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Westfield Lions Club Adopts Portion of Central Avenue

By MICHELLE H. LePOIDEVIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

During a recent meeting of the Westfield Town Council, Mayor Thomas C. Jardim appointed members of the Westfield Lions Club as the proud groundskeepers of one of the most crucial portions of Central Avenue as part of the Clean Communities Program.

According to Town Engineer Kenneth B. Marsh, the program is established by the state and allocates monies to towns. The Adopt-A-Road program, which is part of the Clean Communities Program, allows organizations to adopt a portion of land for maintenance and preservation.

The Lions Club members acquired the area of land on Central Avenue from Grove Street to South Avenue for clean-up.

This portion of land begins with Central Square Wines & Liquors at Grove Street and ends at the Exxon and Gulf gas stations on South Avenue.

Charles Tiles, West Coast Video, Southside Chic, the Italian-American Club of Westfield, Peking Garden, ERA Statewide Realty, Central Square Mall, The Sock Company of Westfield, Krauszer's Food Stores, and Bella Giardina Florist are some of the establishments which are included in this strip of land.

Mayor Jardim stated, "It's a positive thing," adding that the town receives money under the grant of the Clean Communities Program in order to keep the community clean.

The Mayor added that he always tries to encourage and attract important organizations such as the



William A. Burke for The Westfield Leader
LITTER FREE ZONE...Westfield Lions Club Street Clean-up Chairman Jeffrey Broadwell, right, hangs the sign on Central Avenue to notify residents of the club's adoption of a section of Central Avenue under the Adopt-A-Road program. Standing at left is Mayor Thomas C. Jardim. The program encourages citizens not to litter.

Lion's Club to the program. The Mayor stressed that he is "very appreciative" to the Lions Club for

their interest and effort in the program.

Here revealed that road crews from

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

Tensions Mount as Jaywalkers Face Tickets and Enforcement

By MICHELLE H. LePOIDEVIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

You don't have to read between the lines to know that you had better walk between them on crosswalks in Westfield. Otherwise, you have to tow the line by doling out \$43 per jaywalking ticket.

According to Deputy Police Chief John P. Wheatley, since Westfield police officers began distributing tickets on February 1, approximately 83 pedestrians have received tickets for jaywalking.

An estimated 64 motorists have been given tickets for speeding since February 1, according to Deputy Chief Wheatley. Normally, about 64 speeding tickets are handed out during an entire month, he said.

Chief Wheatley told *The Westfield Leader* that he believes the message of increased enforcement is "coming across loud and clear."

"People are realizing that they have to slow down. We're doing it for the safety of the people," he added.

Sara Strohecker of The BRAKES

(Bikers, Runners and Kids are Entitled to Safety) Group of Westfield reported, "The BRAKES group began two years because people were being struck by vehicles while in crosswalks."

From its inception, BRAKES contacted Westfield Police Chief Anthony J. Scutti, the Westfield Town Council, and the Public Safety Committee to encourage "a six-month ticket blitz of warning followed by real tickets to those who presented the most dangerous behaviors."

Those behaviors were later cited as motorists who exceeded the 25 mile per hour speed limit by more than 40 percent; drivers who exceeded the 35 mile per hour speed limit by more than 30 percent; motorists who drove through crosswalks while pedestrians were in them; and vehicles that were parked in or on top of crosswalks and intersections.

Regarding the death of Ellen Interdonato last month, a pedestrian who was not jaywalking when she was struck by a vehicle, Ms.

Strohecker pointed to the irony of the fact that Mrs. Interdonato was obeying the law by crossing in the crosswalk.

She also added that BRAKES members have advised police and town officials about the areas in Westfield which are sorely in need of repainted crosswalks and an increase in signage.

Citing these needs as part of the town's infrastructure, Ms. Strohecker remarked that, "The infrastructure is just as important" as speeding violations.

She added that she hoped the police and officials would have used BRAKES as "a mouthpiece" with more cooperation in solving the traffic safety violations in Westfield.

"That would have been an effective approach," she stated, stressing that tickets would have been issued as warnings before actual tickets were distributed. A "PR" or public relations blitz would have included mailings and warnings which citizens

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Preliminary Municipal Budget Up \$754,000 Over '98 Spending Plan

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

The Town Council has begun the painstaking task of working on the 1999 Municipal Budget. The \$23,678,078 preliminary budget spending plan, as presented to the council on February 6, calls for an overall spending increase of 3.29 percent to support municipal services.

