

Cranford Supports Expansion Of Children's Library

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

CRANFORD — The township committee voiced support Monday at a workshop meeting of expanding the children's library by agreeing to include close to \$1 million in its budget. The expansion of the children's department is a project the library board has hoped to see achieved for more than a decade. The other half of the cost would be kicked in by the state, should the township receive the grant funds from the new state library construction bond act passed by voters in last November's election.

The plans for the expansion would double the children's library on the first floor and would do away with the tall shelving to make room for lower shelving that would be safer, Library Director Michael Maziekien said. He said the expansion would provide early literacy programs for a growing number of children in the Cranford population, and help fill a gap made by the lack of a mandated full-day kindergarten program in the township. The project would also straighten the handicapped ramp at the library entrance to make it more accessible.

The township committee also heard from other departments for their capital items wish list for 2018. The committee agreed to include \$100,000 for desilting Rahway River, which is half the amount requested by the engineer; \$135,000 for a new bucket truck for the Department of Public Works (DPW); \$25,000 for turnout gear for the fire department; \$600,000 to replace some radios in the police department, a move the state is requiring to make the system digital, and \$50,000 to replace a basketball court in Adams Park. The request to replace the over 20-year-old playground at Adams Park was denied by commissioners Ann Dooley and Patrick Giblin; the committee also

denied a budget request to replace four other trucks in an aging DPW fleet of vehicles.

The committee met in private session to hear the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) plan by the proposed developer of 215-235 Birchwood Avenue, where 225 apartments in a multi-story, multi-building housing development are to be built. The township over a year ago purchased the property for \$18 million in an attempt to resell the property to a developer who would reduce the number of apartments on the site. Originally, a builder, Hekemian, won a lawsuit allowing the construction of 360 units there to help satisfy the township's affordable-housing obligation. To date, the township has not signed a contract with the new developer, Birchwood Developers Associates aka Birchwood Developers Urban Renewal Associates, LLC, and will not disclose the bids received for sale of the property.

The developer is expected to present its site plan to the planning board on Wednesday, April 4 at 8 p.m. The architectural plans, as provided on the township website, depict three, four-story buildings that have parking on the ground level, and three stories of apartments above. The affordable-housing component makes up 15 percent of the units or 34 apartments.

The township has until the end of this year to comply with its affordable housing obligation of 55 units that was spelled out in the builder's remedy lawsuit won by Hekemian, along with a prior round need of 138 units, plus another five units, as stated in a judgment of repose in 2013. Cranford has yet to settle its third-round fair share housing obligation.

**Don't need it?
Use a Leader/TIMES
Classified Ad to Sell it!**

Cranford Police to Crack Down on Distracted Drivers

CRANFORD — Law enforcement officers from the Cranford Police Department will be cracking down on distracted drivers during April as part of New Jersey's UDrive. UText. UPay. enforcement campaign.

Beginning April 1 and running through April 21, the high visibility law enforcement initiative will target motorists who engage in dangerous distracted driving behaviors such as talking on hand-held cell phones and sending text messages while driving.

"Distracted driving is possibly the most serious safety issue on our roadways today," said Gary Poedubicky, acting director of the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety. "The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that in 2015 alone, 3,477 people were killed in

distracted driving crashes and an estimated 391,000 people were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving a distracted driver."

In New Jersey, driver inattention was listed as a contributing circumstance in 52 percent of the state's crashes in 2015. Driver inattention was in fact listed as a contributing factor in crashes at a rate nine times higher than that of the next highest contributing factor — speed.

The campaign is being carried out during the month of April, which the National Safety Council has designated as Distracted Driving Awareness Month. The New Jersey campaign is modeled after similar successful high visibility enforcement programs such as Click It or Ticket and Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over.



CHRISTMAS IN FEBRUARY...Staff at Peggy's House in Scotch Plains created Christmas in February as a dying wish for a patient, Liz K., complete with a tree and a visit from Santa.

Peggy's House Creates Christmas for Patient

SCOTCH PLAINS — When a patient expressed disappointment to a nurse that her illness kept her from celebrating Christmas Eve at home, the staff at Peggy's House sprang into action and created Christmas in February, complete with a tree and a visit from Santa. The idea came from Jean Doyle, a registered nurse, who was attending to the needs of Liz K., who passed away on February 10, a week after the holiday celebration.

