

Wednesday, December 24, 1997

# CITY/ TOWNS

## City, university seeking land near Long Lane

By MANON L. MIRABELLI

Middletown Press Staff

MIDDLETOWN — As enrollment in the city's high school continues to rise, the superintendent is eyeing property across from Long Lane School for a future second high school that one day would have Wesleyan University for a neighbor.

While member of Residents Against Institutional Dumping, or RAID, vehemently oppose Wesleyan's bid to buy the Long Lane property, Supt. of Schools David H. Larson said he would like to see the university buy the neighboring land that may one day be the site of a second high school. Wesleyan has been negotiating with the state to buy the 90-acre parcel, for which the state is seeking \$30 million to \$40 million. Neither party has said what Wesleyan has offered.

Under pressure from RAID, the Common Council voted to support Wesleyan's offer, but only if the state agrees to move Long Lane out of Middletown instead of the proposed move onto Connecticut Valley Hospital's 1,100-acre campus. State officials say they will not approve the sale without support from the city.

With 930 students enrolled in Middletown High School, though, Larson said the school will reach its 1,100-student capacity by 2003, if enrollment projections

hold true. That would make the need for a second high school imminent. A natural site for a new school, he said, would be the site across from Long Lane that backs up to Shiloh Baptist Church. Having Wesleyan for a neighbor would also strengthen ties between the public school system and the university.

Because the property must be obtained from the state, Larson said, city officials need to start work on the acquisition. While any plans now are preliminary, state legislators are aware of Middletown's interest in the land.

"We have our legislative delegation tang a look at trying to get the property for us," Larson said. "Our intent is to have the state turn the land over to the city through a special act of the legislature."

While Larson is hoping to build a stronger relationship with Wesleyan as a neighbor to a future high school, calling it "an absolute natural," the university needs to strike a deal with the state within the next few months or the state will rebuild Long Lane as a high-security facility for boys at its current site, a state official said.

Marc Ryan, budget adviser to Gov. John G. Rowland, also said the state would not like to see the sale to Wesleyan move forward "if it would tear the community apart."

## MANSION OF GLORY

City signs contract to restore Col. Wadsworth's former home

By WILLIAM WEIR

Middletown Press Staff

MIDDLETOWN — With the contract signed Tuesday, construction on the restoration of the Wadsworth mansion is expected to begin in mid-January.

City officials and the principals of Kronenberger & Sons Restoration signed the contract for the restoration of the 9,000-square-foot mansion off of Wadsworth Street and Laurel Grove Road.

When it's done, the city-owned mansion, which Col. Clarence S. Wadsworth built in 1917, will be used for weddings, banquets and other events. There will also be commercial space available on the second floor for one or more businesses.

Mayor Dominique Thornton said she was looking forward to seeing the project completed during her administration, but noted that it's the result of several previous administrations' efforts.

"I think it shows that a project like this takes the perseverance of many to come to fruition," she said. "I think it's going to be a benefit for many."

Joyce Kirkpatrick, chairwoman of the Wadsworth Mansion Building Committee, said she's pleased the project is getting under way. She mentioned that a local architect recently told her the mansion is "the last great building from this



Laura Stroebel/Middletown Press Staff

Architects Brian Kronenberger, left, Tom Kronenberger Jr. and Tom Kronenberger Sr., and Wadsworth Mansion Building Committee Chairwoman Joyce Kirkpatrick present Mayor Dominique Thornton a drawing of the mansion project Tuesday.

century [in Middletown] to be preserved."

Although the building's interior is in serious need of repair after years of neglect, Brian Kronenberger said he's looking forward to beginning the project.

"Obviously, it needs a lot of work," he said. "We're really excited about restoring the building."

He said construction should begin the middle of next month and be completed by June 1999.

The city officially began the project after voters approved

the \$3.8 million plan in a referendum last year.

Committee members have said the project is meant to maintain the spirit of the mansion, while making it practical for modern use. The building was last used by the Religious of Our Lady of Cenacle as a convent and retreat.

Kronenberger said his company is already working on a similar project in the restoration of a building in Waterford. "The Wadsworth mansion is in a little more disrepair, but the architecture is simpler," he said.

## Holiday closings

State and federal government offices, financial markets and banks will be closed Thursday in observance of Christmas. Following is a look at holiday hours and closings for some area towns:

### Cromwell

Schools are closed through the beginning of the year.

Town Hall is open all day today but will be closed Thursday and Friday.

The Shunpike Road transfer station will be closed on Saturday. It will resume its normal hours of 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 30, with the facility closing for lunch between noon and 12:30 p.m. daily.

The Cromwell Belden Public Library will be open until 4 p.m. today, closed Thursday and Friday, and open Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

### Durham

Town Hall will close at noon today won't re-open until Monday.

The Durham-Middlefield Transfer Station will be open Friday from 8 a.m. to 3:45 p.m., and Saturday from 8 a.m. to 3:45 p.m.

### East Hampton

Schools are closed through Jan. 5.

Town Hall will close for the Christmas holiday today at 12:30 p.m. It will remain closed Thursday and Friday, and re-open for regular business on Monday at 8 a.m.

Probate Court is closed today and Thursday. Regular hours