

Freeholders OK Architect For New Pool In Rahway

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

COUNTY — The Union County Freeholder Board last Thursday approved a professional services contract as well as additional funding on an existing contract for improvements at Rahway River Park.

Netta Architects of Mountainside was given a \$298,600 contract for design services, construction administration and inspection services for improvements to the Walter E. Ulrich Memorial Pool that is located in the park. Ulrich Pool was included in the 2017 capital budget in the amount of \$3 million, \$2,935,000 of which is to be bonded.

Ron Zuber, director of parks and recreation, said all existing buildings for the current pool will be demolished except one which has historical significance. He said work is to begin as soon as the pool shuts for the summer after Labor Day with construction being completed over the fall, winter and spring months. He said the project will include a new pool, concession stands and locker rooms.

Mr. Zuber said if necessary temporary trailers will be used during the summer of 2019, saying the pool itself will be open that season.

In addition, Neglia Engineering Associates of Clark was given a \$12,750 increase in its contract for a new amount of \$292,752 for additional engineering services for improvements at Rahway River Park. A new sports facility, now the home football field for Rahway High School, opened in the fall of 2017, funded by the City of Rahway and the county despite opposition from residents.

The county's other pool, Wheeler in Linden, is being converted to a spray park.

Garwood resident Bruce Paterson said the amount of the Netta contract caused him "serious concern" as he was worried the project will go over budget.

In other business, the board approved an ordinance on second reading for changes and/or additional fees for recreational facilities. Mr. Zuber explained new fees are being added for the Watchung Sports Cen-

ter in Roselle as an artificial field has been added as the building is now a year-round facility. The turf field is available for rentals for time slots of a half hour, one or two hours, with fees ranging from \$100 for a half hour to \$200 for two hours for county residents. Batting cage rentals are \$40 an hour or \$25 for a half hour for county residents. Fees are \$25 higher in each category for out-of-county residents.

Golf fees for Galloping Hill and Ash Brook Golf Courses are being lowered per the ordinance for veterans per a discount program offered on Mondays and Tuesdays.

The ordinance was approved by an 8-to-1 vote with Freeholder Angel Estrada the lone dissenting vote. He said he was concerned that fees were not taking into account the cost of financing the bonds that the county incurred for improvements made to the golf facilities, including the new clubhouse currently under construction at Ash Brook. He said the county still needs to see what can be done so "as not to continue...subsidizing playing golf."

The board also voted to sell property at 502-506 Amboy Avenue in Elizabeth for \$400,000.

Also approved was a resolution proclaiming Tuesday, April 10, 2018, as Equal Pay Day.

"Women on the average earn 79 cents for every dollar men make and for women of color it's less than that," Freeholder Bette Jane Kowalski said. She said the resolution shows the board's support "to the idea that everyone who performs an equal task should get equal pay."

Nancy Piowar of Plainfield questioned a resolution to designate Trinitas Regional Medical Center in Elizabeth as a Trauma II Level Center.

Freeholder Estrada explained that the New Jersey Department of Health had sought proposals from Union County hospitals that would apply to be a trauma center and Trinitas had applied. He said Trinitas has been making improvements over the past four years including an extension of its emergency room operation "to ensure that it qualified for this process."

He said the county believes it needs a designated trauma center that is closer to its residents.

Ms. Piowar also alerted the county to damage caused by the recent nor'easters, saying Green Brook Park in Plainfield was "devastated" from storm damage. "That park is heavily used and it (damage) is a public safety hazard," she said.

Freeholder Chairman Sergio Granados said Freeholder Linda Carter, County Manager Ed Oatman and Mr. Zuber are working on a plan to clean up the park "as quickly as possible."

Mr. Paterson also questioned why Freeholder Mohamed Jalloh is not being given the Democratic organization line on June Primary Election ballots. Mr. Granados cut off Mr. Paterson, saying his comments needed to address governmental and not political issues.

On the issue of the Gateway Project, which includes two new rail tunnels from New Jersey to New York under the Hudson River and a new portal bridge, Freeholder Bruce Bergen noted that legislation approved by the House and U.S. Senate last week includes \$541 million for the project.

"It's just a start, but it's a good start," Mr. Bergen said. "This is not a New Jersey issue, it's not a New York issue, it's a regional and even a national economic issue."

Bond Vote

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Public Works (DPW). Deputy Mayor Ann Dooley, as well as all the members of the township committee, thanked members of the DPW and thanked members of the Cranford community for all the e-mails and thank you notes received by members of the DPW in appreciation of their hard work.

It also was announced that, April 1 through April 21, a Distracted Driving Campaign would be launched within the township to further deter drivers in Cranford from talking on their cell phones or texting while driving.

