

This page is brought to you by:

Superior Interiors

908-232-3875 • www.superiorinteriorsofnj.com

Bd. Planner: 750 Walnut Ave. Apts. Would Have Negative Fiscal Impact

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

CRANFORD – The planning board's planner, during last Wednesday's board meeting, said in his own fiscal-impact analysis that both the municipality and the school district would see a negative fiscal impact should a proposed apartment complex be built at 750 Walnut Avenue. Hartz Mountain Industries, LLC owns the 30.5-acre property eyed for the development, and currently is applying to rezone the property from commercial to residential in order to build 905 apartment units across five buildings on the property.

The total negative impact to both the township and the school district could be as high as a negative \$2.3 million, the board's planner, Raymond Liotta of Maser Consulting, said. Mr. Liotta gave a presentation of his analysis and review of the fiscal-impact analysis studies submitted by the applicant for the proposed development.

Mr. Liotta had conducted his own analysis because he had seen differences in the three reports supplied by the applicant, one being the cap rate (evaluation of property and rate of return on investment) used in Hartz Mountain's analysis, he said. In the first two reports, the applicant used a 6-percent cap rate and in the third report the applicant used a 5.5-percent cap rate. Mr. Liotta supplied his analysis

using both cap rates, as well as using the school district's analysis (prepared by consultant Ross Haber) of the children who could be added to the district as a result of the apartments, and the district's cost per pupil.

No explanation was given as to the reasoning behind the cap rate change, Mr. Liotta said. The effect of the cap rate change affects the valuation number of the project value.

Basing his analysis on a 6-percent cap rate, the township would see a negative \$210,687 net fiscal impact, Mr. Liotta said. The school district would see a negative \$2,258,171 at a 6-percent cap rate. In sum, the township and school district would see a total negative \$2,468,858 fiscal impact analysis at a 6-percent cap rate, he said.

Using a 5.5-percent cap rate, the township would see a negative \$79,835 net fiscal impact, while the school district would see a negative \$1,949,404.

Hartz Mountain's planner, Keenan Hughes of Phillips, Preiss, Grygiel, Leheny, Hughes LLC, had provided three reports last year, with the final report being updated in October 2018, that showed a positive net fiscal impact to both the township and the school district.

In Mr. Liotta's review, he calculated the value at \$290,687,127 at a 5.5-percent cap rate; and with a 6-percent cap rate the value would be \$266,463,200 in

Mr. Liotta's analysis. "It's a \$24.4-million difference and could make a difference in tax revenues generated by the property," Mr. Liotta said.

Mr. Hughes gave a rebuttal to the school district's planner, Ross Haber's, analysis of school-aged children that would be generated by the application. He gave his reasons why he believes Mr. Haber's report is invalid.

Mr. Haber projects 353 school-aged students would be added to the district if the proposal by Hartz is built and fully occupied. Mr. Hughes data projects 152 school-aged children, and of that total, a range of 110 to 135 public-school students would be added to the school district.

Mr. Hughes said in Mr. Haber's testimony given at a previous board meeting that he said he "based his analysis on new, comparable developments." Mr. Hughes said, "it turns out that was not a true statement."

"Haber indicated his method for estimating the number of school children generated in a two-bedroom apartment was based on looking at the entire universe in a number of communities and dividing that by the number of students in a school district," Mr. Hughes said.

He also did not adjust for a number of other "relevant factors." Also, the list of communities Mr. Haber looked at have 74-percent single-family homes and

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



CELEBRATING WOMEN OFFICIALS...Garwood Mayor Sara Todisco, left, was honored on May 3 by Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-12th, Trenton), right, at the Shiloh Baptist Church in Trenton as part of the event "Becoming: A Celebration of Women Elected Officials."

Garwood Mayor, Council Support Ladder Truck

By **MICHAEL BONACCORSO**
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

GARWOOD – Mayor Sara Todisco and the borough council on Thursday unanimously supported the Garwood Fire Department acquiring a ladder truck. The cost of the truck is estimated at \$1.3 million.

Over the last month, Garwood Fire Chief Allan Tweedle and Assistant Chief John Scalzadonna discussed the ladder truck's spe-

cifics at two public town-hall-style meetings. The council opined on the ladder truck acquisition thus avoiding a referendum vote by residents.

It was revealed during these meetings that the existing ladder truck cannot reach 20 buildings on the north side and 18 buildings on the south side of the borough.

At Thursday's council meeting,

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE