



WESTFIELD
RESIDENTS
ASSOCIATION,
INC.

WESTFIELD NEWS

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July, 2009

IT'S COMING UP MONDAY, JULY 13TH—
WRA'S AL FRESCO SOCIAL EVENT OF THE YEAR:
OUR ANNUAL PICNIC MEETING IN THE PAVILION AT
THOMAS G. SMITH PARK ON COUNTRY CLUB ROAD
GATHERING TIME APX. 5:30 P.M.
TUMMY-BUSTING EATING AT 6 P.M.

Hamburgers, Hot Dogs, Buns, condiments, and beverages will be provided. The other foods: entrees, salads, and desserts will be left to the culinary creativity of attendees' pot luck offerings. The creativity in the past has been a delight for taste buds and the source of jovial conversation as diners explore the variety of foods. After dinner, so as not to decrease the party atmosphere, WRA quarterly reports and business will be kept to a minimum.

Remember, these are rain or shine events. In over ten years, Mother Nature has provided only one time when weather wasn't ideal. If she decides to make it two, we will picnic indoors in the Fellowship Hall of Third Congregational Church on Miner Street, our usual meeting place. Grilling will be done outdoors under cover.

So...circle the date on your calendar, come alone or bring a friend or neighbor, and let's party!

In this Issue:

Planning & Zoning, Inland Wetlands	2
Road Construction	2
Schools	3
Westfield Fire	4
How did they vote	4
Middletown Arts	5
Army plans	6
Council spends money	6
Elections this year!	6

**Westfield Residents
Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 373
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Mail to:

Planning and Zoning and Inland Wetlands Reports

Since our April WRA Quarterly Meeting, here are the actions taken on Westfield only applications:

Planning and Zoning.

- 15 Industrial Park. Did a Site Plan Review and approved proposed construction of a 7,440 sq. ft. addition to the MackFire Protection Building
- Bed and Breakfasts. Approved a Zoning Code amendment to Section 44.08.30 Bed and Breakfast Uses and Section 60.02.30 to allow B&Bs in the R-15 Zone. consideration is being given to allow B & Bs in all zones.
- Liberty Commerce Industrial Park (the Bysiewicz land) on Middle Street. Gave Final re-approval.
- 666 Congdon. Approved a two (2) lot re-subdivision.
- 78 Flynn Lane. Approved a two (2) lot re-subdivision
- 239 Ballfall Road at the southwest corner of the intersection with Sisk Street. Approved a two (2) lot re-subdivision.
- Poplar Road 15 lot re-subdivision. Closed the Public Hearing for the proposed re-subdivision (officially at 85 Flynn Lane) but tabled the Commissions decision on the application until July 8th to have time to study the new material that the developers presented at the start of the June 24th

Public Hearing on the application.

- 872 Westfield Street. Scheduled a Public Hearing for July 8th for a requested waiver of an A-2 Survey requirement for a Special Exception for a Bed & Breakfast. The results of these July 8th Hearings will be reported at our WRA July 13th picnic meeting.

Inland Wetlands Agency.

- 117 Sachem Drive. Did an Agency Review for an application for the construction of a septic system, foundation drain and utility trench for a single family dwelling, and determined no permit was required.
- Country Club Road Lot #41. Tabled a Public Hearing until August 5th for an application to construct a single family dwelling to be located within 100 feet of wetlands because no one representing the applicant was present at the July 1st meeting.
- Soccer Fields, Country Club Road. It was only an informational meeting on July 1st, not a Public Hearing, as announced on the sign affixed to the entrance fence to the Soccer Fields. Agency members learned at that meeting that despite two violation notices, nothing had been accomplished by the Soccer Fields' developer to correct the erosion and sediment problems from Fall Brook associated with construction activities. DeRita Construction is carrying out the work on the fields. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is now handling the situation, and the city will do monthly inspections to be sure corrections are being made.

