



Elvis Presley Dies August 16, 1977  
Friendship Week Begins August 18



# THE TIMES

## Scotch Plains - Fanwood

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FIFTY CENTS

### SP Council Puts Tax Constitution Convention On November Ballot

By FRED ROSSI  
Specially Written for The Times

Scotch Plains voters will have a chance in November to express their opinion on the holding of a state constitutional convention to reform the state's property tax system.

With the Township Council's approval of an ordinance at its Tuesday night meeting, a non-binding referendum on this subject will appear on the township's general election ballot.

This action comes in the wake of the State Legislature's failure to act this year on legislation that would have placed a statewide referendum on the November ballot regarding a state constitutional convention to address property tax reform. Despite having gained some momentum earlier in the year, the legislation stalled without ever coming up for a vote in Trenton.

A constitutional convention would have prepared proposals consisting of amendments to the state constitution and revisions to existing state statutes, all revenue-neutral. It might have helped eliminate the inequities in the current system, ensure greater uniformity in the application of property taxes, reduce property taxes as a share of overall public revenue and help communities reduce their high dependence on property taxes. In the aftermath of the Legislature's inaction, several towns have signaled their intention to replicate Scotch Plains' referendum.

Mayor Martin Marks called the property tax, "the most onerous" of all taxes because it doesn't take into account the ability of people to pay.

"We have an over-reliance on property taxes," he said, to pay for education and local and county services while the state government can rely on a number of revenue sources to finance itself.

He also responded to comments from Scotch Plains resident Walter Apple, who said the ballot referendum was "addressing the symptoms rather than the cause" -- which Mr. Apple said was "runaway spending" at the local, county and state levels, as well as by boards of education.

Mayor Marks defended the local government's effort to rein in spending, but agreed that the cause of property tax hikes in general was "out of control spending."

Saying that about three-fourths of property taxes are earmarked for the board of education, Councilwoman

Paulette Coronato said property taxes "are very unfair," especially to those residents, such as the elderly, empty-nesters and young couples, who don't participate in the local education system.

In other business, the council awarded a \$424,500 contract to A. Juliano and Sons Contractors of Stirling to serve as general contractor for construction of the new three-acre park on Plainfield Avenue.

Mayor Marks expressed his hope that the park, which will include a ballfield and a soccer field, could be ready for use next year.

Separately, Councilman Frank S. Rossi announced that the state Department of Community Affairs has

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### SP Planning Bd. OKs Commerce Bank Application for Park, Mountain Ave. Site

By JEREMY LIPSTEIN  
Specially Written for The Times

At Monday evening's meeting of the Scotch Plains Planning Board, an application for the construction of a Commerce Bank on the northeastern corner of Park and Mountain Avenues was given the green light, assuming that variances are granted.

The bank, which would lease 3,669 square feet on two lots of land for 20 years, with five, five-year lease renewal options, plans to demolish two buildings at this location: the Licho's Inc. jewelry store and a storage building owned by Pantagis Renaissance on the adjacent property.

The property is zoned as a B-2 business district and would not require a zoning change.

Most of the board's reservations dealt with traffic patterns on surrounding streets. A secondary concern was that the bank would complement the rest of the downtown's architectural style.

Richard Gulick, planner for the Planning Board, referred to the site as a "gateway location to the central business district."

While Commerce Bank wishes to maintain its corporate image through its architecture, Board Chairman Joseph Doyle asked the bank to try to appreciate the historic significance of parts of the downtown such as The Stage House Inn and the historic cemetery at the Scotch Plains Bap-



DARING TO FIGHT DRUGS...After Scotch Plains Mayor Martin Marks declared a resolution designating August 6 as "National Night Out" (NNO) in the township, Scotch Plains Police Chief Marshall Nelson had his fingerprints taken by police officer Paul Belford beside the D.A.R.E. vehicle. NNO, which was held for the 19th year throughout the country, is an effort which advocates the prevention of drug and alcohol abuse, as well as criminal activities.

tist Church. "Commerce Bank takes great pride in the way it looks," said Robert Kraus, the attorney representing the bank in this matter.

