



THE WESTFIELD LEADER

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ONE DOLLAR

Westfield Council Adopts Capital Ords.; Discusses Burglaries

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD—The town council at its Tuesday night regular meeting passed a capital budget ordinance and a bond ordinance, while also introducing ordinances that would amend the code of the Town of Westfield pertaining to tree preservation, allow overnight parking at Lot 3 at the train station by South Avenue, designating the Reeve House and Triangle Park as local historic landmarks, setting annual salary ranges and installing a stop sign at Elizabeth and Boynton Avenues.

The bond ordinance was adopted, 7 to 1, with Councilwoman Jo Ann Neylan voting against. The capital

bond will appropriate \$4.76 million to fund items including acquisition of new vehicles, road and pedestrian safety improvements, renovation of the coffee kiosk at the train station, and improvements to the municipal chambers and conference rooms. Part of the bond will be supported by grants and surplus.

Another capital ordinance for \$1 million was adopted, 7 to 1, with Ms. Neylan voting against, to acquire vehicles, equipment and machinery for the Department of Public Works (DPW).

The tree preservation ordinance amendments are to make "more stringent requirements" to aid in tree preservation, Mayor Shelley Brindle said.

Those amendments include notifying neighboring property owners of tree removals, increased fees for removal applications and penalty fines, and mandated donations to the tree trust fund above a certain removal threshold, Mayor Brindle said.

A resolution was passed designating May 20 through June 2 as a Click it or Ticket seat-belt-enforcement period.

The purchase of police uniforms in the amount of \$28,000 was granted by resolution.

The DPW received approval for the purchase of two vehicles at a cost of \$180,906.

Additionally, the DPW is seeking to purchase a firewood super-splitter, and no bids were received after being advertised. The council authorized the town engineer to negotiate for prices to purchase it.

A contract for the town's Licensed Site Remediation Professional (LSRP) was extended by resolution in the amount of \$27,500 to conduct additional testing and evaluations of municipally-owned facilities in order to be compliant with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

The Green Team also is seeking the town council's approval to request that retail establishments in town install a voluntary reduction of single-use plastics, such as plastic straws, stirrers, eating utensils, packaging containers and plastic bags, said Green Team member Tim Boyd.

Some ways a retail establishment could initiate this movement would be to ask customers if they want a bag or eating utensils, to charge customers if they are provided a single-use plastic bag, credit customers for bringing in reusable bags, and to wait for customers to ask for a straw before providing one, Mr. Boyd said.

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New Elementary Report Cards Presented to BOE

By JENNIFER GLACKIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — New elementary report cards were introduced at Tuesday's board of education meeting. Paul Pineiro, assistant superintendent of curriculum, instruction, and programs, presented new standards-based report cards, after a two-year collaboration of administrators, parents and teachers. If the board adopts the standards-based report cards, they will go into effect for the 2019-2020 school year.

Standards-based grading and report cards more closely align with state standards and focus on a growth mindset and a continuum towards mastery, according to Mr. Pineiro. Four levels of performance descriptors will replace letter grades on grades K-5 report cards. The four descriptors are Exceeds the benchmark (E), Achieves the benchmark (A), Progressing Towards the benchmark (P) and Needs Support (N). Grades 1 to 5 will move to a trimester reporting system. Report cards will be distributed in December, March and June. Kindergarten will continue to report on a semester basis. The report cards will continue to have a custom comment section and indicators for work habits and social-emotional learning.

Mr. Pineiro stated that these descriptors "do not reflect letter grades," but instead indicate a student's strengths and areas for improvement that will inevitably help teachers and students set goals for individual learning. Rubrics also were created to help teachers analyze their students' work using a standardized qualitative assessment and to provide transparency for parents, according to Mr. Pineiro and third-grade teacher Cathy Chao, who was on the committee. The rubrics and report cards will be available on the district's website, and parents



RELAY FOR LIFE...Fifty-eight teams with 536 registered walkers signed up to walk at Friday's all-night fundraiser, Relay for Life. Over the last 12 years, the Cranford event has raised over a million dollars. This year's tally was almost \$115,000. The fundraiser featured music, face painting, a silent auction and luminaries to honor friends and relatives.

Susan M. Dougherty for The Westfield Leader

Final Public Comments Heard on 750 Walnut; Bd. to Vote June 5

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD — The planning board heard final comments from the public last Wednesday on the Hartz Mountain Industries, LLC application to rezone its 30.5-acre commercial property at 750 Walnut Avenue to a residential zone. On Wednesday, June 5, the planning board is to deliberate publicly and make its vote to recommend, or not to recommend, that the property be rezoned, to the township committee. The township committee, made up of four Democrats and one Republican, will have the deciding vote to rezone the property.

