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# THE TIMES

## Scotch Plains - Fanwood

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FIFTY CENTS



TAKING OFF WITH THE EGGS?...Young boys enjoy a turn aboard a Fanwood Fire Department truck, which was displayed outside at the Annual Fanwood Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday morning.

## 10 Percent Tax Increase Will Hit Residents in SP

By FRED ROSSI  
Specially Written for The Times

Scotch Plains property taxpayers will face a five-point increase in the municipal government portion of their property tax bill if the township's 2002 budget is approved in May. This will be in addition to the increase proposed by the BOE and the yet unknown increase from the county, which will probably result in a ten percent total tax increase to the residents of Scotch Plains.

At its regular meeting next Tuesday, the Township Council will formally introduce its \$18 million spending plan, one that has been prepared by township officials in recent weeks in an effort to avert a property tax hike that could have been as high as eight points.

While state assistance to municipalities won't be cut this year, the failure by the state government to enact pending legislation could still potentially add two more points to the local tax bill. The legislation,

which was passed by the State Assembly by a 77-0 margin and is currently under consideration in the State Senate, would allow towns to spread the funding of supplemental health insurance over several years instead of one year.

Township Manager Thomas E. Atkins told the Township Council at its conference meeting on Tuesday night that a Senate vote on the legislation will certainly occur before the public hearing and Council vote on the township budget on May 14.

In other financial matters, Mr.

Atkins informed the Council that Suplee, Clooney & Co., the township auditors, were finishing the annual audit and that a report should be in the Council members' hands next week. It was 11 months ago that the auditors began discovering problems in some township accounts that led to the arrest of former Township Treasurer William Polidore and his subsequent guilty plea to embezzling more than \$300,000 in township funds. Mr. Atkins praised township personnel, and singled out Finance

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## Borough Council Shares Views on Convention To Address Tax Relief

By KIMBERLY MERZ  
Specially Written for The Times

A correspondence from the New Jersey State League of Municipalities, concerning a proposal to call for a Constitutional Convention for the purpose of addressing property tax relief, sparked much debate during Tuesday's agenda meeting of the Fanwood Borough Council.

In addition, no answers are in sight concerning the opening of the skate park at LaGrande Park.

A document from the state League of Municipalities, explaining its position in supporting a Constitutional Convention states, "The heavy property tax burden in New Jersey hurts our state and impairs the ability of our local officials to govern effectively and to provide necessary governmental services...."

"Only a Convention, such as that envisioned in S-478 and A-540, could move reform beyond the political logjam that inevitably blocks property tax reform in the legislature...The Constitutional Convention process provides a vehicle that can actually deliver the promise of relief to the people of our state."

The document also lists recommendations for criteria, which the

delegates must meet, such as "providing alternatives, which lessen the local government dependence on property taxes; and provide alternative means, 'including possible increases in other taxes,' for funding local services."

Borough Council President Joel Whitaker said that he is opposed to the proposal. However, he later stated that he would be in favor of a convention that dealt with issues beyond just property tax relief.

"This is an improvement over what they did last year. This one makes it clear that the result will be an increase in taxes, versus last year, (when) they hinted at it. We actually have legislators who want abrogate their responsibility and create a constitutional convention so they can raise taxes, without having to have their fingerprints all over it," Mr. Whitaker remarked.

Councilwoman Katherine Mitchell said that she would like to let the voters decide.

"The people are smart enough to see through it," she commented.

Councilman Michael Brennan said that he is "all for" anything that is going to address the issue of property tax reform.

"I don't see any bright ideas coming up, besides this," Mr. Brennan stated.

"I will make one prediction, if this occurs and they come back, one of the things that will disappear from the state budget is municipal aid, which constitutes about 20 percent of Fanwood's budget," Councilman Whitaker responded.

Councilman Thomas Ryan said that he is all for tax reform, but does not support having a Constitutional Convention, with elected delegates, when there is already a Legislature made up of elected delegates.

"I think a property tax reform movement, in itself, is a good idea, but the only way to make it work is to change expenditures," said Mr. Ryan.

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## Neighbors Voice Concerns Over Proposed Fanwood Subdivision on Pleasant Avenue

By SUZETTE F. STALKER  
Specially Written for The Times

A hearing before the Fanwood Planning Board on a proposed Pleasant Avenue subdivision continued last week, as concerned neighbors were given their turn to ask questions regarding the project.

