

ECIA gains 2 grants for airport expansion

By MEG NUGENT

The Essex County Improvement Authority (ECIA) yesterday accepted two federal grants earmarked for expansion of the county airport and awarded a \$1.2 million contract in connection with the improvement project.

During a half-hour special session, the ECIA Board of Commissioners passed a resolution accepting a \$1.8 million grant to begin the acquisition of the "Vibra-Screw" property, a 21-acre tract located north of the Fairfield-based county airport.

The ECIA wants to use the property to expand the airport's "ground capacity," said Banker, with the hope of building additional hangars and tie-downs for aircraft on the tract.

Before the vote, Commissioner Leslie Lustbader asked Banker, "Is there anything saying he (property owner Gene Wahl) will not sell under any circumstances?"

Banker replied that he has had "no direct communication" from Wahl but was in the process of "attempting to establish negotiations" with him. The ECIA last spoke with Wahl in June, Banker said later.

In addition, Banker told Lustbader that if no agreement is reached with Wahl on the property, the ECIA can go to court to seek condemnation in order to acquire it.

"Our ultimate position is we (the ECIA) will not be able to pay in excess of the (property) appraisal," Banker said. When the authority met last month, Banker estimated it would cost roughly \$2 million for the acquisition and said that figure was not firm because the authority was waiting for a final appraisal.

Banker said yesterday three appraisals have been submitted but refused to divulge the amounts on the advice of the ECIA attorney, saying public release would interfere with the negotiation process.

The ECIA also formally accepted a \$985,999 grant that will be used to finance the completion of an airport taxiway on which construction was begun last year. The contract for the taxiway completion was awarded to the Marsellis-Warner Corp. of Montclair, the lowest of four contractors that submitted bids for the project by the Sept. 15 deadline.

Both grants are funded by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the award of the contract is subject to approval by the FAA and the state Department of Transportation (DOT), according to Banker.

The authority wants to complete the taxiway that is adjacent to runway "9/27," which is located near New Dutch Lane. About 400 feet of the facility was constructed last year and its length will total some 3,500 feet upon completion, which is tentatively set for next summer.

The FAA will fund 90 percent of the completion project, the state will finance 5 percent and the remaining 5 percent will be paid by the ECIA.

Banker, who said two weeks ago that the federal agency had given informal approval of the taxiway grant, said the completion project was put out to bid several weeks ago "in anticipation" of getting the formal approval.

The special session was called because the federal fiscal year ends today, said Banker, adding the grant monies would not be available to the authority beyond that deadline.



'Pride' on the line

Jose Castro of Newark prepares the field for tomorrow's Pride Bowl football game between Montclair State and Wagner at Schools Stadium in Newark

Photo by Jennifer A. Lawson

Newarker hunted in machinegun death

By FREDERICK W. BYRD

Newark Police were searching last night for a man accused of killing a 17-year-old and "spraying the area" with bullets from a machinegun after a dispute.

Police Director Claude Coleman identified the suspect as Ceasar Mendez of Ninth Street in Newark.

The director said the shooting victim, Orlando Corbett of Ninth Avenue, was standing with a group of men on Ninth Street, near Sixth Avenue, early yesterday morning when another man became involved in an argument with the group.

The suspect went inside a house, then returned with a rust-colored travel bag.

"He pulled out an Uzi semi-automatic, pointed it at the

group but it apparently misfired

"The young men began running off in different directions. But at this point he apparently unjammed the gun and sprayed the area with bullets," the director added.

Corbett was struck several times and he was pronounced dead on the scene soon afterward.

"When police responded, the suspect's apartment was empty," the director added.

He said the arrest warrant charges him with homicide and with possession of the weapon.

The case is being investigated by Newark Detective Carmine DeMaio and Essex County Detective Jack Murray. Director Coleman said anyone with information should call the Newark homicide squad noting that information would be kept confidential.

Teen injured by train in Bloomfield

By JERRY THOMAS

A Bloomfield teenager was hospitalized in stable condition last night, a day after police said he was struck by a train while drinking with friends on railroad tracks.

Derek Wingate, 19, of Patton Drive, was found Wednesday about 11 p.m. lying in a grassy area several feet from railroad tracks off John F. Kennedy Drive in Bloomfield, NJ Transit Police said.

Wingate was taken to Newark's University Hospital suffering from multiple limb fractures and cuts to the face and chest, said transit officials who theorized he was "brushed" but not "run over" by the train.

