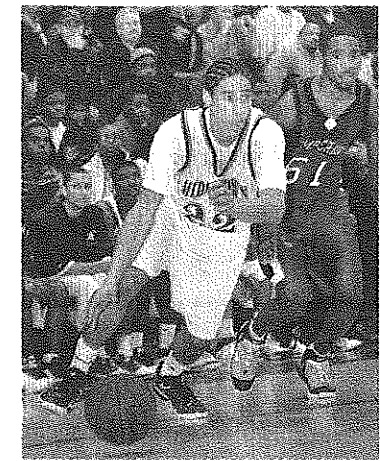


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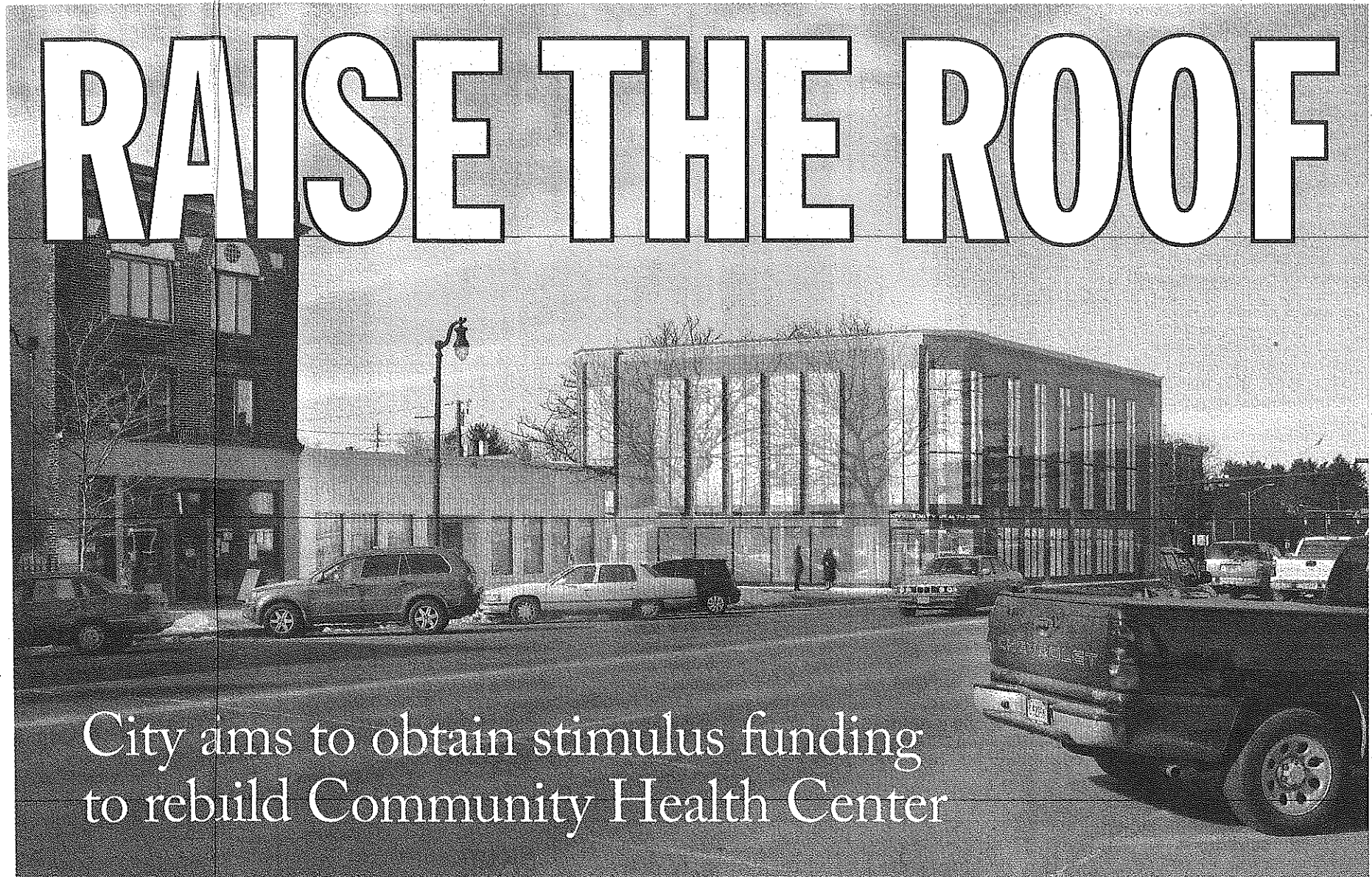


BASKETBALL

MHS season over after upset loss, 53-51

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RAISE THE ROOF



City aims to obtain stimulus funding to rebuild Community Health Center

Courtesy of Robert Olson + Associates
An artist's rendering shows what the new three-story Community Health Center building on the corner of Grand and Main streets would look like. The 40,000-square-foot building would contain an 8,000-square-foot green roof on which plantings could be made, which would keep temperatures inside better regulated. See Page 3.

