

Mayor asks power of appointment

By ANGELA STEWART

The new mayor of Fairfield will be back in an Essex County courtroom today, fighting for what she maintains is her right to make major appointments in the township administration.

Mayor Anna Marie Rotonda, a registered Republican who won the mayor's seat as an independent, has been embroiled in a dispute with the township's three male council members over her power to make municipal appointments.

At the core of the argument is Rotonda's desire to replace Joseph Skripek, the township attorney, whose one-year term expired Dec. 31. Skripek has held the post for about 12 years, according to the mayor.

Yesterday, Skripek and attorneys representing Rotonda met privately with Superior Court Judge Paul Thompson in an effort to resolve the dispute.

After spending about an hour in the judge's chambers, the attorneys emerged, reporting that "nothing was resolved" and indicating they would be back in Thompson's courtroom today at 2 p.m.

Rotonda, a former councilwoman, has attempted at least twice to nominate George Savino, her choice for township attorney. At

the township reorganization meeting Jan. 1, she did not have a quorum.

At the Jan. 9 meeting, the three councilmen—Thomas J. Morgan, Eneo S. Reboli and Gary Pannullo—walked out after they became entangled in a dispute with the mayor over who should appoint the township attorney, prosecutor and a municipal judge.

"I feel the people want a change," said Rotonda, who said she is anxious to get on with the running of the township.

Savino is the township attorney for Lyndhurst, and is also a municipal judge in East Rutherford.

Skripek maintained yesterday that he was not representing the interests of the three councilmen, although Rotonda and her attorney maintained otherwise.

"Until I'm replaced, I'm there," said Skripek. "I'm a hold-over."

But attorney Paul S. Werther, who is representing the mayor, said he feels Skripek is attempting to stay on in the position, with the support of the three councilmen.

Rotonda, whose seat on the council remains vacant, said her advisers have concluded that a municipal attorney must be appointed every year and that Skripek can no longer be considered the municipal attorney.

By KEVIN DILWORTH

Orange Mayor Robert L. Brown last night proposed a \$25.4 million budget for 1989, representing a 4.5 percent or \$1 million-plus increase over last year's spending plan.

Brown submitted his suggested financial package to the city council at its regular meeting. And in doing so, he became the city's first chief executive since the municipality changed from a commission to a mayor-council form of government in 1976 to introduce a budget so early in the year.

Last year, then Mayor Paul Monacelli presented his budget on May 31. And the council did not adopt a spending plan until Sept. 6, the latest any Orange council approved a municipal budget.

The administrative budget process was exhaustive and involved all city department heads, the business administrator and the municipal clerk," Brown told the council and the public.

The mayor attributed the proposed \$1 million hike in municipal operating costs to several factors.

Brown charged Monacelli hired 10 firefighters and placed them on the city's payroll just prior to leaving office. "The effect of these new city employees on the 1989 budget submission is in excess of \$340,000, or 31 percent of this year's increase," he said.

Also, Brown said, the city's police officers are now paid 5 percent more than last year as a result of a union contract negotiated under the Monacelli administration. He continued that the city has hired a business administrator and chief financial officer.

Also, municipal garbage disposal and liability insurance costs have

Orange mayor proposes \$25 million budget

First to present spending plan to council so early in the year

skyrocketed, Brown noted.

"This administration has made a strong commitment to improve the quality of life for our citizens," Brown said in his first "State of the City" address.

The Brown administration, the mayor maintained, has kept "a focused eye on quality-of-life issues previously left abandoned."

Issues such as "sound fiscal management, safe and clean streets, recreation, senior citizen and education" are now being addressed, he said.

"We inherited an administration whose fiscal management was in the hands of the state (Department of Community Affairs' Division of Local Government Services); there was 'low morale among city employees; a backlog of tax collections; and a police department that was a source of disappointment and controversy," Brown said.

Today, he continued, "I'm pleased to see a city steadily moving towards restoration with vision and sound leadership. That city is my city, your city, our city."

The mayor's proposed budget calls for spending \$239,818 more in administrative expenses than the \$2.1 million funded in that category last year.

Meanwhile, the law department is to get \$66,150 less than the \$639,150 allocated it in 1988; and the public works department is to get \$1.4 million instead of the \$1.2 million it received last year.

