

YEAR IN REVIEW 2013 changes big and small

Court cases, high-rises, American Dream and political shifts

ALLENDALE

The borough turned over operation of its water system to United Water on Aug. 1 and began a five-year, \$590,000 contract. The move is expected to save the borough about \$193,000 per year. Allendale retains utility ownership.

ALPINE

■ Real estate investor Richard Kurtz lowered the asking price for his 30,000-square-foot stone mansion from \$68 million to \$49 million. Even the latter price would be a record for a residential real estate deal in the state. Kurtz spent \$58 million on the property — which also contains another luxury home — eight years ago.

■ A golfer was killed by the limb of a falling tree when he wandered into the site of a tree cutting in April. The 60-year-old man, the guest of a club member, was trying to get a ball he had hit into woods near the Montammy Golf Club. Police said they considered the case an accident.

BERGEN COUNTY

■ After several years of debate, the county freeholders in October approved a plan to merge the County Police into the Sheriff's Office. County Executive Kathleen Donovan vetoed the plan, but the freeholders overrode her veto. Donovan then included the issue in a lawsuit against the freeholders, who she claimed exceeded their authority. That suit is set for a hearing in January.

■ County Democrats added to their majority on the Freeholder Board with the Nov. 5 election of former Paramus Mayor James Tedesco III. His win gives Democrats a veto-proof 5-2 board majority starting in January. Meanwhile, Republican Sheriff Michael Saudino won a second three-year term.

BERGENFIELD

After nearly a decade of Democratic control of the Borough Council, November's election saw GOP challengers unseat the mayor and nab an open council seat. Republican Norman Schmelz defeated Mayor Carlos Aguasvivas; Kathleen Sahilberg edged out Councilman Rafael

Marie. The GOP win was attributed by some to Governor Christie's presence on the ticket, but others pointed to Republican campaign allegations of Democrat misconduct.

BLOOMINGDALE

In October, the Borough Council adopted measures to increase road safety, including a ban on parking on Hamburg Turnpike in front of the municipal building and a 10-year, \$250,000-a-year paving plan. Roads set for improvement in 2014 are Raffkind Road, Glen Road, Clark Street, Mary Street, Sunrise Avenue, Forest Avenue and part of Reeve Avenue.

BOGOTA

Mayor Patrick McHale resigned suddenly on Nov. 13 after months of feuding with fellow Democrats on the Borough Council who launched a failed effort to recall McHale and current mayor, Tito Jackson. McHale had been mayor since 2007, replacing Tea Party favorite Steve Lonegan, who was defeated in October in the special U.S. Senate election by former Newark Mayor Cory Booker.

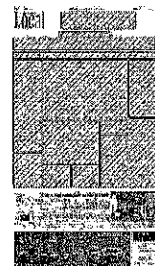
BUTLER

Public complaints about the state of Main Street may lead to both a heavier police presence downtown and creation of a borough-sanctioned Economic Development Commission to study ways to bring businesses back to the vacant storefronts lining the faded thoroughfare.

CARLSTADT

■ A state appeals court ruled on Nov. 20 that Mayor William Roseman may be prosecuted for allegedly allowing his former wife to remain on the borough's health insurance plan after their divorce, rejecting a lower court's decision that Roseman should be allowed into a two-year Pretrial Intervention Program, a form of probation for first-time offenders.

■ This month, Court Administrator Joyce Rotundo, and her deputy, Lori D'Amore, were arrested and accused of manipulating the state's computer system to fix parking tickets, avoid paying fines and to reverse license suspension orders,



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according to the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office. The accused allegedly altered the court's Automated Traffic System to benefit D'Amore and two other county residents not named in the complaint. They were suspended from the court in October.

CLIFFSIDE PARK

■ Gerry Calabrese, the state's longest-serving mayor, was hospitalized with pneumonia on Feb. 15, about a month after starting his 50th year in office. The 88-year-old then suffered a minor stroke Aug. 19, after which his son, Council President Thomas Calabrese, was named acting mayor.

■ Chief Donald Keane ended his 34-year career with the Police Department on Nov. 30 as part of a settlement with the Mayor and Council, which he sued for allegedly stripping him of some of his powers and giving them to the mayor. The suit claimed state law grants police chiefs sole discretion in making personnel assignments as a way to keep officials from meddling with police departments. Keane reportedly settled the suit and agreed to cash in more than \$122,000 in benefits and to go on terminal leave through June, a borough spokesman said.

■ Resident Pedro Garcia was convicted on Oct. 22 of killing and dismembering Francisco Gonzalez Fuentes, whom authorities said was his live-in boyfriend. Prosecutors said Garcia — who denied being gay — was outraged when Fuentes "outed" him by telling people he was his boyfriend. Garcia and a friend, Wilfredo Sanchez, who on Dec. 17 also was convicted of murder, stabbed Fuentes in the neck at his apartment in January 2011, prosecutors said. The two men cut up Fuentes' body and stuffed the parts in bags they then dumped. The men face sentences of life in prison.

CLIFTON

After months of contentious debate, residents overwhelmingly voted in favor of moving municipal elections from May to November. City officials say the switch saves taxpayers \$100,000 each election cycle and will attract more voting in local races. The change takes effect for next year's election, when the terms for all seven City Council members are up.

CLOSTER

After months of preliminaries, the shopping center developer resurrecting Closter Plaza off Vervelen Street completed its plans. Edens, the South Carolina-based developer, has presented the proj-

ect to the Planning Board for review and approval. The plans include a renovated 204,338-square-foot shopping center anchored by a Whole Foods. When the original mall owners, Aspi and Bakhtaver Irani, faced financial trouble in recent years and the mall fell into disrepair, a bankruptcy court approved a reorganization plan for the mall that transferred shared ownership to Edens in 2012. The deal called for the developer to be a managing partner with 50-percent interest in the property. The developer has since poured more than \$30 million into the 16-acre site. Officials and other residents hope the revived mall will revitalize the downtown.

CRESSKILL

After the borough installed a lightning-detection system this spring, the Mayor and Council voted to impose penalties on those who refuse to evacuate a public field when the alarm goes off. Violators could face fines of up to \$1,000, said officials. Borough police and Recreation Department members are among those who enforce the rule. The borough is now searching for new sites in which to install more horns and strobes in the system, said officials.

DEMAREST

■ The November election for the Borough Council was so tight, Democrats were unsure for days whether they should request a recount. In the end, Republican incumbent Joseph Gray held onto his seat and Democratic challenger Melinda Iannuzzi won over GOP incumbent Mary Montague and fellow Democrat Maureen Nevele. In January, the council will have a 3-3 partisan split, with a Republican mayor to break ties. Mayor Ray Cywinski said the political difference would likely come into play if police-merger issues come up again or when it comes to appointing borough professionals.

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■ The Northern Valley Regional High School District plan to launch a random drug-testing program remains in committee review after igniting a firestorm among parents. Leaders of the district, which serves seven communities, said they were motivated by rising drug use among high schoolers. They said they reviewed various programs and felt random testing of students participating in ex-

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tracurricular activities would help deter drug use. Opponents argue such testing would invade students' privacy, breed distrust between students and staff, and that studies show the testing to be ineffective at halting drug use.

DUMONT

■ Two murder cases involving residents were resolved this year. Peter Shanley, 62, was convicted in February of the 2010 murder of his wife, Debra Shanley, 54; he was sentenced to life in prison. In June, Jordan Turner, 25, pleaded guilty to fatally shooting former girlfriend, Heather Reyes, 22, at his home in February 2011.

■ In November, the owner of D'Angelo's Farms announced that the iconic family-run gardening store had closed its doors after more than 90 years in business.

EAST RUTHERFORD

It was a year of moves at the Meadowlands Sports Complex:

■ After a change in corporate sponsors, the Giants' football headquarters changed names on July 25 from the Timex Performance Center to the Quest Diagnostics Training Center.

■ After two years of negotiations, the development company Triple Five received keys to the long-stalled American Dream project on July 31.

■ The borough settled its long-standing lawsuit claiming it is entitled to tax money from the Giants training facility on Oct. 17. It won an upfront payment of \$850,000 from the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority, the land's owner, plus continuing yearly payments of \$200,000 to \$250,000.

■ A new, smaller, \$88 million grandstand opened at The Meadowlands Racetrack on Nov. 23.

■ On Oct. 31 and Nov. 1, Triple Five won back-to-back approvals from two state boards, giving preliminary approval to two bond sales worth up to \$1.1 billion for construction of American Dream. Final negotiations continue on both bond issues.

EDGEWATER

■ Remediation of Veterans Field came to a halt in early October after officials learned the con-

tractor hired to remove polluted soil likely introduced new contaminants when it trucked in crushed concrete. Representatives for the borough and contractor are working on a plan to remove those contaminants. The contractor, Waterside Construction LLC, which is owned by developer Fred Dalbes, agreed to pay for the cleanup.

■ A St. Moritz resident was yanked from bed at gunpoint, beaten, then tied up by robbers who made off with \$2 million in cash and jewelry on Nov. 26, according to authorities. Police recovered the stolen items. Two other residents of the luxury building – Adonis Sepulveda, 30, and Ramona P. Mercado-Vasquez, 26 – are charged with aggravated assault, kidnapping, burglary and other offenses.

ELMWOOD PARK

This year's election led to a shift in power on the Borough Council: Democrats now outnumber Republicans following what was a mildly controversial campaign. The election also saw the victory of the youngest school board member in borough history – 18-year-old college student Daniel Golabek, who graduated from the district's high school last spring. Golabek was not part of the board when it authorized a \$10 million "no frills" referendum, which will go to voters late next month. If approved, the money would pay for repairs to all district schools.

EMERSON

■ Borough Attorney Scott Mooney and Councilman-elect Ron Griffin on Dec. 11 were charged by the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office with tampering with records, defacing primary election petitions and conspiring to deface a petition for nominating candidates in a June party primary. The charges stem from more than nine months of controversy over the questioned petitions, where another candidate's name was added to Councilwoman Elizabeth Garis' forms.

■ The Borough Council censured Councilwoman Danielle DiPaola on Sept. 17 for allegedly divulging what some council mem-

bers considered confidential information when she filed a civil complaint against the borough clerk in April for not invalidating an additional candidate on Garis' petition after discovering the discrepancy. The information, whose confidentiality description DiPaola disputes, was a harassment grievance filed against DiPaola by the clerk that the councilwoman attached to the suit, which a judge dismissed in June.

ENGLEWOOD

Reopening the John T. Wright Arena in Mackay Park upset residents, many in the 4th Ward where the ice rink is located. They questioned the city's priorities with taxpayer money and blasted plans to spend \$1 million to renovate the 30-year-old building. Residents also criticized the city's decision to bring in an outside group, the Boys & Girls Club of Garfield, to run the municipal rink. The criticism derailed the project and prompted the Boys & Girls Club to bow out of its contract. The rink was left in shambles for months until the council approved bare-bones repairs and directed public works crews to prepare the building for community skating by year's end.

ENGLEWOOD CLIFFS

The high-profile groundbreaking of LG Electronics' headquarters on Sylvan Avenue drew hundreds of supporters – and critics – to the 27-acre campus in November. As LG executives and local officials planted trees and cheered the start of demolition, opponents protested plans for a 143-foot-high central building that would be the only high-rise north of Fort Lee visible above the Palisades. LG moved forward with demolition after a Superior Court judge upheld land-use changes in August that paved the way for the company to build four times taller than the zoning allowed. Preservationists appealed the ruling, and the matter is pending in the courts.

FAIR LAWN

■ Police Department morale picked up as a result of agreed-upon retirements of the chief and a captain and settlements of the last of lawsuits filed by officers. Po-

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lice Chief Erik Rose will retire Tuesday, but has remained on administrative leave since April 1. Interim Chief Glen Cauwels is in the post. Three lawsuits were settled, including a second action by former Sgt. Michael Messina, who claimed officials denied him workers' compensation rights after he suffered back injuries when struck by a car while pursuing crime suspects. Messina received \$600,000 in that settlement.

■ The borough was named the best city in New Jersey by Move-to Real Estate. It was the only Bergen County community on the list, which considers amenities, cost of living, crime, education, median income and home value.

■ It was the first time in more than 40 years that the GOP maintained control of the Borough Council, with the election in November of Republicans Amy Lefkowitz and Daniel Dunay.

FAIRVIEW

■ Public works employees moved into their new headquarters in May, marking the first time in several decades that a new borough-owned building had opened. The roughly 9,660-square-foot building, which doubles as an emergency operations center, cost \$1.9 million and was equipped with the latest technology, including solar panels. The department's former building was about 60 years old and frequently flooded during heavy rains.

FORT LEE

■ The first of two 47-story luxury residential towers to be built in a redevelopment zone reached its maximum height of 798 feet above sea level in November, marking a milestone in a project to construct Bergen County's tallest structures. Meanwhile, the developer for the other half of Fort Lee's largest redevelopment broke ground in October on the first phase of a project to include 143,000 square feet of retail. Borough officials say the redevelopment area will generate more than \$10 million in taxes annually when completed.

■ On Aug. 23, during questioning by police at the Skyview Motel on Route 46, Juan Manuel

Mendez-Lazaro allegedly jumped into an unmarked police car and sped away, setting off a tri-state manhunt. He struck three officers as he fled toward the George Washington Bridge and abandoned the vehicle in Manhattan, police said. Mendez-Lazaro was arrested a month later in Pennsylvania. He faces charges of attempted murder, aggravated assault, eluding and other offenses.