Outside of the aesthetic aspects of the project, traffic issues became a main concern. The proposed bank would have ingress and egress at two locations for the parking lot, one on

Mountain Avenue and one on Park Avenue.

While there would be no restrictions for the Mountain Avenue entrance and exit, the one on Park Avenue would allow only right-hand turns in and out. A barrier may be requested from the county on Park Avenue, a county road, to prevent

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### Celentano Resigns From SP Council

By FRED ROSSI  
Specially Written for The Times

Republican Councilman Guy Celentano announced his immediate resignation from the Scotch Plains Township Council on Tuesday night.

Mr. Celentano, who won his seat in a special election last November, said he was leaving the governing body because of several professional and personal reasons.

In remarks at the end of the council's meeting, Mr. Celentano called his eight months in government, "a rewarding experience for me," during which he "gained a sense of appreciation for the employees that make Scotch Plains work as effectively as it does."

He also saluted his council colleagues and thanked them for their support and assistance.

Earlier this year, Mr. Celentano had announced his intention to seek election in November to a full, four-year term.

He is the third individual to hold his present council seat, with the late Democrat Tarquin Jay Bromley having been elected to a four-year

term in November 1998. After Mr. Bromley's death in September 2000, Democrat Sharynn Porter was appointed to fill the seat until last year's special election, one in which Mrs. Porter chose not to run.

Mr. Celentano narrowly defeated Democrat Patricia Romano in the November 2001 balloting.

The four other members of the council, along with Township Manager Thomas Atkins, Township Attorney Douglas Hansen and Township Clerk Barbara Riepe, extended their best wishes to Mr. Celentano.

Scotch Plains Republicans will now have to submit to the council the names of possible successors to Mr. Celentano. Ultimately, that individual will have to be approved by the remaining four members of the council, which is now composed of three Republicans and one Democrat.

Mayor Martin Marks said a new member would likely be approved and sworn in at the council's next conference meeting on Tuesday, September 3.



Guy Celentano

### Westfield Teachers Come Out on Top In Comparison Between Scotch Plains, MS

By LAUREN S. PASS  
Specially Written for The Times

In a comparison of teacher contracts between Westfield, Scotch Plains and Mountainside; Westfield teachers' starting salaries comes out ahead of the other two towns.

The Westfield teacher contract *The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood* was given was from 1999 to 2002. They recently renewed their contract through June 30, 2005.

The new contract, which is not available yet, came into effect on July 1. It includes a salary increase of 3.9 percent for 2002-2003, 3.9 percent for 2003-2004 and 4 percent for 2004-2005.

The starting salary for a new teacher has been increased from \$43,031 in 2001-2002 to \$44,831 for 2002-2003. The new contract also includes an increase in in-service time and an increase in tuition reimbursements.

Health care stipulations for the 1999-2002 contract lists Cigna for major medical, at a rate of \$600 per year, plus \$200 deductible for individual and \$400 per family. Dental coverage provides for no more than \$1,500 per year.

Retiring teachers can have the same coverage, if they have served more than 15 years and notify the school board within 30 days after retirement that they wish to maintain it.

Teachers with 15 to 20 years of service receive a \$700 longevity increase; those with 20 years or more receive \$1,050.

For the year 2001-2002, salaries ranged from \$43,031 to \$73,018 for teachers with a bachelor's degree, depending on their length of time within the district.

For teachers with a master's degree, salaries range from \$45,834 to \$77,190; master's degree plus 30 credits, \$48,275 to \$81,523, and doctoral degree, \$51,187 to \$86,011.

Advisors and coaches receive extra stipends, ranging from \$431 to \$7,941, depending on the activity and the teacher's length of service.

