

## Sewer Fee to Increase; Parks Plan Moves to Planning Board

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD—Taxpayers will see an increase of \$30 in their sewer tax bill this year. In a contentious vote Tuesday, the mayor and town council voted to increase the fee from \$165 to \$195, with Republican Councilman Mark LoGripio casting the sole dissenting vote.

"The number-one concern I hear from my constituents is affordability," Mr. LoGripio wrote on his councilman Facebook page. He asked the

council to table the vote for the finance committee to further review it, but quickly drew comments from the mayor and finance committee members, who ultimately said Mr. LoGripio should just cast his vote and the finance committee has already discussed it. Mr. LoGripio said the move was a "done deal" when a resolution had been drafted and presented at the finance committee meeting, something he said he had not seen in the eight years he served as councilman.

"An 18-percent increase is quite

significant to most taxpayers," Mr. LoGripio said in response to the mayor's statement that in three years the town saw an increase of \$750,000 in its Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority (RVSA) billing.

The town saw an increase of \$210,000 in its sewer bill from the RVSA this year, Town Administrator Jim Gildea said.

The fees for use of the Memorial Pool also were passed. Resident fees for 2020 are: family (five or more), \$520; family (four or less), \$420; individual, \$195, and senior, \$90, as well as other categories.

Three ordinances were passed. The council approved establishing an Access and Inclusivity Council. The town council approved expanding the board of the District Management Corporation, also called the Downtown Westfield Corporation, the management entity of the special improvement district (SID). The board will be amended to have 11 members made up of one town council member; three owners of real estate in the SID; three business operators in the SID, but who do not own property in the SID; four residents who are not property or business owners in the SID; and the town administrator and mayor or their designees as ex-officio members. The board's residents, business and property owner members are to represent both the north and south side of town, the mayor noted. The mayor and council also approved the sale of a portion of town property at 320 Virginia Street to a property owner that abuts that town parcel.

The council additionally voted to approve a resolution to refer the Parks and Strategic Plan to the planning board for consideration. Pat Hoagland, of Brandstetter Carroll Inc., the company hired to provide a study and recommendations for the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

## Assistant Prosecutors Seek Settlement of Contract

By PAUL J. PEYTON  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

COUNTY — The Union County Assistant Prosecutors Association (APA) came before the Board of Chosen Freeholders last Thursday as they seek a new contract. The union's previous contract expired December 31, 2017.

Juan Fernandez, representing the collective bargaining unit, told the freeholders that the group had reached a preliminary settlement for a new contract but now has been told there is not sufficient revenues available for the deal reached.

"We were advised during our negotiations that our contract was always dependent upon the prosecutor's overall budget and the dollars that are allocated to that budget were associated with the assistant prosecutors' contract," Mr. Fernandez said. "All the parties negotiating the contract were aware of that."

He said the union reached a "preliminary understanding regarding a financial package" that would give assistant prosecutors a 2-percent raise for a new three-year agreement with adjustment for stipends. He said assistant prosecutors receive stipends for being on-call on evenings and weekends when law enforcement cases occur.

Mr. Fernandez said several recent promotions in the prosecutor's office may have impacted the assistant prosecutors' contract. He said data they have received shows promotions for three individuals in the prosecutor's office totaled \$90,000 per year.

"That would have covered a large amount of the 2-percent increase we were seeking for 62 members of the Assistant Prosecutors Association," he said, noting that the 2-percent raise would cost the county \$130,000.

He said one employee in the



Christina M. Hinke for The Westfield Leader  
WE VOTE...Many of the women in the audience, at Tuesday's town council meeting, along with the Town of Westfield councilwomen and mayor wore white to commemorate the 100th anniversary of New Jersey's ratification of the 19th amendment giving women the right to vote. "I'm so glad to have the opportunity to honor the suffragettes who led the way for us," Mayor Shelley Brindle stated.

## Committee Asks Bd. to Look At North Ave. 'Redevelopment'

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD—With a 4-to-1 vote, the township committee on Tuesday night approved a resolution requesting that the planning board evaluate certain properties on North Avenue, to determine if the properties should be designated as a "condemnation area in need of redevelopment." Con-

demnation occurs when the state, local or federal government seizes property and compensates the owner. The power enabling government to do so is more commonly referred to as eminent domain.

Mayor Patrick Giblin said the decision has been discussed with business owners before the decision was made. "The business owners are fine with the agreement which has been made," Mayor Giblin told The Westfield Leader.

The properties in the North Avenue study area include 7 Springfield Av-

enue, where the Cranford Fire Department is located; 1 Springfield Avenue, where the Cranford Pet Vet is operating; 45 North Avenue East, where a gas station and auto garage is operating; 39-43 North Avenue East, where Hunan Wok, Ramen House, Island Tans and apartments above are located, and 27 North Avenue East, where a vacant, township-owned building is located, commonly referred to as the MDTV building.

Mayor Giblin said the conversation "on the process" not only in-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



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WESTFIELD 300...Bob Lewis, at Tuesday's town council meeting, presents a woodcut plaque representation of the Westfield 300 logo created by Jennifer Wilner to Mayor Shelley Brindle. The logo is in celebration of Westfield's 300 year anniversary. Mr. Lewis, a crossing guard at Washington School since the mid-90s and a crossing guard in town for 26 years, has had a hobby in wood working since he was 15, he told The Westfield Leader.

## Cranford Comm. Estimates Capital Budget at \$4.8 Mil.

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD—The township committee has not finalized the 2020 capital budget, but discussed several capital expenditure requests from various departments at Monday's workshop agenda meeting. Mayor Patrick Giblin said the committee received an estimated \$5.8 million in requests, while a capital budget in the estimated \$4.8 million range will "likely" be approved.

Of the estimated \$4.8 million, "roughly" \$3.5 million will be spent on infrastructure and paving projects, stated Mayor Giblin. Proposed capital expenditures include school-zone and pedestrian signs (\$150,000), renovation of the Community Center gym floor, and drainage improvement projects including Elm Street as well as other streets along the Rahway River.

In other business, newly-appointed Cranford Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Gina Tipton and

Chamber President Andis Kalnins said the 75-year-old chamber has just finished an internal reorganization. Ms. Tipton will replace Dottie Baniewicz, chamber executive director, who is retiring. As part of its revitalization, the chamber has added new executive board members, Mr. Kalnins said.

"We are looking to do the downtown street fair this summer. The street fair has always been favored by residents and is something the chamber has traditionally hosted," Mr. Kalnins said.

He said the chamber is planning events and membership "pushes" to increase local business participation. "For years, most of our members have been Cranford's businesses," Mr. Kalnins said.

The street fair would allow business owners to purchase a table in front of their store to service consumers street side, he said.

Traditionally, each business can purchase a table at the street fair for

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



Paul Lachenaier for The Westfield Leader  
WAITING AROUND...A tractor trailer strike near Plainfield caused the Raritan Valley Line to be shut down in both directions during the Tuesday morning rush hour on Tuesday. Rail commuters at the Cranford Station line up in a long line for the bus to New York City.

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GRANDPARENTS DAY...Bayla Funk is pictured with her grandmother during Grandparent/Special Persons Day held January 31 at Lincoln School in Westfield. At three different points in the day the gym was brimming with various guests who were all there at the behest of someone small in their lives.

PAGE INDEX	
Regional .....	2-3
Editorial .....	4-5
Police .....	12
Community ...	6-7, 12
Obituary .....	6
Education .....	13
Sports .....	9-12
Real Estate .....	3-14
Classifieds .....	12
A&E .....	14



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