■ The borough in December agreed to pay \$360,000 to settle a lawsuit by three teens left locked in a police van overnight in freezing temperatures. The plaintiffs in the March 2011 incident had been picked up during a rowdy house party and taken to headquarters to notify their parents. But they remained locked in the van with two other boys for 15 hours before being found. The lawsuit claimed officers intentionally inflicted emotional distress and, in two of the cases, demonstrated racial bias. Officials deny discrimination and say the boys were unintentionally left in the van.

■ Motorists faced traffic gridlock for four days in September when two of three access lanes were closed on the George Washington Bridge without notice. Speculation emerged that the abrupt lane closing was political payback against the mayor, a Democrat, for not endorsing GOP Governor Christie's reelection. The closures snarled traffic for hours for residents, making students late on the first day of school and reportedly hindering emergency vehicles. In December, David Wildstein, a Christie appointee to the Port Authority who ordered the lane closures, resigned, and shortly after, Bill Baroni, another Christie choice, also stepped down as deputy executive director. An ongoing state probe has caught the interest of Sen. Jay Rockefeller, chairman of a Senate transportation committee.

FRANKLIN LAKES

The Borough Council this month approved changes to the land use and development code to rezone the 18-hole High Mountain Golf Club off Ewing Avenue

for a mixed use of 275 residences. Toll Brothers would develop the 131-acre site for 60 single-family homes, 160 carriage homes and 55 affordable-housing units. The Planning Board approved the zoning change from one acre to half-acre. The borough must fulfill state Council on Affordable Housing mandates that it promote housing for low- and moderate-income people and negotiated with Toll Brothers in the site's development.

GARFIELD

The next phase in the cleanup of a massive chromium spill began in November with the excavation of about 5,000 tons of contaminated soil and concrete at a former electroplating plant. The work is projected to be completed by March. In 1983, more than three tons of hexavalent chromium spilled out of a broken tank at the E.C. Electroplating plant on Clark Street. The cancer-causing material has since spread across the southwestern corner of the city, with dangerous levels detected in the basements of several homes and businesses. The area became a federal Superfund site in 2011.

GLEN ROCK

Republican incumbents Michael O'Hagan and Mary Jane Surrago retained their seats on the governing body after a close election. But on voting day, police descended on a pair of polling places — the borough's elementary and middle schools — in response to a phoned-in bomb threat. Searches of the Alexander Hamilton Elementary School on Harristown Road and the Glen Rock Middle School on Hamilton Avenue turned up nothing of a suspicious nature, and the matter remains under investigation.

HACKENSACK

■ Citizens for Change, a slate of citizen activists who pledged to reform city government, won all five seats on the City Council in May in an upset over a team tied to the longtime political establishment. The win was hailed as a break from decades of dominance by the Zisa family in city government.

■ James Brady was homeless in Hackensack when he turned in

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\$850 he found on the street to police. The money was given back to him after six months, but the city's Human Services Department said he broke rules by not reporting the money as income and cut off his welfare benefits. The news provoked outrage, and people from around the world contributed thousands of dollars to a charitable fund set up for Brady.

HALEDON

Suspended Police Chief Louis Mercuro's attorney insists a sexual



MERCURO

harassment complaint against his client by two female employees is overblown, claiming it originated with a mildly off-color joke Mercuro told to other officers. Marlton-based attorney Stuart J. Alterman said the chief has told the joke "about 100,000 times in the past 10 years." The joke's punch line suggests an unusual method to cure male impotence. But a PBA statement in late November claimed a female officer and dispatcher continued to endure a hostile work environment, marked by Mercuro's "inappropriate and unprofessional comments." Mercuro was suspended with pay on Nov. 18 over allegations stemming from sexual harassment and negligence complaints. Poor management, questionable leadership and bizarre behavior by the chief also were reported by the department. The borough will hold a disciplinary hearing for the chief.

HARRINGTON PARK

By hiring an administrator and deputy police chief, the borough strengthened its leadership positions. On July 15, the mayor and council adopted an ordinance that created borough administrator position and on Oct. 21 created the deputy chief post. The borough clerk, Ann Bistriz, was named the borough administrator and Sgt. James Hayden was promoted to deputy chief.

HASBROUCK HEIGHTS

Police-related events erupted

during the year: Through the Police Benevolent Association, police officers accused Chief Michael J. Colaneri of favoritism in overtime assignments and promotions. Also, the state Supreme Court ruled July 1 that the department had enough evidence to fire a lieutenant accused of getting into a bar fight with a police chief from a different town. And a former borough officer was indicted on murder charges in July for allegedly killing a Wood-Ridge man.

HAWORTH

Residents and officials broke ground on an expansion to the Municipal Library, ushering in a new era for the aged facility. After rejecting another round of bids, li-

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brary board of trustees were allowed to directly negotiate with a contractor for the expansion project. Trustees say the 2,800-square-foot addition should be completed in late 2014 and will cost about \$763,000.

HAWTHORNE

■ After strong resident opposition, Walmart pulled out of a deal to establish its first supermarket-only store in New Jersey. The borough government is working on rezoning the area, in part to end litigation against the Walmart development by the resident group Hawthorne Deserves Better.

■ Richard McAuliffe, 46, was sworn in as the new chief of police. McAuliffe, with the department 25 years, took over from retiring Chief Robert Scully.

■ The borough unveiled a 9/11 memorial with a 24-foot beam from the World Trade Center. The memorial honors Sal Zisa Jr., the only Hawthorne resident who perished in the September 2001 attacks, as well as police, fire and ambulance members.

HILLSDALE

■ A Superior Court judge ruled that United Water could proceed with renovations to the Woodcliff Lake Dam, which borders the borough, after the borough and a group of Hillsdale and Westwood residents whose properties frequently flood argued in court that the utility should present its plans before the Planning Board before starting work. The borough has chosen not to appeal the decision, while the group, which believes dam operations during storms contribute to the flooding, is working on an appeal.

■ The Borough Council on Dec. 3

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reached a compromise with resident Rosemarie D'Alessandro on the text for a sculpture honoring her daughter Joan, who was raped and murdered 40 years ago. The text D'Alessandro submitted for the memorial, which will be placed near the train station in April, was deemed too graphic by the council. The compromise pays tribute to Joan and child safety laws D'Alessandro worked for in her name.

HO-HO-KUS

Unexpected loss of Police Department staffing — from officers leaving — forced postponement of the chief's retirement. Recently, the force received the council's go-ahead to begin the yearlong process toward achieving state accreditation. Earlier in the year, the department and its chief were both named in a discrimination lawsuit filed by a veteran officer, who claims he was passed over for promotions because of his age.

KINNELON

■ The quiet Highlands community was rocked by an alleged murder-suicide when, on May 23, police found John Paul Jones, 74, and Joann "Joey" Jones, 63, dead inside their Smoke Rise home. John Paul Jones allegedly shot and killed his wife and himself.

■ Officials and residents are continuing a monthslong debate on whether putting in artificial turf at the high school's field would solve the community's chronic need for sports fields and whether it would pose safety and environment concerns.