The governing body, which is expected to introduce the spending plan in March with adoption likely in

April, is currently looking at an increase in spending of \$754,865 over 1998. The figures are based on a preliminary budget presented to council by Town Administrator Edward A. Gottko.

"I'm estimating that within the next three weeks we will have the expense side of the budget pretty much completed," said Second Ward Councilman James J. Gruba, the Chairman of the council's Finance Committee.

The eight council standing committees will soon be reporting on their meetings with the individual municipal department heads regarding their budgets. Also, the full council has already heard from departmental directors on both their capital (improvements and purchases) and operational spending plans.

"I think the process this year seems to be going pretty well," said Councilman Gruba, noting that the budget priorities of both Republicans and Democrats on the governing body are well understood by the whole council.

The current municipal spending plan does not factor in the impact on local taxes because state aid revenue numbers have yet to be received by the town. Last year's \$22.9 million budget represented an increase of three tax points per \$100 of assessed value of a home. The average home in Westfield is assessed at \$174,000.

Mr. Gottko noted that the largest proportion of this year's budget increase is \$200,000 resulting from the severe Labor Day thunderstorm that caused significant damage throughout the western fringes of Union County. That figure, though, will be offset by \$95,000 in emergency aid received by the state.

"It (the storm) kills us. If we didn't have that, we would have a great budget this year," said First Ward Councilman Gregory S. McDermott.

Another \$95,000 of the hike is due to an increase in group health insurance for town employees; another \$80,000 for the police and firemen's state pension fund; and \$10,000 for an increase in Social Security payments.

Six additional full-time employees and one part-time employee is included in the budget. Broken down, these include three additional full-time traffic enforcement officers, two full-time hourly employees in the Department of Public Works as well as a full time project engineer in the engineering department.

Also, as proposed by Mayor Tho-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

Diner Site Demolition Is OK'd

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

Ever since the Excellent Diner was moved to Germany several years ago, the infamous hole in the ground has been the topic of conversation, even becoming an issue in the 1996 mayoral campaign.

The Town Council, Tuesday, granted Villane Construction Corp. of Westfield a construction permit to demolish the remaining foundation of the diner. The cab portion of the diner was removed and shipped overseas in 1995.

Construction official Anthony Scelsa said that the builder will be responsible for demolishing the foundation and removing all debris from the site, "the whole nine yards," as he described the process.

He said Villane will have to "safeguard" the site with some sort of fencing, as is currently the case, since a hole will remain until excavation work begins for the foundation of a three-story retail and office building that is planned for the site.

Stella Lekas, whose family owns the property, received approval last summer from the Planning Board to construct the retail and office building.

Town Council also had proposed acquiring the lot and creating a park as part of a matching grant program from Union County.

Villane will also have to remove an existing oil tank on the property.

In addition to the diner site, the council granted a demolition permit to Bohler Engineering of Watchung to tear down the existing Exxon Station, Central and South Avenues, and the former home of McEwen Flowers, 431 Central Avenue. McEwen Flowers has relocated to East Broad Street.

Two new pumping station islands, with a canopy, will be installed at the Central and South location. A Tiger Mart retail store also will be constructed. In addition, the lot will be completely landscaped to enhance the appearance of the property.

Mr. Scelsa noted that construction is expected to begin in the spring.

In other business, the council introduced an ordinance to join the capital lease program offered

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

SUNDAY HOURS INCLUDED IN PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO COUNCIL

Westfield Library Officials, Friends Seek Full Funding of \$1.15 Million Spending Plan

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

Westfield Memorial Library officials went before the Town Council Saturday to plead their case for full support of the library's proposed 1999 town allocation of \$1,153,500. The library's total preliminary spending

plan this year is \$1,285,417.

As part of the allocation proposal, the library board has asked the council for \$14,000 to enable the building to be open for 13 Sundays beginning September 26.

If approved, Westfield would join Springfield and Berkeley Heights as

the only towns in Union County with Sunday library hours, according to Westfield Library Director Barbara Thiele. The Plainfield library is also planning to initiate Sunday hours.

According to statistics on libraries provided to *The Westfield Leader* by Ms. Thiele, the Westfield library is

the busiest in the county, with 115 books and/or periodicals checked out per hour. A total of 323,558 materials were circulated in 1998 alone, a figure that even outdid Elizabeth, the largest city in Union County, with a population over three times the size of Westfield.

The Westfield library has had its budget slashed the last five years, according to representatives of the Friends of the Westfield Library.

Eighty-eight percent of the library's budget is funded through the municipal budget. Other sources of revenue include state aid, fines, fees for videos, and donations.

This year, the Westfield Council is mandated by the state to fund \$1,035,000 of the library's budget request of \$1,153,500, based on the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

Upgrading Housing Is Objective Of New Volunteer Commission

By KIMBERLY A. BROADWELL
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

As part of efforts to help Westfield home owners find rehabilitation assistance when needed, a Housing Commission has been established.

According to a municipal ordinance, which was recently adopted by the Town Council, the commission was established to provide advice and assistance to those residents who may be eligible for county housing rehabilitation programs.

According to the council ordinance, the Commission is responsible for maintaining a current list of properties in Westfield which are eligible for housing rehabilitation grant, lien and loan programs.

It is also responsible for promoting Westfield's participation in rehabilitation programs, providing advice and assistance to residents whose homes are eligible for such programs, and providing advice to the mayor and council regarding such programs.

The Commission, according to the ordinance, consists of members of the West Broad Street, Windsor Avenue-Cacciola Place, Madison Avenue and downtown Westfield neighborhoods.

The group, made up of five members and two ex-officio members, held its first meeting this month and is planning a second meeting in March.

According to committee member Michael La Place, Executive Di-

rector of the Downtown Westfield Corporation, the first meeting consisted of committee members discussing their goals, compiling a mission statement, and working out some administrative and organiza-

tional strategies.

Noreen Lund, who represents the Windsor Avenue-Cacciola Place neighborhood on the commission, stated that the commission was ac-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

Highland Ave. Subdivision Okayed Despite Unease of Neighbors, Board

By KIMBERLY A. BROADWELL
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

Approval for a minor subdivision at 704 Highland Avenue, with conditions, was granted by a 6-1 vote to developer Michael Mahoney following hours of discussion at Monday evening's Planning Board meeting.

Property owner Jenelyn Cooling testified that she and her husband have had their home on and off the market for nine years. She said she and her husband planned to remain in their current dwelling and would sell the other plot to the applicant, Mr. Mahoney, for development.

Former Town Attorney Charles Brandt, who represented Mr. Mahoney, said the developer intends to construct a Colonial style home on the new lot.

The proposed house would match the style of others in the neighborhood, Mr. Brandt maintained. It would reportedly be priced at

\$750,000.

Among the conditions attached to the board's approval of the subdivision was a requirement that both side yard setbacks of the new lot measure 15 feet. The applicant had originally asked for a variance allowing only 10 feet. In addition, the property must have a 40-foot front yard setback.

The board also asked for a deed restriction prohibiting any further subdivision in the future, and that the home which is built on the new lot be approved by the Architectural Review Board.

During Monday night's meeting, many neighbors spoke both for and against the subdivision.

Marilyn Kelly, who lives on Colonial Avenue, stated that she was in favor of the project, but did not like the idea of having two driveways in a small area. She said she wanted the driveway to the new house to come from Highland Avenue instead of Colonial.

Jane Quinn of Highland Avenue also stated that she was in favor of the subdivision. She noted that, accord-

ing to the owners, the existing house was built in 1906 and the Coolings were concerned about preserving the house for the neighborhood.

She stated that the house has been on the market for some time, and that the last developer who had offered to purchase the land wanted to subdivide the property into three lots and knock down the existing house.

She went on to say that the Coolings did not agree to this because of their commitment to preserve the pristine antiques that were a part of the couple's home.

Mrs. Quinn said she felt that this was a way for the Coolings to sell off part of their property and also maintain their house.

But Fred Barry, who also lives on Highland Avenue, was not in favor of the subdivision. He read aloud a letter he had written to Planning Board members, in which he outlined his strong opposition to the proposal.

He stated that he thinks dividing lots in the neighborhood into sub-standard lots lowers the value of all of the houses in the neighborhood.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

INDEX

Business	Page 17	Mountainside	Page 3	Social	Page 6
County	Page 2	Obituary	Page 10	Sports	Page 13
Editorial	Page 4	Religious	Page 9		

CYAN YELLOW MAGENTA BLACK

Jaywalkers Face Tickets, Increased Enforcement

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

believe should have preceded the ticket blitz.

While noting that she does not necessarily agree that jaywalkers are causing the most dangerous traffic conditions, Ms. Strohecker said, "It would have been a good faith gesture. But, I think overall what needs to be done is to make this town safer."

She revealed that to her knowledge, more pedestrians have been struck by vehicles while in crosswalks, instead of when they were not in them, or jaywalking.

Ms. Strohecker noted that there should be a mutual respect between pedestrians and drivers. Pedestrians expect safe and defensive driving from motorists, while motorists expect pedestrians to cross at crosswalks—not to jaywalk, according to Ms. Strohecker.

"Until that mutual respect is on both parts, I don't see a change occurring for the better," she concluded.

Donna Cordell and another individual, who wished to remain anonymous, told *The Westfield Leader* that they were ticketed for jaywalking when crossing within the crosswalk on Tuesday, February 2. They reported that they veered off the crosswalk approximately three feet on their way to Footlocker when ticketed.

They also noted that their ticketing officer jaywalked himself, crossing between parked cars, in order to distribute the ticket.

Ms. Cordell stated, "It doesn't make sense," revealing that the cost of a ticket would be more understandable if it were within the \$10 to \$20 price range—comparable to the cost of a Westfield parking ticket.

She added that she believes the commerce in the town will suffer greatly due to the flurry of jaywalking tickets.

"I think they (the downtown stores) are going to lose business," she observed.

Both Ms. Cordell and her friend intend to fight their jaywalking tickets on Thursday, February 25.

During the meeting of the Westfield Town Council this Tuesday, Deidre Gelinne, Co-Chairperson of BRAKES, stated that she has observed more police presence in Westfield.

"We hope this is not a one-time blitz that is going to go away," she stressed.

Councilman Neil Sullivan, who also serves as the Chairman of the Public Safety Committee, stated that he is hopeful that a proposed increase in the town budget will be approved in order to continue the enforcement of traffic officers throughout town.

Richard Albert of Westfield, who has addressed letters to the Council for nearly five years regarding pedestrian safety, expressed his concern about the crosswalk at St. Paul and East Broad Streets.

He noted that most crosswalks, including the crosswalk at St. Paul and East Broad Streets are "white-washed."

Pointing to the ticketing of jaywalkers and pedestrian safety, Mr. Albert stated, "This seems somewhat of a backward approach." He added that officials should be more concerned with enforcing a motorist's obligation to yield to a pedestrian than maintaining a ticketing blitz of jaywalkers.

Town Engineer Kenneth B. Marsh told Mr. Albert that the town was set to repaint crosswalks, but the contract fell through. He said he anticipates repainting crosswalks in the spring.

Mr. Albert claimed that pedestrian crossing signs were removed approximately one month prior to the death of Mrs. Interdonato.

Mr. Marsh responded that the pedestrian crossing signs were removed because of snow plows. He stated that when the snow season ends, the signs will be erected once again.

Ms. Gelline requested pedestrian crossing signs that might be more durable.

Mr. Marsh noted, "Whatever you put there (as a sign) it's going to get hit."

Chief Scutti presented an example of a pedestrian crossing sign, which was posted on Rahway Avenue and caused an obstruction to a tractor trailer.

"If a street isn't wide enough, it causes more of a hazard than a benefit," reported Chief Scutti.

Regarding the death of Mrs. Interdonato, which is reportedly under investigation, Chief Scutti maintained, "There is no way that we can prove that she was in a crosswalk at the time of the accident."

While explaining the increase in recent enforcement, Mayor Thomas C. Jardim told the audience, "We have a good plan. I'm not sure that we publicized that plan as well as we should."

Councilman Carl Salisbury stated, "We as a council don't do a good enough job communicating to the public about what is being done and what should be done." He added that he hopes there will be increased cooperation between police, council and BRAKES members.

"To be very honest, I think it (publicity) has gotten the message across loud and clear that you should not jaywalk," stated Chief Scutti.

One web site, "Westfield, New Jersey

At A Click" which may be accessed at www.quintillon.com/westfield contains the warning, "The Town of Westfield is trying to make our streets safer for everyone. Pedestrians and motorists alike should be aware that the Westfield Police Department is stringently enforcing speeding, yielding to pedestrians, and jaywalking laws."

The Mayor revealed that he wanted to make it clear to the public that enforcement will continue with the hope that the behavior of motorists and pedestrians will change. He also stressed that effective pedestrian crossing signs will be erected.

"This is a town where you don't speed," he stated. "We're trying to make it a well-rounded attack. It is important to make it (Westfield) a pedestrian-friendly town."

Pointing to the need of mutual respect between pedestrians and motorists, Chief Scutti added, "A motorist is a pedestrian within two or three minutes and a pedestrian is a motorist within two or three minutes. They're the same person."

Chief Scutti stated that only the marked crosswalks in town qualify as places where pedestrians may cross without facing a ticket.

When Mr. Albert asked if street corners could qualify, the Chief responded that these areas are not official crosswalks.

Councilman Lawrence Goldman observed, "Very few people are aware of yielding to pedestrians in a crosswalk. It's a much broader issue that has to be attacked at the state level." He added that he believes it will take a long time for people to change their behavior as pedestrians and motorists.

Town Administrator Edward A. Gottko reported that there has been a 78 percent increase in the number of tickets distributed in the past week in comparison to last week's ticket distribution.

According to the 1998 Westfield Police Department Annual Report, there was a 125 percent increase in pedestrian accidents.

Eighteen pedestrians were struck by vehicles without fatalities. Six individuals who were riding bicycles were struck.

Michael La Place, Executive Director of the Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC), stressed that although he is in favor of enforcing the jaywalking ordinance, he is very concerned that the public was not supplied with information or warnings before tickets were distributed.

According to Mr. La Place, several individuals have approached the DWC and the Westfield Chamber of Commerce to express their displeasure and disinterest in shopping in Westfield due to the enforcement of the ordinance.

"We feel like we are going to lose some loyal customers," he observed.

While explaining that there was a lack of "public education and publicity" prior to the enforcement, Mr. La Place concluded, "That's a step that was missed. This was a step back."

Demolition Permit OK'd For Former Diner Site

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

by the Union County Improvement Authority. The second reading and adoption vote is slated for Tuesday, March 9.

The Authority will issue bonds not to exceed \$15 million over 15 years. Through the program, the town intends to purchase two new fire pumper trucks for the fire department at an estimated combined cost of \$700,000, as well as a communications system for the department with a price tag around \$135,000.

In addition, eight dump trucks and other equipment will be obtained for use by the Department of Public Works. The total cost of the equipment purchased is estimated at \$1.2 million.

The town will make the first lease payment next year. Town Administrator Edward A. Gottko said the town will not know what its lease payments will be until the Authority issues the bonds.

The town purchases will be through the "lowest responsible bidder" process as required under the state's public contract law. Bidders must submit proposals based on the specifications as set by the town.

The fire engines and communications system will be paid off over the course of 10 years while payment of the Public Works trucks will be completed over a period of five years.

"I'm glad we as an authority were able

to offer the program and, as a Town Council, we were able to participate in the program," said Gregory S. McDermott, speaking as both the Chairman of the Union County Improvement Authority and as First Ward Councilman.

In other business, the council approved a resolution appointing representatives to the Pedestrian Planning Advisory Committee, which will study local pedestrian safety. Appointees include: Mayor Thomas C. Jardim; First Ward Councilman and Transportation, Parking and Traffic Committee Chairman Carl A. Salisbury; Third Ward Councilman and Chairman of the Public Safety Committee Neil F. Sullivan; Town Administrator Edward A. Gottko; Town Engineer Kenneth B. Marsh; Traffic Safety Officer and Police Sergeant Carl Geis; Planning Board Chairman Martin Robins; Superintendent of Schools Dr. William J. Foley, and Union County government representative Mary Jane Milway, and BRAKES (Bikers, Runners and Kids are Entitled to Safety) representative Rachel Lipschutz.

The group will work with the engineering firm of Lehr & Associates, which has been obtained through a grant from the state Department of Transportation to complete a study regarding pedestrian safety.

Highland Ave. Subdivision Approved Despite Unease

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Mr. Barry remarked that one of the reasons he continues to live in Westfield and pay the high taxes, even though his children are not in school anymore, is because of the strict zoning laws. He also pointed out that the developer is not from Westfield.

Mr. Brandt asked Mr. Barry if he would be in favor of the development if the applicant changed the lot shape. He explained that Mr. Mahoney can change the shape of the lot into more an L-shape. Under those circumstances, variances would not be needed and the case would not need to be heard by the board.

Mr. Brandt said the applicant chose the style for the new lot so that the home to be built on it would conform with the rest of the neighborhood, and would not have an odd shape. In order to accomplish this, however, certain variances had to be requested.

Mr. Barry stated that if an owner wanted to alter his or her property in accordance with the laws, then he would have no say in the matter. He reported that he was not in favor of any subdivision, but that he would have to respect anything that was done in accordance with the zoning laws.

John Osterhus of Highland Avenue

echoed the sentiments of Mr. Barry, stating that the neighborhood was "well-spaced, and that if we start the process of lowering the zoning laws and squeezing in, then the character of the neighborhood would change. I would like to preserve the character of the neighborhood."

Before the final vote was rendered, members of the Planning Board voiced mixed feelings about the application. Robert Newell stated that he was not in favor of the application, but nevertheless decided to vote "yes," with the restrictions that were set forth.

If the appeal was denied, he said he felt Mr. Brandt was "threatening" that the developer would put in a house that would not match other homes in the neighborhood.

Mr. Newell said this would not be in the best interest of the neighborhood. He added that by granting the subdivision with conditions, the board at least had some type of control over what the developer was doing.

Todd Evans concurred with Mr. Newell's remarks, and noted that Mrs. Cooling could inquire about having her home preserved as a historic landmark.

Pamela McClure said she thought it was very beneficial to have construction plans for the new home go before the Architectural Review Board.

Mayor Thomas C. Jardim commented that he was not in favor of the subdivision, saying "it was not in the interest of public good." He cast the lone vote against the proposal.

In other business, the application for Adam and Marcie Borr to subdivide property at the intersection of Prospect and Trains End Court into four lots was briefly introduced by their attorney, James Flynn.

Mr. Flynn, who began presenting the application at 11 p.m., wanted to continue with testimony from his engineer after many neighbors came forward with questions about drainage.

Because of the late hour, however, the Planning Board decided to hear the case at its next meeting on Monday, March 1, at 8 p.m.

Upgrading of Housing Is Commission's Objective

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

tively identifying properties which are in need of rehabilitation, and looking at funding sources such as HOME, a housing investment partnership program operated by Union County, which helps those with rental properties.

Municipalities receive funds from the program, which can be used for rehabilitation, acquisition and reconstruction of low income housing.

When asked about the commission, Mayor Thomas C. Jardim stated that all appointed members on the body are volunteers and that their main function will be "to let homeowners be aware of the grant and loan programs that are available through the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development and other state and Federal programs."

He cited such examples as the Upstairs Downtown Program, which is aimed at renovating tenant dwellings in the downtown area.

Finally, former Councilman Kenneth MacRitchie, who does not serve on the commission but is a strong supporter of its efforts, told *The Westfield Leader* that the group is working with the HOME and Upstairs Downtown programs, as well as the federally funded Multijurisdictional program for owner occupied homes run by the Union County Revenue Sharing Committee.

He said the commission is also working with the E-Team Partners coordinated by the Public Service Electric and Gas (PSE&G), to help homeowners within specified income guidelines fund repairs to their heating systems.

Mr. MacRitchie pointed out that the

commission was designed to be ongoing and not simply a short-term solution to the poor condition of some of Westfield's residential housing stock.

He said the commission was concerned with the whole town and not just one specific area of town.

Mr. MacRitchie noted that the commission is a non-fiscal entity consisting completely of volunteers who meet periodically.

Preliminary Budget Up \$754,000 Over 1998

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

mas C. Jardim, a part-time programmer for the town's local access television station, TV-36, is included in the budget. The total cost of these positions, excluding benefits, is \$194,000.

Another hit was received from the town's sewer flow capacity as part of the agreement with the Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority, of which Westfield is a member. The fee the town must pay has risen by \$49,000 from \$897,800 to \$947,000 this year.

The council will meet Wednesday, February 17 to try and pare down its capital improvement side of the budget for the year which, among other things, include 1999 road projects, and nearly \$400,000 in improvements as sought by the Downtown Westfield Corporation, the governing body of the special improvement district.

The Recreation Commission has proposed creating a parks and maintenance department at an annual cost ranging from \$304,000 to \$481,000, with the numbers based on whether current employees are reassigned to the department or new personnel are hired by the

town. That request, though, is not included in the preliminary budget.

Mayor Jardim has listed the upgrade of municipal lots, the overall capital infrastructure and Department of Public Works services and the TV-36 upgrade in programming on his priority list for this year.

In an effort to create funding to support economic development, the Bruno Group has made a presentation to the council about how it could seek grants for the town.

Mayor Jardim has noted that a grants person might be able to locate additional revenue streams for the town to finance some of its budget initiatives.

Among budget areas that have decreased are the bond interest remaining on the debt issued by the town in the 1980s to build the Westfield Memorial Library. The bond interest figure has dropped from \$104,168 in 1998 to \$69,368 this year, along with a principal payment of \$600,000 in 1999. The library debt will be paid off next year.

In addition, departmental expenses other than salaries and wages in the budget is down \$245,000.

WESTFIELD POLICE BLOTTER

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3

• A Boulevard resident reported receiving harassing telephone calls, according to police.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5

• Roderick Boyd, 44, of Newton was charged at the Monmouth County Jail with forgery, uttering a forged instrument and attempted theft by deception for allegedly trying to deposit a stolen check at an East Broad Street bank on December 23, police said. Bail was set at \$1,000.

Boyd was being held on similar charges by Monmouth County authorities, Westfield officials confirmed.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7

• A Dartmouth Place resident reported that unknown individuals spray painted and threw eggs at his white Jeep, and also struck the front of his house with eggs.

• A resident of Effingham Place reported that someone broke the windshield of his motor vehicle while it was parked in front of his home.

Westfield Lions Club Adopts Portion of Central Avenue

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the Westfield Department of Public Works normally tidy up the portion of Central Avenue which the Lions have acquired. He believes this will save these crews valuable time.

Mr. Marsh revealed that the Environmental Club at Roosevelt Intermediate School had adopted a portion of downtown Elm Street as a part of the Adopt-A-Road program.

He also noted that the Youth Leaders Club of the Westfield "Y" also selected the park and plaza area around the Monument to World War I veterans in Westfield for its Adopt-A-Road project.

According to Mr. Marsh, the adopting organization supplies the manpower, while the town provides the bags and necessary tools for clean-up.

Signs representing the organization are erected by a coordinator and clean-up days are organized.

Mr. Marsh noted that there is no specific frequency of maintenance, however, most organizations clean-up areas once per month.

He added that any organization can select any spot in town for the Adopt-A-Road program.

According to Jeffrey Broadwell, Chairman of Street Clean-Up for the Westfield Lions Club project, club members will

be responsible for cleaning up litter and other debris from the curb areas to the sidewalks. Maintenance of the storefronts must also be preserved throughout their area.

Mr. Broadwell believes that this portion of Central Avenue is perhaps the most crucial area, as it presents motorists, citizens and pedestrians with "a first impression" of the town of Westfield.

"It's a gateway to the downtown area," he observed.

Due to the heavy traffic flow included in that part of Central Avenue, Mr. Broadwell stated that it is not only vital, but a true honor, for Lions Club members to give that portion the best face lift possible.

Executive Director of the Downtown Westfield Corporation, Michael LaPlace, stated that he believes the Central Avenue area is "an important corridor" to Westfield, as an introduction into its commerce and landscape.

Debbie Schmidt of the Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce stated, "We definitely want our streets to look as best as they can."

Celebrating its 75th anniversary, the Westfield Lions Club, which was chartered in 1924, is one of the oldest Lions Clubs in New Jersey.

Full Funding Is Sought By Library Representatives

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

town's equalized valuation of properties in Westfield, according to Town Administrator Edward A. Gottko.

Last year, the council funded \$1.1 million of the library's request of \$1,117,940. In 1997, the library was given an appropriation of \$1,075,000 out of a request of \$1,097,649. In 1996, the library received funding in the amount of \$1,030,000 out of a request of \$1,069,243.

The council was mandated to fund the library \$994,000 in 1998 and \$995,000 in 1997.

If the library request is approved, the facility would be staffed in the beginning mostly by part-time employees who agree to work Sunday hours, according to the Library Director.

Eager to have the library's full budget request approved by the council, the Friends have initiated a postcard petition drive to encourage the council to approve the budget. Some 2,500 cards have been received by Mayor Thomas C. Jardim and council members, officials explained.

While noting the library operation is a priority in the town budget, Fourth Ward Councilman Lawrence A. Goldman said he sees the library as another department which comes in with a budget request. He said if all departments had their budget requests approved, the impact would be too great on taxpayers.

"The only gripe I have with the library board is that we (the council) have questioned if they can reallocate their budget in terms of the appropriation that is given by the town, rather than adding funding" to the budget request for Sunday openings, Councilman Goldman explained.

"That's not possible," snapped Sadie Schoss, the former Friends President, in commenting to *The Westfield Leader* on that possibility.

"We have to cap it (the budget) somewhere. So our interest is (that library officials) provide some flexibility with some level of budget constraint," Mr. Goldman stated.

Councilman Goldman said the board has indicated that approving less than the full budget and including Sunday hours is not a "workable" idea in terms of the budget constraints before the library board.

Ms. Schoss disagreed with that view, commenting, "This (Sunday hours) was something that the Town Council has to do above and beyond the budget."

Friends representative Jane Curtis explained that the only areas library officials could cut would be funding for materials, which is used to purchase books and tapes, and in the area of hours of service, where part-time salaries are involved.

For instance, she noted that Friday evening hours were cut a few years ago due to budget constraints.

"If a cut is taken again for a reduced number of hours of service, it will not be so easy" for the board to find where to reduce hours of service, said Ms. Curtis.

For instance, opening later in the morning, as some council members have indicated, would "be too late" for "Story Hours" held for young children. Also, she noted that many senior citizens like to stop first thing in the morning at the library to research how their stocks are doing on Wall Street.

Meanwhile, any cutback in evening hours, she said, would directly impact students who need to work on school projects.

Jane Curtis, speaking on behalf of the Friends of the Library, noted that the public has requested programs and services above and beyond what is currently offered by the Westfield library.

Ms. Schoss said one reason Sunday hours are popular is due to the fact that parents are often busy Saturdays attending local sporting events which their children are involved in.

Third Ward Councilman Neil F. Sullivan, Jr. said he supports the full library allocation this year, noting that "we run an extremely efficient operation" in terms of dollars spent per capita income when compared to surrounding community libraries.

"I don't know anyone who can argue

against Sunday openings," he noted.

Councilman Sullivan said it is important that Sunday openings are a permanent program and not just a pilot initiative. Next year, Mr. Sullivan said, he would like the library to be open at least one day on weekends during the summer months.

In a memorandum to Mayor Thomas C. Jardim and the council, President of the Library Board of Trustees Harrison T. Watson, Jr. explained that the opening of the library on Sundays makes for a "valuable, tax-supported resource available to many who cannot otherwise access it, particularly two wage-earner families."

He cited public support in Westfield for Sunday openings, noting that other communities which open their libraries that day have found Sundays to be their busiest days.

If Sunday hours are approved by the council this year, the board would seek to open 37 Sundays in the year 2000. Library officials said opening this number of Sundays would cost \$40,000 in next year's budget.

"The library is possibly the one area where everybody can agree on. It doesn't matter your age or your social/economic bracket. The library is a benefit to every individual in our community," explained Library Board Treasurer Cynthia Cocken.

"And we hope you will support us in our effort to be a strong, vibrant library," she told the council.

Third Ward Councilman John J. Walsh noted that he and some other council members are a bit "irritated" that last year's appropriation did not include Sunday hours. Mr. Walsh said he would like the board to be flexible by moving funds around, if possible, to support Sunday hours.

Ms. Schoss told the council Tuesday night that there is no "bluff" in the library budget this year, noting that Ms. Thiele has already "pared" down the spending plan.

Councilman Walsh told *The Leader* that the board's opinion has been that the library will only open the extra day if their budget request is fully supported in the town's municipal budget.

Mayor Jardim noted that, "The library budget is quite unique. It is only approved (by the council) as a lump sum."

He observed that unlike it is able to do with municipal departments, the governing body has no legal authority to cut programs or services offered by the library. That power rests solely with the facility's Board of Trustees.

First Ward Councilman Gregory S. McDermott indicated he thinks the council "has to support the (library) budget," given the financial constraints faced by the board.

He said due to the time restrictions for many Westfielders, Sundays are the one day many persons would actually use the 10-year-old facility.

In addition to the many sports programs in town, he said, "We have to be able to stretch the minds" of children and adults alike.

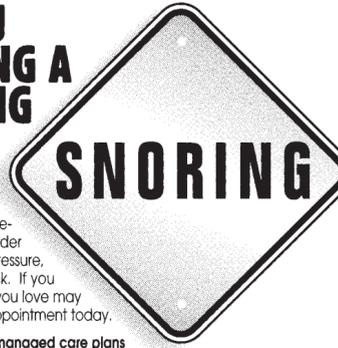
In terms of the actual budget, the largest part of the spending plan, or \$668,310, is for salaries, wages and benefits. Another \$234,950 has been budgeted for the operation of the building, library equipment and maintenance of its grounds.

In addition to funds earmarked from the town, the library also anticipates revenues from state aid, \$30,990; another \$60,000 in fines for overdue books, \$9,000 in fees for videos taken out by cardholders, and nearly \$46,000 in fine revenues collected but not used in the budget from last year.

Mrs. Cocken, in response to an inquiry from Councilman Goldman, noted that the library has been approached by Garwood officials regarding a possible regionalized agreement to extend the use of the Westfield library to Garwood residents.

Westfield has had a successful regional health department for years. The program currently serves Mountainside, Garwood, Springfield, Roselle Park and Fanwood.

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