

Cranford Experts Express Their Opinions on 750 Walnut Avenue

By **CHRISTINA M. HINKE**
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD – James Brunette, a licensed real estate broker, and Maurice Rasched, licensed as a professional engineer, with a specialty in traffic engineering, provided their opinions on 750 Walnut Avenue at the planning board hearing last Wednesday. This 30-acre tract of land is owned by Hartz Mountain Industries, which is seeking to rezone the property for residential use in

order to erect 905 apartments. Mr. Brunette spoke about the viability of the industrial and the office space market in the state. The office commercial market is improving, while the "industrial market is on fire," Mr. Brunette said. He said there are shortcomings regarding the property. "It could be retrofitted to meet the requirement people would want," Mr. Brunette said. He showed examples of properties in other

municipalities where property owners have made improvements to buildings to attract tenants. Some attractions include lounge areas, eateries, gym space and outdoor space, he said. For an industrial use, he said a 35-foot ceiling height is desirable, and Hartz could change the ceiling heights. Hartz's real estate professionals have said they have been unsuccessful in finding tenants. Bank of America occupied a large portion of the commercial space, but has vacated the premises.

Also, there is a demand for smaller industrial spaces between 25,000 and 50,000 square feet, Mr. Brunette said. A tenant at 750 Walnut Avenue, Lab Corps, had wanted to downsize its space at the site, "and couldn't come to an agreement (with Hartz)," Mr. Brunette said. Lab Corps occupies 85,000 square feet. "They are in the midst of evacuating," Mr. Brunette said.

At the start of Mr. Rasched's

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Christina M. Hinke for The Westfield Leader

DAR MARKS 75TH ANNIVERSARY...Barbara Krause of the Cranford Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution is presented with a resolution March 5 by Mayor Patrick Giblin marking the 75th anniversary of the Cranford DAR.



LEADER IN FLORIDA...Caroline and RJ from Cranford hold up *The Westfield Leader* in front of the Flagler Beach pier in Flagler Beach, Fla., on Sunday. With the temperatures reaching into the 80s, playing in the sand and surf has been a nice break from the ice and snow in New Jersey.

Cranford BOE Proposes \$68-Mil. School Budget

By **ROBYN ORR-GIOFFRE**
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD — Preliminary discussions about the 2019-2020 school budget took place on Monday night at the Cranford Board of Education (BOE) meeting.

The projected total for the budget is expected to be \$68,522,849, which is a 1.26-percent increase from last year. The approximate school tax increase on the average Cranford taxpayer will be \$167.16.

The board approved submission of the budget to the executive county superintendent of schools, part of the state's Department of Education.

The six largest components of the budget are salaries and benefits, out-of-district tuition costs, transportation costs, energy costs, student related/extraordinary services and liability services.

These areas make up over 94 percent of the budget and add up to \$62,763,069. The district is receiving an increase of \$216,159 in state aid. According to Superintendent of Schools Scott Rubin, Ed.D., the money will be used to "continue the district's focus on promoting and enhancing health and wellness."

The district is recommending that two school counselors be

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