Toby Two Realty, Co., L.L.C., the South Plainfield-based contract purchaser for 76/80 Pleasant Avenue, is seeking the board's nod to subdivide the single, 100-foot-wide lot into two 50-foot lots. The property, currently occupied by a single-family home, is located in an R-75 zone.

Pending approval of its application, Toby Two Realty plans to build a second, two-story home on the new lot. The applicant's plans also call for an existing, detached, two-car garage to be replaced by a one-car garage and the removal of asphalt areas, in order to minimize the overall increase in impervious surface coverage.

The company's bid involves seven variances, addressing minimum lot size, minimum lot width, minimum side yard setbacks and maximum improvement coverage.

The hearing on the appeal began February 27, at which time several witnesses testified on behalf of the applicant. Because the meeting ran late, the appeal was extended to March 27. It will be continued again at the board's regular session on Wednesday, April 24, at 8 p.m., when members of the public will be invited to give testimony.

Although Toby Two's principals and their representatives maintain

the subdivision will be a plus for the area, neighbors have voiced concerns about storm water management, quality of life and the aesthetic impact of the additional development.

Helene Miale of 84 Pleasant Avenue questioned Donald Sisto, a principal of Toby Two, last week as to whether he had studied the "scope and character" of the neighborhood, including lot sizes, average home measurements and the number of attached versus detached garages.

Replying that he had studied the area, Mr. Sisto said he found the neighborhood included both 50-foot by 100-foot and 75-foot by 100-foot lots, and reflected a variety of architectural styles, including split-levels, ranches and Cape Cods. He determined the garage models were split about 50-50 between attached

and detached.

In response to her inquiry as to whether he had spoken to any neighbors about the subdivision proposal, Mr. Sisto answered, "only you."

Judy Raub of 170 Martine Avenue asked Mr. Sisto whether his company had included adequate provisions for drainage in the plan for the property. Neighbors have been concerned the subdivision will increase the flow of storm water into Forest Road Park.

If the subdivision is approved, Mr. Sisto said each of the two lots would be equipped with a subterranean drywell to contain water runoff. "I'd like to improve what's there, not make it worse," the applicant remarked.

Attorney Frank Farrell, of the

Westfield law firm of Gutterman Wolkstein & Klinger, representing another neighbor opposed to the subdivision, last week questioned witnesses for Toby Two on various aspects of the project.

Craig Stires of Stires Associates in Somerville, the applicant's project engineer, confirmed that overall impervious surface coverage would increase by only 7 percent as a result of the subdivision.

Mr. Farrell also questioned William Hamilton, a licensed professional planner with Keller & Kirkpatrick of Parsippany, as to whether the proposal adequately reflected the goals of Fanwood's zoning ordinance.

Mr. Hamilton, who was among the

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## Freeholder Holmes Urges Board to Shelve Vote on Solid Waste Management Program

By FRED ROSSI  
Specially Written for The Times

After a lengthy public hearing, the Union County Freeholders, still needing some questions answered, delayed a vote on an ordinance that would include Safety-Kleen Systems, Inc. in the county's solid waste management plan.

Safety-Kleen operates a solid waste management service in Linden and is requesting county permission to

handle certain types of other non-hazardous industrial wastes, from pharmaceuticals to small business waste, at its facility.

At last Wednesday's meeting, Freeholder Chester Holmes asked Safety-Kleen representatives repeatedly about the inclusion of certain pharmaceuticals at the site, whether those materials' medical usefulness would have expired when they arrived in Linden and whether there was a pos-

sibility that some of the materials could potentially end up at the county's incinerator in Rahway.

Garfield Robertson, Facility Manager of the Safety-Kleen facility, failed to, in Freeholder Holmes' estimation, provide concrete answers to his questions.

As a result, Mr. Holmes, saying he was not satisfied with the responses, asked his colleagues to put off a final vote on authorizing Safety-Kleen to

expand its waste management program.

Before the Freeholders take a vote, sometime in late April or May, Freeholder Holmes plans to send a letter containing his concerns to Safety-Kleen, hoping to receive a more detailed response.

In other business, the Freeholder Board appointed Jerome Feer and Rosemary Millet, both of Westfield,

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## Postal Service Examines Various Grievances Filed by SP Employees

By DEBORAH MADISON  
Specially Written for The Times

An investigation into allegations of mistreatment and harassment of postal employees at the Scotch Plains Post Office was conducted by the Postal Service on March 21 and 22.