■ The school board elevated interim Superintendent of Schools Diane DiGiuseppe to superintendent atop a string of administrative moves including the retirement of Wayne Merckling as high school principal as of Feb. 1, 2014, and the naming of Robert Reis, retired principal of Wayne Valley High School, as Merckling's interim replacement.

LEONIA

The power struggle between the Borough Council and the volunteer Fire Department dominated the last half of 2013. The borough closed the firehouse for all social gatherings after a visiting teenager was arrested for allegedly molesting the 3-year-old son of a firefighter in June. The fire company sued over the closure, then the borough rewrote the ordinance governing the department to give the mayor and council more oversight over hiring. The new ordinance prompted a second lawsuit, which the fire company withdrew in December amid plans to settle the mat-

ter in mediation.

LINCOLN PARK

Borough resident Matthew Weisholz, 28, was sentenced to five years in prison in connection with the heroin-related death of a friend earlier this year. On Aug. 9, Weisholz pleaded guilty to a first-degree drug induced death charge and a third-degree charge of heroin possession, authorities said. Prosecutors argued Weisholz was liable for the death of Montville Township resident Erin Idone, 29.

LITTLE FALLS

The township moved ahead with a major flood-mitigation program, issuing federal grants to the owners of 78 properties for buyouts and elevations. Of those, 27 were in a portion of the Singac neighborhood that's surrounded on three sides by the flood-prone Passaic River.

LITTLE FERRY

The tragic Nov. 5 death of 23-year-old Robyn Paranto, known to many as a selfless primary caregiver to her disabled father and mentally challenged younger sister, inspired a wave of support for the young woman's family. Within days of her death, the community helped to raise more than \$30,000 to cover funeral costs, and it has raised more than \$60,000 by year's end to support the family's needs. Councilwoman Peggy Steinhilber noted that the generosity was by a community that has endured much in recovering from the effects of Superstorm Sandy.



PARANTO

LODI

■ An appellate panel ordered the Passaic Valley Water Commission to roll back double-digit rate increases it imposed on Lodi customers starting in 2009. Borough water users are expected to receive either credits on bills or direct refunds. From 1998 through 2008, the commission had raised its rates for Lodi customers by 3.5 percent a year. But commission officials determined those rate hikes had failed to account for increases in wholesale water rates and that they had collected about \$3.7 million less from borough customers than they should have. Water rates were raised by 21 percent in 2009, then by 30.7 percent in 2010.

■ In August, Lodi commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Angel Lounge murders, in which a borough police detective and a police trainee were shot to

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death. For decades, the victims' families have struggled to move on, a task made even more difficult by a lengthy parole battle waged by Thomas Trantino, one of two killers. That battle ended in 2001, when the state Supreme Court upheld an earlier decision that he should be paroled. After serving a year in a halfway house, he was freed on Feb. 11, 2002.

LYNDHURST

A \$20 million dredging project began in July along the Passaic River's local stretch to remove the top 2 feet of polluted sediment and cap what remains. Work was delayed after the Bridge Street swinging bridge in Newark broke, blocking vessels needed at the site. In November a group of companies responsible for polluting the river advanced a controversial proposal to reduce further cleanup costs by opening a fish exchange where local anglers can swap fish caught in the Passaic for clean, farm-raised fish.

MAHWAH

Testimony from Crossroads Developers on an application to build a 600,000-square-foot shopping center at the International Crossroads concluded in December. A public comment session is set for Jan. 27, and the Planning Board will then decide on the controversy-ridden plan after nearly two years of reviews.

MAYWOOD

■ The federal government announced plans to remove the equivalent of 450 railcars of polluted soil from parts of the Maywood Chemical Co. Superfund site in a \$17 million cleanup. The proposal is the latest phase in a decades-long effort to clean up a site east of Route 17 used since the late 1890s for industrial purposes.

■ Republican incumbent Adrian Febre and the GOP's Thomas Lindenau won seats on the Borough Council in the May election. They defeated Democratic incumbent Erich Fleischmann and ticket mate Jonathan King.

MIDLAND PARK and WALDWICK

Authorities charged a Midland Park man with the rape and murder of his former girlfriend in her parents' Waldwick home as the couple's baby slept in the same room. Mark Spatucci, 22, climbed through a second-floor window, argued with Mary Greff, 23, then strangled her while their 9-month-old son slept in a bassinet in the same room, Bergen County Prosecutor John Molinelli said. The couple had lived together in Waldwick before Greff ended the relationship about two months after the baby's birth. Prosecutors said Spatucci sexually assaulted Greff before he strangled her. He was arraigned on the added charges of felony murder and two counts of aggravated sexual assault. Spatucci's attorney entered a not guilty plea on his behalf and he is being held in lieu of \$2 million bail.

MONTVALE

The shared-services agreement with River Vale that dissolved Montvale's Department of Public Works was struck down by a judge last week in a finding of violations of open public meetings rules and a conflict of interest involving the mayor. The borough said it had taken preemptive steps to fix violations it knew would be cited and that the agreement to share services with River Vale was already in effect. The case stems from the Montvale Borough Council's decision in March to hire a consultant to conduct a feasibility study, and subsequent votes this summer to eliminate the Montvale Department of Public Works and form the Passaic Valley Department of Public Works with River Vale, a move explained to the public as a cost-saving measure.

MOONACHIE

Governor Christie spent the first anniversary of Superstorm Sandy on Oct. 29 in the borough, flanked by NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell, Jets owner Woody Johnson and Super Bowl host committee President Alfred Kelly Jr., to announce more than \$1 million of investment, jointly contributed by the NFL Foundation and the host committee to rebuild damaged recreation and community facilities statewide. Local residents had mixed reviews of state efforts in the past year, with some criticizing the bureaucracy involved in applying for state and federal aid needed in ongoing recovery, repairs and reconstruction.

NEW MILFORD

■ A developer's plan to build a large, mixed-use development on 16 acres of riverside land continued to draw community ire and divide officials. The S. Hekman Group's application — which includes a 70,500-square-foot supermarket, a drive-through bank and affordable-housing units — has changed several times in its two years before the zoning board.

■ In April, the partly mummified body of Alice Klee was found beneath a heap of clothing and trash in her apartment. The 68-year-old woman had been missing for three months, and the death was not considered of a suspicious nature.

NORTH ARLINGTON

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The borough's three-year attempt to buy back its water system from the Passaic Valley Water Commission failed when a judge ruled in favor of the commission in April. The borough had contended that the commission committed fraud when it bought the system for \$4 million in 2004. After the deal, North Arlington alleged the commission charged overly high rates and failed to do proper maintenance. While acknowledging the borough's arguments had merit, state Judge Margaret Mary McVeigh ruled that the court did not have authority to overturn a legally binding contract, especially given that North Arlington had failed to pursue other avenues of redress before filing suit.

NORTH BERGEN

■ Eight-month-old Angelie Paredes of North Bergen was killed in West New York in late July when a jitney bus slammed into a light pole, toppling it onto her stroller. Police said the driver, Idowu Daramola of New York, was talking on a cellphone at the time. Daramola was charged in the baby's death, and lawmakers have pushed for tighter regulation of the jitney industry, including improved background checks on drivers, better safety training and greater insurance requirements.