According to the mayor's proposal, the police department's budget will rise from \$3.9 million last year to \$4.2 million this year; the fire department's from \$3.4 million to \$3.8 million. Also, garbage disposal and insurance costs will increase from \$2.5 million to \$2.7 million; city council and city clerk's office expenses, from \$405,500 to \$412,824; and finance department expenses, from \$370,550 to \$304,000.

In the last six months, Brown asserted, various state and county funding sources have been tapped to help lessen the tax burden of city residents.

For example, the mayor said, one \$605,000 grant will help defray the operating costs of the police department and the city's department of public works; another \$377,000 grant will help pay for some public safety expenses, and yet another \$105,000 award will pay for some street improvements.

Under the direction of Police Director Charles Cobbert, Brown said, a new police department table of organization was formulated that has resulted in the number of patrolmen on the streets almost doubling without "an additional (financial) burden to the taxpayers."

Furthermore, Brown said, "Through the joint efforts of the Orange Police Department and the Essex County Sheriff's Office, we are sending a clear message to drug dealers: You once owned the streets. You don't now. We are taking them back."



Mayor Robert Brown
'Quality-of-life issues'

In the area of recreation, Brown said, a \$430,000 municipal park restoration program is expected to get underway this spring, "providing for substantial renovation of city parks such as Central and Metcalf."

According to the mayor, \$200,000 in capital improvement funds are available this year. He said some of city's most pressing needs include renovating the police department building on Lincoln and Tremont avenues; replacing the police department's antiquated communications system; replacing some traffic lights and parking meters; and buying a new hook and ladder truck and a new pumper for the fire department.

Bloomfield truck crash victim settles suit

A Bloomfield man who was injured in an auto accident three years ago will receive \$400,000 and annual \$35,000 payments in compensation for his injuries under the terms of an out-of-court settlement.

Theodore Alfone, 59, was injured Jan. 5, 1986, when the car he was riding in was struck by a truck driven by Vincent Mauro Jr. of Newark, at Clifton and Third avenues in Newark.

Under the terms of a settlement with Newark Morning Ledger Co., Leaseway of New Jersey, Vincent Mauro Jr., Lucille A. Vitale and the estate of Thomas A. Vitale, Alfone will receive a lump sum payment of \$400,000 and \$35,000 each year for the rest of his life, beginning in February 1990.

Maplewood buying \$43,410 in rock salt from Essex

Maplewood will pay about \$43,410 this year for rock salt, under an agreement with Essex County approved last night by the township committee.

The agreement calls for some 1,500 tons to be set aside by the county for Maplewood's use on icy roadways during 1989.

The figure represents a cost of \$28.94 per ton, the amount the county is paying its supplier, International Salt

Co. of Clark Summit, Pa., to deliver the salt. The committee also adopted an ordinance establishing a parking space for the handicapped in the municipal lot in Maplewood center.

The space was previously set aside by the committee without an ordinance. Last night's action will enable police to issue summonses for illegal use of the space, committee members said.

West Caldwell awards facilities cleaning contracts

The West Caldwell Council last night awarded contracts totaling \$39,400 to clean public buildings, including the municipal building and police headquarters.

Adam Staszczak of Clifton was awarded a \$19,400 contract to clean the firehouse, the library, the recreation office and the civic center.

The other contract of \$20,000 was awarded to the D & J Maintenance Co. of Nutley to clean the police headquarters and municipal building.

The council had tried twice to solicit bids by advertis-

ing, but received no responses. The council then solicited bids privately.

In other business, the council introduced a \$3,500 appropriation as West Caldwell's share toward the installation of a blinking light at the intersection of Ravine Avenue and W. Dover Avenue. The intersection is at the border of West Caldwell and Caldwell. The light is expected to cost approximately \$30,000, with Caldwell contributing \$10,000. The neighboring municipalities expect the state to pay the rest of the bill. A public hearing is scheduled for Feb. 21.

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VIEWPOINT

The nuclear dinosaur

Two decades ago, there were a few so-called proven facts that you had to learn if you wanted to get ahead in the energy business. Fact Number One was that there was going to be an enormous demand for new power sources in coming years. Fact Number Two was that it was going to be an enormous

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