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Traffic, parking and education were the main concerns expressed in a lightly attended community meeting hosted for residents of Montclair's Third Ward by its representative on the township council, Councilor Sean Spiller. The meeting took place at the Montclair Public Library on November 24.

Montclair Police Officer Christopher Barnes helped field questions from residents concerned about needs for four-way stop zones at the intersections of South Fullerton Avenue and Union Street and Clinton Avenue and Union Street, citing the difficulty of navigating the former intersection and two accidents at the latter in a six-week period. Officer Barnes said that the police department's traffic bureau will ordinarily survey an intersection to look for violations and consider accident statistics. Councilor Spiller added that such concerns could be forwarded to Township Engineer Kim Craft to study it, with the Traffic and Parking Advisory Committee also studying the matter and weighing the various recommendations from the traffic bureau and Craft's office, with the findings to be decided by the council.



Montclair Third Ward Councilor Sean Spiller at his November 24 community meeting at the Montclair Public Library

"The challenge of it is that, probably if you asked most residents," Councilor Spiller said, they want stop signs on their streets." He said there's always a desire for traffic-calming initiatives in different parts of town, but where to pursue such initiatives came down to what the township decided based on the data. The council, he added, defers to the findings and can't put stop signs everywhere. Officer Barnes, for his part, said that people could contact Police Sgt. Stephanie Egnizzo in the traffic bureau with any concerns about traffic issues, and he added that the best way to campaign for stop signs was by petition.

"The squeaky wheel always gets the grease," he said.

Councilor Spiller also turned to parking issues, saying that there needed to be a broad parking plan that quantifies what Montclair has in terms of paid parking throughout town, where to strategically place meters, and how to incentivize more parking at decks to free up more spaces along the streets in commercial areas. He said that Acting Township Manager Tim Stafford, who appeared at the community meeting, was committed to look at all that and "really get a handle" on the issue.

A Union Street resident commented that there was overnight parking allowed on some streets and restricted hours on other streets, but there was no signage indicating one set time when people cannot park, which impeded municipal services, such as street cleaning, from being delivered on a broad level. He thought it would be a good idea to have such signs consistent with permits. Stafford said he would look into it as part of the overall parking study, while Councilor Spiller said the council was trying to make such information on hanging permits in cars. Stafford added he had just come from a meeting where people actually complained that Montclair had too many signs. He encouraged residents to forward their own suggestions to Montclair Parking Utility Finance Manager Tina Iordamlis.

One woman also brought up the new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)

tests being implemented by the Montclair School District. She said that she was skeptical of the PARCC tests narrowing the achievement gap between more affluent students and poorer ones when research showed family incomes were tied to test scores, and she also voiced concerns about the lack of sufficient computer equipment in some of the schools to administer the PARCC tests and the cumbersome essays involved. She felt that the test itself had not been given sufficient testing. Given that some jurisdictions are opting out of the PARCC tests, she felt that the Montclair district hasn't been forthcoming about the way it is presenting the information about PARCC.

Councilor Spiller, himself a teacher, noted that the request was made that the district use the paper-and-pencil version of the PARCC, which he understood was ongoing, and that the school board was the best place to address such concerns. He was quick to add, however, that he shared such concerns.

"I don't think another test is going to help us identify those who are having difficulty and those who are achieving at a high level," he said. He did say that he supported efforts to find ways to provide resources that help families and students to overcome the achievement gap, most notably trying to expand pre-kindergarten education to all Montclair children.

Councilor Spiller took advantage of the meeting to update constituents on the various issues that the council had addressed lately. He said that negotiations to purchase the Social Security Administration building were still ongoing, with the township presenting appraisals to the federal government without getting any in return, but he remained hopeful that the township could buy it at a reasonable cost. He added that Mayor Robert Jackson was still interested in redeveloping the property as a community center. Councilor Spiller also updated residents on the water issue, explaining that the township was using a combination of increased rates and conservation efforts to both raise more revenue to replace aging water infrastructure and lessen Montclair's water deficit. A decision on whether to buy or lease into the Wanaque South Reservoir or develop the Nishuane Well has not yet been made.

On the animal shelter, Councilor Spiller said that the council quickly authorized \$40,000 in repairs and added to the volunteer coordinator position as a budget item.

At the start of the meeting Officer Barnes, as officer for the Third Ward, told constituents he could easily be reached for non-emergent matters. He also announced that a new community policing command vehicle had arrived at the police department on Friday and as in the process of being outfitted. He said it would be like a "mobile office" that would be in use throughout the township.