

Cranford Comm. Supports Expansion Of Children's Library Department

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 apart-

ments.

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.

Wednesday Morning Club Lists April Program Guests

CRANFORD — The Wednesday Morning Club will hold its business meeting on Wednesday, April 4, at 10 a.m. Club President Sue Driscoll will introduce Colleen Hintz. Ms. Hintz will present a program entitled "The Secret Quilt Code of the Underground Railroad." Attendees will learn about the sewing of quilt blocks to create visual messages that were interpreted by slaves looking to gain their freedom in Canada via the Underground Railroad. The meeting will take place at the Cranford Community Center, located at 220 Walnut Avenue. All are welcome.

On Tuesday, April 10, the club's Public Affairs Department will meet at the home of Sue Driscoll to plan for next year. The meeting will begin at 12:30 p.m. Interested persons are asked to bring a sandwich and to call Ms. Driscoll if they plan to attend.

The American Arts and Crafts Department will meet on Tuesday, April 17, at 10 a.m., in the Cranford Community Center to plan their projects for next year. If planning to attend, call Joan Davis.

Probitas Verus Honos

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.

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The club will gather on Wednesday, April 18, for a luncheon at Giovanna's Restaurant featuring writer, singer-songwriter and actor Val Emmich. Giovanna's Restaurant is located at 1462 South Avenue, Plainfield. The luncheon begins at 12:30 p.m. and the cost is \$21. To make a reservation, call Jane Reilly. Mr. Emmich is known for his work as an actor on HBO's "Vinyl," NBC's "30 Rock," Showtime's "The Big C" and ABC's "Ugly Betty." He also has written a very well-received first novel entitled "The Reminders." *The Huffington Post* said of his novel, "Emmich performs a bit of magic in his warm and winning debut novel."

On Monday, April 23, the Literature Department will meet at the home of Dot Conheaney at 12:30 p.m. to select the books the group will read next year. Participants are asked to bring a sandwich and call Dot if they plan to attend.

For more information about The Wednesday Morning Club, call Vice-President Carol Moran at (908) 233-5635 or e-mail her at caromm@comcast.net.