ANGELIE

■ A five-alarm fire on Sept. 28 that tore through a five-story, 50-unit apartment building on Kennedy Boulevard left as many as 120 tenants homeless. Afterward, township officials and non-profit organizations moved to provide food, clothing and shelter to the victims. Investigators weren't able to determine the cause but ruled out arson and said the fire started in a loft.

NORTH HALEDON

Two Borough Council members with a combined 27 years of service attended their final meeting on Dec. 11. Republicans Bruce Iacobelli and Elaine Vuonci-no lost reelection bids to Democratic newcomers Dennis Marco and Michael A. Galluccio. The winners had campaigned on bringing balance to the borough's wholly Republican council, which has not seated a Democrat since 2002.

ORADELL

The historic Atwood-Blauvelt Mansion on Kinderkamack Road was sold at a Bergen County sheriff's foreclosure auction in March to a senior care company

after its owners could not afford upkeep. A subsidiary of Fort Lee-based CareOne LLC took full ownership of the 19th-century estate, which has been the focus of legal wrangling and public debate since 2007 when CareOne first sought permission to build an assisted-living facility on the 4.3-acre site. Since then, several potential buyers have emerged, encouraging residents who don't want the mansion turned into a care facility.

PALISADES PARK

■ The FBI delivered subpoenas in May to the municipal building seeking borough records. Borough officials have declined to say what records federal authorities requested and have been given.

■ The school district, which had employed part-time interim superintendents since 2010, hired Joseph Cirillo as its new chief. Cirillo has worked for the district for 10 years, most recently as assistant to the schools superintendent.

■ The borough was the site of the finish line for the first Comfort Women Memorial Peace Marathon in Bergen County, a 5-mile run memorializing the women forced into sexual servitude by the Japanese Imperial Army from 1932 to 1945. The event, held on Labor Day, drew about 100 runners.

PARAMUS

■ Westfield Garden State Plaza shoppers faced a terrifying situation on Nov. 4 when a rifle-toting gunman clad in black and wearing a motorcycle helmet entered the mall about 9:20 p.m. and fired six shots into the ceiling, an elevator and at signs, sending people scattering for cover. Richard Shoop, 20, of Teaneck then went to a remote storage area of the mall, where he took his own life. No one else was injured.

■ Changes were made this year in the Police Department. There were four new officers hired, as well as numerous promotions including Kenneth Ehrenberg as chief and Robert Guidetti as deputy chief. A school resource and Drug Abuse Resistance Education officer also has been reinstated after two years in which the program had been discontinued because of tight staffing.

■ Borough Hall underwent renovations including to the council chambers in June. The 178 chairs were ripped out and new carpeting, LED lighting and ceiling tiles were installed.

PARK RIDGE

The borough took the lead in hiring a consultant to study the feasibility and pos-

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sible savings in merging police departments with Montvale and Woodcliff Lake. But Montvale's council voted over the summer against moving ahead with consolidation, and the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office asked Park Ridge to return funds it had given it toward completing the study, claiming the memorandum of understanding was broken when Montvale made the decision without public hearing on the issue. Now, Park Ridge is asking a judge to decide who should pay what's still owed for the study.

PASSAIC

■ The city in February unveiled plans for an Eastside Redevelopment Zone, a 100-acre swath of blighted industrial and residential properties in the shadow of City Hall. Among the targets for redevelopment are Alfred Speer Village, the high-rise public housing complex off State Street the city wants to raze and replace with low-rise, mixed-income development. There also are plans to convert the Uniroyal factory on Passaic Street into a 550-unit apartment complex with retail outlets on the first floor. The city signed a developer's agreement with Pennrose LLC to plan both projects.

■ A huge fire on lower Broadway in November destroyed four businesses and left 100 people homeless. No one was hurt, and firefighters even saved two dogs that had been trapped for hours inside one of the burning buildings. The fire began in the El Corralito bodega, grew as it was fed by a ruptured gas line and was fought by 26 fire companies from the counties of Bergen and Passaic that had to wait while a utility company arrived and cut off the gas. None of the buildings had outstanding fire code violations.

PASSAIC COUNTY

Democrats swept the county races in the Nov. 5 election, reelecting Richard Berdnik as sheriff and Terry Duffy and Pat Lepore to the Freeholder Board. Governor Christie, a Republican, won Passaic County, but his popularity wasn't enough to help Republican candidate Frank Feenan in the race for sheriff, or Christian Barranco and Phil Weisbecker Jr. in their bids for freeholder seats. Afterward, Feenan and Passaic County GOP Chairman John Traier questioned the validity of more than 10,000 signatures beside ballots cast on Nov. 5, claiming they didn't match signatures from prior elections. Sherine El-Abd, the county elections superintendent, impounded all election machines and began an investigation. Her re-

port is expected to be published in early 2014.

PATERSON

■ In March, crumbling Hinchliffe Stadium was added to the list of national landmarks, a designation advocates hope will spur investment in the restoration of one of three American ballparks still standing from the days of the segregated Negro Leagues. Built early in the Great Depression, Hinchliffe also was host to other major sporting events. It severely deteriorated after it was shut down more than 15 years ago, and city officials are hiring a contractor for a \$1-million restoration.

■ In July, former Councilman Aslon Goow disclosed documents showing Joey Torres received a \$73,996 severance payment on his last day in office in 2010. Torres says the check was processed per city regulations. But no other city mayor in the past 20 years received a severance payment, and Torres' critics assert he, too, should not have. A City Council investigation in August was set aside when Mayor Jeffery Jones said municipal employees should not participate because of legal issues. The Jones administration began its own inquiry. Officials say they expect its findings to be made public at a City Council meeting in January.

■ In August, two 17-year-olds were shot to death during the National Night Out campaign against crime, when thousands of residents gathered at block parties and barbecues. Jaquell Johnson was killed shortly after playing in a Night Out basketball game. Derrick Fitts was killed several hours later. Authorities have charged two men with murder. Authorities said Fitts was killed to keep him from giving police information about the shooting of Johnson, his teammate on the Eastside High football team.

■ In December, a state agency approved more than \$100 million in tax credits for a non-profit organization to build a hotel and office building beside St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center. The proposal by Medical Missions for Children had languished as the organization put together funding. City officials said the tax credits will allow the project to advance. Paterson now has a single motel, charging hourly rates. Officials say the city desperately needs a hotel to attract tourists to the new national park at the Great Falls.

PEQUANNOCK

The Board of Education and the Pe-

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quannock Township Education Association reached a deal on a contract that will increase the 310 unionized teachers' salaries by a total 7.65 percent over three years through June 2016. It includes two extra days of professional development for teachers to learn about new mandates, such as the Common Core State Standards. The administrators union also signed a new deal that will raise salaries by 7.16 percent over three years.

