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SIXTY CENTS

Rescue Squads Face Longer Trips When Muhlenberg Hospital Closes

By KATHERINE VOWELL
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

PLAINFIELD — As Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center in Plainfield makes its final preparations for closing, local volunteer rescue squads are being warned of the various changes about to take place.

Current plans will leave Muhlenberg open to non-critical patients who can receive out-patient care, meaning volunteers will have to decide which patients require in-patient care.

“That is a huge window,” said Shawn Lawson, captain of the Plainfield Rescue Squad. “We will have to use our own judgment, because we can’t bring anyone [to Muhlenberg] who has to be admitted.”

For Plainfield, the current five- to seven-minute trip to Muhlenberg hospital will now range from 20 to 40 minutes each way, depending on the hospital of choice, thereby tripling the amount of time it takes to get to Muhlenberg.

Roughly 85 percent of Plainfield’s calls are taken to Muhlenberg, the remainder go to Overlook Hospital in Summit, JFK in Edison, Robert Wood Johnson in New Brunswick and Somerset Medical Center in

Somerville. “It is going to be very challenging for us and the city,” Mr. Lawson said. “We average 7,000 calls a year, and the longer our transports take to other hospitals is going to affect the patients traumatically. Going out of town combined with the level of calls does not work for us or the patients.”

Other rescue squads are facing similar situations with the added commute to alternate hospitals.

“Overlook Hospital is twice as far, twice as long, and twice as much fuel,” said John Oatis, president of the Fanwood Rescue Squad, who estimates about 50 percent of Fanwood’s calls are taken to Muhlenberg.

With gas prices shooting up this summer, the added fuel cost is an additional burden that these volunteer organizations will be facing once Muhlenberg is closed.

“Muhlenberg has been always, not necessarily better equipped, but better experienced for all emergencies,” Mr. Oatis said. “They are the best hospital around as far as emergency rooms, they’ve seen just about everything. They know how to treat people and get them moved around in an orderly fashion.”

Muhlenberg is not the only hospital suffering from financial difficul-

ties. “It is the entire hospital system in general that is suffering,” said Mr. Oatis. “We have seen a string of hospitals closing, and it is just going to continue until someone comes up with an answer.”

Mr. Oatis, who is also a member of the New Jersey State First Aid Council, 2nd District, said that at a meeting last month, two senior officers from Muhlenberg hospital quoted that the hospital was losing \$1.5 million every month, and between \$15 to \$18 million annually.

“When you hear numbers like that you realize why they can’t go much further,” Mr. Oatis said. “It all comes down to the money, and it is a business decision on their [Muhlenberg Hospital’s] part.”

According to Mr. Oatis, the hospital will keep open the programs that are turning a profit, including the School of Nursing. The hospital will also run a satellite emergency room used for basic life support, nothing serious that would require a patient to stay in the hospital.

“They are still going to keep the paramedic unit that work the advanced life support open,” Mr. Oatis said. “The unit will be kept on for a while, because they have the ability to stabilize patients, communicate within emergency rooms and provide medications.”

With local rescue squads spending more time on the road, the volunteer rescue squads will be relying on mu-

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PAINFUL CLOSING...Founded in 1876, Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center is closing due to financial losses. The hospital in Plainfield, as viewed from Hub Stine Field, serves many local towns such as Fanwood, Scotch Plains and Westfield. See story at left.

Scotch Plains to Establish Special Improvement District Next Month

By FRED T. ROSSI

Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — The township council will introduce an ordinance, next month, to establish a Special Improvement District (SID) in the downtown business district and along Route 22.

During a 100-minute meeting on Tuesday with about 45 business and property owners, Deputy Mayor Nancy Malool said the ordinance would include a provision calling for a first-year assessment of \$400 on each property within the SID boundaries. This, she said, was in response to concerns raised by downtown property owners about the exact level of assessments being considered to finance the initial year of the SID’s operations.

The original proposal was a six-tiered flat rate formula depending on a property’s assessed value, with the assessments ranging from \$250 to \$2,000 per year.

Ms. Malool said she formulated the \$400 flat rate proposal after meeting last week with East Second Street property owner Sal Lamastra, who presented her with a petition signed by 121 individuals opposed to the SID.

Ms. Malool said, this week, she wasn’t surprised by the petition but questioned its value because of her concern that signers were not provided with accurate information about the details of the SID. She said she spoke to multiple people who told her they had been told their annual as-

essment would be \$2,000 when, in fact, most property owners would be paying \$250 to \$500 under the original formula.

As Mrs. Malool and Matthew Jessup, an attorney and consultant for SID, spoke in greater detail about the fee structure and what they saw as the benefits of establishing a SID, much of the vocal opposition appeared to dim among the attendees. Mr. Lamastra said, “at least we can take a chance” with the \$400 assessment, although he continued to express concerns about a SID entity “dictating” to the business community.

Mrs. Malool and Mr. Jessup both reminded attendees that the SID board of directors would be composed of local business and property owners. Mrs. Malool said the \$400-per-property assessment would result in an initial operating budget of about \$65,000, which she said would be enough to hire a manager, likely on a part-time basis initially, to start promoting local businesses and securing grants and other outside funding.

A board of directors of 11 to 13 members will be appointed by the township council and include representatives from all areas within the

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TO THE RESCUE...At last week’s township council meeting, Mayor Martin Marks, left, presented a proclamation to Harold Hill, honoring him for his 50 years of service to the Scotch Plains Rescue Squad.

Updated Redevelopment Plan Presented to Planning Bd.

By DEBORAH MADISON
Specially for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

FANWOOD — The Fanwood planning board heard a presentation of the most recent, proposed revisions to the Downtown Fanwood Redevelopment Plan. Mayor Colleen Mahr and the borough council act as the borough’s redevelopment agency and requested the update.

Stan Slachetka, a planner with T & M Associates that was hired by the borough, said to the board that the proposed changes were made to “fine-tune” small aspects of the overall plan and did not fundamentally alter the original plan in any substantial way.

The downtown redevelopment area – bordered by Martine Avenue to the north and Second Street to the south, and flanked by South Avenue and LaGrande Avenue to the east and west – is currently being redeveloped by a public and private partnership between the borough’s redevelopment agency and private developers. Certain parcels of the project are in various stages of completion, while other lands have not been purchased yet.

Some of the overall goals to be achieved by the redevelopment plan include improved pedestrian circulation and safety, enhanced linkage of the residential areas to the Fanwood Train Station and retail areas, and additional incentives to promote retail develop-

ment, Mr. Slachetka said. “The goal is to balance the community vision with the practical realities of the market place,” he said.

He said there would still be opportunities in the future to modify other design details as developers come before the board for site-plan approvals. However, Mr. Slachetka said some of the design features included in his presentation are considered to be essential and “locked-in” in order for these overall objectives to be achieved.

One of features of the plan includes a pedestrian walkway, traversing the entire length of the municipal parking lot from LaGrande Avenue to South Avenue, located behind retail stores and residential units. Another aspect of the plan, Mr. Slachetka told the board, is the inclusion of drive-through lanes in the parking lot for Sovereign Bank, located on South Avenue.

Mr. Slachetka said the bank considered drive-through lanes to be an essential aspect of its success. Board members discussed their concerns regarding pedestrian safety in the parking lot and ways to alter traffic patterns, as well as speed and site lines.

The board discussed eliminating multiple ingress and egresses in order to improve pedestrian safety.

Another debated aspect of the plan was whether or not to allow profes-

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Fanwood Redevelopment Concept Plan Map



Essex Jury Awards \$5.5 Mil. to Family of Student Killed in WF

SP Attorney Levine Serves as Family’s Attorney

By FRED T. ROSSI
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

WESTFIELD — The State Superior Court jury in Essex County, last Thursday, ordered the City of Newark to pay \$4.1 million to the family of Sohayla Massachi, a Seton Hall University student who was murdered in Westfield in 2000, and demanded Seton Hall University and Argenbright Security company to pay out the remaining \$1.4 million, or 25 percent, in the Estate of Sohayla Massachi v. City of Newark Police Department case.

The decision arose because of mistakes made by a Newark 911 operator and police dispatcher during the May 2000 incident.

At the time of the incident, Ms. Massachi, a 1994 graduate of Westfield High School, was abducted by her former boyfriend, Christopher Honrath, from a street near the Seton Hall campus on the afternoon of May 10, 2000. He then drove Ms. Massachi, 23, to his

apartment on Central Avenue, where he shot Ms. Massachi and himself.

During the kidnapping, two high school students saw Honrath pull a screaming Ms. Massachi into his car, parked on South Orange Avenue in front of the university in South Orange.

One of the students ran to the security booth at the university’s main gate and reported what she had seen to an Argenbright Security employee, who told her that the incident “was not on campus, and there is nothing they could do for her.”

The two students then called the South Orange Police Department from one of their homes and reported the abduction, along with a description of the two people involved, as well as a description of the car and its license plate number.

Minutes later, two off-duty Essex County Sheriff’s Officers who witnessed the abduction called 911, which

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Communities to Celebrate Memorial Day on Monday

By LAURA MORTKOWITZ
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — Area communities will hold various Memorial Day observances on Monday, May 26, to honor those military men and women who gave or risked their lives protecting the United States.

The communities of Scotch Plains and Fanwood will begin their Memorial Day observances at 8 a.m. at American Legion Post, 209 Park Avenue and Sunset Place in Scotch Plains. Wreaths will be laid at the Fanwood Memorial Library located at North Avenue and Tillotson Road at 9 a.m., and presented at the Veterans Monument at Park Avenue and Front Street in Scotch Plains at 10 a.m.

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Memorial Day Parade, themed “The 55th Anniversary of the Korean War Armistice,” will begin at 10:45 a.m. from the Scotch Plains Municipal Building, located at 430 Park Avenue. It will proceed down Park Avenue and Martine Avenue before ending at LaGrande Park in Fanwood.

Donald Wussler will serve as the parade’s grand marshal. Mr. Wussler is a Korean War veteran from the United States Army 7th Infantry Division and the recipient of a Purple Heart.