Human Resources Director for the Eastern Region, Maureen Zapp, told *The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood* that as a direct result of articles published in *The Times* between January and February on the chronic problems plaguing the facility, her office launched the investigation to look into the allegations and the disparaging accounts of the prevailing climate.

As part of the investigation, a "climate assessment" survey, which was used to gather verbal responses to questions about the atmosphere at the facility, was administered to all of the postal workers who chose to participate.

Ms. Zapp told *The Times* that participation by the employees in the survey was completely voluntary and was totally anonymous. Approximately 90 percent of the employees participated.

"I was interested in finding out how many employees were unhappy. That was of great concern to me," Ms. Zapp stated.

According to Scotch Plains Postal Employee and Union President of the National Association of Letter Carriers, Branch No. 4102, Elizabeth Mulligan, an extraordinary number of grievances have been filed by Scotch Plains postal employees over the past two years, some of which alleged mistreatment and verbal abuse by their Supervisor Tom Thompson and Postmaster, James McDade.

Mr. McDade has been the Postmaster at this facility since November of 2000.

Ms. Zapp stated that although there have been an unusual number of grievances filed at this facility, more than from any other branch in the state, many of them were over minor disputes, such as hours and wages and were resolved locally.

Many of the grievances that were not resolved were filed by the same, few employees, added Postal Service Spokesperson for the Eastern Region, Diane Todd.

"Of the 451 grievances filed between 2000 and 2002, 73 percent were resolved locally between management and union officials at the facility," Ms. Zapp stated. She said that was a high rate of resolution, which did not come to her attention because they were resolved locally.

Of the remaining grievances, 48 were resolved by the Postal Service's Dispute Resolution Team and 34 of those were found to be in favor of management, Ms. Zapp reported. Additionally, 45 percent of those 48 grievances, were filed by three employees, she said.

Ms. Mulligan stated that in the past

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FIRE TRUCK FUN...Friends Mark Mital, 4, of Fanwood and Paige Crandall, 4, of Scotch Plains play a game of hide and seek aboard a Fanwood fire truck.

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CYAN YELLOW MAGENTA BLACK

## Postal Service Examines Grievances by SP Employees

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year, every single letter carrier had filed at least one grievance and in many cases, several. She also claimed that the Dispute Resolution Team was biased and usually found in favor of management.

"Once the team reaches a decision, no matter how biased, there is no recourse. It is considered resolved," Ms. Mulligan stated.

Ms. Zapp said that there were several avenues of resolution, which the union could avail themselves of, including bringing the grievances to her attention, which was not done.

Ms. Mulligan and several other Scotch Plains postal employees alleged that Postmaster McDade and Supervisor Thompson have repeatedly harassed postal workers, intimidating them with verbal abuse, threats of dismissal or penalizing them with suspensions for what they claim were unwarranted or minor violations.

Other grievances included allegations that supervisors intentionally mishandled workman's compensation or disability claims, transfer requests or requests for family leave. Additionally, several postal employees claimed that they have been repeatedly harassed by Mr. Thompson for filing grievances or for union activities.

The Scotch Plains facility employs approximately 63 postal workers including letter carriers, front desk clerks, sorters/handlers and supervisors.

Seven out of the 63 employees, including two union representatives have spoken with *The Times*, concurring that the atmosphere at the facility was very oppressive and "tense" due to the "disrespectful" way they were treated by the postmaster and Mr. Thompson.

Several postal employees told *The Times* that they believed most of these complaints were from a few disgruntled employees and a few employees said that they thought there was some validity to complaints on both the parts of management and the postal workers.

Ms. Zapp said that the results of the climate assessment survey indicated to her that on most questions regarding their treatment, more than 74 percent of the employees reported being treated with respect and dignity by their supervisors and postmaster.

Ms. Zapp maintained that a few employees were probably unhappy with Mr. McDade's methods of strictly applying the rules. She also maintained that due to the economy and the impact of e-mail, the amount of work for the post office has slowed down, nationwide, leaving some workers dissatisfied with fewer hours and less overtime.

According to Ms. Zapp, Mr. McDade has told her that on occasion he has had to ask the workforce to "quiet down and get back to work" for being so loud that they could be heard by customers in the lobby. She said that she doubted Mr. McDade would call them names or yell at them, as he has been accused of doing.