POMPTON LAKES

A judge recommended revocation of a borough doctor's license after testimony from former patients and medical professionals about alleged botched spinal surgeries he performed. Dr. Richard Kaul, an anesthesiologist, was not trained as a surgeon but practiced as one at same-day surgery centers around North Jersey, including his borough office, NJSR Surgical Center, now closed and bankrupt. The

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state Board of Medical Examiners will decide next year whether to accept the judge's recommendation or alter it.

PROSPECT PARK

An undisclosed incident within the Fire Department prompted an investigation by a Borough Council committee. Officials said they were probing a "personal matter," but the committee's proceedings raised public speculation that the local government might abolish the all-volunteer fire department. Mayor Mohamed Khairullah denied the rumors, saying the committee will disclose its findings when the investigation is finished.

RAMSEY

Airmount Woods, a \$2.2 million, nine-unit housing complex for adults with autism, was built through a partnership between Ramsey Housing Inc., the Bergen County United Way and Madeline Corp. The development is among the first of its kind in the state.

RIDGEFIELD

The borough began the year making history when Dennis Shim was sworn in as the first Korean-American borough councilman, and Ray Penabad became the third Cuban-American on the current council. Democrats also

held a 5-1 governing majority and advanced plans to build a \$15 million civic center on the site of the community center. But opponents, led by former Republican councilmen, circulated a petition asking that preliminary expenses for the project be approved by referendum. Voters in May overwhelmingly rejected the plan. In November, they also rejected spending funds on security guards for district schools.

RIDGEFIELD PARK

■ In summer, the first Young Muse Festival — an event showcasing the work of budding artists — was held at the new Overpeck County Park.

■ The village is closer to developing two vacant parcels it owns on Challenger Road when it entered into a contract with Avalon-Bay Communities Inc. The company will pay \$18 million for the land, where it plans to build more than 450 residential units, according to village officials.

RIDGEWOOD

Public Service Electric and Gas crews began installing thicker, taller utility poles along Hope Street and Spring Avenue this summer, causing an uproar among residents caught unaware. They petitioned the Village Council, which had the pole project stalled before requesting a meeting with the state's Board of Public Utilities. Despite the complaints that the poles would destroy property values and pose more of an overall threat, the BPU in November sided with PSE&G, ruling the work in Ridgewood could resume. The poles are being installed.

RINGWOOD

A 7.6-mile expansion of the Tennessee Gas Pipeline project across the borough gained final approvals from federal regulators. As a last-resort action to slow construction in March, two protesters lashed themselves to maple trees until a leader of the Ramapough tribe asked them to free themselves. The pipeline was completed, and in service on Nov. 1.

RIVERDALE

The rock wall has been fixed. Since the development on Overlook Drive and Skyview Terrace was completed in 2005, the wall along its entrance has fragmented as it weathered, and in March 2011, the main entrance was closed off for three days after many large rocks fell. In 2010 homeowners sued over the situation. The borough, developers, contractor, borough engineer and homeowners settled and agreed to share the cost of wall repairs. The outlined work was completed prior to the start of the holiday season.

RIVER EDGE

After years of delay and setbacks, construction began in May on the former Huffman Koos lot on Main Street, a commercial plan officials hope will help revitalize the downtown. A new 22,000-square-foot building is expected to house several small commercial tenants; Total Wine has plans move into the second 30,000-square-foot building, and a pharmacy is expected to take over the current Total Wine building on Kinderkamack Road, according to developer Peter Ciancia.

RIVER VALE

The township merged its Department of Public Works with Montvale's in a shared services pact expected to save about \$400,000 in each municipality. But five Montvale workers slated to lose their jobs claimed in a lawsuit that River Vale hired five replacements, including two related to Montvale's mayor and River Vale's administrator. In October, a judge put a stay on Montvale from entering the agreement until the trial, but not on River Vale because it is not a party in the case.

ROCHELLE PARK

Voters approved a \$6.5 million construction to improve security and make repairs to the 90-year-old Midland School. The district will cover 40 percent of the cost, or an estimated \$2.6 million, through state funds. Owners with homes assessed at the township's

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average of \$344,000 will face a tax increase of \$93 a year to support the work. Most of the project involves converting the school's steam-heating system to hot water. Security also will be improved by replacing all exterior doors, installing new outside cameras and upgrading the public announcement and fire safety systems.

ROCKLEIGH

The Planning Board's decision to approve a guest house was upheld by a judge in August. The board's approval of the 121-room guest house in January prompted three residents to file a complaint saying the board did not handle the application properly. The attorney for the residents said the project was "too big" for "too small of a town." The court affirmed the board's decision to allow the applicant, 26 Rockleigh LCC, to build the guest house, said board Attorney Ken Dolecki. An appeal was filed objecting to the ruling. It will be heard next year.

RUTHERFORD

■ Resident John "Jay" Fahy, a prominent attorney and former Bergen County prosecutor, committed suicide on June 17. No suicide note was found, and Fahy's motivations remain unknown. Fahy was days away from having his law license temporarily suspended by the New Jersey Supreme Court after losing a billing dispute.

■ Republican challengers Mark O'Connor and Jack Manzo beat Democratic council members George Fecanin and Jack Boyle, creating an even split between the parties on the six-member Borough Council.

SADDLE BROOK

Local businesses and community members responded with an outpouring of financial support this year for resident Thomas Buchak, who lives with a severe form of epilepsy and whose family was unable to afford the care it said he requires. Buchak, who has Lennox-Gastaut syndrome, aged out of the local school system earlier this year at age 21. Because of Medicaid funding

rules, his family had to choose between receiving private-duty nursing services and sending him to a day program geared to young adults. Thousands of dollars in donations have poured in for the family.

SADDLE RIVER

School officials just last week made a decision where to send their middle school students when a contract with Ramsey expires in June. The district weighed sending its students to Upper Saddle River, but in the end reached a 10-year contract renewal with Ramsey.

SECAUCUS

■ Voters approved a \$27.4 million bond question on Dec. 10, allowing the school district to renovate and expand facilities. Enrollment, on the rise since 2008, is expected to continue on that track the next four years, school officials said. The projects will allow the district to shift sixth-graders to the middle school and ease crowding at the elementary schools. Projects include new classrooms and labs and a physical education wing at the middle and high schools, which share a campus. Work is supposed to be completed by the 2016-17 academic year.

■ Deputy Mayor John Bueckner attended his last council meeting as an elected official on Dec. 18, after 20 years on the governing board. Bueckner, previously a school trustee, chose not to seek reelection in November. His successor, Mark Dehnert, will be sworn in on Saturday.

SOUTH HACKENSACK

Vincent A. Sicari gave up his job as municipal court judge to pursue a career in comedy after the state Supreme Court ruled he could not continue to do both. The court had ruled that Sicari's entertainment career was not compatible with the state's code of judicial conduct, rejecting his appeal of judicial advisory committee opinions issued in 2008 and 2010. Sicari became a municipal court judge in 2008 and has a 16-year entertainment career that includes television appearances

and performances at comedy clubs.