Opening ceremonies in Westfield will begin at 9 a.m. at the Monument to Veterans of World War I at the North Avenue and East Broad Street Plaza. All Westfield and Mountaintop organizations are invited to participate. The grand marshal is Lieutenant Colonel Michael Hrycak, who

has lived in Cranford since 1960.

Lt. Col. Hrycak has served in the United States Army since graduating from Rutgers University, having been commissioned as a second lieutenant through the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) in 1981. He was promoted to major in 1996, and to lieutenant colonel in 2003, and has served in the Iraqi Theater of Operation.

The opening ceremonies will feature multiple guest speakers, such as Peter Hogaboom, this year’s Master of Ceremonies; Al Riker, American Legion chaplain, and Westfield Mayor Andrew Skibitsky. Kerry Stubbs will sing “God Bless America” a cappella, and Theodore Schlosberg of the New Jersey Workshop for the Arts will perform taps.

There also will be cannon volleys by Lambs Artillery and special bell tolls by Jack Panosh, bell master and curator for the Westfield Town Clock.

After opening ceremonies, the parade will proceed north on East Broad Street to Fairview Cemetery, where closing ceremonies will take place. The Daughters of the American Revolution and the Sons of the American Revolution will hold their annual memorial service at the Revolutionary War cemetery.

At noon, Garwood will offer a solemn celebration at noon, held at the Garwood Knights of Columbus Hall at 43 South Avenue. There will be a guest speaker and refreshments for those in attendance. All are welcome, with a special invitation extended to children and young adults.

SP Plans Resurfacing Program for Summer

By FRED T. ROSSI

Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — The township is preparing to embark on what Township Manager Thomas Atkins called Tuesday night “an ambitious, aggressive program” of road resurfacing on 22 streets this summer.

At the township council’s conference meeting, Mr. Atkins said he was confident the roadwork could be mostly completed in the 10 weeks between the end of the school year in late June and the beginning of the next school year in early September.

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HOLE IN ONE...Scotch Plains Parks and Recreation Director Ray Poerio (center) accepts an award, at last week’s Scotch Plains township council meeting, from Bruce Kaufmann and Dee MacKay of the New Jersey Recreation and Park Association for excellence in design for the township’s mini-golf facility at Scotch Hills Country Club. Mr. Kaufmann and Ms. MacKay serve as Westfield’s recreation director and assistant recreation director, respectively.

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Katherine Vowell for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times
DARE TO DINE...At the second "DARE to Dine" cook-off on May 20, three restaurant chefs competed to raise funds for the Westfield DARE program. Pictured, left to right, are: Mayor Andy Skibitsky, Stacy Weinman, Officer Gary Moore, John Moretti, owner of the Top Line Appliance Center, Naomi McElynn, Elise Wilkins, Lori Vaughan and Audrey Hodapp. See article page 10.

WF DARE Program Holds Cook-Off to Raise Funds

By KATHERINE VOWELL
 Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD—DARE to Dine held its second cook-off, Monday, at the Top Line Appliance Center at 576 North Avenue in Westfield.

This was the second of three "Iron Chef"-type cook-offs taking place to raise money for the Westfield DARE program.

The public is the judge at these events, and chefs are rated based on the taste and appearance of the food. Monday night's winner, Limani Seafood Grill, will challenge Top Line's "top chef" John Cucullo, on Monday, June 2.

This past Monday's event was sold out, with close to 250 tickets purchased. All proceeds go to the Westfield DARE

program, which will use the funds to purchase a new vehicle.

"The cook-off supports the Westfield DARE program and pushes support for local businesses," said Officer Gary Moore, instructor and mentor for the Westfield DARE program.

Other restaurants that participated in the cook-off included, Chez Catherine, 16 Prospect, Feast Catering, Mama Lou's, Mojave Gill and The Brick Oven. DARE helps give students the skills they need to avoid involvement with drugs, gangs and violence.

Tickets for the final cook-off on June 2 are \$30 per person. For more information, contact Naomi McElynn at (908) 233-3021 or the Top Line Appliance Center at (908) 232-5200.

Fanwood Planning Board

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

sional office space on the first floor of retail buildings. One of the current building owners requested the board to approve a variance to allow this non-permitted usage.

Board Chairman Gregory Cummings voiced his opposition to the proposal, saying it was not something previously supported by the planners and would be "deleterious to a thriving, retail area."

Those who supported the idea cited the need of building owners to have flexibility when leasing a property, especially in difficult economic times. In a compromise, the board voted to approve a maximum of 25 percent of ground-floor retail space for professional office use, with the option to rescind that usage after the first leasable leave. Board members will form an ad hoc committee to review an ordinance regarding that usage.

Other aspects of the plan discussed included cross-access easements of the shared parking arrangement, building heights, sidewalks, open-space and landscaped areas, mid-block crossings and other aesthetic design features.

Officials said the borough intended on purchasing the Livingston-Wilbur property located on South Avenue, be-

tween the Ling property and Sovereign Bank. The borough was currently negotiating a purchase price. The land would need to be capped in order to contain ground contamination that migrated from the original Dean Oil site.

T & M Redevelopment Coordinator Daniel McCarthy said the price to contain the soil would not be expensive and would actually lower the purchase price of this property. The borough's intention was to flip the property to a developer, after the soil was secured, board member Jack Molenaar told *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*.

Located at 238 South Avenue, the light-industrial property was the site of a construction accident, last year, when a fire wall under construction at the Station Mews redevelopment project next door collapsed onto the Livingston-Wilbur building.

The planning board, at its next public meeting on May 28, will review the proposed modifications to the plan. The board will then forward its recommendations to the mayor and council.

WF Murder

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outed the call to Newark, where a 911 operator told the county officer, "What are [police] going to do? By the time they come out, this car will be gone."

The operator also incorrectly entered information about Honrath's vehicle into the 911 system and failed to report its last-known location or that it was in motion.

"My hope, and the hope of the Massachi family, is that first contacts in an emergency will be properly trained and adhere to their own policies and procedures," said the family's attorney, Brian Levine, who also serves as the Scotch Plains township attorney.

The two-week trial was set in motion after a state appeals court ruled last November that municipal governments could be held liable when police dispatchers and operators do not follow prescribed policies.

that the fire truck was justified if it could save a life. "You cannot put a cost on a life," said Mr. Napolitano.

Ms. Villaggio also noted that the small streets in Garwood might not accommodate the neighboring towns' ladder trucks.

Other items of discussion included implementing fees at local swimming pools and ice skating rinks to generate revenue for the recreation committee. Mr. Napolitano replied by saying such a proposal was already in discussion amongst the committee.

Another community member, Bruce Paterson, suggested a "piggyback relationship" between the recreation department and the library, stating that the library was "over-funded."

"We are mandated by the state to fund the library \$205,000," said Ms. Villaggio. "Right now, the library is getting the minimum level required for it to run."

However, a board of trustee member for the Garwood library said that a relationship between the library and recreational department could be negotiated.

Further cost-saving suggestions from residents included decreasing the number of recycling pickups from bi-weekly to monthly, cutting the number of bulk pickups in the town, regulating garbage pickup efficiency by having the truck pickup trash from both sides of the street at once and the development of borough-owned property.

Rescue Squads Cont.

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tual aid now more than ever.

Edward LaFerrera, captain of the South Plainfield Rescue Squad, said that South Plainfield has already developed a close relationship with the Plainfield squad.

"Plainfield uses Muhlenberg on a much more frequent basis than we do," Mr. LaFerrera said. "We back up Plainfield because for every call we receive, they probably get four or five. It [Muhlenberg closing] will be a bigger burden on us as well."

The added distance is not the only thing concerning local rescue squads. The influx of patients that will occur at remaining hospitals has left many wondering how hospitals, such as Overlook, JFK and Robert Wood Johnson, are going to cope.

"It is not just a matter of distance," said Joseph Law, an emergency medical technician for the Scotch Plains Rescue Squad, which takes approximately 60 percent of its calls to Muhlenberg.

"We are looking at a big change considering the majority of patients go to Muhlenberg or Overlook...Muhlenberg and Union [Hospital] will be down, and Overlook has too many patients as is. For us to bring our patients there is out of the way for them not having the room."

Mr. Law continued by saying, "When a hospital has no beds, they can't take any more patients, so where do we take them when Overlook is filled with Muhlenberg, Union and their own patients?"

"Hospitals are all pretty much at capacity with Muhlenberg open," Mr. LaFerrera said. "JFK, which is already overwhelmed with patients, will be worse off with Muhlenberg closed. Sometimes we go there and our crews will have to wait 10 to 15 minutes to get a bed. I can't imagine

what it will be like with Muhlenberg closed."

Similarly, Mr. Lawson said, "I've been at hospitals where you have three or four crews walking in at once that have to wait."

Regardless of the squad, everyone seems to agree that the situation at Muhlenberg is unfortunate, and that another hospital closing is the last thing a rescue squad wants to see happen.

"Somebody is going to have to help out when more hospitals become entrenched with the same situations," Mr. Oatis said. "I just hope that sometime, somewhere, someone can come up with a solution that will help a lot of people."

"We would rather not be running to far off places, but if we have to, we will," Mr. Oatis added. "As long as we continue to get great volunteers, we will serve our community and the community surrounding us."

Westfield, Cranford and Mountainside Rescue Squads were contacted for this story, but phone calls were not returned.

SP Council

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property; Sunrise Court; the 300 block of Union Avenue; Valleyscent Avenue; Watchung View Place; White Oak Road and sections of Woodside Road and Sycamore Avenue.

The township is also planning to request bids in the next few months for a state Department of Transportation-funded project on Deer Path and a portion of Glenside Avenue.

The 22nd street, Cellar Avenue, will be repaved in conjunction with Clark Township, where about half the street lies. The two towns will evenly split the approximate \$10,000 cost of this project.

Freeholders to Introduce 2008 Budget on May 29

By RAYNOR DENTIZIO

Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

ELIZABETH—The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders determined the items to be discussed at its next regular meeting during the board's monthly agenda-setting session last Thursday night. Among the items on the agenda are the county's 2008 operating and capital budget.

County Manager George Devanney released his executive budget of \$436.8 million with a proposed tax levy of \$254.3 million in February. Under that plan, spending would increase \$22.4 million over last year while taxes would jump \$15.5 million, 6.48 percent, according to information released by the county's public information department. County taxes would increase in 20 of the 21 towns in Union County.

Final numbers for the operating and capital budget were not available at press time.

According to Sebastian D'Elia, director of the county's office of public information, final budget numbers will be available by the end of the week.

Also set on the agenda is a capital ordinance for funding various projects, including: renovations and acquisition

of various equipment for Union County College; and the construction of a performing arts facility in conjunction with Kean University at the Union County Vocational Technical Schools. Some \$53 million in capital requests have been presented for this year's budget by department directors.

The board also considered a resolution authorizing an application for funding \$250,000 of the Essex/Union Auto Theft Task Force, and a resolution approving water rescue training for firefighters in the county in the amount of \$30,000.

Following the requests from county department heads, the board entered into executive session. Although board members were unable to comment on the exact nature of the session, items discussed included a potential land acquisition, contract matters and issues related to the county jail.

The items set on the agenda will be discussed at the freeholder's next regular meeting. Due to the Memorial Day holiday, the next meeting is scheduled for May 29, at 7 p.m. at the Union County Administration Building in Elizabeth.

Grace Period Proposed Prior to Issuance of Tickets

By WAYNE BAKER

Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD—The Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC) revealed, Tuesday, that the town is looking into establishing a 15-minute grace period that would be honored before parking tickets are issued. Business owners appeared at a town council meeting, last month and were critical of the council's proposed decision to increase parking fines from \$20 to \$32. Owners said that the amount of parking tickets given and the level of enforcement were driving customers out of town.

On the parking-enforcement issue, DWC Executive Director Sherry Cronin said if the grace period concept were pursued, courtesy cards that feature the date and time would be issued to overtime parkers; once the additional 15 minutes had expired, a ticket would be issued. If approved by the town council, the town's parking-enforcement staff would administer the program.

Ms. Cronin said the town would be asked to better monitor pay station lots so that people are not being ticketed upon arrival. In some instances, it is not apparent to the parking-enforcement officers whether a person is first arriving at a space or not. Incidents have been reported in which people first entering empty spaces and paying for parking have been ticketed.

She said efforts are being made to encourage longer-term downtown parkers to park on the outskirts of the business district in order to make more space available to patrons of both stores and service businesses within the downtown. Ideas discussed Monday's meeting included remote parking with jitney service, renting underutilized private space for this use and discounted permits for employers to purchase for employees.

Joe Spector, owner of The Leader Store on East Broad Street, suggested that the town look into legal arrangements with private-property owners to add more parking spaces in the downtown. He said a "stacked" parking deck at a "less visible" location in Westfield could help add parking capacity.



Katherine Vowell for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times
RUBBER DUCKIE...The Second Annual Rubber Duck Race took place on Sunday, May 18, at Mindowaskin Park in Westfield to raise awareness and funds for Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA). Close to 500 people gathered outside to cheer on 4,500 rubber ducks floating across Mindowaskin pond. This year's race raised \$16,500. Pictured, from left to right, are: Rutgers football player Art Forst; Patrick Higgins, who is diagnosed with SMA and is the son of Maureen and Bill, coordinators of the race; and Rutgers football player Shamar Graves.

POLICE BLOTTER

Westfield

Saturday, May 17, Lynde Jules, 19, of Westfield was arrested on an outstanding Westfield criminal warrant after a motor vehicle stop at North Avenue, West, and Crossway Place. Jules was released after posting \$200 bail.

Sunday, May 18, Kevin Quattlebaum, 27, of Jersey City was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on the 600 block of South Avenue, West. He was charged with possession of less than 50 grams of suspected marijuana and possession of a controlled dangerous substance in a motor vehicle and was released with two summonses.

Scotch Plains

Monday, May 12, a business on Martine Avenue reported that someone threw a rock at the window of his building.

Tuesday, May 13, a resident of Seneca Road reported that his neighbor took garbage and threw it on his lawn.

Tuesday, May 13, a resident of Seneca Road reported that someone removed her daughter's pocketbook, which was left at a Park Avenue store.

Wednesday, May 14, a business on Park Avenue reported that someone damaged a sign at the rear of the store.

Sunday, May 18, William Graham, 53, of Scotch Plains was arrested and charged for driving while intoxicated (DWI) after being stopped for a motor vehicle violation. According to police, Graham was transported to headquarters where he was processed and released on a summons.

Sunday, May 18, a resident of Midway Avenue reported that someone removed her backpack from an East Second Street store.

Fanwood

Sunday, May 11, Jaime R. Jervis, 26, of Roselle was arrested on outstanding warrants out of Roselle, Roselle Park and Elizabeth after a field investigation.

Monday, May 12, Vanderlei C. Rodrigues, 34, of Newark was arrested on an outstanding no-bail body warrant from the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Authority. According to police, he was processed and turned over to immigration officials.

Monday, May 12, Stephanie A. Kendall, 29, of Fanwood was arrested after a field investigation on Mary Lane for an outstanding Plainfield warrant. According to police, she was processed and turned over to the Plainfield Police Department.

Wednesday, May 14, Justo Caceres, 30, of Plainfield was arrested on an outstanding Edison warrant, as well as a no-bail body warrant from the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Authority.

Fanwood CERT to Deliver President's Service Award

FANWOOD—The Fanwood Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) announced Monday that it has teamed with the White House to become a certifying organization for the President's Volunteer Service Award, a national program recognizing Americans who have demonstrated a sustained commitment to volunteer service.

Established by President George W. Bush in 2003, the award gives presidential recognition to individuals, families and groups who meet requirements for volunteer service, measured by the number of service hours performed over 12 months.

The Fanwood CERT is one of thousands of organizations that have joined forces to deliver the President's Volunteer Service Award and honor the volunteers who strengthen the United States.

As a certifying organization for the award, the Fanwood CERT is responsible for verifying service hours, nominating potential recipients and delivering the award.

"We are extremely proud to recognize our most outstanding volunteers with the President's Volunteer Service Award," said Lieutenant Richard Trigo of the Fanwood Police Department.

"Fanwood's CERT volunteers are role models in our community, donating their time, energy and talent to bring us closer together as neighbors

ment Authority. According to police, he was processed and turned over to immigration officials.

Sunday, May 17, Alesia E. Burgess, 44, of Irvington was arrested and charged with driving under the influence (DUI) on Martine Avenue for operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of drugs/alcohol. According to police, she was processed and released to a responsible adult.

Monday, May 19, Peter M. Cacciuto, 20, of Fanwood was arrested on Forest Road and charged with criminal mischief to borough property at a Forest Road park. Two male, 17-year-old Fanwood juveniles were also arrested and charged with criminal mischief to borough property.

Mountainside

Tuesday, May 13, Tameca Holland-Womack, 25, of Somerville was arrested and charged with driving with a suspended license after being stopped on Route 22, East for several motor vehicle violations.

Thursday, May 15, Kevin Woodbridge, 25, of Union was arrested at the Scotch Plains Police Department for an outstanding Mountainside warrant in the amount in the amount of \$500.

Friday, May 16, an employee at a Route 22 gas station reported that a man asked the attendant to fill his vehicle with gas and after receiving the gas stated that he left his wallet at an area restaurant. According to police, the suspect fled the scene when the attendant went to notify police of the incident.

Monday, May 19, a resident of Wychwood Road reported illegal dumping to police after observing three garbage bags full of beer cans and other garbage on municipal property. According to police, the dumping seems to be ongoing as this is not the first incident the resident, as well as other area residents, continuously clean up discarded garbage bags.

Monday, May 19, Tony Forbes, 22, of Plainfield was arrested and charged with driving with a suspended license and failure to exhibit documents after a motor vehicle stop on Route 22, East. He was also charged with an outstanding warrants out of Green Brook Township in the amount of \$314.

Tuesday, May 20, Meghan Nadeau, 23, of Warren was arrested and charged for DWI, refusal to submit to a breath test and consumption of an open container of alcohol in a motor vehicle. According to police, she was also issued a summons for careless driving for driving with a flat tire. She was processed and released to a responsible adult, police said.

and a nation," he added. "The award is our way of thanking these volunteers and inspiring everyone in our community to make volunteering a central part of their lives."

The award is issued by the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation, a group convened by President Bush to help foster and encourage a culture of volunteer service and civic participation among Americans. Chaired by two-time Super Bowl Champion Darrell Green, with former United States Senators Bob Dole and John Glenn as honorary co-chairmen, the council is composed of leaders in government, media, entertainment, business, education, nonprofit and volunteer service organizations and community volunteering.

Fanwood's CERT was established in 2005 as part of Fanwood's Office of Emergency Management, to educate the public and assist police, fire and rescue squad responders with additional support during major emergencies and events.

More information is available at the Web site FanwoodCERT.org. For more information about volunteering with the Fanwood CERT, visit the Web site or call Lt. Richard Trigo at (908) 322-5000. For further information on the President's Volunteer Service Award, access presidentialserviceawards.gov or call 1-(866) 545-5307.

More Than 1,000 Speak Out Against Proposed Muhlenberg Closing

By JOHN MAGUIRE
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

PLAINFIELD - More than 1,000 people attended the final public hearing last Thursday at Plainfield High School to discuss Solaris Health System's application to close Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center in Plainfield as an acute-care facility.

Heather Howard, commissioner of the Department of Health and Senior Services, along with five members of the State Health Planning Board, listened to members of the public who spoke out against the proposed closing.

Scores of people held "Save Muhlenberg" signs and applauded as Muhlenberg employees, clergy and residents pleaded with the board to reject Solaris' application. They asked for more time to work out a solution to keep the hospital open.

While the speeches were passionate, attendees were more restrained than they were at the first hearing, conducted on May 6, where a spirit of optimism prevailed. Over 30 people spoke about what Muhlenberg means to them and their community.

"The only reason we are here is because of the deliberate rape and destruction of Muhlenberg Hospital by Solaris," said James Colvin, a local pastor.

Hospital employees also voiced their opposition to the closing.

"Minutes matter," said Dr. Marianne Warner of Westfield, arguing that it would take too long to transport patients in need of urgent care to other hospitals, such as JFK in Edison.

According to Solaris, a "satellite" emergency department will remain, but cannot handle major life-threatening situations, such as strokes, heart attacks and even pregnancy.