Several letter carriers reported that supervisors followed them on their routes, pressuring them to pick up their footpace and to deliver unreasonable amounts of mail in inadequate amounts of time, to avoid overtime.

"This puts undue pressure on the letter carriers to perform beyond reasonable expectations," Ms. Mulligan maintained.

"The supervisors get bonuses based on production rates and the carriers are penalized if they take a few extra minutes, even in bad weather," she added. One letter carrier pointed out that if you are hurrying at an unreasonable pace to avoid overtime, then you are not being careful to park correctly or cross the street safely, so you get penalized for either not being safe or for being too slow.

Ms. Zapp conceded that it was management's responsibility to insure that employees were performing their duties, keeping pace with previous workload expectations and following proper safety precautions.

"It is management's job to insure that employees are not purposely slowing down. Work-load expectations are covered in the National Agreement," Ms. Zapp stated.

She also confirmed that some employees are penalized for chronic absenteeism, but never for taking allotted family leave. She also stated that she is only aware of one grievance filed for a declined workman's compensation claim out of several.

Ms. Mulligan said that she recently launched a letter writing campaign and is encouraging the postal employees to write to their congressmen regarding the unreasonable atmosphere at the Scotch Plains facility.

"The only time the Postal Service conducts an investigation is when union leaders step up picketing, writing to congressmen or to the local papers. We are attempting to resolve this in the only way that we will be heard," she contended.

A letter carrier for 17 years, John Turnlington, told *The Times*, "Both sides need to be more flexible. Each side has some valid points and some valid grievances. Some of these accusations are magnified and distorted by both management and the union and some are unfairly arbitrated. Some of these grievances are unnecessary and could be resolved amicably if either side was willing to be reasonable. All of this back and forth retaliation creates a very negative atmosphere that makes coming to work a lot more stressful than it needs to be. Both sides need to be more professional in how they handle and treat each other in order to stop these conflicts from constantly escalating."

Ms. Zapp told *The Times* that she would be looking at the individual responses on the surveys over the next few weeks to better analyze the causes and solutions to the problems at the facility.

Ms. Todd declined to permit Mr. McDade or Mr. Thompson from commenting on the issues, stating, "We don't want to debate this in the media."

## FW Council

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"Lots of tax money in New Jersey is raised; we spend too much money, that's the problem," he continued. "A lot of it is coming down from Trenton, either through the Supreme Court or through our legislators, saying, 'oh, these are things you have to raise money for.'"

"I have to be honest with you, Mike," Councilman Ryan told Mr. Brennan. "I don't think it is going to be a luxury tax. You don't sell enough luxury goods in order to make money. I am all for reform, but it has to come from both sides of the ledger. If it only comes from one side of the ledger, it is pointless," Mr. Ryan said.

"I'm in support of having this on, because I think we should have a debate on it. I'll happily talk about it in public, but I don't support it unless they do something profound," he continued.

Further discussion with the Fanwood Recreation Commission about the opening of the skate park has yielded no concrete results, officials said.

According to Councilman Brennan, the Recreation Commission is concerned about the higher cost of liability insurance, with the addition of an attendant to enforce park rules.

A proposal to erect a higher fence with a lock was also discussed, to keep skaters from sneaking in while the skate park is closed. Raising fees high enough to cover the additional insurance and staffing costs was brought into question by the council, as they addressed reports of skaters sneaking into the park without a permit.

According to Borough Administrator Eleanor McGovern, a surveillance video camera would cost approximately \$1,500 to \$2,000.

Councilman Stuart Kline suggested that the skate park could be moved to LaGrande Park, where there is already a high fence. The area of Forest Road Park being eyed for the skate park was originally made for street hockey.

Mr. Brennan suggested that privatizing the skate park might be a possibility, and will investigate that idea further.

Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School senior Bill Gonch, who is active in "Students for Government" and was observing the Borough Council session, said that teenagers are "cheap and smart" and he didn't think that any fence or lock would keep them out if they wanted to get in.

## Linden AutoAccident Kills Westfield Resident

By LAUREN S. PASS  
Specially Written for The Times

WESTFIELD -- Westfield resident Robert Nixdorff, 35, was killed on his way to work in Linden on Monday, March 24, when Peter Quinones, 27, of Rahway, reportedly ran a stop sign at the corner of Elm and Laurita Streets.