TEANECK

Friends and acquaintances of Richard Shoop, the gunman who fired shots at the Westfield Garden State Plaza in Paramus and then committed suicide on Nov. 4, expressed disbelief with the 20-year-old's actions. Some acknowledged Shoop had been troubled, but co-workers and customers at a pizza shop where he worked, former teachers at the high school and his friends described him as generous and kind.

TENAFLY

Tenafly Nature Center plans to build an expanded Education and Discovery building on East Clinton Avenue aroused opposition among some residents who want that part of the publicly owned property kept in pristine condition. The group, Save the Tenafly Green Acres, distributed petitions against the plan and sought an alternative: a new building at the TNC's existing site on Hudson Avenue. TNC leaders say that site is too small to serve the crowds of visitors each year, is not accessible to the disabled and has limited parking. The proposed 7,950-square-foot building would be barrier free and surrounded by forest, set back from East Clinton Avenue. Critics have asked for a public vote. Mayor Peter Rustin said he would consider a public vote held next election day, as long as both sides agree in writing to abide by the results.

TETERBORO

The borough learned this year a Walmart might be coming in three years, with the completion of Teterboro Landing. Stores in the development — on 55 acres of polluted industrial space around Teterboro Airport — also include a Costco. But longtime business owners in town objected to reports of a \$19 million tax break from the state, an incentive ensuring the big-box retailers will set up shop in the new development.

TOTOWA

In June, families of intellectually disabled residents at the North Jersey Developmental Center in

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Totowa sued the state in federal court to keep the center open, claiming a violation of civil rights and accusing the Christie administration of interfering with medical decisions. In 2012, a state task force appointed by the governor and state Legislature had ordered its closure by 2017.

UPPER SADDLE RIVER

Mack-Cali unveiled a plan to redevelop the 47-acre Pearson property on Lake Street into two office buildings totaling 290,000 square feet, 240 luxury apartments and retail space. Pearson announced two years ago that it would relocate to Hoboken.

WALLINGTON

The owner of Farmland Dairies, a milk-processing plant that employs more than 300, announced plans to close the facility in 2014. The move is expected to impact not only plant employees but local businesses that serve the plant and its workers. The borough will likely be affected as well: Farmland Dairies is one of its largest water consumers, according to Borough Administrator Witold Baginski, and the borough receives about \$680,000 in property taxes annually from the plant.

WANAQUE

Two houses were razed in May to make way for a \$6.5 million Borough Hall. Construction of the 18,000-square-foot building on Ringwood Avenue began in August. The new building, expected to be completed next December, will be more energy efficient and provide more space for the Police Department and parking.

WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP

■ The township faced criticism when a local restaurant owner was fined \$1,000 for performing electrical work without a permit. Meanwhile, the owner of Gyros and Goodies, recently featured See **YEAR IN REVIEW** Page L-7 on a Food Network TV show, claims she neither completed any work recently or that an inspector visited her restaurant before giving the violation. The township is conducting an investigation.

■ A driver of an SUV struck and injured Police Officer Heather Castronova on July 20, after she had issued a summons to a vehicle on Fern Street. The driver fled, and the reward for finding the fugitive remained at \$10,000 as of late last week.

■ The township, along with Westwood, Emerson, the Emerson Board of Education and the Westwood Regional School District, approved installing a lighting-detection system to service the municipalities and their schools' fields.

WAYNE

■ The township was shaken by the fatal shooting during a robbery of Isaac Rinas, 18, who allegedly had gone to Paterson to buy a gun on the night of his graduation from Wayne Valley High School. Three men have been indicted on murder charges, one of whom is Case Cole, a Wayne resident and Rinas' former classmate. Authorities say he orchestrated the robbery plot.

■ Mayor Chris Vergano introduced a redevelopment plan in August that touched off strong opposition among some residents and spawned a proliferation of orange "Do Not Rezone Wayne" lawn signs around town. The plan aims at addressing the township's declining ratables: In 2013, Haier America moved its headquarters to Wayne, but other companies left, including GAF and Ashland Specialty Ingredients.

WEST MILFORD

The construction of a new township library inched along, with officials deciding on a final plan and moving ahead with the first steps of building. In July, the library board approved plans for a three-story building, despite the Township Council's indecision over whether to relocate some municipal offices to one of the floors. Two months later, a contract was awarded to install the building's septic system.

WESTWOOD

■ After a year of debate, the mayor and council approved amending the process for police officers to rise through the ranks,

no longer requiring a college degree for officers to become sergeants and institutionalizing a formal promotional process.

■ The borough began an extensive traffic-renovation project around its downtown to improve traffic flow and attract more visitors to the business district. Its train station also saw improvements.

WOOD-RIDGE

Wood-Ridge opened an intermediate school on Sept. 3. Refurbished for \$6 million in the former Our Lady of Assumption School — a private Catholic school that closed in 2010 — the school has 17 classrooms for 280 students Grades 4 to 6.

WOODCLIFF LAKE

The career of Borough Administrator and Clerk Wolfgang Albrecht ended abruptly following charges that he illegally altered the dates on election-related documents. Albrecht stepped down in October after a two-month leave of absence for allegedly backdating letters from two candidates saying they were withdrawing from the November council race. Without entering a formal plea, he agreed to enter a pretrial intervention program to avoid possible prosecution. He will be cleared of all charges after six months of probation, officials said.

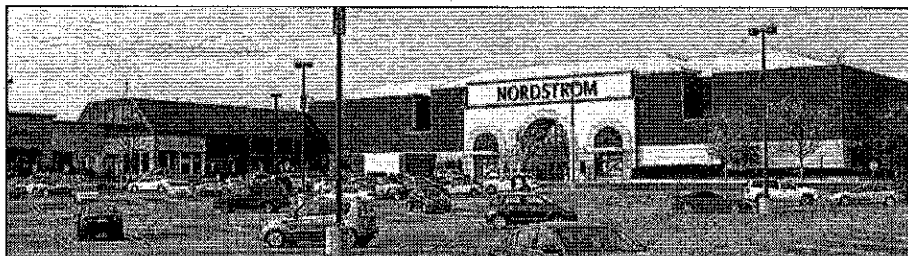
WOODLAND PARK

The borough drew support from 25 other municipalities served by the Passaic Valley Water Commission in its bid to defeat the PVWC's \$100 million plan to drain reservoirs on Garret Mountain and replace them with concrete tanks, a measure aimed to prevent contamination. In June, the PVWC hired an engineering firm to design the first phase, which includes draining. Borough officials are developing a legal strategy to delay the project until 2016, when federal environmental regulations undergo scheduled reexamination.

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Pries, Donna Rolando, Leslie Scott, Karen Sudol, Linh Tat, Deborah Walsh and Deena Yellin and Joe Malinconico of the Paterson Press contributed to this article.