City hopes to garner stimulus funds to rebuild Community Health Center

By SLOAN BREWSTER
PRESS STAFF

MIDDLETOWN — Community Health Center may soon have a new face, and in the process, the city could garner funds for the project from the \$787 million federal stimulus package.

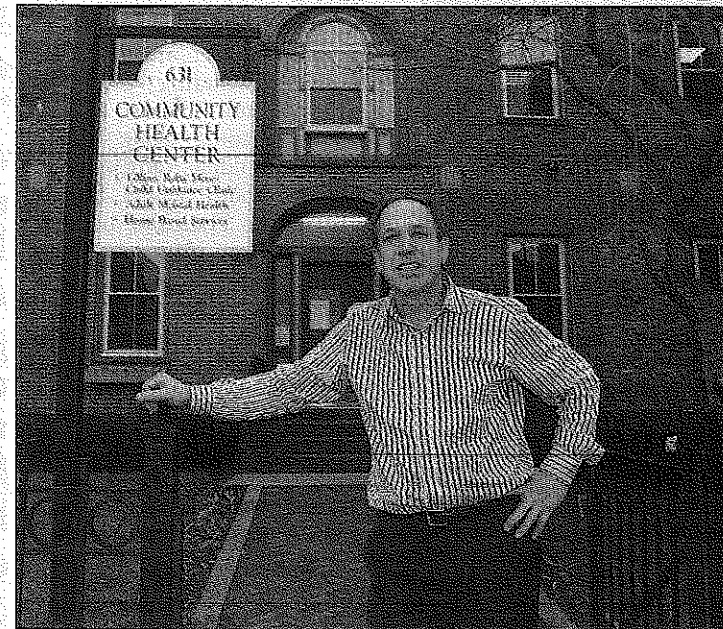
The project for a new health center was on a list of eight local ideas Mayor Sebastian N. Giuliano sent to Gov. M. Jodi Rell for consideration for the federal funds.

Monday at the economic development commission meeting, Mark Masselli, Community Health Center president and CEO, presented a plan three years in the making for a new three-story building on the corner of Grand and Main streets.

Masselli hopes to rush the plan through city commissions in order to get the necessary approvals to render the project shovel-ready so it may meet qualifications for stimulus funds in time for the state's deadline.

Masselli needed to pass the scrutiny of the economic development commission so the commission could complete the process of acquiring Requests for Proposals in time for the planning and zoning commission meeting in April.

The design includes innovative ideas, which William Warner, director of planning and conservation, said he hopes will make it more appealing to Rell when she reviews the 2,000 projects



Catherine Avalone | The Middletown Press

Mark Masselli, president and CEO of the Community Health Center, at 631 Main St., Middletown, is one of the original founders. The Community Health Center started as a free clinic in 1972 and currently serves 70,000 people in 11 cities in the state.

municipalities have sent to her.

"I'm sure she's looking for very unique projects," Warner told members of the commission, after reading portions of a letter from the governor outlining requirements for approval for stimulus funds.

The 40,000-square-foot building would contain an 8,000 square foot roof on which plantings could be made, which would keep temperatures inside better regulated, Masselli told the commission.

"We think that would be a big showcase," he said. "It obviously has a big impact on heating and

cooling."

In addition, the building would free space the center currently uses on Main Street for retail and may also free the spot — also on Main — where St. Vincent DePaul Place is now located, as Masselli hopes to move the soup kitchen to the new building.

"It is intended really to open up a lot of retail on Main Street," Masselli said of the plan.

The new building would consolidate medical, dental and behavioral health services the center offers, Masselli said. It will

also expand health care services offered to 8,000 local patients the center currently serves.

Common council and commission member David Bauer was apprehensive about the project. He questioned whether it was the right thing to put at a gateway to the city and said he was opposed to pushing the plan through commissions too quickly.

"What we have at the local level is the politics of urgency when we can only give 30 days for an RFP," Bauer said. "I think the date set is way too abrupt, too aggressive, it's just going to add to the steam roller of the project."

Other commission members disagreed with his concerns.

"If we do it aggressively, 30 days is enough," Joseph Bibisi said.

Warner explained there was a reason to move so quickly.

"And the reality is, if you want to get stimulus funds from the governor, this is it," Warner said.

In the end, the commission approved the plan to solicit RFPs; Bauer was the only member opposed to the motion.

"It's a revelation to see now that [Masselli] has what he has now and he's providing services for 8,000 city residents," Bibisi said. "He should be applauded."

With several other offices in Connecticut, the center serves 70,000 patients statewide.

Masselli will also attend the planning and zoning commission meeting tonight at 7 p.m. in the council chambers at City Hall.