

# New Jersey Herald

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Tuesday



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# County takes aim at immigrant law

By **BILL WICHERT**  
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The all-Republican Sussex County freeholders board is taking aim at a Democratic governor. Not Jon Corzine, but New York's Eliot Spitzer.

While Spitzer's plan to issue driver's licenses to illegal immigrants has drawn criticism across the country and become a hot topic in the presidential primary race, the county freeholders have added their own voice to the mix, expressing their own opposition to the plan with a letter sent to the governor last week.

"I don't think you should reward illegal residents by giving them driver's licenses," County Freeholder Gary Chiusano said.

With the Sussex towns of Montague,

**The freeholders are protesting New York's plan to issue driver's licenses to illegal immigrants. They're concerned it could affect Sussex County's borders areas.**

Wantage and Vernon adjoining New York State, Spitzer's plan "would jeopardize public safety and security for our residents," according to the freeholders' letter.

"I don't think it's a direct threat to Wantage," said County Freeholder Hal Wirths, who first raised the issue on the freeholders board. "I think it's a threat to national security overall."

If an illegal immigrant is involved in a car accident in Sussex County, their medical

care at local hospitals would be picked up by taxpayer dollars, Wirths said. Also, if an illegal immigrant is arrested and sent to the county jail, the county would have to pay for their medical care as long as they remain a county inmate, Wirths said.

"I think it sends the wrong message," he said. "It's condoning illegal immigration."

Working with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Spitzer is looking to offer three types of licenses — a driver's

license to cross the New York-Canadian border; a federally-approved license to travel by plane; and a non-federally-approved license for driving purposes.

Spitzer's proposal has generated a politically charged debate that has reverberated in the presidential campaign. He said Friday he was standing by the plan for now, but he suggested he might consider backing off if he could not build enthusiasm for it. The New York Times and other New York newspapers reported in Saturday's editions.

"I don't think there's ever been an executive, a president, a governor who hasn't put out ideas that at the end of the day there isn't support, and so things don't work out,"

See **IMMIGRANTS**, Page A6

## WANTAGE TOWNSHIP: LAKE NEEPAULIN DAM



A section of Lake Neepaulin dam structure shows the wear of age.

# Dangerous dam



Photos by Amy Paterson/New Jersey Herald

Geese land on Lake Neepaulin last week. The lake was the subject of a special meeting between residents and the township, examining how to pay for necessary repairs.

# Wantage dam repairs could cost up to \$1M

By **ROBERTA FUGATE**  
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Given the deterioration of the Lake Neepaulin Dam, rainfall amounts of 6 inches could result in the breach of the dam and the emptying of the lake.

"God forbid the dam is breached and someone is killed or property is destroyed," said Friends of Lake Neepaulin member Betsy Jable. "I don't want to spend any more money than I have to either but the long-term benefits will be greater than what we are spending."

More than 50 people attended a special meeting of the mayor and commit-

tee members held last night at the Wantage School to consider whether the township should co-sign a loan to provide funds for the repair and rehabilitation of the Lake Neepaulin Dam.

Friends of Lake Neepaulin submitted the request for the township to co-sign a loan application with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection for a long-term, low-interest loan.

The actual costs of repairs for the dam will be determined once the township receives the results of an October DEP inspection. Current estimates for the repairs range from \$750,000 to \$1

**Nightmare scenario**  
Rainfall of 6 inches in a 24-hour period could result in the breach of the dam and the emptying of the lake.

million.  
The Neepaulin Dam, built in 1927, is in need of repairs in order to meet the standards put forth in the state Safe Dam Act.

The organization fears if they do not comply with the New Jersey Safe Dam Act, the DEP may mandate that the lake be drained.

The Safe Dam Act states that a reservoir or dam can be drawn off in whole or in part if it is not sufficiently strong enough to resist the pressure of water on it or if there is reasonable cause to believe that danger to life or property may be anticipated.

Wantage administrator James Doherty said there will be a number of negative impacts if Lake Neepaulin is

See **WANTAGE**, Page A6

# Once blocked, ecstasy drug on rise

By **TOM HOWELL JR.**  
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NEWTON — Ecstasy was the scourge of teen dance "raves" in 2000, before a homeland security border crackdown pinched the drug's availability and use declined.

But a massive ecstasy bust in northern New Jersey last week and anecdotal evidence of increased use in Sussex County suggest the party pill is on an upswing, according to a Newton-based counselor.

"We've definitely been hearing more about it in the last year," said Becky Carlson, a director with the

Center for Prevention and Counseling on Spring Street. "It's not cause for alarm, but it's cause for concern."

On Thursday, the federal Drug Enforcement Administration announced the completion of the largest seizure of ecstasy in New Jersey history.

The bust included 122 pounds of the drug — officially known as MDMA — accompanied by 150 pounds of marijuana, three assault rifles, three semiautomatic handguns, swords, fighting knives and about \$120,000 in U.S. currency.

Five men, including the ring's Lebanese-born leader, were

arrested in an investigation that spanned Somerset, Passaic and Hudson counties.

Ecstasy is still a "red flag" that rears its head in Sussex County crime reports, usually through the seizure of several pills during a traffic stop, according to police.

"We hear through counselors that it's around," Carlson said. "It's not as big as in 2000 and 2001, because 9-11 made it harder to get (the drug) into the country."

Outside of small domestic laboratories, most of the ecstasy supply comes from Belgium, the Netherlands and Canada via body carriers, by air/sea cargo, luggage,

and by express mail, according to the DEA.

Word of a slight ecstasy spike in Sussex County prompted Carlson to place the topic back into her "Project Alert" community programs.

"You have to keep the prevention part out there," Carlson said.

Nationwide statistics on the drug's use reflect local anecdotal data.

Research shows 9.2 percent of 12th graders had used ecstasy in 2001, dipping to 3 percent in 2005 and rising slightly to 4.1 percent in 2006, according to Monitoring the Future 2006, a national survey of

secondary school students.

"Clearly the very substantial decline in ecstasy use appears to be over," the report concludes.

Used to promote euphoria and reduce inhibitions, ecstasy can damage neurons, increase heart rate and risk of seizure and damage serotonin levels that regulate mood, appetite, pain, learning and memory, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

The best way to stem an ecstasy revival is to never become too comfortable, Carlson said.

"It's science-based," she said. "As the perception of harm goes up, use goes down."