In the Scotch Plains-Fanwood school district, health insurance is provided by Connecticut General Life Insurance Company. The contract provides for 100 percent coverage after \$2,000, with a \$1 mil-

lion life maximum; radiation therapy up to \$560 maximum; 70 percent for outpatient mental and nervous problems, and, if the insured party dies, surviving family receives two years coverage.

As of January 1, 2003, the major medical deductible is \$300 per individual and \$600 per family per year.

Retirees receive 100 percent coverage for the first year, coming down by 10 percent each year, ending at the sixth year with 50 percent.

Delta Dental is the provider for preventive and diagnostic services, providing 100 percent coverage. Sixty percent of remaining basic dental care is covered. In addition, 60 percent coverage is offered for crowns, inlays and gold restorations. Fifty percent coverage is provided for prosthodontic care, as well as orthodontic care, for chil-

dren. The contract is good from July 1, 2002 through June 30, 2005.

The starting salary in 2002-2003 for teachers with a Bachelor of Arts Degree is \$39,625; Bachelor of Arts Degree plus 30 credits is \$42,445; Master of Arts Degree, \$44,000; Master of Arts plus 30 credits is \$46,920, and doctoral degree, \$50,500.

In the 15-step pay scale, top salaries range from \$55,577 to \$71,977. The top salaries at level 25L range from \$71,560 to \$92,653.

As of 2001, teachers paid at level 15 or above will now fall into the 20L or 25L categories. Those within the 15-step scale will receive a 3 percent increase for 2002-2003, 3.25 percent for 2003-2004 and 3.69 percent for 2004-2005.

Additionally, coaches and co-curricular advisors receive an annual stipend. These stipends range from \$498 to \$9,080, depending on the

club, sport, or length of time the advisor has served.

In Mountainside, school board employees are insured at board expense under Blue Cross/Blue Shield and a dental plan.

For the year 2002-2003, salaries for teachers with a bachelor's degree start at \$38,557 and they can receive up to \$72,197 for 25 years of service; master degree salaries range from \$41,303 to \$42,863, and salaries for a master's degree plus 30 credits range from \$42,863 to 76,503. There is also a longevity increase of \$900 for 20 years of service, 24 years and 28 years.

Teachers also receive stipends for coaching and advisory positions, ranging from \$25 per session or up to \$3,289 per year, depending on activity and longevity in the position.

In the August 22 edition of *The Westfield Leader*, there will be a comparison of the Board of Education administrative contracts.

### Ms. Page Honored by FW Council; 5K, Fanny Wood Day Advertised

By STEVEN KRAKAUER  
Specially Written for The Times

Ruth Page, recently retired Planning Board Secretary, was honored at Tuesday's regular meeting of the Fanwood Council. Ms. Page was recognized for her 10-and-a-half years with the planning board and seven-and-a-half years with the former Fanwood zoning board.

"We will miss her friendship, advice and companionship," said Mayor Louis Jung.

Ms. Page was also presented with a resolution in her name, as well as a commemorative plate with the Fanwood insignia. "It's been a pleasure working with everyone," Ms. Page said.

Since Fanwood's TV-35 taped the council meeting, officials took ample time to discuss upcoming community events. The seventh annual CONTACT We Care 5K race will take place on Saturday, August 17, at LaGrande Park. Also this year, a KIDS Sprint will take place and a wheelchair invitational race will be held as well. The 5K race will start at 5:45 p.m., the kids sprint will begin at 6:30 p.m. and the wheelchair invi-

tational will commence at 6:15 p.m.

The Council read a proclamation deeming August 17 "CONTACT We Care Day" in Fanwood.

Also taking place will be the annual Fanny Wood Day, which this year is on Sunday, September 29. There will be five hours of live music for the first time.

Councilman Stuart Kline gave a report from the Administration and Finance Committee. So far, 55 percent of the tax levy has been collected in the two collection dates. There will be two more this year.