Dr. Warner, chairman of the hospital's Obstetrics and Gynecology Department, said that Muhlenberg "is an integral part of the community." She emphasized that closing Muhlenberg as an acute care facility would put lives at risk. "Please do the right thing - don't close Muhlenberg Hospital," she said, to cheers from the audience.

Bernadette Countryman, senior vice president at Trinitas Hospital and head of nursing, said that a plan was in place to meet the needs of the community. She said that "the Trinitas family has the means and ability" to meet their needs.

There were jeers in response from the audience.

"I think Solaris has thrown in the towel," said Henry McNally of Fanwood. "Muhlenberg has been central to me and the whole area." He implored the board to "look for a different model than the one Solaris has presented."

Some attacked the demeanor of board members seated on the stage. "This is not blah-blah-blah - this is a matter of life and death," one person shouted - accusing a board member of not being interested in what those present had to say.

"Five people from the board are here," said Chairwoman Judy Donlen, who presided over the hearing. "We only needed to send one," she added.

Others attacked Solaris management and pointed to inconsistencies in its financial disclosures leading up to the decision to close the hospital.

"Take a look at the 990 Solaris filed with the IRS," said John Gostel, a local accountant, while questioning the legitimacy of Solaris' claims that Muhlenberg was hemorrhaging funds due to charity care. He called on the board to conduct an independent audit of Muhlenberg's accounting books.

"Since 2003, Solaris has moved successful functions of the hospital to JFK Hospital in Edison," in a deliberate attempt to undermine the case for keeping Muhlenberg open," said Mr. Gostel. Before approving any application by Solaris, he called on the state to "conduct a comprehensive community impact study" and

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John Maguire for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times
DON'T CLOSE OUR HOSPITAL...Members of the Plainfield High School Youth Leadership Group hold posters urging the state's Health Planning Board to keep Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center in Plainfield open, during Thursday's hearing at Plainfield High School.

Planning Board Denies South Ave. Office Building

By FRED T. ROSSI
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS - After hearing concerns from a half-dozen neighbors, the planning board on Monday night, on a split vote, denied an application for a two-story office building on South Avenue.

D. Villane Construction had sought approval for the 1,580-square-foot building at the corner of South Avenue and Jersey Avenue to house its offices and a meeting room for clients. At earlier hearings in April and May, an architect, an engineer and a traffic consultant had testified on Villane's behalf.

At Monday's hearing, attended by about 25 neighborhood residents as similar to earlier meetings, Peter Steck, a professional planner testifying for Villane, told the board the triangular-shaped lot was "a difficult property to develop," but said Villane had "done a good job" with their proposal. He said the property was "not well suited to residential use," and concluded that the proposed office building would not have a significant negative impact on the neighborhood.

Six residents spoke in opposition to the application after Mr. Steck's testimony, with Jersey Avenue resident Michael Brennan saying the township's master plan discourages commercial development in residential areas.

Steve Bronski, another Jersey Avenue resident, suggested that the Villane company either donate or sell the property to the county or the township for use as a park as a way to thank "the community that has been a big part of their success."

Several Jersey Avenue residents raised concerns about the safety of neighborhood children playing in the street and the risk that could be posed

by cars exiting the Villane parking lot and driving on Jersey Avenue toward Hetfield Avenue.

Three board members voted to approve the application, with Alice Agran saying the building would be a "low-impact use." Dominick Bratti called the plan "better than anything else that could be there," such as a gas station or an extension of the county's public works yard located across South Avenue.

Township zoning official Robert LaCosta noted that the property is located in a B-1 zone that allows for commercial development of the type that Villane was proposing. But Councilman Jeffrey Strauss, noting that a significant number of neighbors had attended each of the hearings on the application, said the board should not be seen as forcing the development on the neighborhood.

"We have to think about what the neighbors there think" about the proposal, he said. Councilwoman Paulette Coronato agreed, saying it was important to "preserve the residential character of Scotch Plains."

Board Chairwoman Maria Sartor also voted against the application, citing concerns about the safety of neighborhood children, as well as preserving the "character of the neighborhood."

The board also approved a site plan application for a 10,920-square-foot retail building at the site of the former Club Malibu on Terrill Road. The building will house an Advanced Auto Parts outlet and four additional stores.

The property, which is located between the Jade Isle restaurant and the Jiffy Lube auto service outlet, has been vacant since the Malibu building was razed in 2003, four years after the nightclub closed in the wake of a fatal shooting in its parking lot in late 1998.

At Monday night's meeting, Ms. McGovern reiterated that a series of meetings have been held with all of Fanwood's department heads in an effort to find ways to save money.

However, with the borough's budget remaining relatively flat for the past couple of years, Mayor Mahr has previously emphasized that "there's not a lot of fat" left to cut.

The budget introduced in April rings up at about \$8.5 million, but Fanwood's funding from the state is expected to decline - by some previous estimates as much as 17 percent - at the same time that the economy and revenues are down and expenses are on the increase (gasoline costs,

for example, are at least \$14,000 more than budgeted, officials have said).

Without state aid, under the budget as introduced, the municipal share of the tax bill would increase about 29 percent, a figure Mayor Mahr has labeled "unacceptable."

At Monday night's meeting, Mrs. McGovern said the borough needs about \$374,000 in state aid.

"We still haven't gotten our full quota yet, and we're not sure that we ever will," she said.

Aside from municipal aid, the borough's also waiting to learn the fate of its application for "extraordinary" aid - which Fanwood has received in the past few years (\$325,000 last year) and must be dedicated to reducing the local tax burden.

Borough officials said they hope to have all state aid numbers in by the middle of July. Then, the board can begin preparing the introduced budget for a public hearing and adoption.

In the meantime, the governing body has already approved a resolution authorizing the mail-out of estimated tax bills for the third quarter (due August 1) in order to ensure enough revenue to keep the borough operating.

Following Monday night's special meeting, the governing body adjourned into executive session to discuss matters related to the municipal court; it was not clear if there was a budget tie-in to those discussions.

FW Budget Picture: 'Nothing Has Changed'

By TED RITTER
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

FANWOOD - Mayor Colleen Mahr and the borough council have held two special budget meetings in the past two weeks, including a brief session on Monday night. However, as Councilwoman Katherine Mitchell summarized, "Nothing has changed."

Borough Clerk Eleanor McGovern asked bookkeeper Patricia Celardo if there was any new information regarding the "budget situation," but Ms. Celardo said there was nothing new to report about state aid figures.

The governing body - like its counterparts in other communities in the region - is waiting for the state to send official word on levels of municipal aid.

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Susan Dougherty for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times
MAKE THAT BUCKET...Longingly surveying the prizes available to those who can make a basket, Andrew and Matthew Kipp of Fanwood hope their mom can sink it for the proverbial two points during Sunday's Fanwood street fair. The fair is sponsored by the Fanwood Business and Professional Association.

Scotch Plains Council Approves \$24.6 Mil. Budget By a 4-1 Vote

By FRED T. ROSSI
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS - By a 4-1 vote, the township council on Tuesday night approved a \$24.6 million municipal budget, which will be financed in part by an 8.5-point, or 5.6 percent, increase in municipal property taxes. A tax point equals \$100,000 in spending in the township.

Democratic Councilman Jeffrey Strauss said it was a "stable tax rate."

Councilwoman Paulette Coronato noted that Scotch Plains' municipal property tax increase will be the lowest of any town in Union County, equal to a \$96.80 increase for the average assessed home of \$121,000.

In remarks at the start of the public hearing, Ms. Coronato said the council, in crafting the 2008 spending plan, "had to deal with two unprecedented factors," namely the state's new 4 percent cap on municipal tax levies and the reductions in state aid as proposed by Gov. Jon Corzine.

Scotch Plains is slated to see a reduction of \$271,000 in its state assistance this year. Had the township received that state aid, which is equal to nearly three tax points, the tax increase would have been five points, a level equal to last year. Ms. Coronato said if the full amount of state aid was received that the municipal tax increase this year would have been about 3.5 percent.

Mayor Martin Marks explained that most communities are exceeding the 4 percent cap mandated by the state

because of loopholes and exemptions granted by state officials, and added that the average property tax increase in New Jersey this year "will be well in excess of 4 percent."

Three residents spoke during the public hearing. The mayor told a resident from Rambling Drive who questioned the council about excessive municipal spending that the governing body had little leeway in adjust-

ing expenditures. Most of this year's increase was due to mandated spending increases for health and other insurance, pension contributions, negotiated contracts and sewerage fees.

The two other residents who spoke were local Democratic Party officials - Richard Samuel, the party chairman and a candidate for township council, and Phil Weiner. Mr. Samuel

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Area Schools Close Due to Extreme Heat

By KATIE ROGERS
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

AREA - As temperatures neared 100 degrees this week, school districts across Union County called for early dismissals and closures.

In many school districts, such as Westfield, Berkeley Heights and Scotch Plains-Fanwood, only parts of the schools are air-conditioned. As a result, students were let out for half the school day.

Sally Roland, executive assistant to the superintendent of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood school district, said schools were forced to shut down due to the extreme heat.

"Most of our schools are not air conditioned," Ms. Roland said on Monday. "Only one school is. Right now we are looking at possible single sessions, but the decision hasn't been made."

She said students must be in school for at least four hours in order to count for a legal, instructional day of school. Therefore, if students complete half days in the hot classrooms, they will not have to make up days at the end of the year.

Judy Rattner, superintendent of the Berkeley Heights school district, said her schools followed suit with half days on both Monday and Tuesday.

"Parts of the middle school and high school are air-conditioned," Ms. Rattner said. "But there wasn't enough air-conditioned space for us to circulate the classes."

The Westfield school district stayed open for a full day on Monday, and a

half-day on Tuesday, according to Lorre Korecky, coordinator of school community relations.

Westfield schools had already reached the limit of allowable days off and had set their final school day for Thursday, June 19, which will have a four-hour session and graduation to follow at 6 p.m.

"The kids were encouraged to drink water and stay hydrated," Ms. Korecky said. "The blinds were drawn and the lights were low. A lot of efforts were made to keep the kids and teachers cool."