Country Club Road Re-paving

One of the busiest streets in Westfield will be under construction this summer. The series of curves on Country Club Road, between the 4-corners intersection at Ballfall and Knox Boulevard will be straightened somewhat, and re-surfaced. This project went through Inland Wetlands nearly 2 years ago, because this section of the road crosses wetlands, in fact it passes between two detention ponds in the course of this long block.

Work began last summer, with the felling of large trees and the installation of a few storm drains, but was delayed because of buried fiber optic cables owned by SNET. Bob Daubmeier, in the Department of Public

Works, said that the project should start again in July. Country Club is considered a major artery between I91 and Rte 217, and thus the State is paying for this project.



A grader on another project in Middletown.

2008-2009 School Year Ends in Controversy

The future is still uncertain for Moody School and Macdonough School: while Assistant Superintendent Barbara Senges explained a number of staffing changes during the June 16, 2009, Board of Education meeting, parents still are not convinced that 2009-2010 will bring much relief for Moody's overcrowding or Macdonough's racial imbalance concerns.

As a quick summary, Middletown parents got quite a shock last August when bus route notification cards showed up in the mail the week before school started. More than 250 bus stops had been dropped from transportation routes to save \$50,000 in fuel costs. Buses were overcrowded, elementary school children were expected to walk up to a mile for a bus stop, Kindergarteners were no longer picked up in front of their homes, and many children now had to ride the bus for 30-50 minutes, one way, just to attend a school 2-3 miles (or less) from their homes. While the Board of Education approved these cost-saving measures, no letter of notification ever came home to parents to explain the changes. Many parents complained, attended BOE meetings, and in the end, were somewhat successful in getting the most egregious cases resolved.

By late December, the overcrowding concerns at Moody School burst on to the scene as the most pressing issue for the District. When the parents of more than 460 Moody students tried to show up for the Holiday Concert at the same time, it was obvious to all (including the Fire Marshall) that there was a serious problem. Your WRA Executive Committee wrote to Superintendent Michael Frechette twice regarding the situation at Moody. Both times, the "official" response, summed up in a sentence, was a "thanks for your concern, but we've done all we can and we're just waiting for JCJ Architecture's report to tell us what to do."

In case you haven't heard, the Board of Education hired and is paying JCJ Architecture \$138,000 to conduct a District-wide Utilization Study. This purpose of the study is to look at the District infrastructure (school building, classroom sizes, etc.) and current grade configurations and to make suggestions to the Board of Education as it decides when and how to re-district. An interim JCJ report has concluded that Middletown has enough seats for all its students, but those seats

aren't in the right places. For example: Moody is roughly 4 classrooms over capacity; Macdonough has been notified by the State that it is racially imbalanced; and other elementary schools on the other side of Middletown have empty classrooms or classes with 14-18 students in them (at one point this year, a 3rd grade classroom at Moody had 27 students in it). Because the BOE told JCJ Architecture it couldn't move students twice (move them in 2009-2010 to uncrowd Moody and then move them again as part of the re-districting), JCJ was unable to pinpoint any solutions for the 2009-2010 school year that would lessen the actual number of students at Moody. The only chance of relief is if fewer children enter Kindergarten than the number that graduated from 5th grade. But, last year's Kindergarten estimates were way off (5 classes instead of 3), and this year's numbers aren't known yet.

The budget for 2009-2010 only complicated these already complex issues. A level-funded budget (meaning the same amount as last year plus contracted increases) would have required a 5.61% increase in the BOE's funding from the Common Council. Instead of the \$73,325,856 requested, the Common Council gave the Board of Education \$69,550,000, or a .29% increase from last year. If you consider that various contractual salary increases of 2-5% had to occur, you can see how deep the cuts were to accomplish this budget. A summary of what was cut can be found at www.mps1.org/boe/2009-06-09BOEreductionssummarylist2009-2010.pdf.