Councilman Michael Brennan noted the number of violations seen by the Municipal Court over the past month, July. There were 185 parking violations, 45 moving violations and nine criminal violations. There were three court sessions during the month, including a special session for a driving while intoxicated case.

Councilman David Trumpp gave a report from the Public Works Committee. Graffiti was removed from various parks and a restroom and water fountain were repaired at LaGrande Park over the past month. Also, the new curbing project outside Borough Hall was completed.

Councilman Brennan also described the condition of the skate park at LaGrande Park. The skate

park is currently "up and running," although there was no funding to put in fencing around the park or pay someone to monitor it. Instead, the police are going to strictly monitor the park.

Councilman Brennan also noted that the skaters will need to purchase permits from the police station to use the skate park and must display the permit on their helmets at all times.

The council passed an ordinance entitled "Peace and Good Order," which prohibits public urination and defecation, even if it is on private property in clear view of the public. "This is something needed in our town and every town," Councilman Thomas Ryan, Jr. said.

A resolution was passed to accept a Regional Domestic Response Team at the police department. This would train officers in techniques for responding to domestic violence calls. Towns like Westfield, Scotch Plains and Clark have passed similar versions of the resolution.

The meeting lasted just over an hour, described by the council as, "the shortest meeting all year."

Council President Joel Whitaker did not attend the meeting, as he was on vacation, which prompted Councilman Ryan to conclude, "Joel not being here was a direct contributing factor."



Cheri Rogovsky for The Times

BIRTHDAY TREAT...Members of the Scotch Plains Fire Department helped Nicholas Tarantino mark his fifth birthday last week, by letting him try on an authentic firefighter's hat. Pictured, left to right, are: front row, Nicholas and his brother, Matthew Tarantino, 9, and back row, firefighter and Fanwood postal worker Edward Frame and Scotch Plains Fire Chief Jonathan Ellis.

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CYAN YELLOW MAGENTA BLACK

## Parking Deck Project Updated; Costs, Plans to Be Seen By Nov.

By LAUREN S. PASS  
Specially Written for The Times

WESTFIELD -- The Westfield Town Council appointed itself as redevelopment agency in February and chose The Atlantic Group to lead them through the redevelopment process for lot 3 and lots 1 and 8 at the April 9 council meeting.

During the April meeting, The Atlantic Group presented a 29-week plan. Currently, they are a week or two behind because of the Planning Board Schedule.

The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood recently sat with Town Administrator James Gildea to discuss the status of the projects.

"Truthfully, this process we're in right now, is really the farthest we've ever been," Mr. Gildea said.

The Atlantic Group, represented by Patrick Henry, Robert Goldsmith and Lawrence Houston, are guiding the town through the legal process of declaring the lands as areas in need of redevelopment.

Atlantic has had meetings with the Project Review Committee, whose members consist of Sherry Cronin, Charlie Wiedman, Claire Lazarowitz, Rafael Betancourt, Lawrence Goldman, Gregory McDermott, Mr. Gildea and Ken Marsh.

On September 18, there will be a meeting of the Westfield Planning Board, during which the parking lots will be on the agenda to be designated as areas in need of redevelopment.

In the first week of September the RFQ (request for qualifications) will be available for potential developers to pick up. Once those are returned the town will decide which of those developers will get RFP (requests for proposals).

According to Mr. Gildea the town will then narrow it down to a few candidates. They will interview the candidates and then choose one.

By November the town should have plans and actual costs for both lots. The council will then decide whether they have the funds in place to be able to build one or both decks in the year 2003.

According to Mr. Gildea, he and Patrick Henry feel that they will have a large response to the RFQs based on the fact that 20 developers have already made inquiries into the projects.

The cost of the project, depending on how many retail and residential units as well as the number of decks, will be divided between the developer and the town.

Residential units will line Prospect Street, and 200 parking spaces will be added to lots 1 and 8. Ingress and egress from the deck will be on Elm Street, with only ingress for the residents of the apartments on Prospect Street.