Liz had come to Peggy's House in Scotch Plains in late January after several hospitalizations that kept her and her family from their yearly tradition of having Christmas at their East Brunswick home. She told her nurse about how she'd missed it and in no time, the residence's staff got to work planning the day.

The main atrium, already decorated for Valentine's Day, was completely redecorated for Christmas. The tree was erected with lights and ornaments, gifts and food appeared, and Rich Rager (whose wife, Nancy Rager, is the center's director of residential services) got on his Santa costume to help celebrate the season. Liz, her husband Michael, their children and guests joined Peggy's House

staff on Saturday, February 3 for the festivities. Liz passed away one week later, but the Peggy's House staff created a lasting memory for Liz's family and all involved.

"She rose to the occasion and took it all in," said Ms. Doyle, Liz's nurse. "She loved every minute of it. When I asked her if she had a good day, she told me, 'It was an amazing day.'"

Rich Broski, communications director for Center for Hope Hospice, created a moving video chronicling the heartwarming story. In less than 24 hours after posting the video to the Center's Facebook page, it was shared 26 times and viewed over 1,200 times. The video is also on YouTube at bit.ly/ChristmasinFeb.

Fanwood Egg Hunt Moved to March 31

FANWOOD — Due to a weather forecast of heavy snow last Wednesday and the potential for hazardous conditions in Forest Road Park over the weekend, the Fanwood Easter Egg Hunt, originally scheduled for March 24, has been postponed until this Saturday, March 31, at 10 a.m., at Forest Road Park.

Did You Know?

The Union County Clerk's Property Search Website trafficked over 1.18 million property searches in 2017.

Munoz Says Murphy Follows DEM Playbook

TRENTON -- Assemblywoman Nancy Munoz (R-21st, Summit) released the following statement following last week's budget address by Governor Phil Murphy:

"What Governor Murphy proposed today is straight out of the Democrats' spend and tax playbook. It's a classic Democrat budget loaded with tax increases and far too much spending that our taxpayers cannot afford. For eight years, we balanced the state budget while growing our economy. The governor's plan will wipe out our progress. It will stifle growth and hurt families and businesses still struggling to make ends meet."

SAGE Participates In 16th March for Meals

SUMMIT — SAGE Eldercare is participating in the 16th annual March for Meals — a month-long, nationwide celebration of Meal on Wheels and the homebound and vulnerable seniors who rely on its vital safety net.

SAGE's Meals on Wheels is the oldest continuously run program in New Jersey. The program provides more than 46,000 meals to about 225 people in Union County (Berkeley Heights, Mountainside, New Providence, Springfield, and Summit), Essex County (Millburn and Short Hills), and Morris County (Chatham and Madison).

"The services that we provide the seniors in our area are critical; it's not just a warm meal, but also a friendly visit, sometimes the only human contact a senior gets the whole day," said Marianne Kranz, SAGE director of Meals on Wheels and Home Support Services. "Together, we can keep seniors living independently, healthier at home and feeling more connected to their community as they age."

Since 2002, Meals on Wheels America has led the annual awareness campaign in an effort to fill the gap between the seniors served and those in need that is widening

due to increased demand with a rapidly aging population combined with declining public and private resources, and rising food, transportation and operational costs. This month, hundreds of local Meals on Wheels programs, like SAGE Eldercare, reached out to their communities to build the support that enabled them to deliver nutritious meals, friendly visits and safety checks to America's seniors all year long.

"March is a time for us all to rally around Meals on Wheels," said Ellie Hollander, president and CEO of Meals on Wheels America. "Our ability to meet the needs of vulnerable seniors lies in the willingness and generosity of businesses, government and concerned individuals of all ages to contribute in their own way. It not only makes economic sense to enable seniors to stay healthy and safe at home, but it improves the health and vibrancy of our communities and our nation at large."

For more information about the Meals on Wheels program at SAGE, or if you know someone who could benefit from the service, contact Ms. Kranz at (908) 273-5554 or email mkranz@sageelderca.



MARCH FOR MEALS...State Senator Thomas Kean Jr. (R-21st, Westfield) joined the SAGE Eldercare's Meals on Wheels team in support of the 16th annual National March for Meals program on March 9. SAGE's Meals on Wheels is the oldest continuously run program in New Jersey. The program provides more than 46,000 meals to approximately 225 people in Union County. Pictured, from left to right, with the Senator are: Meals on Wheels volunteers William and Karen Ayers and SAGE Eldercare Executive Director Angela Sullivan.