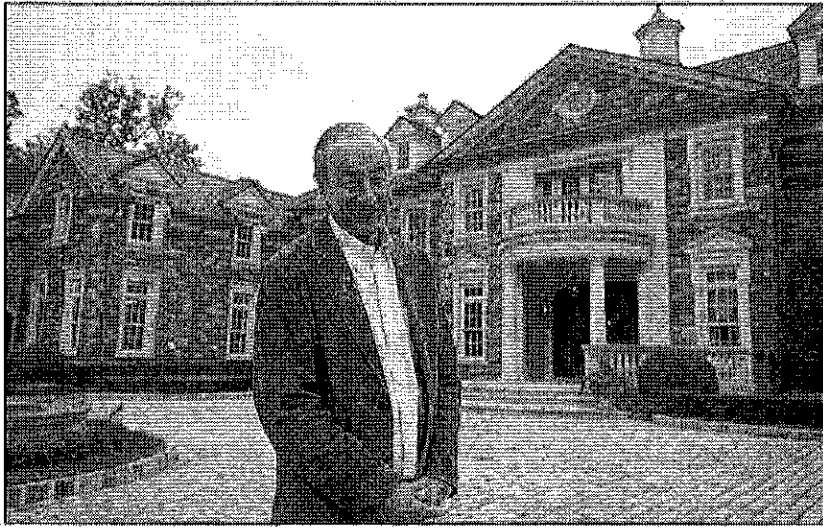
Westfield Garden State Plaza was closed the morning after the shooting.

THOMAS E. FRANKLIN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



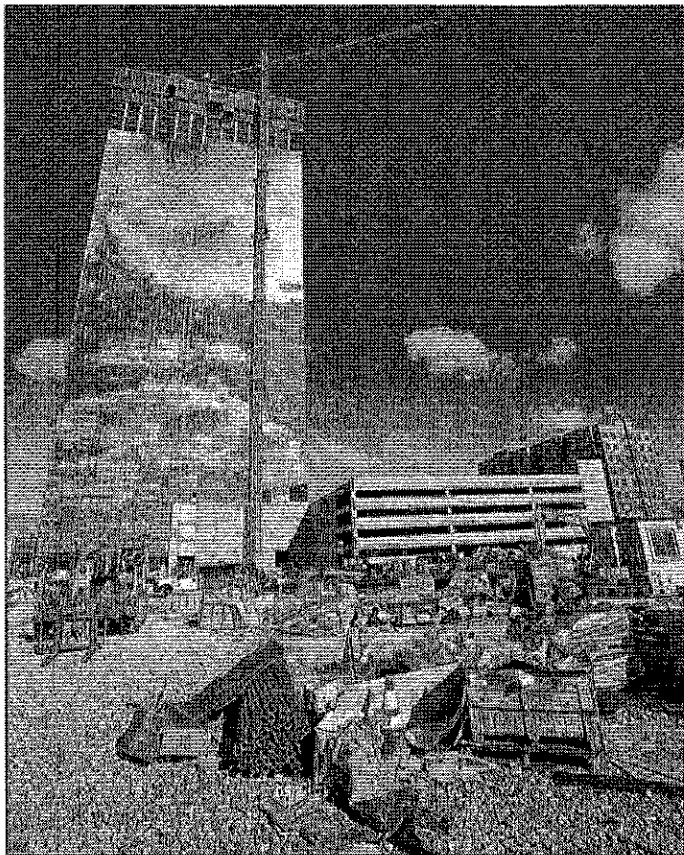
TYSON TRISH/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Police from all over North Jersey were at the Westfield Garden State Plaza in November on reports of a shooter.



MARKO GEORGIEV/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Richard Kurtz in front of The Stone Mansion in Alpine, which he is seeking to sell for \$49 million.



MICHAEL KARAS/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

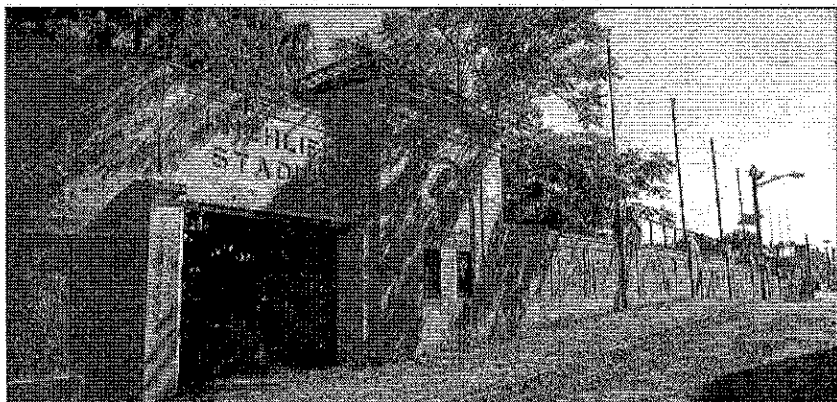
The first of the two 47-story towers to be built in Fort Lee recently reached its maximum height.

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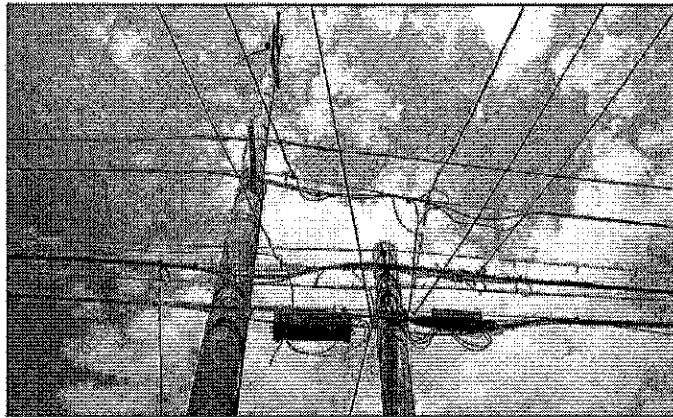
KEVIN R. WEXLER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The funeral for 8-month-old Angelle Jian Paredes was held at the Fairview Mausoleum. The girl was killed in West New York when a jitney bus knocked over a light post that fell on her stroller.



DON SMITH/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Hinchliffe Stadium in Paterson in March was named to the list of national landmarks, giving supporters hope it will attract revitalization money.



TARIQ ZEHAWI/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Ridgewood residents protested PSE&G installing larger utility poles, but the state ruled in favor of the power provider.

WOMEN UNITED IN PHILANTHROPY

A Golf for All outing for women who play and don't play golf was hosted by Women United in Philanthropy at White Herches Golf and Country Club in Hawthorth.

1. Julia Orlando, Lynn Bartlett, Tony Cipraro, Julie Cohen and Lisa D'Allesandio
2. Wendy Conner, Doris Sanders and Mary Long
3. Pat Mack and Pat White
4. Kathy Liding, Kate Duggan and Scott Redden
5. Maria Frangou, Dore Glendon and Mark Bate
6. Dr. Glen Gilman, Nancy Beards, Sarah Mullane and Susan Winchell Albano