A Get Fit Cranford Day was announced for the township for Sunday, April 22, which will be held in the main parking lot of the municipal building. Activities will include a self-defense class, yoga, dancing and a Simon Says class instructed by Mayor Thomas H. Hannen, Jr.

High-school athlete and distance runner Keith Brown asked commissioners to look into the condition of the bike and walking/running paths throughout Cranford, noting that there are many potholes and root overgrowth on these paths, causing potential injuries to those who utilize them like himself and his fellow runners.

The next township committee meeting is scheduled for April 10, at 7:30 p.m., at the municipal building at 8 Springfield Avenue.



Christina H. Hinke for The Westfield Leader
SAVING LIVES...Westfield Volunteer Rescue Squad members Michael Besaw, Edward Hance and David Sloan receive a proclamation from Mayor Shelley Brindle Tuesday night. The squad is fundraising to maintain and sustain their efforts to save lives.

Personalized Learning Showcased at BOE Meeting

By ROBYN ORR-GIOFFRE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD — Personalized Learning through Competency-Based Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) was showcased Monday night at the regular monthly meeting of the board of education.

Competency-Based learning seeks to advance students from skill to skill based on how competent they are, as opposed to advancing them based on age.

Jill Hayeck's third-grade students from Orange Avenue School gave the board a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the benefits of this program.

The students compared a traditional classroom to one using Competency-Based learning and told the board students in this environment become independent and work with any style they choose. They further commented that students learn and study at their own pace, take tests when they are ready, have increased ability to meet with teachers and peer experts and are able to move forward or stay behind in a skill even if classmates move on.

The program allows for Innovation Hour, a time for students to explore topics of interest during the day and a time for students to meet and discuss ways to be more successful in the classroom.

Additionally, there is Teacher Time, where students can sign up to meet with their teacher, which can be done with a small group of learners instead of just one-on-one. Students also can consult with the Expert Board, made up of students who have mastered a skill.

"I like this way of learning because we are not pushed to learn what we are not comfortable with," third grader Riley McGee told the board.

Orange Avenue School Principal Marc Edery commented to board members that for teachers implementing the new program. "The hardest part is letting go" and letting students

take control of their learning.

Superintendent Scott Rubin, Ed.D., gave the students accolades for their presentation, commenting, "I have to tell you, I think our future is in very good hands."

Security issues also were discussed at the meeting. The security audit will take place soon and there is a visit planned for each of the schools in the district.

Community meetings have been scheduled at each of the schools to address security concerns and social and wellness issues with students, with a presentation and a question-and-answer segment.

Mr. Rubin told the board that, starting next year, he would schedule an annual meeting to provide an update about safety and wellness concerns. He told the board he views security as "a shared responsibility" and expressed gratitude to the PTA presidents for allowing a dialogue with each of the schools, further commenting that, "it's very healthy to have this mutual dialogue and get to see things through multiple lenses."

The board of education will hold a public hearing on the budget in the board room at Lincoln School at 7 p.m. on Monday, April 30.

Writing Of Downtown Plans to Start Next Week

By FRED T. ROSSI
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

SCOTCH PLAINS — The drafting of redevelopment plans for the downtown business district is expected to get underway in the next week, and the hope is that, in about two months from now, the township council will be in a position to approve the plans and then vote on the first actual projects by the fall.

Last week, the council gave its unanimous approval to a plan to declare 45 properties in the downtown business district as being "in need of redevelopment," a designation that will give the municipal government greater control over how those parcels are redeveloped. The initial focus will be on the municipal-owned properties that house the library and adjacent parking lot as well as the municipal building, fire house and adjacent parking lot. Two or three new parking structures will be needed in the downtown to accommodate the new development, which will include not only retail and commercial space, a new library and possibly a new community center but also several hundred new housing units. It is likely the new parking facilities will be situated on each side of Park Avenue — on the block where the library now stands, in the present municipal parking lot next to town hall and possibly elsewhere such as behind the stores on Park Avenue between Bartle Avenue and Westfield Avenue.

Thomas Strowe, the township's coordinator for the revitalization efforts, said the redevelopment plans will include a variety of items including land use, building design, infrastructure needs, design standards, density, building heights, parking, etc.

"We'll then ask developers to submit proposals that fit into what's laid out in the plans," he told *The Westfield Leader* this week. "We'll get as specific as we need to but we don't want to be too specific," he said, adding that, "we want the free market to work" and encourage developers to be creative and come up with their own ideas as well.