"They were drinking on the tracks," said Sgt. Alfonso Imperiale, who added police did not know if the group knew they were on active tracks.

Tracy Munford, a spokeswoman for the rail agency, said, "Some of the young people were sitting on the Boonton Line track," which runs from Dover to Hoboken. She said the train was delayed 32 minutes, but ridership at the time was "light." No other trains were affected she added.

Imperiale said Wingate and two other Bloomfield teenagers, Richard Huhn, 18, of Willet Street and Shawn Quimby, 19, of Davey Street were charged with trespassing and as minors in possession of alcohol. Huhn and Quimby, he said, were taken to Bloomfield police headquarters and later released, pending court hearings.

Michael Gabriele, 21, of VanWinkle Street, Bloomfield, and Mark Lynch, 20, of Harrison Street, Belleville, were charged with trespassing.

A lot of people find the railroad a place to hang out, but unfortunately, it is not," said Munford, who noted that the agency has a safety awareness program warning people to stay off the tracks.

State tries to fix rift in Orange police force

By DIANE CURCIO

The state Attorney General's Office is trying to mediate the problems between Orange Police Chief Robert Sarge and the city's new police director, Charles C. Cobbett.

The two lawmen's attorneys yesterday told Superior Court Judge Paul B. Thompson they have been contacted by Deputy Attorney General Carl Wyhopen and would agree to meet with him.

Sarge brought the city to court last week, alleging Cobbett was usurping his authority. Thompson imposed temporary restraints upon the city, preventing Cobbett or Mayor Robert Brown from exerting any "political interference" in the 85-officer department.

The city's attorney, Robert Westreich, sought to clarify the judge's order yesterday. Thompson said the chief is in charge of the day-to-day operation and the director should concern himself with policy, budgets and dealing with the media.

In Sarge's complaint he questioned Cobbett's authority to appoint a confidential aide, Sgt. Chester Penta, who is president of the superior officers' association.

But the judge said the order did not give Sarge the right to remove Penta from the position. "What good is a confidential aide if somebody else appoints him?" Thompson asked rhetorically.

Moreover, the judge indicated to Westreich the court order does not bar the city from enforcing a seniority policy in the patrol division.

Penta, and John DeRosa, president of the Orange Policemen's Benevolent Association Local 89, said the seniority policy enacted by Cobbett has been a great boost to the department morale.

Under the policy, the chief assigned whomever he wants to the patrol division but the officers decide what shifts they work, according to seniority.

A full hearing on the complaint filed by Sarge is scheduled for Oct. 13 before Thompson.

7 youths nabbed in Seton attacks

Seven youths were arrested yesterday afternoon for attacking a group of Seton Hall Preparatory School students on a platform of the Highland Avenue train station in Orange, NJ Transit Police said.

A detective assigned to NJ Transit's anti-crime unit was injured when punched in the face by one of the juveniles as the unit interceded in the 3:15 p.m. altercation involving about 40 people, said Sgt. Alfonso Imperiale.

The unit was assigned to the Scotland Road rail station following days of complaints from the West Orange prep

school students of assaults and threats by youths from the surrounding neighborhood, Imperiale said. Imperiale said none of the youths was injured in yesterday's aborted brawl.

Those arrested, all from Orange, were charged with offenses including aggravated assault, rioting and trespassing, Imperiale said. They were all released in the custody of their parents.

The sergeant said he did not know what triggered the friction between the two groups and added transit police will continue monitoring the train platform.

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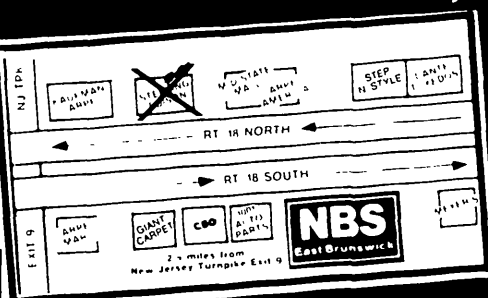
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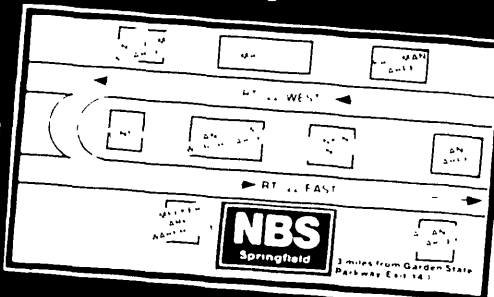
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