The most distressing facet of the 2009-2010 budget is the fact that the Board of Education heard from JCJ Architecture on May 26th that Middletown parents consider small class sizes the number one most important attribute of our schools. JCJ had sponsored a series of community outreach seminars to talk to parents and tax payers about our schools, and 100% of attendees rated small class sizes as the primary concern. Yet, the June 9th budget vote resulted in the elimination of 6 elementary classes.

Also eliminated for next year is the gifted program, PROBE, and leveling for 6th grade language arts. [Leveling is the grouping of students into classes by ability. There were two levels for 6th grade language

(Continued on page 4)

School Board and Moody School (continued from Page 3)

arts and math: advanced and everyone else]. Again, 5th grade parents attending the 6th grade Open House at Keigwin heard about the changes to advanced classes for the first time at that Open House, and a huge fire-storm erupted shortly thereafter. When several parents complained at the May 14th BOE meeting, board members voted to hold two workshops (May 26 and June 2) to learn more about leveling. The Superintendent contended that students perform better when they're NOT grouped by ability, and parents loudly complained about behavioral problems, loss of opportunity, and overburdened teachers in heterogeneous classrooms. In the end, the Board of Education voted to support the Superintendent's recommendation, and there will be no leveled classes in Language Arts for six-graders in 2009-2010.

So, for all the changes that happened in our school system this year, parents have yet to feel that they were considered, included, notified or that their concerns were even heard and/or addressed. Even if you no longer have school age children at home, the Board of Education spends more than half of Middletown's total budget each year. If you're not sure that your tax dollars are being spent wisely (and many on the WRA's Executive Committee don't think they are), please let the Board of Education and Common Council hear your views. This is an election year, and we should hold our elected officials accountable for their actions!

Full coverage of the Board of Education meetings, Planning and Zoning Meetings, and many other municipal matters can be found at the Middletown Eye News:
www.middletowneyenews.blogspot.com

Westfield Fire District

The budget of \$1.2M was passed by a vote of 53-11. The Westfield mill rate of 1.028 remains by far the lowest rate of any of three Middletown Fire Districts.

A big thanks to all the volunteer firefighters!

HOW DID THEY VOTE?

The 110 Congress—which ran from January 2007 through December 2008—made significant progress on animal protection legislation, including banning the import of puppies from foreign breeding mills, strengthening the federal law on animal fighting, and providing some safe-guards against tainted ingredients in pet foods. How did Connecticut's legislators vote on all issues?

In the Senate: Chris Dodd voted in favor of all 6 of the protective proposals. Joe Lieberman voted in favor of 5 of the proposals. He did not vote on the proposal that would prohibit the use of dogs and cats obtained through random sources, which include the theft of family pets and fraudulent responses to "free to good home" ads.

In the House: All but one of our CT representatives voted in favor of over-riding President Bush's veto of H.R.2419, which contains key animal welfare provisions to strengthen federal law on animal fighting, prohibit importation of puppies under 6 months old, and increased penalties for violations of the Animal Welfare Act. Who opposed? Rep. Shays.



SPEAKING OF ANIMALS

If you are a jogger and take your dog along on your runs, consider its age. For older dogs the spirit may be willing but due to its aging physical condition the run could be debilitating or worse, fatal.

MIDDLETOWN ARTS ARE ALIVE IN THE SUMMER!

There are a lot of great opportunities to see and hear great music, film, and theater in Middletown this summer.

And best of all, most of them are FREE!

Below are this year's offerings from three different series of performances in July that occur every year. For complete listings, read *The Middletown Eye*. Each week Richard Kamins has two or more articles listing all of the upcoming arts events in our city.

The Music at the Mansion series at Wadsworth Mansion. Let the children run around while you and your friends enjoy a picnic and wonderful music on the south lawn on a warm summer evening. All concerts are free and start at 6:30PM. Call 347-1064 for more information.

