redevelopment Plan" submitted along with architectural renderings suggests a pedestrian friendly "main street" environment along South Avenue with a 9,000-square foot pedestrian plaza and sufficient parking for residents and retail customers. The plan is expected to be the basis of a recommendation to council for an ordinance that will govern the development of the area.

It proposes specialty retail and restaurants, prohibiting businesses such as hair and nail salons, pharmacies and hardware stores, no larger than 10,000

square feet, and takes into account "affordable housing", designating between 10 and 15 percent of the units.

Garwood officials have estimated that the town is deficient about 60 units and combined with The Villages senior development on Second Avenue, would suffice for the borough's requirement in the latest Mount Laurel housing mandate, Mr. Vinegra said.

Mr. Vinegra said that the apartments will be "the premium apartments in all of Union County," with common areas, club rooms with pool tables and fitness rooms. Besides a pool, the site includes a putting green atop a parking garage.

The renderings come six months after the board voted to recommend that borough council declare a 7.1-acre area on both sides of South Avenue "in need of redevelopment."

The action was the first step in transforming the area. The second step is to devise a plan of what the town would like to see in the area followed by the selection of a developer to execute it.

Mr. Vinegra stressed that the designs put forth based on the subcommittee's recommendation does not mean the board is obligated to select Russo Development or its concept as a partner for transforming the site.

The proposal will be examined further by the board at a special meeting on Tuesday, December 1.

In other matters: The board went into executive session to discuss Superior Court Judge Karen Cassidy's ruling overturning an approved variance for nine townhomes at the corner of

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Brian Trusdell for The Westfield Leader

FIRST LOOK...An architectural concept of a four-story, 300-plus residential unit mixed-use development for the Casale-Petro properties on South Avenue in Garwood was unveiled to the borough planning board at its November 12 meeting, replete with a parking deck, pool and putting green.

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RESIDENTIAL BROKERAGE

#600North

Jill Skibinsky
For Listings

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THE WESTFIELD WEST
SALES ASSOCIATES
OF THE MONTH!

Karen Rimondi
For Sales

600 North Avenue West, Westfield | 908-233-0065 | www.coldwellbankerhomes.com/westfieldwest

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