Westfield schools' concerns were rescheduled to coincide with cooler temperatures. The sixth and eighth grade Choral and Orchestra Concert originally scheduled for Tuesday night at Roosevelt Intermediate School was rescheduled for tonight. Edison School concerts originally scheduled for June 11 were moved to June 12.

For students in the Mountainside school district, schools did not let out early, according to Sue Nugent, secretary to the Chief School Administrator. Although, students at Beechwood and Deerfield Schools were dismissed Tuesday at 1 p.m. due to the heat.

"We didn't have to let out early, our schools are air-conditioned," Ms. Nugent said. "I'm sure the kids are bummed."

Cranford schools were closed on Monday and Tuesday due to the heat. Garwood schools remained open even though the schools only have some air conditioning.



Courtesy of Amy Carow
SUPER 8...The Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School (SPFHS) Class of 2008 forms the shape of "08" at its senior picnic on Tuesday, June 3, sponsored by Project Graduation of the SPFHS PTA.



Katie Rogers for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times
THE HEAT IS ON...Students at Scotch Plains Fanwood High School stand outside the school after being dismissed early, due to the heat wave.

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BOUNCING' BABES... Staying cool by catching the breeze, Leah and Jonah Strachman, right, of Fanwood enjoy Sunday's street fair. The Fanwood preschoolers had the inflated "ride" to themselves, while other families with children ate, listened to the music or visited the craft tents. The fair was sponsored by the Fanwood Business and Professional Association.

Muhlenberg Hospital

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

explore different ownership options.

Others simply called for more time to work out a solution and asked that the board require Solaris to retain its license to operate Muhlenberg as an acute-care facility for one year so that a comprehensive evaluation of what health services needed to be maintained could be conducted.

Some were disappointed at what they perceived as a lack of support from local political leaders. State Assemblyman Gerald Green of Plainfield was attacked. "Why did Mr. Green not say something to the public earlier?" asked Chao I-Chen of Plainfield.

Mary Zink, an active member of the Plainfield community, said, "We will not vote for Green, [Governor Jon] Corzine or [Assemblywoman Linda] Stender if they do not help us address this issue. It is polite to say 'We hear you,' but we need action." "We will make this a political issue," she concluded.

"Our elected government must be held accountable for those who voted them into office," added Joseph Barnes of Plainfield.

Word came on Friday after the meeting that department managers at Muhlenberg were notified that the hospital will continue to operate as an acute care facility until Friday, June 27, two weeks more than expected. Some employees in attendance said

the facility had already been stripped of many of its abilities to function. According to staff, residency programs have been discontinued and key functions transferred to other hospitals like JFK.

Bill Nagl summed up the position of many in attendance when he said that the real issue is "the disparity of health care between the haves and have-nots."

After delivering an account of how Muhlenberg saved her life when she went into acute respiratory distress, Patricia Richards stated to cheers that she was, "here tonight as a warrior of the cause to keep this hospital open. We are minorities here - we need help."

Calling the meeting to a close, Board Chairman Donlen called the audience a "spirited group" and the situation a "very painful thing." She said the next step was for a public voting session to be called, at which Solaris will formally present its application to close Muhlenberg as an acute-care facility.

"I have no idea," she said, when asked what the board may recommend to Commissioner Heather Howard, who will make the final determination on the fate of Muhlenberg. "Don't leave us," said Flor Gonzalez in a final plea.

Many vowed to fight on as long as there is a chance to save the hospital. The decision will be made in Trenton.



COOL IN THE SHADE... With temperatures in the 90s for the Fanwood Street Fair, people grabbed any shade they could find to cool down. The fair, held Sunday, is sponsored by the Fanwood Business and Professional Association.

Zoning Bd. OKs Three Applications at Meeting

By FRED T. ROSSI
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — The township zoning board of adjustment last week approved three applications and put off action on two others until next month.

Susan and Brian Lewand received a variance to allow construction of an addition to their home at 1922 Parkwood Drive. A setback requirement of 25 feet was waived for the addition, which will be situated 17 feet from the property line. Mark and Bonnie Cimring also received a variance allowing them to construct an addition, including a front porch, to their home at 1597 Ramapo Way. The front setback will be about 31 feet vs. the required 40 feet set forth in the local zoning ordinance.

Michael Criscitiello of 141 Glenside Avenue received a variance to permit the construction of a 192-square foot shed that will be mostly situated in his front yard. Local zoning requirements are for secondary buildings to be situated to the rear of the front setback building line.

At its July 10 meeting, the board will continue hearings on two other applications. Penni Jade Green was seeking side yard and rear yard setback variances to allow the construction of a sunroom and deck at 1195 Washington

Avenue, but some issues regarding property lines, particularly as they relate to adjacent Kramer Manor Park.

Ms. Green was asked to re-do her site plans so the board can consider them next month.

The board next month will also hear from representatives of Westfield Hall about why a certain type of fence was installed at the group's house of worship at 2265 South Avenue. In November 2006, the board approved the group's application to convert the building that housed the Friendly's restaurant on South Avenue into a house of worship.

Included in that approval was a stipulation that a board-on-board fence would be installed at the rear of the property along the railroad tracks. Last week, Westfield Hall requested an amendment to their site plan to allow the ex post facto installation of a metal picket fence instead of the previously approved type of fence.

The installed fence's height may also conflict with local zoning ordinances governing fence heights along front and side yards, officials said. The board will need to determine if the new fence should be considered to be situated along the front of the property, since the building's main entrance is at the rear, or the side of the property.

Fanwood Council Reviews Policies on Development

By KATIE ROGERS
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

FANWOOD — With an audience of nearly 25 people Tuesday, the Fanwood Borough Council addressed its ongoing plans to redevelop the borough's downtown area, in hopes of bringing economic vitality to Fanwood.

Mayor Colleen Mahr announced that the Fanwood Mews received its certificate of occupancy this week and congratulated owner Helen Ling on all eight of her apartments being filled. After visiting the apartment complex, Mrs. Mahr said she was very impressed at the outcome of the apartments, which she described as "state-of-the-art."

"This is a display of the success that is starting to take seed in Fanwood," the mayor said.

Currently, professional offices are not permitted to occupy the first floor of any of the new buildings in downtown Fanwood.

Mrs. Ling spoke out against this policy during the public portion of the meeting. She said she believes this space should be open to any type of business occupancy, be it consumer or professional.

"Putting professional offices on the first floor will not decrease the traffic, but will increase it," Mrs. Ling said. "It will make our downtown more complete and comparable to other downtowns. In this economy, we need to open our arms to all businesses in Fanwood - it will only help us."

Stan Slack, consultant on the Fanwood downtown redevelopment plan, agreed with Mrs. Ling's proposal. Mr. Slack explained that, currently, a professional office could occupy 25 percent of each building

between South Avenue and Second Street; however, this office may not be located on the first floor.

"The comments you heard from the public are on point," he said. "We can get in higher quality from non-residential usage on the first floor."

Mr. Slack also said the height initially proposed for each of the buildings, which were supposed to be two-and-a-half stories each, or 35 feet, may have to be extended to 40 feet to reach a full three stories.

"The two-and-a-half-story standard does not fully recognize the fact that it is truly a three-story structure," he said. "It may have to be changed to recognize this reality."

These considerations apply to the area along Second Street. Some residents encouraged the council to embrace the alterations being made to the project, and to vote in favor of them.

However, Greg Cummings, planning board chairman, expressed a differing opinion. He supported staying true to the project's original regulations.

"It would be premature to alter the plan," Mr. Cummings said.

Approvals for the downtown redevelopment plan will be discussed at the next council meeting.

In other business, Councilman David Valian presented Fanwood resident Bud Colombo, of the Shade Tree Commission, with the Volunteer of the Month Award. Mr. Colombo has been a Fanwood resident for 53 years.

The council also unanimously voted in support of efforts to save Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center in Plainfield.

Additionally, the council announced future plans to have a borough-wide tree count.

Scotch Plains Council Approves \$24.6 Mil. Budget

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

said that problems at the state level "shouldn't mask excessive taxation in town." He noted that fees paid to the Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority (RVSA) are slated to increase greatly in 2009. He suggested researching "creative ways" to lessen that increase, such as spending "a couple of million dollars" for a feasibility study of re-routing some of the sewer flows to the Plainfield Area Regional Sewerage Authority.

Ms. Coronato said it was important that the township maintain a "healthy reserve" for future years, and added that Mr. Samuel's multi-million sewerage proposal would "put us in a jeopardizing position."

As he did last year, Councilman Kevin Glover, who is running for mayor this year, voted against the budget. He said that in a time when the economy is struggling, that "this is not the time to be raising taxes." He said he favored more aggressive use of revenues and the township's surplus to avoid any tax increase at all this year.

Mr. Strauss, terming it a "good, tight budget," said the spending plan provided township officials with the "greatest flexibility and protection." He called Mr. Glover's proposal for a

zero-tax increase "reckless," and noted that the zero-tax increase passed by the council in 2000 created an 18-point tax increase three years later.

Mayor Marks called Mr. Glover's zero-tax rate proposal "outlandish" and "reckless." He asked Township Manager Thomas Atkins what would happen in 2009, if the council had accepted Mr. Glover's plan, and Mr. Atkins said there would be less money and a higher tax rate next year. The mayor said he felt the council was being "too aggressive" in its revenue anticipations this year, and was concerned about the township's ability to regenerate enough surplus for use in 2009.

Deputy Mayor Nancy Malool, who will face Mr. Glover in this year's mayoral race, said township officials would look at a "tremendous increase" in taxes next year if this year's tax rate were lowered any further. She said, as of now, next year's tax rate will be 17 points before any spending or revenue details are examined. "If there was a possibility [for a lower tax-rate plan] that was responsible, we'd lower it," she said. But, with further mandated spending increases slated for 2009, "we've lowered it as low as we can without jeopardizing next year."

Garwood Approves Pay Cuts for Mayor, Council

By RAYNOR DENIZIO
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

GARWOOD — The Garwood Borough Council proposed more than \$100,000 in changes to the 2008 municipal budget on Tuesday, including the approval of pay reductions for the mayor and council.

The pay cut, which takes effect on July 1, trims \$5,150 from the 2008 budget.

