

WALDWICK SUBURBAN NEWS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2007



Baby buzz

New kids on the block.
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Dogs' day

Who might have won at Westminster (had he shown).
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All bets are off

Coach pays the price of winning.
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Jumping for joy



GARY JUNG/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Traphagen School kids get a lift out of their jump rope heart fund-raiser during Pam Bedrock's gym class. See other photos, Page 3.

CAPITAL EXPENSES

Vintage lighting tops list

BY SONIA KANIGEL
Of Suburban News

WALDWICK - Vintage lighting for part of West Prospect Street and improvements to the road into Borough Park are among the projects being funded under this year's capital improvements ordinance.

The ordinance authorizing \$1,641,600 for capital improvements, which passed at the Feb. 13 council meeting, also includes the purchase of a new recycling truck and resurfacing of four streets. The appropriations are down about \$250,000 from last year.

"We're trying to control spending," said Mayor Rick Vander

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Questions weighed for K-12 election ballot

BY SONIA KANIGEL
Of Suburban News

WALDWICK - Preliminary numbers are adding up to a need for a second question on the school election ballot, district officials said last week.

The district is awaiting state aid numbers, which could come in Governor Corzine's budget message as early as Feb. 22, but current figures indicate the district has a tough road ahead as it draws up its budget for the 2007-2008 school year, officials said.

"You don't have to be a math wiz to know that... it is just not pleasant," said school board President Neale Bedrock. "This is not unique to Waldwick. Every single district is going to be facing the same problem that we're facing."

Board members said at their Feb. 12

meeting they were working under the assumption of a 4 percent state cap on spending increases - which would limit increases to last year's \$23.6 million budget to about \$960,000.

More than \$800,000 of that sum will be consumed by fixed costs, including salary increases, employee benefits and pensions, officials said. Other projected increases include \$300,000 in special education funding, plus costs associated with a district "wish list" of new textbooks and personnel.

"I think the only way this is going to happen is that clearly we have to have a second question," Bedrock said.

A second question proposed at the Feb. 12 meeting would call for residents to vote on the hiring of a computer teacher and a guidance counselor, both at the elementary school

level. It currently falls to classroom teachers to incorporate computer training into lessons at Crescent and Traphagen elementary schools.

Officials say an elementary-level guidance counselor could help keep some students out of special education classes by identifying learning problems early.

"The bottom line is, let's fix them before they fail," said Schools Superintendent Robert Penna. "Let's put some strategies in place so that they don't become special education children two or five or 10 years from now."

"I think the superintendent is absolutely correct that one of the ways to avoid over-classification is to address learning problems as early as you can," Bedrock said. "By putting this position in, it'll give us the ability to reduce the classifications that we

have, because we're getting killed [on special education costs.]"

The projected \$300,000 increase in the district's special education budget represents a 15 percent increase over last year's figures. Special education costs represent about 20 percent of this year's district budget.

"I think these are very compelling needs," Penna said of the proposed second question. "In every district I've worked in, those are givens - those are staff positions. How do you say 'no' to something that, in the long run, will help you lower [the number of] your special ed people? In this day and age, how do you say 'no' to technology?"

But at the meeting, officials debated whether the proposed question could garner broad enough community sup-

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