- July 1st: Eight to the Bar, voted 'Best Jazz Band' in the 2008 Hartford Advocate Readers Poll, they play American roots music including swing, rhythm and blues, and Motown.
- July 8th: Galvanized Jazz Band, recognized by Connecticut Magazine as "Best Jazz Band in the State," they play New Orleans jazz and Dixieland.
- July 15th: Jay Ungar and Molly Mason are responsible for a Grammy award winning musical accompaniment to Ken Burn's PBS series, "The Civil War."
- July 22nd: Planet Zydeco captures the essence of traditional rural-style accordion-driven dance music played in Southern Louisiana.

Frank Capra Directs Hollywood's Leading Men. The Wesleyan Center for Film will show 4 classic movies directed by Frank Capra, in this year's Cine-Fare program. This program links the movie to participating restaurants, who often will serve meals specifically designed to complement the movie being shown that night. Restaurants this year include the Firehouse Steakhouse, Fishbone Café, Forbidden City Bistro, Nikita's Bistro, Osaka Japanese Steakhouse, Tavern at the Armory, Tuscany Grill, and Typhoon. Movie-goers get a 10% discount on meals, and there is a free shuttle from the restaurants to the movie theater on Wesleyan's campus.

All films begin promptly at 7:30PM. Call 685-2245 for more information.

- July 7th: It happened one Night, with Clark Gable
- July 14th: Mr. Deeds goes to Town, with Gary Cooper
- July 21st: Mr. Smith goes to Washington, with Jimmy Stewart
- July 28th: A hole in the head, with Frank Sinatra

Shakespeare in the Grove. Artfarm is a local non-profit theater group that will present *The taming of the Shrew*, at Middlesex Community College. This is a free professional outdoor Shakespeare performance, with live music beforehand. The setting is spectacular: a beautiful hill overlooking the Connecticut River Valley. Bring a picnic and friends and enjoy great entertainment.

The concerts start at 6PM, and the play starts at 7:00PM. Performances will be July 16-19 and July 23-26. Suggested donation \$20.

For more information, call 346-4390.

Army Moving Forward with Cucia Park

The Army Corps of Engineers has begun the process of designing and constructing a training facility for the Cucia Park location on Smith Street. They will be building a 160,000 square foot building for offices and training, and a 35,000 square foot maintenance shop for vehicles, as well as parking for military and private vehicles.

On June 18th the Army met with contractors to inform them about the project, which is required by law to utilize local subcontractors.

Diane McCartin told us that she expects the Army to close on Cucia Park in a couple of months, and construction to start in late fall or early winter.

Council spends Cucia Park Sales Proceeds

The Common Council voted to increase City government spending without increasing the property tax rate, for this year's budget. To accomplish this with a balanced budget, they took money from the City's Fund Balance, and they budgeted \$1.5M from the pending sale of Cucia Park to the Army. The latter violates a resolution the Council passed in October of last year, when they voted 11-1 to use proceeds from the sale of Cucia Park to replace the lost open space.

Before their vote on the budget, the WRA executive committee voted to send a letter to Council members, expressing our concern over the use of Cucia Park sales proceeds to balance the budget. The Conservation Commission also sent a letter to the Common Council, expressing their concern over this. The Council decided to allocate the money to this year's budget.

Election Season Coming Up!

Elections for municipal offices are held every odd-numbered year in Connecticut, and our City's most important elected positions will all be on the ballot this November. These include Mayor, Common Council, Planning and Zoning, and the Board of Education.

In late July the Democratic and Republican Town Committees will officially select their candidates for the ballot.

The WRA always holds a well-attended "meet the candidates night" in October, where you can ask candidates for each office the questions that are of importance to you. Look for more information in the fall newsletter.

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**WESTFIELD
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**Address:
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Middletown, CT 06457**

WRA MEMBERSHIP FORM 2008—2009

Please Circle One: NEW RENEWAL DONATION

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