Mr. Nixdorff was traveling East on Elm Street, and Quinones was traveling south on Laurita Street. The speed limit on both residential streets is 25 miles per hour.

According to Linden Police Chief John Miliano, the speed and the weight of both vehicles, especially the 2002 Ford Expedition, were major factors in the severity of the accident.

Both the Ford Expedition and the 1995 Honda Prelude were destroyed when Mr. Nixdorff's Honda was reportedly forced off the road, through hedges and into the side of a house. Quinones' SUV flipped over and skidded onto a sidewalk, hit a parked car and stopped.

Witnesses said Quinones kicked out front window of the SUV, and "took off running."

Quinones later flagged down an ambulance, complaining of chest pains. He was treated and released from Trinitas Hospital in Elizabeth.



SCENE OF THE ACCIDENT...Marked by a star, the intersection of Laurita Street and Elm Street in Linden is where Westfield resident Robert Nixdorff, 35, was killed in an automobile accident.

Mr. Nixdorff was taken to Rahway Hospital, where he later died.

Quinones has been charged with being involved in a fatal accident while on the revoked list, leaving the scene of an accident and he had an outstanding warrant, among other charges. He was released on \$15,500 bail and a grand jury will decide whether to indict him on

these charges. Being involved in a fatal accident while driving with a suspended license is a third-degree charge, and carries a heavy sentence.

Mr. Nixdorff was a graduate of Kean University in Union and founded Nixdorff and Assoc., CPA in Linden in 1999. He and his wife, Carolyn, have resided in Westfield since 1993.

## Neighbors Voice Concerns Over Proposed Fanwood Subdivision

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witnesses who testified at the mutual hearing, reiterated his belief last week that the subdivision would bring the existing property more into conformity with others in the area.

Mr. Farrell asked Mr. Hamilton how many homes on Pleasant Avenue, between Estelle Lane and Forest Road, had 50-foot-wide lots, and how many were larger. Referencing a topographical map outlining all the homes in the area, the planner responded that three were 50-foot-wide lots and 17 were larger.

The attorney additionally questioned Mr. Hamilton as to whether he felt the neighborhood needed more vehicular traffic, people or homes.

Mr. Hamilton replied that traffic was not his area of expertise, but felt the proposed new home "would be a posi-

tive" for the neighborhood, adding there is not a lot of new development in Fanwood.

Mr. Hamilton also fielded questions from Ms. Miale, who maintained that 90 percent of the lots on Pleasant Avenue measure 75-feet by 100-feet, while only 10 percent are 50-feet by 100-feet.

She asked the planner whether he believed a "tall and narrow structure," as she described the proposed new home, would fit in with the rest of the neighborhood.

Mr. Hamilton stated that various styles of homes exist along Pleasant Avenue and St. John's Place, which intersects it, noting structure heights range from one to two-and-a-half stories.

"It's a great mixture of houses," Mr. Hamilton said. "It's hard to categorize one type of house in this neighborhood."



NEW TEMPLAR...Fontaine Deanna Gatti of Mountainside, employed at the American Express Travel Agency in Scotch Plains, was recently inducted into the Knights Templar in Manhattan at the Church Du Saint Esprit, with a black tie reception at the Princeton Club. Pictured, left to right, are: Chevalier Pipe Major David Gerald Palladino, Classical Music Correspondent of *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood*, Mrs. Gatti, and H.E. Chevalier Dr. Marcel S. dePicciotto, Grand Prior of the Republic of France.

## Parking Problem Extends to Westfield High Throughout 18 Months of Construction

By ROBERT COAKLEY  
Specially Written for The Times

WESTFIELD -- The Westfield Board of Education grappled with the issue of finding space for Westfield High School (WHS) students to park, while weighing how much parking is needed for the students who drive, and how parking should be limited.

Parking around WHS had already been reduced since student parking in the armory parking lot on Rahway Avenue was banned following the terrorist attacks on September 11. Faculty members are cur-

rently being allowed to park in the armory lot.

In addition, with the construction work to WHS, which will be occur over the next 18 months, there were questions about how much space was needed for construction workers.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. William Foley said problems include parking fees and how they could be enforced. Whether or not the school board would lease space on a long-term basis for the students is an additional issue.

For now the parking problem will be

investigated by the school board, Dr. Foley said. No proposals will be issued yet since all the facts are not available.

Board President Arlene Gardner, who is seeking another term, said that a survey is being planned for the high school juniors and seniors to see where they would be willing to park their cars.

According to Ms. Gardner, the survey will include questions that will help the board decide what to do. The juniors and seniors of the high school will respond, she said.

The results of the questionnaire should

help the school board attain a clearer picture as to why a student needs a car to get to school and what they would be willing to do to get more student parking.

"There is no easy resolution for this," Ms. Gardner said. "There is pressure from the parking and the construction, as well as the larger freshman class due this fall. There is not a lot the school board can do in the short term, and the active armory is not a short-term solution," she said.

Board member Kimberly Rhodes said there is no teacher parking at some of the elementary schools. She believes the board must consider if they want to put student parking before employee parking.

The school board detailed which streets near the high school might be used for student parking, using a map to point out certain areas. One section near Elm Street was discussed, even though it is a half-mile walk to WHS.

Farleigh Albertson, a member of the public, said student parking, if not done properly, could be seen as "over-indulging" the students, stating that a 17-year-old could see a car and a parking lot in front of the high school as a right instead of a privilege.

Fred Albertson, another member of the public, said the school board is underestimating the students. "They know where to park," he said, adding that the school board should focus on things more "worthwhile" for the students.

Steve Morgenthal, a member of the public, said that he was worried about the traffic on Stoneleigh Park, which is very narrow.

Patrick Torrio, an eighth grader, added that students should use other means to get to school and free up parking for parents and teachers.

"Students really don't need cars," he said.

Kay Gragnano suggested that the school board could alleviate traffic congestion by creating a circular driveway from Dorian Road onto Rahway Avenue.

Ms. Gardner said the school board is not jumping ahead to spending money in a tight budget, but is only looking at options. In other business, Board member William Wallace asked the public to vote yes on the school board budget on April 16. Mr. Wallace said the budget is financially sound, with an increase of 27 cents per \$100 of assessed property value.

The board must continue the "excellence" in the schools, Mr. Wallace said. With only 7 percent of state aid this year instead of the 32 percent state average, an increase in insurance and lower interest rates, citizens have to foot the education bill, he added. More than \$800,000 was cut from the budget.

Ms. Gardner said other districts across the state are "feeling the squeeze" of the budget and have to make similar financial decisions. A series of meetings will be held for the public to ask questions about the 2002-2003 school budget: Thursday, April 4, Roosevelt Intermediate School, 7:30 p.m. and Tuesday, April 9, Tamaques Elementary School, at 7 p.m.

Board members stated that all schools would be closed on Friday, May 24, and Tuesday, May 28, due to a lack of snow days this year, giving students and faculty a longer Memorial Day weekend.

A special groundbreaking ceremony will be held on Tuesday, April 9, at 1 p.m. at WHS, where a new science wing and a cafeteria extension will be added to building.

Other extensive renovations will be made, according to Public Information Officer of School/Community Relations Lorre Korecky.

According to Assistant Business Administrator Tamar Sydney-Gens, the work is expected to take about 18 months.

Bouquets of flowers were presented to board members Annemarie Puleio and Mr. Wallace, since they are not running for another term. Both were praised for the time, effort and commitment they had given the board.

## Planning Board Questions Its Own Legal Authority

By JAMES M. FOERST  
Specially Written for The Times

WESTFIELD -- The legal authority of the Westfield Planning Board was brought into question by its very own members, at the board's April meeting.

The controversy arose over an application presented by Susan Cherin of 854 Standish Avenue. Mrs. Cherin proposed to create two, single-family lots from one

## Freeholder Bd.

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to the Air Traffic Advisory Board. The county government will also receive \$240,000 from the U.S. Justice Department's Community Gun Violence Prosecution Program to hire two Assistant Prosecutors dedicated to the prosecution of gun-related violent crimes in Union County over the next three years.

The Freeholder Board passed a resolution declaring April as national Child Abuse Prevention Month.

County Manager George Devaney announced the creation of a task force to review the county's organizational structure and make recommendations aimed at increasing operational effectiveness, efficiency and accountability in government.

The seven-member task force will review the current organizational structure and make recommendations for improvements; review the current merit-based compensation system with an emphasis on measuring fairness and results; review qualifications of the candidates for the position of Deputy County Manager, held by Mr. Devaney until last month, and develop job specification for the post; and examine the merits of a performance budgeting system or similar type of incentive program.

The task force will be headed up by Dr. Dawood Farahi; Chairman of the Public Administration Department at Kean University.