Each person was given five minutes, and one opportunity, to voice his or her comment on the application, with Hartz Mountain's attorney, James Rhatican, having the final chance at the microphone to give a summation. He said he will submit a written summation for the board's consideration by Friday, May 24.

It has been a year of planning board meetings, where the board heard testimony from experts on behalf of Hartz Mountain, as well as the school district and the planning board's experts. What was heard from the microphone Wednesday from residents is "Say No to 750 Walnut Avenue," a tagline created by a group of township residents opposed to the application.

Residents who commented do not want the added traffic congestion, increases in the township's population and school district enrollment, or the density of the apartment buildings proposed on the lot, which is surrounded by a single-family residential neighborhood on the front and side and a golf course at the rear of the lot.

Hartz's application to rezone had architectural drawings for 905 apartments, 15 percent of which would be inclusionary affordable housing, amongst five buildings. The development would feature a mix of four- and five-story buildings with parking for close to 1,800 cars, and two clubhouses

and pools. The plan estimates the 905 units would add 1,846 people to the population. The 2010 United States Census placed the township's population at 22,625.

Wayne Orshak, of Mohawk Drive, a longtime resident and a former director of the Cranford Chamber of Commerce, was the first resident to speak. "This project as currently proposed will forever change the fabric of our beloved community," he said, adding that it "will adversely affect" the community. He said the township is "not equipped to handle this very large increase in the population" ...and that the development would "dramatically affect the quality of life here in Cranford."

Lydia Allen, of Walnut Avenue, who lives across the street from the property, said the traffic is already congested there, making it hard now to get her car out of the driveway. She told of the fatal accident that occurred around the corner from the property on Raritan Road, where a pedestrian crossing the street was struck by a vehicle and died in the hospital.

"We will have to force our way out...this is not the way it's supposed to be," said Ms. Allen, who has lived in the township for 45 years. She said to the board, "you are ruining the south side of town. Nobody here on this board lives on Walnut."

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IN RECOGNITION...Westfield High School choral students and their directors, John Brzozowski and Maureen Francis, were among the fine arts students recognized by the Westfield Board of Education Tuesday night.

Jennifer Glackin for The Westfield Leader

Bramnick Hosts Town Hall On High-Density Housing

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

MOUNTAINSIDE — Assembly Republican Minority Leader Jon Bramnick (R-21st, Westfield) hosted a town hall meeting in Mountainside Monday night on alternative affordable-housing solutions mitigating high-density housing's impact on public infrastructure, schools and taxes.

Assemblyman Bramnick said suburban towns not along a transit line should not be responsible for current affordable-housing quotas.

Mr. Bramnick said the affordable-housing discussion can continue, while informing residents by reaching out, constituent by constituent, through petition and town hall meetings.

He said many residents are unaware why traffic is becoming worse, how high-density housing came about, or who voted for the current legislation.

"Garwood and Cranford are becoming townships with more renters than homeowners," said one resident in describing affordable housing's impact on suburban demographics.

Mr. Bramnick said bipartisan regional housing committees could be established to assess state affordable-housing needs on a regional basis. He said urban areas are exempt from affordable-housing quotas, while suburbs are being held accountable.

Legislation (A-3928) "allows housing to be built where there is present need, such as urban areas which are closer to jobs and transportation," Assemblyman Bramnick said.

Attorney Jolanta Maziarz, who has defended municipalities against builder's remedy lawsuits, said the legislative standard creates an urban area "gentrification," forcing poor individuals into the suburbs. She said the suburbs become overcrowded, lacking resources, funding and infrastructure.

Assemblyman Bramnick said suspending court-imposed housing agreements for one year would allow state lawmakers to receive feedback from municipal leaders "to enact real reform" versus forcing towns into "onerous settlements."

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BUY NATIVE...Lara Mendenhall, AP Environmental teacher at Governor Livingston High School in Berkeley Heights, and Derrick a Boy Scout of Troop 80 in Cranford buy a selection of native plants for a rain garden Ms. Mendenhall will plant at Governor Livingston.

Christina M. Hinke for The Westfield Leader



KNOW YOUR STUFF...Ruth Yablonski, holding a book on plants, and Claire Minick, help buyers at Sunday's 30th annual Master Gardeners of Union County Spring Garden Fair and Plant Sale in the Watchung Reservation. The Spring Garden Fair is known for a large selection of flowers, herbs, and vegetables including the popular Ramapo and Rutgers 250 tomatoes.

Christina M. Hinke for The Westfield Leader

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Congratulations to the Top Producers for the Month of April!



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