

This page is brought to you by:

**Bramnick, Rodriguez, Grabas, Arnold & Mangan, LLC**  
 908-322-7000 • [www.jonbramnick.com](http://www.jonbramnick.com)

## 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."

Also, referring to PSE&G's desire to build a substation in the back corner of 750 Walnut Avenue, Ms. Allen said, "What more can we have there? It's ridiculous. You can't keep building...it's a dangerous situation."

She also rebuffed Hartz's testimony that the property is no longer viable for office use. She said an office building at 67 Walnut Avenue in Clark recently sold for \$10.5 million. Another resident, Susan Malanka, came up later and said the same.

Mark Zucker, of Virginia Avenue, said he felt the reports provided by Hartz Mountain's experts were inaccurate, calling it "poor business practice at best and deceitful at worst."

He said he spoke to a councilwoman in Clark about the Clark Commons' developer's propos-

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



Susan M. Dougherty for *The Westfield Leader*

**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.**

## Garwood Hears Review Of School District Goals

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

GARWOOD – New Jersey School Boards Association representative Gwen Thornton presented the Garwood school district's four broad strategic goals, derived over three strategic planning meetings on September 24, October 9 and December 12, 2018, at Tuesday's Garwood Board of Education meeting. The strategic categories include providing 21st-century curriculum instruction, protecting school climate and culture, and enhancing community engagement, while considering district financial costs

and facilities.

"Dreams become a goal when written down. Goals broken down become a plan. Action makes dreams a reality," Ms. Thornton said.

Garwood residents, board of education members and Lincoln School educators developed the categories, discussing the district's "strengths and weaknesses," Ms. Thornton stated.

"You did everything you needed to be done to begin making your dream a reality," said Ms. Thornton, addressing district representatives and strategic plan-

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE