

## Eight Candidates Contending for Four Seats on Westfield Town Council Participate In Candidate Forum Sponsored by Leader and Area League of Women Voters

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better with the public in bringing the proposal forward," especially making it clear that "it was only a proposal."

**Mrs. Weinstein:** While Mrs. Weinstein agreed that it was "only a proposal," she said that she had recommended sending a notification letter to the residents in the immediate area about the proposal even though it isn't legally necessary for the Commission to do so.

**Leader to Mrs. Weinstein:** What is the shade tree ordinance and what is the value of it to the Town of Westfield? How does it rank in priority to other expenditures and needs of the town?

**Mrs. Weinstein:** "I think the shade tree ordinance is very important." She added that it protects the environment by prohibiting in certain instances the clear-cutting of trees. She noted the importance of tree preservation whenever possible. She thinks the Shade Tree Commission is "doing an excellent job to this end."

**Mr. Quackenbush:** The candidate feels that the ordinance is a "very valuable asset to a suburban community like Westfield." He called for the community to be "vigilant" in tree preservation and to encourage any organizations which would promote planting more trees.

**Leader to Mr. Albano:** Do you feel the Emergency Communication Systems with the town, county and the state need improvement in light of the events from Hurricane Floyd? What do you think should be done?

**Mr. Albano:** He said that while walking his ward, he was told how frustrated residents were in the lack of communi-

cation regarding the water emergency. Mr. Albano reported that he was frustrated that he had to find out from a school phone chain that water was contaminated when he could have found out from a more effective emergency system. He feels the TV-36 hookup should be at Town Hall instead of at Westfield High School, enabling better communication of emergency situations. He added that better communication between the council and school board could facilitate in these emergencies.

**Mr. Stoner:** "Yes, we need to improve the emergency communication within our community." The candidate called the town's Web site "woefully inadequate," and needs major improvements. He also believes that the TV-36 hookup should also be from Town Hall. He also suggested using e-mail for getting out the word on emergencies.

**Leader to Mr. Stoner:** You've stated in the newspaper that the North Avenue business area needs attention and offers potential for improvements in appearance and traffic flow. Please explain your vision of this and how it might be implemented. How does the ShopRite development issue relate to your proposal?

**Mr. Stoner:** Regarding North and Central Avenues as major entrances to Westfield, Mr. Stoner considers the areas to be "eyesores," with business on these entrances that "could stand substantial improvements." Mr. Stoner stated that the ShopRite development will cause major traffic problems in the area.

**Mr. Albano:** Mr. Albano believes that

the SID must be expanded beyond North Avenue. He believes that since the council will hire a grants consultant, such improvements will be accomplished through grants. He added that a traffic calming study, which is headed by Councilman Sullivan, will aid the traffic congestion which is associated with the ShopRite development.

**Leader to Mrs. Gulotta:** What are your views of the relationship of the town government with other agencies such as the public school system, neighboring governments, county and state government? How can these relationships be augmented for the benefit of the town?

**Mrs. Gulotta:** "The town doesn't work as a vacuum." She pointed to various liaisons between the town and other organizations such as the school board. "We must maintain these kind of relationships, like shared services." She emphasized sharing services between the school board and the town.

**Mr. McDermott:** The incumbent reiterated the importance of the role of town Administrator in maintaining relationships with other towns. He pointed to the success of his work as liaison to the school board in which safety issues and parking at the National Guard Armory had been addressed.

**Leader to Mr. McDermott:** What are your views of downtown revitalization, proposed light rail links and New York City commuting initiatives? Do these issues drive the need for a parking deck?

**Mr. McDermott:** As the council liaison to the SID, Mr. McDermott stressed that the parking issue is very important

in completely developing the town. He looks forward to hearing the results of a study by the town's Parking Consultant, Rich & Associates, in order to determine the deck's placement and cost.

**Mrs. Gulotta:** "I wholeheartedly support a parking deck." She stated that the deck could be aesthetically pleasing, giving Summit's deck as an example. She stated that she loves the downtown area and wants to see it flourish. She also anticipates the results compiled by the parking consultant.

**Leader to Ms. Lazarowitz:** Please describe how you would improve the physical character of Central Avenue as the "Gateway to Westfield," while maintaining the integrity of the neighborhood?

**Ms. Lazarowitz:** The candidate stressed the importance of slowing problematic traffic down along with improving the look of the buildings along Central Avenue. "If you're driving too fast, how can you see the beautification?"

**Mr. Sullivan:** Citing a \$450,000 grant to put in infrastructure improvements and a \$10,000 grant for facade renovations, Mr. Sullivan said the council has approached this issue and accomplished several goals in working to revitalize Central Avenue through investing money in that area. He also stressed the importance of slowing traffic down in that area. He pointed to a traffic calming issue piloted on Rahway Avenue which he hopes to carry through the rest of the town, if it is deemed successful.

**Leader to Mr. Sullivan:** Westfield had two traffic fatalities this year and the level of traffic throughout the town

seems to be increasing. Please discuss your views of what should be done to deal with the related safety and quality of life issues.

**Mr. Sullivan:** "People drive too fast, we have to slow people down," he reported. He pointed to the council's work with BRAKES (Bikers, Riders and Kids are Entitled to Safety), the police, various planning agencies and the school board that was occurring even before the fatalities. Education, enforcement and engineering. "The Three E's" were the keys to traffic and pedestrian safety outlined by Councilman Sullivan. He pointed to improved crosswalk markings and presence of pedestrian signs around town which have been established throughout Westfield. He presented a yellow reflector, which he discovered at the Walk New Jersey Conference that would be put upon pedestrian signs to alert drivers.

**Ms. Lazarowitz:** A member of BRAKES, the candidate agrees that improvements have been made. However, she believes that more can be done. She believes that residents need to work together in order to make Westfield a safer community.

**Hi's Eye Questions:** **Hi's Eye:** Is Westfield government prepared for Y2K?

Mrs. Weinstein and Mr. Sullivan assured the students that the town is prepared and all computers have been tested and readied for the new century. All candidates concurred. Mr. Quackenbush stated that he hopes measures will be taken to work with shared services to assure that the town will have an alternative if not Y2K ready.

**Hi's Eye:** Are you in favor of a parking deck?

All candidates revealed that they are in favor of the deck. Mr. Quackenbush said this can be done with a low impact. Mr. Sullivan pointed out that there may be a need for two—one for commuters and one for in-town employees. Ms. Lazarowitz said this must be accomplished now for commuters and downtown shoppers.

Mr. McDermott and Ms. Gulotta concurred that if the town is to keep business thriving, a parking deck must be established. Mr. Albano stated that he looks forward to seeing the study the consultant will produce to determine "unanswered issues" such as the cost and placement of the deck. Mr. Stoner said he hears parking is a major concern among Second Ward residents.

**Hi's Eye:** Are you in favor of amending the Town Charter to increase the term lengths of service for the council members and the mayor?

Mrs. Weinstein favors a two-year term because "it keeps the council in touch with its constituency." Mr. Sullivan mused, "I'd like to extend my term by two years now if I could." He has sent a request to state legislature to pass an ordinance to have the residents vote on taking the bi-partisanship out of elections and to vote on term preference.

Mr. Albano and Mr. McDermott also favor two-year terms. Mr. Albano said extending terms could discourage people in the community from wanting to run for council. Mr. McDermott said that two-year terms allow candidates seeking re-election to keep in touch with their constituents by campaigning. Mrs. Gulotta would like to see longer terms "for a more deliberative body."

Mr. Stoner is open to all options, although he feels that longer terms would encourage more people to run for council. Ms. Lazarowitz believes that if campaigning time is used to meet and greet constituents, "something is wrong," noting that incumbent council members should be doing this all the time. Mr. Quackenbush favors longer terms because more can be accomplished.

**Hi's Eye:** Are you in favor of the Charter proposed for amending Westfield Local Access TV?

Mr. Quackenbush believes TV-36 "could play a much greater role," therefore, he endorses any charter amendments to improve the channel. Ms. Lazarowitz commented that maintaining TV-36 is a good way to get involved in their town.

Mr. Stoner believes that the "talented people" in the town could help to improve the quality of TV-36. He would support amending the charter. Ms. Gulotta suggested advertising TV-36 on other cable networks. She supports amending the charter. Ms. Weinstein is in favor of amending the charter.

Mr. McDermott stated that the emergency system response with Hurricane Floyd should be evidence that the station needs improvement. Mr. Sullivan said the council "has to step up and fund" the station for improvement. Agreeing to amend the charter, Mr. Albano also suggested maintaining another channel besides TV-36.

**Closing Statements:** **Mr. Stoner:** The New Jersey Common Cause Chairman stated that he would work with the mayor to address the needs of road safety, street repair and downtown revitalization. He added that he would "make it his first priority" to keep in touch with the residents of his ward, "make connections for people" and "welcome people into the community" and use his sales and marketing skills to contribute to "build a culture of helpfulness."

**Mr. Albano:** Referring to the promises he made when campaigning two years ago, Mr. Albano said progress has been made in all areas in which he set goals—including downtown improvement, leaf removal, road repair and renovating fields. "I have walked my ward and have talked to many of my constituents." People are happy with what I've accomplished.

"I love Westfield and I take pride in working with my constituents. Good government doesn't just happen, it takes hard work." He pointed to his work with his GOP colleagues and constituents.

**Mr. Sullivan:** Revealing his mission statement for the town, "Working Together. Working Together for Westfield," he promised to work for "extraordinary customer service," ensuring safety for residents and delivering government through technology. He noted that "it is imperative to make residents safer and feel safer," noting the improvements in this area he is working to accomplish.

**Ms. Lazarowitz:** Stating that she is "passionate about preserving the integrity of the downtown," the candidate said she cares "deeply" about Westfield, wants to work for traffic safety and is dedicated to non-profit community social service. She added that she "shares the mayor's vision" and "will listen and respond to everyone's concerns." "Put your trust in me. I will make a difference," she said.

**Mr. Quackenbush:** Noting his 13-year residency in Westfield and work as a Cubmaster and Boy Scout leader, Mr. Quackenbush said his family has "put down deep roots" and he wants to "continue to serve the Westfield community" as a member of the Town Council. He believes he has a cooperative character and traits that would complement members of the council. He wants to ensure that "government is a collaborative process." He wants to set an "agenda that will benefit all of Westfield."

**Mrs. Weinstein:** Calling her service to the Town Council "both an honor and a privilege," Mrs. Weinstein wants to ensure that Westfield is a safe place for residents to live and raise a family. She wants to continue the work she has accomplished as a councilwoman. She noted that along with the team of Councilmen Albano, Sullivan and McDermott, she wants to help carry Westfield, along with the mayor, into the next century. "I look forward to the challenges ahead and ask for your vote of confidence."

**Mr. McDermott:** Proud of his achievements, the teamwork and professionalism of his colleagues, Mr. McDermott said he is glad he has worked to refurbish the parks and downtown area, establish privatization of garbage collection and ensure safer sidewalks and streets.

He also hopes that his team of Albano, Weinstein and Sullivan will bring the town into the next century and respond to the challenges ahead. "Westfield will thrive, prosper... under the representation of the Republican Town Council members here this evening. We have the experience. We're ready to serve and we need your support on election day."

**Mrs. Gulotta:** A 29-year resident of Westfield, Ms. Gulotta has given back to her community through membership on several organizations such as the Parent-Teacher Association, the Westfield Symphony Orchestra Board and United Fund of Westfield. The first woman President elected to the Board of Education. "I feel that I can do a good job on the council and work with everyone on the council irrespective of party."

## Mr. Jung, Mr. Populous Discuss Wide Range of Issues In Mayoral Candidate Forum Sponsored by Times, League

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proposing that the Post Office be moved to the western half of the core commercial block, as an anchor store.

"If we develop a comprehensive plan for the entire block and market this very aggressively, potentially we could draw some commercial business to our town. It's got to be a cooperative effort between the business people, the populace and the borough to make it a win/win for everyone. We should try this idea."

"To the naysayers, I say I saw a company's theme that said, 'Amazing things can happen if you try new ideas.' This is a new idea. It's something we haven't tried. Second Street hasn't changed in the last 15 years. This is an opportunity to upgrade an entire block."

**Mr. Populus:** "To hire an expert to come in and do a market analysis is exactly what the town needs. Councilman Jung has been on the council for six years. He has never proposed going out in the market place and aggressively promoting any site in Fanwood. This is why we got \$10,000 to hire this person."

"It just so happens, I'm a licensed real estate appraiser. I'm a real estate broker. I have 33 years of experience in the business. I've gone through this in other towns. I've testified before numerous planning boards and boards of adjustment, and you don't just arbitrarily move something. You've got to do the work first."

**The Times:** "What are your particular visions for developing the Dean Oil site? Should the town buy the property? How are the existing property owners' rights protected with actions of government? Are there other opportunities that you've heard of that could be considered and what is your position on the referendum?"

**Mr. Populus:** "The referendum is something that I proposed that we put on the ballot. What I've done is that I've talked to as many people as possible. Through the referendum—it's non-binding—we get an opportunity for the citizens to say yea or nay. Then we could do the necessary work to see if the Dean Oil site is a worthwhile buy."

"I think it was under contract for \$350,000. Then it was discovered that it was tainted. There is a process that you have to go through. The referendum, yes. Let's analyze the site, to see if it's marketable. That doesn't mean that we have to buy it. Property owners' rights are continuously protected. You just can't

arbitrarily condemn a piece of property. There are certain procedures you have to go through."

**Mr. Jung:** "Well, definitely the Dean Oil site should not be used for the Post Office, because of the traffic issue. The traffic has to come off of South Avenue. So the Post Office has to be in the center part of that core commercial area or towards South Avenue."

"The referendum was a good idea. We should look at all the options. We need to think about that whole area, not just a piece meal approach. That's why we need to get this comprehensive plan as fast as we can."

**The Times:** Low income housing requirements are being imposed on municipalities throughout the state. What is Fanwood being asked to do? By when? What are the alternatives and costs in your view?

**Mr. Jung:** "Fanwood is in the process of making their commitments complete in the near future. The construction of the housing on Terrill Road is part of that commitment. The condos on LaGrande are part of that commitment. We can also fulfill that commitment in terms of another piece of land off Midland, which is another possibility. Those are the only pieces left."

**Mr. Populus:** "Back in the late 80s, I had the opportunity to present my views to some of the legislators of the State of New Jersey on affordable housing. The town I spoke about was primarily Fanwood and how it would disrupt the community if there was an abundance of housing that hit the market place. This helped to stem the tide downward of the 90 that they wanted us to have to where it is now."

"This is certainly something that we have to do. The courts mandate that we do this. We have an opportunity to sell it off to other communities, if that's the way we decide to go and that was before my time. So I don't know how that worked out. But it's something that is here. We have to deal with it. Nothing has started yet. The developers have cleared the land and they haven't started construction yet. So we'll wait and see what happens."

**The Times:** All municipalities are pursuing grant moneys at this time. As Mayor, how would you be most effective in seeing that Fanwood is successful in getting its share? Where does grant money come from? Is the source of grant money included in local property taxes?

**Mr. Populus:** "Of course when the county bonds something, we have to pay that off; it is like a credit card. Let's say we got \$300,000 from the county. The portion of our taxes that we pay to the county is not the same as Scotch Plains, so we're ahead of the game when we get the \$300,000."

"Most of the grant moneys that I've gotten are not tied in directly to that situation. It's tied in to the federal government. For example, the Cops Grant, I was active in that. I helped the police department put that together with some criminal justice experts. We got \$74,000."

"The \$10,000 grant that I just got for the consulting for downtown. That's part of the county tax burden, but that will come back to us, and we have to pay a certain portion of it in taxes. But you must remember, if we're paying over \$2 million in taxes to the county, every time we get grant money from the county, that reduces that \$2 million."

"It's a great way to go and, as Mayor, I'll just continue doing what I'm doing. I've gotten over \$5 million over the last five years. The reason I say I've gotten is because I've gone to the market place, the council approves the application for the grant. When I got \$100,000 and \$25,000 for the Christmas Tree fund, I walked up to Senator DiFrancesco, and said 'Donald, we need help in Fanwood.' And the council approved it."

"This is the type of proactive approach one must take, in order to keep this money flowing. It's the connections that you have and the people that you deal with in order to keep the money going. To my knowledge, no one on this council, in the last five years, has gotten a dime in grant money, because they didn't take the initiative to go out and get it."

**Mr. Jung:** "Bill, to paraphrase Ronald Reagan, 'There you go again.' You're taking full credit for the grants. Getting grants is a team sport. It takes more than one person, especially big grants. Bill, as you know, you and I have sat with Senator DiFrancesco, Assemblyman Augustine, Assemblyman Bagger, back in January, working on generating the downtown grant."

"As a Liaison, I sent letters to the county, asking for clarification on what to ask, and so forth, and worked in the library with (Library Director) Dan Weiss."

**The Times:** Are there any areas to improve Fanwood parks and expand the recreational areas? How would this be paid for?

**Mr. Jung:** "We need to make sure that things are always improved for our parks and recreation. We need to approach the Recreation Commission and discuss with

them what their priorities are. What we need to do for next year is ask the Recreation Commission for a needs assessment for the parks and get some priorities to those needs. Then the Mayor and council can be a better judge of where to allocate budget money as well as grant money."

"We just had \$100,000 that came in. We may want to look at where that money can be earmarked for our parks. We need to make sure that our parks can always be better, can always be improved. We may want to consider taking a look at a walking path up at Forest Road Park and fixing the fence, and maybe some extra parking. That's just one example."

"I think we need to ask the Recreation Commission. I think they have felt left out of the picture the last couple of years. Let's get their insight and their priorities and their time line."

**Mr. Populus:** "What can I say? There he goes again. We did have a meeting with Rich Bagger, not Alan Augustine. It was Rich Bagger, the Mayor, myself. I set the meeting up. Rich Bagger called him to come to the meeting and the Mayor came along."

"It is a team sport, when the application comes back here and the council has to sign off on it. But you still have to go out and get the money. You still have to have the connections. You still have to know how to negotiate with people. We go to the county for \$400,000 and we got \$300,000."

"On the recreation side, I would agree with Louis. We should get a plan from them. They have something in place now. It's just a matter of expanding it to include more activities."

**The Times:** How can the Borough of Fanwood expand the involvement in shared services with other towns and the school system? In what areas does Fanwood currently have shared services programs?

**Mr. Populus:** "Fanwood has shared services with our Board of Health Officer, with our court clerks. We share equipment with the Public Works Department. We share with our mutual aid situation; that's shared services in a sense. We do the same thing with the county. We share whatever they have for us."

**Mr. Jung:** "Well, as they say, we've had the same eye doctor, and the same eye surgery, and I think we see eye to eye on this issue. I think the shared services that we could do more of, I think you mentioned a couple of them, and there are others, like maybe traffic light shared services. I think there's welfare and also there's a bus."

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