

Prospect Street Blaze Claims Life Of 19-Yr.-Old Man, Family Dog

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD—Firefighters battled an early morning fire Monday on the 1200 block of Prospect Street that resulted in the death of 19-year-old Jake Tooley as well as the family's puppy, Moo.

Fire Chief David Kelly told *The Westfield Leader* that when firefighters arrived after receiving the call at 2:45 a.m. they "encountered heavy fire conditions." The three-alarm fire took two hours to bring under control, Chief Kelly said. According to news reports, the blaze began in the living room. Chief Kelly said two persons managed to escape while firefighters attempted a rescue when told a third person was trapped

on the second floor of the home. The home, located at 1260 Prospect Street, is near Brightwood Park. Tax records list the homeowner as Alison Tooley. Ms. Tooley is the mother of Jake and his older brother, Sam.

"There were no other injuries to firefighters or others in the family," Chief Kelly told *The Leader*.

While the chief did not have information on what other fire departments assisted Westfield at the fire scene, he said around 50 firefighters battled the fire at the height of the blaze. An NBC News report stated that nine other agencies assisted Westfield.

"Unfortunately, despite valiant efforts by the first responders, a 19-

year-old young man lost his life. The cause of the fire is under investigation," Mayor Andrew Skibitsky said in a statement released Monday. "Westfield is a community in mourning today. We cannot imagine the pain and grief the young man's family is feeling, and our heartfelt thoughts and prayers go out to his family and friends."

Jake Tooley was a 2016 graduate of Westfield High School (WHS), and a student at Monmouth University according to his Facebook page, and was a member of his school's golf and cross-country teams. Sam Tooley is the cross country and track coach at WHS.

Jake was predeceased by his father, Michael G. Tooley, who passed away suddenly on November 18, 2016, according to his obituary.

A gofundme page (www.gofundme.com/the-tooley-fund) was set up to raise funds for the family had raised \$178,588 as of Wednesday morning from 2,219 different donors.

"In the fire the Tooleys lost nearly all their possessions, as well as their everyday necessities... All donations will be given directly to the Tooleys to aid them in regaining their everyday necessities and assist them in their continued move forward as a family," according to a statement on the gofundme page.

Sam released a statement on Monday.

"My brother was an amazing man. Young, but wise beyond his years out of necessity due to what life had dealt him over the last few years... Our house can be rebuilt. Our possessions can be replaced. My little brother, however, will be forever missed," he said.

Funeral services are planned for today at 11 a.m. at the Presbyterian Church in New Providence, according to NJ.com.



FAMILY TRAGEDY...An early-morning fire on the 1200 block of Prospect Street in Westfield claimed the life of Jake Tooley, a 2016 graduate of Westfield High School (WHS), as well as the family's dog. Services are scheduled for 11 a.m. today at the Presbyterian Church in New Providence. Inset, a photo from Facebook of Jake, right, at his WHS graduation with his brother, Sam.



REBUILDING SUBSTATION...The PSE&G substation in Cranford is in the process of being rebuilt. It is seen on Saturday from the outside patio of the River & Rail restaurant across the street.

BOE OKs New Asst. Principal; Election Candidates Declared

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD—At Tuesday's board of education meeting Paul Duncan was approved as Franklin Elementary School's assistant principal. Superintendent Margaret Dolan recommended Mr. Duncan for final board of education approval. An interview committee selected him through a 120-applicant vetting process.

The interview committee included Franklin School Principal Eileen Cambria, teachers Kerry Lyman and Nancy Rygiel, Human Resource Specialist Barbara Ball, and district K-12 supervisors, Mathematics Supervisor Regina Kiczek, Science Supervisor Tom Patterson and Special Education Supervisor Andrea Lo.

"I am confident that Dr. Duncan is an excellent fit for Westfield and the Franklin School community," said Superintendent Dolan.

Mr. Duncan replaces Scott Lipson, who accepted a principal position in Morris County.

"He (Mr. Duncan) clearly stood out as a thoughtful, experienced educator with sound judgment," Principal Cambria said.

Mr. Duncan worked 10 years in the Warren Township school district

teaching fourth and fifth graders. He was assistant principal and supervisor for Warren Township's summer school. He also co-chaired the Warren Technology Subcommittee assisting district strategic planning efforts.

"I am honored to be joining the Westfield Public School District because of its commitment to educational excellence. I've already received a warm welcome," Mr. Duncan said.

On school election night, Tuesday, November 7, five candidates will contest three board of education seats. Declared candidates include incumbent Peggy Oster, Lynn Brenner, Simon Cirasa, Kent Diamond and Anthony Marotta.

Ms. Oster is the only board member of three whose term is expiring in January 2018 who is seeking reelection. Board members Christopher Langhart and Mark Friedman will not seek reelection.

The Parent Teacher Council will host a Board of Education Candidates' Night on Wednesday, October 18. The candidates' night will take place at Westfield High School. The three individuals elected will serve three-year terms from 2018 to 2021.

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Cranford's Court Hearing Postponed to September 19

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

CRANFORD—A hearing, originally set for Friday, September 1, that could allow the township to amend its fair-share housing obligation has been postponed to Tuesday, September 19, at 1:30 p.m.