While the main focus initially will be on the library and town hall properties, Mr. Strowe said the entire area encompassed in the Phase 1 section — 19.2 acres of public and private properties bounded roughly by Park Avenue, East Second Street and Westfield Avenue, Grand Street, Forest Road and Front Street — will be included in the redevelopment plans that will be written. He said the downtown may be divided into several redevelopment zones and that developers may choose to submit proposals for a single zone, two zones or for the entire neighborhood, depending on their preferences. And if private property owners, after evaluating the plans and developer proposals, want to participate, they will be encouraged to do so, Mr. Strowe said.

A subcommittee of the downtown redevelopment committee will be responsible for drafting the plan and will work with other committee members as well, said Mr. Strowe, who will take part in the plan's writing along with Mayor Alexander Smith, Deputy Mayor Llewellyn Jones, Township Manager Al Mirabella, planners and attorneys along with several business owners and property landlords. The subcommittee's progress will be updated at the redevelopment committee's monthly meetings, and if members of the public wish to provide comments or input at those meetings, they will be able to do so, Mr. Strowe told *The Times*.

He echoed the mayor's hope that by the end of May or early June, the redevelopment plan can be introduced by the township council and, if approved, requests for proposals from developers can be solicited during the summer months. By fall, Mr. Strowe said, he hopes the governing body will be voting on the first downtown projects.

Last week, Planning Board Chairwoman Paulette Coronato noted that the current downtown revitalization efforts had come further than any of the previous efforts, which included over the years numerous consultant reports and the formation of several committees that sought to find a solution to downtown revitalization. Mr. Strowe this week said the same, adding that, "we have to get [the first phase] right and as perfect as it can be."



Fred T. Rossi for The Westfield Leader
WORDS OF WISDOM...Former baseball star Darryl Strawberry speaks to fans young and old at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School on Monday night about his professional triumphs and personal struggles.

Westfield Budget

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the town's AAA bond rating.

Councilman Mark LoGrippe said he had concerns with spending a quarter of a million dollars in consultation fees. He questioned the need for a part-time communications manager. "Our communication is better in Westfield than in Summit and they have a public relations officer," Mr. LoGrippe said.

The public relations manager is to help alleviate the burden of communicating to residents from the department heads, and the new position will also mitigate the need for outside consultants for website management, Mayor Shelley Brindle said.

Councilman Frank Arena also questioned hiring consultants. He went further to call out the federal deficit. And then said, "I would like to see us be the leader in New Jersey and eliminate county government." He said the redundancies in New Jersey government make the state residents the "highest taxed people in the planet."

The public portion of the meeting had a large crowd gathered to hear the budget, with a handful of residents who asked questions such as the need for hiring of new people, what was cut from the budget to alleviate the tax burden to residents, technology, and other matters.

"There is a tax fatigue," said resident Ryan Morris of Hyslip Avenue. "I challenge you guys to come back and say...this is what we cut...to save and invest over here," he said.

Resident Kenneth MacRitchie

asked the council to reconsider his request made eight years ago to remove the restriction of fence heights around equipment apparatus used for utility companies.

Prior to the council unanimously voting to introduce an ordinance banning the sale of cats and dogs taken from puppy mills in the town, Larry Cohen, a volunteer Union County legislative leader for the Humane Society, spoke about how this ordinance is "a good deed." So far, 120 New Jersey municipalities have passed such an ordinance, he said.

The council also introduced an ordinance that regulates and establishes certain requirements for short-term rentals of private residences.

A cap bank was established in the amount of \$321,556, which is 3.5 percent over last year's.

Gregory Talmont was appointed to the Board of Architectural Review.

Mayor Brindle said the police department had 60 citations given out during the storm; some 4,000 people attended the March For Our Lives event in Westfield, and that a new Town Hall High School intern program, has 48 high school students involved.

The DPW will be picking up brush that resulted from downed limbs and trees due to the snow storms at the curbside, and the town website is to be updated daily on the brush pickup schedule. Also, the Conservation Center is open Saturday and residents can bring brush there as well.



Christina H. Hinke for The Westfield Leader
PARKINSON'S AWARENESS MONTH...Barbara Ringk receives a proclamation from Mayor Shelley Brindle announcing Parkinson's Awareness Month. The Parkinson's Support Group in Westfield meets every second Monday of the month.



Courtesy of Joanne Larosa
HOME SWEET HOME...Preschool teacher Gabriella LaRosa and Teal Hall, a local carpenter, build an igloo with last week's snow a their home in Westfield.



Susan D. Dougherty for The Westfield Leader
STUDENT ORGANIZED AND STUDENT LED...Saturday's March for Our Lives held in Mindowaskin Park in Westfield, and organized by student Emily Bloomfield, was a rally where people who spoke of personal reasons for marching.