The mayor's salary will be cut from \$2,400 to \$1,800. Council members will make \$1,500, down from \$2,000, according to Councilman Anthony Sytko.

"That was something I pushed for, and we were able to come to an agreement on with the finance committee," Mr. Sytko said.

Council President Kathleen Villaggio recommended additional changes to the municipal budget through a combination of reductions and anticipated revenue. These include decreasing the amount of money set aside for seasonal public works employees by \$5,000,

raising the percent of funding reserved for uncollected taxes from 97.26 to 97.75 percent and higher anticipated revenue from the municipal library and sewer charges.

In addition, Ms. Villaggio said the borough received word that its Consolidated Municipal Property Tax Relief Aid (CMPTRA) will be partially restored in the amount of \$154,933.

"We have been officially notified by the state that we can include this amount in our 2008 budget," Ms. Villaggio said.

Including the CMPTRA money and the proposed reductions, the borough's budget would decrease by \$259,583. Ms. Villaggio said this would lower the budget's tax impact from an average municipal tax increase of \$518 to \$378 per house assessed at \$100,000. The council is also awaiting word on additional state aid, which could result in further tax decreases.

The borough's budget will not be finalized until the state's budget is approved by the State Legislature in July.



TICK TOCK... Richard Edge (left) and Jack Gordin inspect parts for restoring the clock from the 1930s that hangs at the corner of Elm and East Broad Street in downtown Westfield.



POLICE BLOTTER

Westfield

Tuesday, May 27, a teenager returning to his home in the 700 block of Clark Street heard noises inside the house and subsequently discovered a flat screen television had been removed from a downstairs home entertainment center and was left lying on the floor.

Police responded to the scene, along with the Union County Sheriff's Office K-9 Unit, to check the residence. No one was seen in the vicinity of the home and nothing was reported missing, according to police. The incident remains under investigation.

Friday, June 6, Evan Fernandez, 19, and Michael Downer, 18, both of Westfield, were arrested during a motor vehicle stop on the 500 block of Kimball Avenue. Each was charged with possession with intent to distribute less than 50 grams of marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia and underage possession of alcohol. Both men were processed at Westfield police headquarters, issued summonses and released pending a court appearance.

Friday, June 6, Omar Harris, 39, of Linden was arrested at Plainfield police headquarters on an outstanding criminal warrant from Westfield. He was committed to the Union County jail in lieu of \$578 bail.

Saturday, June 7, Eric Diaz, 30, of Belford was arrested at Westfield police headquarters on outstanding motor vehicle warrants from Clark and Middletown. Bail amounts on the warrants were \$120 and \$228, respectively. Diaz was released after posting bail.

Sunday, June 8, a resident of the 500 block of South Chestnut Street reported the theft of \$60 in cash plus three credit/debit cards from her purse while it was left unattended in an unsecured room at a local church.

Scotch Plains

Tuesday, June 3, Ashlee Christmas, 19, of Scotch Plains was arrested and charged for an outstanding warrant after being stopped for a motor vehicle violation. She was transported to headquarters where she was processed and released after posting bail, police said.

Wednesday, June 4, a resident reported that someone removed gift cards from her purse.

Wednesday, June 4, a student at the Union County Magnet School reported that someone removed her iPod valued at \$300 from the treadmill at the gym.

Wednesday, June 4, Paul Longson, 18, of Scotch Plains was arrested and charged with possession of marijuana. According to police, he was stopped for a motor vehicle violation and officers discovered the marijuana. He was transported to headquarters where he was processed and released after posting bail, police said.

Thursday, June 5, Christian Lalau, 18, of Plainfield was arrested and charged with distribution of marijuana in a park. According to police, officers responded to a report of narcotics activity at Haven Avenue Park at which time they said they observed Lalau selling marijuana. He was transported to headquarters where he was processed and released after posting bail, police said.

Thursday, June 5, Mandel Sly, 19, of Scotch Plains was arrested and charged for resisting arrest. According to police, officers responded to a report of an individual driving a car without the owner's consent. After being stopped by police, Sly attempted to run, authorities said. He was transported to headquarters where he was processed and released after posting bail, police said.

Fanwood

Friday, June 6, Shakirah Griffin, 30, of Plainfield was arrested on an outstanding Scotch Plains warrant after a motor vehicle stop. According to police, she was processed and released.

Friday, June 6, at 3:30 a.m. a Patterson Road resident reported that someone attempted to gain entry to his home through breaking a window but fled

when the victim arrived at the scene of the break-in. According to police, the incident is under investigation.

Friday, June 6, a bank on North Avenue reported that someone cashed fraudulent checks in April in the amount of \$955 and \$975. According to police, the suspect has been identified and charges are pending.

Saturday, June 7, a 17-year old Plainfield juvenile was arrested in the 500 block of North Avenue for shoplifting. According to police, he was also charged with possession of a controlled dangerous substance (CDS). He was processed and released to a responsible adult pending a court date in Elizabeth Family Court, police said.

Saturday, June 7, a resident of Chetwood Terrace reported that someone entered his home and removed two sets of car keys. According to police, two vehicles, a 2009 Toyota and a 1999 Mercury were stolen from the driveway. The vehicles were recovered the next day in Plainfield, police said.

Saturday, June 7, Jennifer L. Hopkins, 26, of Willingboro was arrested on an outstanding warrant out of Edgewater Township after a motor vehicle stop on Terrill Road. According to police, she posted bail and was released.

Sunday, June 8, Daniel C. Smith, 20, of Martinsville a passenger in a vehicle, was arrested for multiple Monroe Township warrants after a motor vehicle stop on South Avenue. Tracy A. Getchis, 26, the driver of the vehicle was arrested for an outstanding Trenton warrant. Getchis was also charged with possession of CDS paraphernalia. According to police, both individuals posted bail and were released.

Monday, June 9, Regina K. Jonesbooker, 42, of Sicklerville was arrested for an outstanding warrant out of Maywood after a motor vehicle stop on Terrill Road. According to police, she posted bail and was released.

Tuesday, June 10, Kelly A. McGrath, 27, of Linden was arrested for an outstanding Linden warrant after a motor vehicle stop on Terrill Road. According to police, she posted bail and was released.

Garwood

Tuesday, June 3, Maria Sosa, 51, of Perth Amboy was arrested on South Avenue just past the Westfield line and charged with driving under the influence and for driving with a suspended license. She was also charged with having an open alcohol container in a vehicle and an obstruction on her windshield view, police said.

She was taken to police headquarters where police said she failed a breath test. Sosa was released to a family member pending a June 9 municipal court date.

Tuesday, June 3, Jose Arroyo, 44, of Roselle was arrested in the 100 block of North Avenue and charged with possession of a controlled dangerous substance, suspected to be marijuana, and possession of drug paraphernalia. He was released pending a June 9 court date.

Thursday, June 5, Steven Reilly, 38, of Cranford was arrested at the Garwood Mall and charged with possession of a controlled dangerous substance determined to be marijuana and drug paraphernalia, a brass pipe. Police responded to the scene on a suspicious person call.

Reilly was also charged with an active traffic warrant out of Morristown. He was released after posting bail pending a Garwood Municipal Court hearing.

Monday, June 9, Noelle Bradbury, 37, of Union was arrested in the 400 block of North Avenue and charged with driving under the influence of alcohol, having an open alcohol container in a motor vehicle and possession of drug paraphernalia.

She was transported to police headquarters where she failed a breath test, police said. Bradbury was later released pending a municipal court date.

WF Diner Waitress Arrested in Fraud Case

By KATIE ROGERS
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD — Cranford resident John Polo Jr., 38, pleaded guilty on Monday to four cases of fraud and identity theft, according to Assistant Prosecutor for Union County Ann Rubin.

The investigation into the thefts began in October of 2007, when two customers from the Westfield Diner reported there were fraudulent purchases made on their credit cards from P.C. solutions, Polo Jr.'s business. It was later discovered that Denise Tortorello, a waitress at the diner, was Polo Jr.'s accomplice.

According to Ms. Rubin, Tortorello admitted to copying down the customers' credit card numbers and giving them to Polo Jr., who would then make

purchases from his own company and pay himself.

Polo Jr.'s second partner was Samuel Jacobs, a patient transporter at St. Joseph's hospital in Paterson, the assistant prosecutor said. She said Jacobs aided Polo Jr. in obtaining the personal information of several hospital patients, enabling Polo Jr. to steal more than \$52,000 from E-Trade in five months time.

Ms. Rubin said Tortorello pled guilty to two counts of credit card fraud and was sentenced to 18 months in state prison, while Jacobs pled guilty to third-degree trafficking in personal identifying information and faces two years probation. Polo Jr.'s sentencing is scheduled for Friday, August 8.



GIFTS TO EDUCATION... Scotch Plains-Fanwood media specialists and members of the Fanwood Clean Community Committee display educational tools purchased through the committee. Pictured, from left to right, are: Front row, Carla Herniter, Terene Labrecque and Erica Moon; second row, Barbara Madurski, Linda Talcott, Terry Keller, Eileen Raszka, Eunice Ellard and Bob McCarthy; and top row, Dean Talcott and Clint Dickens. Mr. and Mrs. Talcott, Mr. McCarthy and Mr. Dickens are committee members.

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Neil Cohen Resignation

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

dened" by this turn of events.

"This is not the Neil Cohen I know," Ms. DeFilippo told *The Leader*. "I've never seen anything to indicate this sort of behavior."

Governor Jon Corzine called the allegations "deeply disturbing," in a statement issued by his office.

Governor Corzine said, "All of us who have worked with him are shocked by the reports. Child pornography reflects a horrible debasement of children that is totally intolerable. Creating, distributing and using child pornography should be pursued vigorously by law enforcement wherever it is found."

Mr. Cohen has represented the 20th District, which includes Elizabeth, Kenilworth, Roselle and Union, since 1994, and also served from 1990 to 1991. He served on the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders from 1988 to 1990.

Mr. Cohen also resigned as general counsel to the Union County Utilities Authority, a \$109,000 post, and as Union County Planning Board attorney, a \$27,000 salary.

