

TOMS RIVER

Township man pleads guilty to cocaine possession; authorities say he's part of significant distribution ring. 2

REGION

GOP candidates spar ahead of primary. 4



CSI: RED BANK

Catholic high school students examine evidence in forensic science class. OUR TOWNS/2



NEW HOME FOR NISSAN

Pine Belt Nissan of Keyport has moved into a \$6 million facility off Route 36. BUSINESS/5

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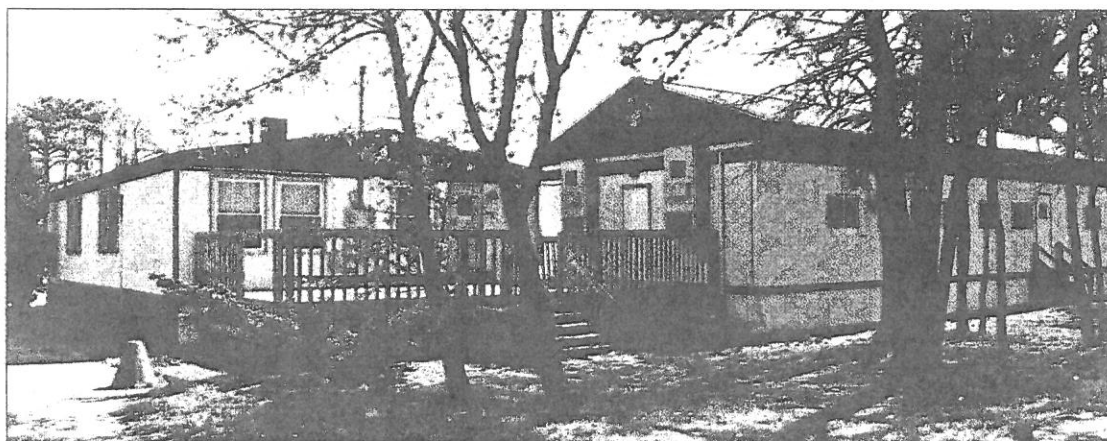
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LOCAL NEWS

SECTION B



In recent times, St. Thomas Christian Academy's budget continued to show a deficit, but an official said the school (above) would have enough money to pay the bills through the remainder of the school year. (STAFF PHOTOS: MICHAEL SYPNIEWSKI)

With too few students, school's out

St. Thomas Christian plans to close grades 1 through 8

By KEITH RUSCITTI
TOMS RIVER BUREAU

BRICK — St. Thomas Christian Academy's board of trustees has decided to eliminate its first-through eighth-grade curriculum when the school year concludes in June.

However, academy officials said the school's pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs would continue.

Citing decreasing enrollment as the primary factor, Robert Sanger, the academy's executive director, said the administration was trying until this week to find a way to continue its grade-school curriculum.

"There was absolutely no discussion about that lawsuit. This was strictly a business matter."

— Harold McAvooy, vice president of school's board of trustees

"We were still trying to figure out a way to continue up until (Monday)," Sanger said. "It just wasn't feasible due to the enrollment being lower than we expected."

The academy gained notoriety in November 2005, when it, along with the St. Thomas Lutheran Church and its parent organization

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, were named in a lawsuit alleging that a former pastor of the church, the Rev. Robert L. Slegel, molested children between 1967 and 1985.

There are 21 plaintiffs involved in the lawsuit which is still pending, according to Toms River attorney Robert R. Fuggi Jr., who filed the suit that seeks \$5 million in damages for each plaintiff.

Slegel resigned in 1993 and died in 2006. His widow, Cynthia Slegel, who was once principal of the academy, and the Rev. John M. Elstad, a onetime associate pastor of the

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Academy officials said the doors to the school's prekindergarten and kindergarten programs would remain open.

ANOTHER FOUR COMPLAIN

More charges are filed against embattled mayor

By CHELSEA MICHELS
TOMS RIVER BUREAU

BEACHWOOD — Complaints about Mayor Ronald W. Jones Jr. continue to pile up, as four more harassment charges were filed recently against him.

Between April 11 and 15, two residents filed their first charges against Jones, as did two others who were adding to previous charges they had filed against him.

Borough Councilwoman Katina L. Clark, 34, of 420 Tiller Ave., who ran for election with Jones in November, filed charges April 14, claiming Jones left inappropriate text messages, followed Clark in his car, drove past Clark's house at all hours, called Clark names and spoke inappropriately about her to other people, according to documents filed in Beachwood Municipal Court.

"I trust the judicial system will handle this matter," Clark said. "I choose not to comment at this time because I fear for the safety of my family."

Jones' attorney, Ron A. Venturi, who is out of town, said this week that he could not comment on his client's behalf until he returned and reviewed the charges.

Jones referred all questions to Venturi.

Robert DiBella, 41, and Joel Balazinski Sr., 46, both of 1008 Halliard Ave., filed complaints against Jones on April 7



Ronald W. Jones Jr.

BEHIND THE NEWS

Two borough residents filed charges against Mayor Ronald W. Jones Jr. in Beachwood Municipal Court, claiming a text message he sent before an April Borough Council meeting was intended to create a public alarm, according to court documents. Robert DiBella, 41, of Joel Balazinski Sr., 46, both of 1008 Halliard Ave., filed complaint against Jones on April 7 accusing him of disorderly conduct, false public alarm, harassment and disrupting a public meeting. Jones said the charges are baseless with no probable cause, adding that he had sent an e-mail, not a text message.

accusing him of disorderly conduct, false public alarm, harassment and disrupting a public meeting.

On April 15, Balaz

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Two towns setting the concrete water rate hike

Warstown man ID'