Cranford has requested a motion for leave to amend a judgment of compliance and repose and related relief with the state Superior Court in its regards to the Mount Laurel lawsuit filed by Cranford Development Associates, a.k.a. S. Hekemian Group. The postponement comes after Hartz Mountain Industries LLC requested on August 15 that the court intervene in the Township of Cranford's motion for leave.

As of August 23, attorney Michael Jedznik of the Jeffrey R. Surenian and Associates law firm, the law firm representing the township in its affordable-housing obligation, had sent a letter to Union County Superior Court Judge Camille Kenny requesting a one-cycle adjournment of the township's motion, as well as Hartz's motion. Hartz subsequently requested a denial of the adjournment.

In Mr. Jedznik's letter, he states that the "Township's Mount Laurel team has met with Special Master MacKenzie and Mr. Walsh from the Fair Share Housing Center (FSHC) to commence confidential settlement discussions. The township was very encouraged by the results of this first meeting, and in the absence of any unforeseen obstacles, we are cautiously optimistic that we will reach an amicable accord with FSHC."

Hartz's attorney Stephen Eisdorfer wrote in his August 24 letter to Judge Kenny that Mr. Jedznik requested an adjournment because "Mr.

Surenian was newly returned from vacation and sought the one-cycle adjournment to enable him to respond to Hartz's filings."

"In its letter requesting the adjournment, however, Cranford does not request the adjournment on the grounds on which it solicited and obtained my consent. Rather, it seeks the adjournment so that it can pursue 'confidential' communications with the Special Master from which Hartz is excluded."

In Hartz's brief it outlines its defense why it should be privy to these communications.

Hartz states in the brief that it is seeking to intervene "in order to preserve its interest in the development of its property, and to further provide this Court with potentially valuable input as to the issue of Cranford's unmet fair share need," the brief states. It further urges the court to deny Cranford's motion.

Hartz states in its brief that Cranford specifies 750 Walnut Avenue as being suitable for inclusionary development of multi-family housing. Cranford has asked the Special Master to determine and recommend to the court that the capacity of 750 Walnut is exactly 300 units, a density of 10 units per acre.

Hartz's position is Cranford "has exhibited neither the creativity nor the 'opportunity' as mandated in Mt. Laurel II."

Ten units per acre is lower than the average 39-unit per-acre density permitted in three other sites in Cranford: Woodmont Station, Riverfront at Cranford Station and Cranford Crossing, Hartz says. Hartz has proposed a development capacity of its 30.5-acre property of 30 units per

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Town Schools to Open Wed. With Two New Principals, 35 Teachers

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD—Public schools open this Wednesday, September 6, for 6,300 Westfield students, the same number as last year. Students will be greeted by new principals at Jefferson Elementary School and Roosevelt Intermediate School and 35 new teachers who are replacing mostly teachers who have

retired.

The district's new staff institute was held Tuesday and Wednesday for the new teachers.

During an interview with *The Westfield Leader* on Friday, Margaret Dolan, Ed.D., superintendent of schools, said Susie Hung, Ed.D., who previously was principal at Walton School in Springfield, is the new principal at Jefferson. Prior to Springfield, she was a teacher at Tamaques Elementary School in Westfield. Ms. Hung replaces Jeanette Munoz, who has retired.

"I think she is going to be a great contribution to Jefferson School," Superintendent Dolan said.

Mary Asfendis is the new principal at Roosevelt, where she replaces Stewart Carey, who has retired. She comes over from Edison Intermediate School, where she was assistant principal. In turn, Crystal Marsh has been named the new assistant principal at Edison Intermediate School. She most recently was a science teacher at the Salk School of Science Middle School in Manhattan.

The superintendent said Ms. Asfendis started her career as a Spanish-language teacher at Edison and later became the head of world languages from 2004 to 2012 for Bernards Township schools before returning as assistant

principal at Westfield High School and later assistant principal at Edison. "She is well prepared for her position," Ms. Dolan said.

Also, the board of education approved the appointment Tuesday night of Paul Duncan as the new assistant principal at Franklin Elementary School. He was most recently with Warren Public Schools, where he taught and was head of the summer program. He replaces Scott Lipson, who took a principal's position at Tinc Road Elementary School in Mount Olive, Morris County.

The district also has hired Tom Weber as the new supervisor of visual and performing arts and Enrique Pincay as supervisor of world languages and English as a Second Language. Mr. Weber, who comes over from the Egg Harbor, N.J., school system, previously taught with the New Jersey Workshop for the Arts here in town. His career spans 22 years in arts education. Mr. Weber replaces Linda King, who retired after 30 years with the district.

Mr. Pincay comes from the Hillsborough Township Public Schools, where he held a similar position to his new administrative post in Westfield. He replaces David Greer, who left to become director of the Office of Aca-

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READY TO OPEN... Jefferson Elementary School's new principal, Susie Hung, left, expresses her gratitude to PTO Secretary Lindsay Wagner and third grader Lacey Wagner, who updated the school's welcome sign. Westfield Public Schools open this Wednesday, September 6.

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TRAINING DAY...A North Star State Police Medevac helicopter is shown flying over Mountainside Borough Hall and landing for a training exercise with borough emergency services.

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