At the start of its meeting, the Freeholders welcomed a delegation from China that was in the midst of a one-week course on municipal government at Kean University. The 20-member group is the third such delegation from China to take part in the seminar.

The Freeholders' next regular meeting will be held on Thursday, April 11.

existing lot, the practice commonly known as "shoehorning."

Nearly 30 residents from surrounding properties objected to the application and retained counsel to oppose it.

Mrs. Cherin alleged that the property was formerly two contiguous lots, which had been merged into one prior to the purchase of the property in 1989.

According to the objectors' attorney, in 1967, pursuant to a New Jersey Supreme Court mandate, the tax assessor merged all double lots which were deemed to be undersized. He argued that because these two lots were non-conforming at that time, they were merged to create one conforming lot and that they should not now be split into two "non-conforming" lots.

He further argued that the applicant was fully aware of this fact when the property was purchased, because only one deed was exchanged and only one parcel was assessed by the tax office.

Mrs. Cherin had previously presented an application for minor variances to the town zoning official, claiming the merger of the two lots was improper.

The Zoning Officer disagreed and rejected the application, relying on the town map which showed the property as one lot.

Mrs. Cherin appealed to the Board of Adjustment which, in rejecting the application, sided with the Zoning Officer. Afterwards, Mrs. Cherin brought a declaratory judgment action against the Board of Adjustment, which is presently pending in the Superior Court of New Jersey.

Simultaneous with the filing of suit against the town, Mrs. Cherin filed an application with the Planning Board to sever the property and create two lots. The application stated that the purpose was to return the "lots" to their original topographical description. The division of the two lots would return the property to its condition prior to the supposed "improper" merger.

The hearing of the application was objected to by several members of the Planning Board. Board members William Ziff and Victor Trzesniowski questioned the validity of the application and the ability of the Planning Board to hear the application.

"I take issue with this body hearing this application while the town is presently involved in litigation over this same issue," commented Mr. Treznowski.

Mr. Ziff echoed the sentiment by questioning whether the matter should be heard by the Planning Board or left to the Superior Court to determine the "entire controversy."

Mr. Treznowski stated, "I don't know if we have the legal authority to hear this application."

Charles Brandt, attorney for the applicant, argued that the board was required to hear the application because his client was under a duty to exhaust all administrative remedies prior to instituting suit to appeal the board's determination. He noted that he only filed the declaratory judgment

action to preserve his client's right to appeal.

Paul Strauchler, Planning Board Attorney, agreed with Mr. Brandt and urged the board to continue with the application.

Charles Weidman, the Mayor's Designee to the Planning Board, commented that the Planning Board was "duty bound to hear the application."

During boisterous argument amongst the members of the board, a recess was taken and the public was excluded from a brief executive session.

Planning Board Chairman Robert Newell returned, announcing that the hearing was being adjourned until the next meeting in May. He cited administrative and legal questions and issues as the reason for the adjournment.

"We will be conducting our own internal investigation," in order to determine whether the application could in fact be heard by the Planning Board, stated Mr. Newell. He added, "We want the members of the Planning Board to feel comfortable hearing this application before we proceed."

The next Planning Board meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 6.

## 10 Percent Hike

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Director Lori Majeski, for their efforts in turning around the fiscal situation. He also said that the auditors were impressed with the condition of the township's financial records.

The township will be receiving a \$2,500 grant from the state Department of Environmental Protection to conduct an open space inventory in Scotch Plains. The town will provide matching funds for the study by the Township Environmental Commission. And it's hoped the Council will be able to reach some conclusion this month about whether to proceed with introduction of a proposed ordinance that would permit local police officers to enter a private residence and take legal action if they witness the possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages by someone under 21 years of age.

The local Municipal Alliance Committee (MAC), a group that works to prevent substance abuse, has been pushing for enactment of such an ordinance, but the Council, in periodic discussions on the topic in the past year, has been unable to form a consensus.

Councilwoman Paulette Coronato, who in the past has expressed some of the sharpest opposition to the idea backed by MAC, has been out of town during several recent conference meetings, and her colleagues will wait until she returns before fully discussing the matter.

Restaurant Review rates the steaks at Verve Restaurant as "the Finest" in the area.

**John's**  
**Meat Market**



announces that their U.S.D.A. Prime Dry Aged Steaks are now being served at

**Verve Restaurant**

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