According to Susan Evans, director of communications at the New Jersey Department of State, under state guidelines the Union County Democratic Committee has 35 days from the time the department receives notice of resignation to fill the vacancy with an interim successor. Ms. Evans told *The Leader*, Tuesday, that the department has yet to receive Mr. Cohen's resignation.

A special election will be held in November to fill the remaining year on Mr. Cohen's term. Both parties must have their candidate's names certified 48 days before the general election. The Democrats can choose to place someone other than the interim successor on the November ballot.

Phil Morin, Union County Republican Committee chairman, told *The Leader* that if the allegations against Mr. Cohen are true, "He should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Never forget the real victims in child pornography are the children themselves who are forced to participate in these heinous [acts]."

Mr. Morin said he has reached out to all four municipal chairs within the district and will have candidates shortly. He said the GOP plans to hold a convention after potential can-

didates are identified.

He said the GOP has "some pretty natural candidates," including C. Louis Bassano, a former state senator from the district; Linda Gagliano, a former Union school board member and 2007 state senate candidate; Kathi Fiamingo, the mayor of Kenilworth, and Roselle's Esther Guzman-Malcolm, a former candidate for sheriff.

He said no matter whom the Democrats select to fill the term, "they will just give voters more of the same."

On the Democratic side, Mr. Morin called first-term Roselle Councilwoman Cecelia Dallas-Ricks the "presumptive frontrunner" in a field that also includes current Freeholder Chairman Angel Estrada and Patricia Perkins-Auguste, at-large councilman in Elizabeth.

Mr. Morin said he heard "rumblings" that Mr. Estrada would be interested.

Mr. Estrada, an Elizabeth resident and manager at the Elizabeth Motor Vehicle Commission, confirmed with *The Leader* on Tuesday that he would be interested in the Assembly seat.

Mr. Estrada, who has lived in the 20th district for more than 40 years, said he "knows the ins and outs" of the area, as well as the "makeup" of the community.

"I know what the job requires," he said.

The freeholder added, "On the environment, evening the playing field with regards to social services and bringing the community together, my record is clear."

With new dual-office-holding laws in place, Mr. Estrada would have to resign from the freeholder board if selected. His seat expires at the end of the year.

In 2006, Mr. Morin called for an investigation into Mr. Estrada's actions after then-Attorney General Zulima Farber called Mr. Estrada to straighten out driver's license and car registration issues associated with Ms. Farber's boyfriend, Hamlet Goore.

Mr. Morin said he is "not quite sure" what the results of the investigation were. "Regardless, it leaves some clear questions as to his judgment."

While admitting that the situation is not clear, he said a "chain reaction" would go off if Mr. Estrada were tapped for the position.

Freeholders Visit Westfield

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

increase from last year.

Mr. Mirabella acknowledged that balancing the county budget has been a "challenge." He also said county increases over the last few years are "not where we want them to be."

However, he said, "We've worked hard as a budget committee" and thanked First Ward Councilman Frank Arena for attending freeholder budget meetings and attempting to understand the process.

Mr. Mirabella said, "We struggle with the same things - mandated costs, salaries, insurance costs, utility costs."

Later in the conference, council members had an opportunity to query the freeholders.

Mr. Arena took the opportunity to question the financing for The Academy of Performing Arts, which will be located in Scotch Plains at the Union County Vocational-Technical Schools (Vo-Tech).

The \$20 million venture will eventually accommodate 200 students. The money will mostly be used to build a new outdoor amphitheater, sound studios, dressing rooms and a stage. Construction should be complete by fall 2009.

Mr. Arena said, "We're all tightening our belt... It sounds good, and I know some of the value that's there, but it's a very expensive proposition. Governor Corzine basically said, 'financially, we're having a heart attack. Get the paddles out.' Is the \$20 million investment worth the value?"

Mr. Estrada, while acknowledging the expense, responded by saying that "investment in education and our children is critical."

Mr. Mirabella deemed the \$20 million figure "a large capital investment" but said he is "proud" of the vocational schools in Union County, calling them one of the "premiere" county vocational centers in the state.

Fourth Ward Councilman Jim Foerst asked the freeholder representatives if they would be willing to accept a similar pay scale to that of a Westfield councilman.

According to a Union County employment list, while freeholders earn salaries of \$29,500, Mr. Mirabella makes \$30,500, and Mr. Estrada earns \$31,500.

"We, as Westfield council people and the mayor, are elected but are essentially volunteers and serve for \$1 a year. So, would the freeholders consider a similar budgetary proposal?" Mr. Foerst asked.

"No," Mr. Mirabella replied immediately, causing laughter to spread throughout the room.

"When people ask me what a freeholder does, I say I do what a [municipal] councilman does but a little bit larger scale, budget, area and constituency. It's a lot of responsibility, too. We're not going in that direction, but that's a nice question," he added.

In other business, First Ward Councilman Sal Caruana addressed Westfield's budgetary picture. As a "necessary measure in an extremely difficult budgetary year," Westfield will have no capital budget in 2008.

The proposed capital budget of \$4 million had included \$2.5 million in funds for the renovation of Memorial Field. Plans for Memorial Field included a complete redesign of the softball fields to allow for simultaneous play, changes in the parking lot design and moving the tennis courts. The budget had also included \$1.3 million in public works improvements to fund road improvements.

Mr. Caruana said while the finance committee "loves" the Municipal Field project, "as Councilman Arena was saying to the freeholders, you can't do every project you love." He said opportunities for private support or partnerships would have to be considered for the project to come to fruition. "At \$2.5 million, it's nowhere close."

Mr. Caruana did say that capital improvements will occur in 2008, but they will be completed with money appropriated in 2007.

The town will set aside \$75,000 for quiet zone work on Rahway Avenue and \$70,000 to fund its share of a state aid project for Westfield Avenue.

"Our capital budget is funded by long-term debt," Mr. Caruana said. "With a \$4 million capital budget, we would be adding to our debt service by about 25 percent." The town has \$15 million in unfunded debt.

"At this point, we need to be a lot more strategic in planning our capital improvements," he added. "In 2008, we are taking a break."

Mr. Foerst, as a member of the public works committee, said he was "disappointed" with the news because constituents want roads paved. However, he said, "I realize there's not much we can do."

JoAnn Neylan, who chairs the public works committee, said this "tough love" was needed. She said "this is the right decision and is in the best interest of all of us."

Mr. Caruana said declining revenues over the first half of 2008 also contributed to the decision. Construction fees are down 40 percent from last year. Parking revenue is down 15 percent, which is "further than we would have projected, representing a slowdown in consumer spending and driving."

In addition, there is a decline in interest. The town will earn \$300,000 in interest income this year. Last year, the town made \$800,000.

Starting Monday, August 25, the finance committee will meet every Monday for nine months. They will work to create a debt-management plan, while meeting with all department heads to discuss possible employee reductions and hear proposals for "revenue enhancement."



Michael J. Pollack for *The Westfield Leader* A FAIR SHAKE...Fourth Ward Westfield Councilman Tom Bigosinski, left, shakes hands with Freeholder Al Mirabella. County representatives attended the meeting to hear concerns of the Westfield council and promote the relationship between the county and municipality.

Muhlenberg Formally Closes Plainfield Emergency Room

PLAINFIELD - On Wednesday at 8 a.m., Muhlenberg's emergency room went on "full divert" status, meaning rescue squads must divert to other hospitals. On Tuesday, Muhlenberg Medical Center sent a letter to local rescue squads formally closing the emergency room in Plainfield. The letter reads: "Dear Emergency Medical Technician:

This letter will serve to formally advise you that Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center, an affiliate of Solaris Health System, will discontinue acute care services at its facility located at Park Avenue and Randolph Road, Plainfield, New Jersey on Wednesday, August 13, 2008. Approval from the Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services of our Certificate of Need (CN) to close has been received and pursuant to the conditions of the CN, this letter will provide a 15-day notification of our intent to close.

We will immediately implement an operational plan to achieve an orderly closure of acute care services. As a part

of that planning process, we will cease to accept direct admissions to the hospital. In 48 hours, we will place the Emergency Room on full divert status. These steps are being taken to ensure we can provide a safe discharge for all current inpatients by August 13, 2008 [final closing date]. During the transition period, we will continue to operate a full-service Emergency Department.

We are deeply saddened by the closure of Muhlenberg but we remain committed to the provision of care to the residents of Plainfield. We thank you for the support you have provided during this process and your willingness to assist in the continuance of healthcare services for the residents of the Plainfield community.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me directly at (908) 668-2197.

Sincerely,
Nancy Fiamingo
Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer
Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center.

Mountainside Fire Dept.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

With about 15 volunteers, some of whom also volunteer with the fire department, members are expected to be on duty 12 hours every week, with shifts running from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m.

Ms. Moore believes that the primary reason for volunteer shortages is the "class you have to take for five months." Although the class is paid for by the town, she said that the "schooling just sounds worse than it is."

President of the Scotch Plains Rescue Squad, Dan Sullivan, believes that word of mouth is the best way to recruit new volunteers.

The Scotch Plains Squad, comprised of 62 members, has had difficulties recruiting individuals to cover the daytime shifts from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Although Mountainside has a paid service during the work week, Mr. Sullivan said that a paid service is "something we don't want to consider."

SP Farmers' Market Sets Blood Drive Gift Certificate

SCOTCH PLAINS - On Saturday, August 2, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., the Scotch Plains Farmers' Market will feature a blood drive. Donors will receive a \$20 gift certificate towards purchases at the market. The market is located at the Municipal Building parking lot at 430 Park Avenue in Scotch Plains.

The Scotch Plains Business and Professional Association (SPBPA) is sponsoring the blood drive in conjunction with The Blood Center of New Jersey.

As part of the SPBPA community outreach effort, this drive is being held to meet the urgency of the community's increasing need for blood. One donation can save up to three lives.

Donors are first asked medical history questions and given a mini-health check, including pulse, blood pressure and iron level. The actual donation of blood takes five to seven minutes, and then the donor is given a snack and juice. The entire process generally takes under one hour. Do-

Scotch Plains is a little more lenient with its required hours and members usually volunteer about four to five hours every week.

In the meantime, Scotch Plains has maintained a good relationship with its neighboring town, Fanwood, to ensure that the daytime calls are answered.