ACCIDENTS & PERSONAL INJURY LAW

**CALL
JON BRAMNICK**

Certified Civil Trial Lawyer

908-322-7000

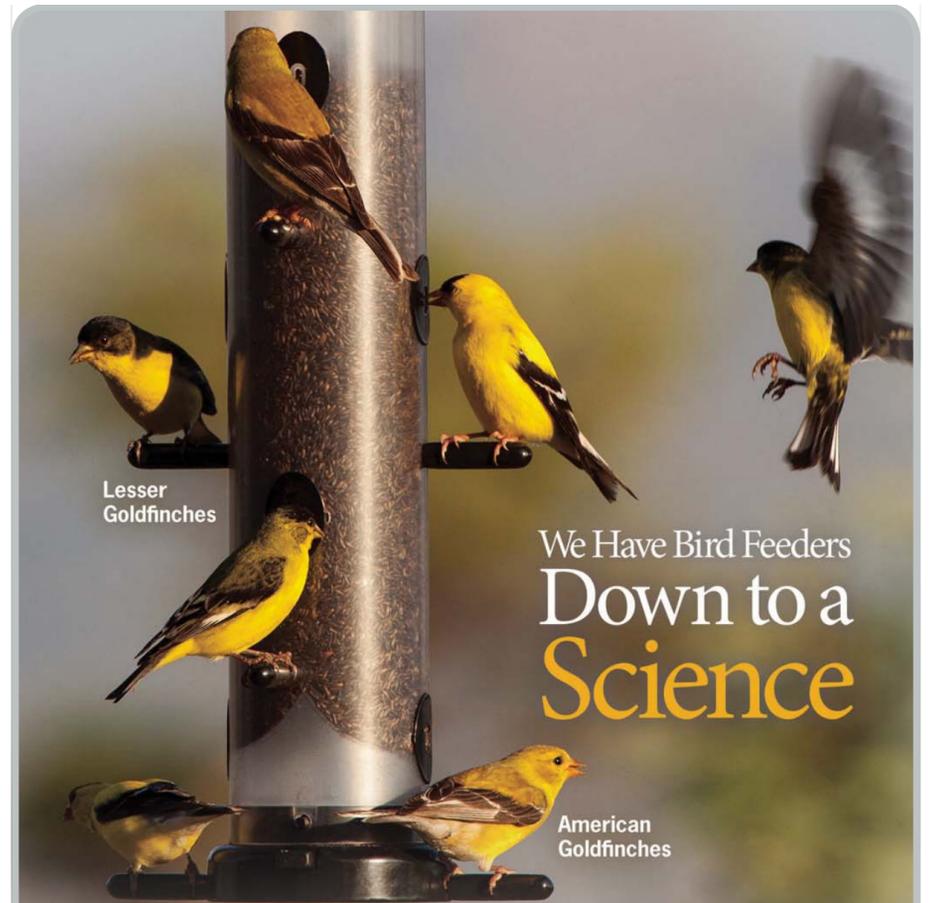
Jon M. Bramnick, Esq.
John C. Rodriguez, Esq.
Gary J. Grabas, Esq.
Jonathan P. Arnold, Esq.
Patrick J. Mangan, Esq.
Jose Vilarino, Esq.
Richard M. Brockway, Esq.
Carl A. Salisbury, Esq.

Gavin Handwerker, Esq.
Brian J. Trembley, Esq.
Kelly A. Lynch, Esq.
Susan E. Kinsella, Esq.
Brent A. Bramnick, Esq.
Michael Noriega, Esq.
Cristina Carreno, Esq.
Robert C. Rowbotham, II., Esq.

Bramnick, Rodriguez, Grabas, Arnold & Mangan, LLC

1827 East Second Street
Scotch Plains, NJ 07076

www.jonbramnick.com



Lesser Goldfinches

We Have Bird Feeders
Down to a
Science

American Goldfinches

20% OFF
All Bird Feeders*

*Valid only at the participating store listed. Offer not valid on previous purchases or sale items. Offer valid in-store only 3/30/18 thru 4/16/18.



2520 US Highway 22 East, Scotch Plains, NJ 07076
(908) 233-5004 • www.wbu.com/scotchplains

BIRD FOOD • FEEDERS • GARDEN ACCENTS • UNIQUE GIFTS