"We have a unique situation, because Scotch Plains surrounds Fanwood, and there is a very good relationship between the two squads," Mr. Sullivan said.

For Mr. Sullivan, being part of the squad is to "do something good for people. You will never get rich doing EMS... It is an appreciation for what we do and how we do it."

For Mountainside Fire Department volunteer of 31 years, Dean Paskow, the bottom line is simple.

"If you're interested, you find the time to do it."

Vendor Leaves Market

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

duce a small volume of crops.

The Scotch Plains Farmers Market now has an organic baker, which is new. He also said one of the farmers sell organic produce grown from another New Jersey organic farmer.

According to the Global Market for Organic Food and Drink, organic food sales have increased from \$23 billion in 2002 to \$40 billion in 2006.

However, Westfield cannot jump onto the organic food bandwagon as easily as Scotch Plains has. Ms. McElynn had sought to bring organic produce to Westfield through the Purple Dragon co-op, but as a member of the New Jersey Council of Farmers and Communities produce sold at the market must be grown in New Jersey and at the farm owned by the farmer selling the goods. She said an inspection revealed that Purple Dragon imports organic fruits. She also said there are a limited number of organic farmers in New Jersey and they pro-

The Chamber is looking into whether it wants to stay a member of the council. For the October 3 Chamber board meeting, this topic is already on the agenda. The Chamber will look at both the benefits and the restrictions of staying a member of the council. Some of the items the Chamber will look into are being able to sell organic food and the fee that has to be paid to the council to stay a member.

Scotch Plains is not a member of the council. Elizabeth, Roselle Park, and Springfield are the only other Union County towns that have markets that are part of the council.

According to the Downtown Cranford Management Corporation, Cranford has not had a Farmer's Market in about three years as they have their own farm in town, Dreyer's Farm on Springfield Avenue.

Katherine Vowell contributed to this story.



POLICE BLOTTER

Westfield
Wednesday, July 23, Hector Menjivar-Mejia, 35, of Plainfield was arrested on an outstanding South Plainfield warrant and an outstanding Harding Township warrant after a motor vehicle stop in the area of Park Street and Central Avenue. He posted bail and was released.

Wednesday, July 23, Michael C. Johnson, 32, of Westfield responded to police headquarters where he was arrested on an outstanding Garwood warrant. He posted bail and was released.

Wednesday, July 23, Salvatore Fazio, 24 of Westfield responded to police headquarters where he was arrested for an outstanding Westfield warrant. He posted bail and was released.

Friday, July 25, Jobin Mathew, 18, of Westfield was charged with possession of marijuana in the area of Wells Street and Fairacres Avenue after police received a call of a suspicious vehicle. Mathew was released with a summons pending and a court date.

Friday, July 25, Bishara Tyler, 32, of Scotch Plains was arrested on an outstanding New Brunswick warrant after a motor vehicle stop in the area of Lamberts Mill Road and Spruce Lane. Tyler posted bail and was released.

Saturday, July 26, a joint investigation with Clark police resulted in the arrest of three individuals: Bryan Fowler, 20, Christopher Dean, 20, and Corey Perez, 20, all residents of Cranford.

Police said the arrests were pursuant to a burglary of a residence on Manchester Drive. Each suspect was charged with burglary, theft, criminal mischief and possession of burglary tools. Bail was set at \$25,000 for Dean and Perez and \$10,000 for Fowler, police said, pending a superior court date of August 1.

Sunday, July 27, Ikemefuna Okwuosa, 21, of Union was arrested for an outstanding warrant following a motor vehicle stop at East Broad Street and Euclid Avenue. He posted bail and was released.

Sunday, August 27, a resident of the 900 block of Ripley Avenue reported the theft of two laptop computers and an emerald ring. The total value of items taken was placed at \$18,500.

Mountainside
Thursday, July 24, a resident of Bayberry Lane reported receiving several calls from a collection agency regarding a check that he supposedly cashed in the amount of \$1,022. According to police, the front of the check had an address in Elizabeth where the victim never resided and the victim stated that he never wrote or cashed a check in that amount. The victim filed

an affidavit stating the above and the incident is under investigation.

Thursday, July 24, a resident of Larkspur Drive reported that as she was driving on Route 22 she noticed a vehicle she described as a dark red, older model compact four-door station wagon occupied by five white males in their late teens traveling east. According to police, the victim stated that the vehicle attempted to parallel her car and when it was directly along side hers, a passenger threw an object into the open driver's side window of her vehicle.

The object was determined to be a Kentucky Fried Chicken soda cup full of soda, police said. The victim did not sustain any injuries, but police have broadcasted a SPEN alert to neighboring jurisdictions to stop and hold any vehicle matching the description noted in this report, authorities said.

Monday, July 28, Francisco G. Lebron, 34, of Newark was arrested at the Essex County jail for an outstanding Mountainside warrant.

Scotch Plains
Wednesday, July 23, Michael T. Sweeney, 38, of Scotch Plains was arrested for an outstanding warrant out of Plainfield. According to police, he was processed and released after posting bail.

Thursday, July 24, Thomas P. Creamer 18, of Elmwood Park was arrested and charged with possession of marijuana after a field investigation. According to police, he was processed and released on a summons.

Thursday, July 24, Charles H. Williams, 49, of Plainfield was arrested after a motor vehicle stop for an outstanding warrant out of Elizabeth. According to police, he was processed and released after posting bail.

Thursday, July 24, Michael J. Molina, 24, of Elizabeth was arrested for an outstanding warrant out of Elizabeth. According to police, he was processed and released after posting bail.

Friday, July 25, Ivano Pizzano, 19, of Scotch Plains was arrested for criminal mischief and criminal trespassing after a field investigation. According to police, he was processed and released with a summons.

Sunday, July 27, Janine F. Lytle, 25, of Plainfield was arrested after a motor vehicle stop for an outstanding warrant out of Middlesex. According to police, she was processed and released after posting bail.

Sunday, July 27, Xiomilka Rodriguez, 26, of Allentown, Pa. was arrested and charged with driving a vehicle reported stolen from Jersey City. According to police, she was processed and released with a summons.

Sharpe James Sentenced; 27 Months Stirs Debate

NEWARK - U.S. District Judge William Martini sentenced former State Senator and former Newark Mayor Sharpe James to 27 months in prison on Tuesday. James was also fined \$100,000, nj.com reported.

Co-conspirator Tamika Riley was sentenced to 15 months in jail.

After being sentenced, they were released. They are expected to report to prison on September 15.

In a highly publicized trial, a jury convicted James and Riley of fraud and conspiracy last summer. It was reported that Riley, 39, and James, 72, were romantically involved.

The conviction was a joint prosecution effort by U.S. Attorney Christopher Christie, Attorney General Anne Milgram and the FBI.

The prosecution of James, initiated two years ago, brought an end to the career of the Democratic Party power broker, whose influence was far reach-

ing in the state. James, in public office for 20 years, has accumulated millions of dollars in the bank, a yacht, Rolls Royce and a number of properties, according to published reports.

The light sentence given to James and Riley by the judge stirred controversy. Mr. Christie said his office will appeal the sentence, contending it was unreasonable under federal sentencing guidelines. Judge Martini said the sentencing was in line with that given to other corrupt, convicted politicians in the state, according to NJ.com.

James' and Riley's crime involved their conspiracy in the fraudulent sale of publicly-owned city property of which hundreds of thousands of dollars in profits were garnered.

About his light sentencing, the judge further added that he failed to see who was the victim in this crime, NJ.com reported.

Court Upholds Conviction In 2003 Westfield Arrest

ELIZABETH - On July 28, appellate judges Rudy Coleman and Thomas Lyons ruled against Warren Guerrier on appeal from the Superior Court of New Jersey, Law Division, Union County.

The defendant's position was that the arresting officers in 2003 in Westfield violated his rights under the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution, to be free from unreasonable searches and seizures.

Defendant Warren Guerrier appealed an October 21, 2005 judgment of conviction entered following the trial court's acceptance of his March 2, 2005 guilty plea - third degree conspiracy to commit the crime of identity theft, and third degree possession of devices and materials to make false drivers' licenses.

Guerrier had moved to suppress evidence seized from his car after a stop for traffic violations in Westfield. The court found that the police had the right to stop the vehicle and probable cause to conduct the subsequent search of the

interior of the car because the smell of marijuana emanated from the vehicle.

The court found that the arresting Westfield Police Officers had acted correctly.

On September 12, 2003, at approximately 12:01 a.m., Officers James Stivalo and Kevin O'Keefe of the Westfield Police Department pulled over a Honda wagon driven by Guerrier. The reasons for the stop were that the officers observed that the car had an unreadable expiration date on its Virginia license plate tag and the car's front side windows were unlawfully tinted.

The officers approached the vehicle and asked the driver, Guerrier, to provide his driving credentials. Guerrier could not produce them. At that time, Officer O'Keefe detected a strong odor of marijuana emanating from the vehicle.

Officer O'Keefe then instructed Guerrier and his passenger, co-defendant Alexander Young, to exit the vehicle. Both men were advised of their Miranda rights.

County GOP Calls for Cohen Campaign Funds to be Frozen

COUNTY - In response to former Assemblyman Neil Cohen's resignation following allegations that pornography involving children was found on his legislative office computer, Union County Republican Chairman Phil Morin issued the following statement:

"As the investigation of child pornography allegations apparently continues against former Assemblyman Neil Cohen and election laws mandate that a special election be held this November as a result of the legislative vacancy, the Union County Republicans are calling for both his individual and joint legislative campaign accounts with Assemblyman Cryan to be frozen until the investigation is complete.

"No campaign funds should be used for Mr. Cohen's personal legal defense or doled out as campaign contri-

butions in the interim.

"If the allegations are true, we call upon Mr. Cohen to donate all funds in his individual and joint campaign accounts to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) to help in the fight against child pornography and to assist the only true victims of such a heinous crime.

"According to their website, financial donations to the NCMEC 'help advance their mission to prevent child abduction and sexual exploitation' and 'assist victims of abduction and sexual exploitation, their families and the professionals who serve them.'

"According to the release: Election Law Enforcement Commission advisory opinion AO-01-2008 limits the use of campaign funds for criminal legal defense. Charitable donations are specifically authorized."