Five hundred parking spaces will be created on lot 3, and retail will face South Avenue with two levels of residential units above them. Parking for the retail and residential will be provided in the deck.

Some residents were concerned about the height of the parking deck on South Avenue, but according to Mr. Gildea, because the land slopes down the deck will be no higher than

the South Avenue Seafood building. Though the area will be re-developed the housing will not necessarily be low income. Though the town will be asking for it in the RFQ and RFP.

The RFQ process should take two to three weeks, and the RFP could take a month or longer for the proposals to come back.

The Atlantic Group is doing a similar project in Princeton.

Mr. Gildea explained that the parking fees that have been collected, approximately \$100,000, has gone

into a capitol improvement fund for parking improvements to be used at a later time and that the same thing will be done next year.

Currently, the committee has decided not to acquire any privately owned land, but a developer could negotiate with the owners for that.

Though there are currently no provisions to provide parking for the other residents of downtown Westfield, Mr. Gildea said that this has become an apparent issue and that the council will have to figure something out.

## WF Planning Bd. Imposes Tax on Local Businesses

By JAMES FOERST  
Specially Written for The Times

WESTFIELD -- According to Westfield Planning Board member Victor Trzesniowski, the board's August membership meeting included the approval of a controversial new "tax" on downtown businesses.

The controversy arose when Robert Newell, Planning Board Chairman, suggested that an applicant, Teriman Associates, be required to purchase municipal parking permits for its employees to overcome a deficiency in the municipal parking requirement.

Teriman Enterprises, Inc. of Elizabeth had requested a parking variance in connection with establishing a new beauty salon at 110 Quimby Street.

The land use ordinance requires that the business maintain three parking spots for each barber/beautician, which according to William Butler, attorney for the applicant, would constitute between 9-24 parking spaces depending on the day and time of operation.

There was boisterous opposition to this proposal from various members of the Board, most notable Mr. Trzesniowski. In response to the Chairman's suggestion, Mr. Trzesniowski commented that, "this is a new form of taxation which we have no authority to enforce."

He continued by stating that, "the Planning Board has no taxing authority and requiring business to obtain municipal parking permits to overcome parking variances amounts to taxation."

The board has no statutory authority to impose taxes upon applicants, according to Mr. Trzesniowski.

Martin Robins, Planning Board Member, agreeing with Mr. Trzesniowski, noted that the board was, "legislating without authority from the Town Council."

Planning Board member Jay Boyle, disagreeing with both Mr. Trzesniowski and Mr. Robins, countered by stating that this was a, "creative solution to overcome a parking variance."

Mr. Newell, echoing Mr. Boyle's comments stated, "This is not a requirement on the applicant. This is a voluntary solution on the part of the applicant to overcome a parking variance."

Mr. Trzesniowski questioned the voluntariness of the applicant asking, "if he doesn't agree, aren't we going to deny his application?"

Mr. Martino, principal of Teriman Enterprises, Inc. stated that he was reluctant to agree to this type of re-

quirement. Anthony LaPorta, Planning Board member, asked Mr. Martino if he was willingly entering into this agreement or was he under duress in agreeing to these terms.

"I don't want to have to pay but I will agree to this condition because I need to begin conducting business," stated Mr. Martino. He noted that he had signed a lease and had been paying rent since July.

Mr. Newell commented that, "this began with last month's applications requiring employees to purchase employee parking permits in the Central Business District."

He continued by stating that to overcome a parking variance, "it should be standard to require businesses" to purchase employee parking permits.

A divided board approved the application, which included the applicants "voluntary" purchase of four municipal parking permits.

Following the meeting, Parking Director Barry Sommers was contacted by The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood. Mr. Sommers said that though there is always a parking requirement on developed properties, there is currently no space available in either of the employee permit lots. He said that applicants could be placed on a waiting list.

## SP Council

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approved the township's application for a grant that will be used for reimbursement of a \$55,000 software program that will be used for the scheduling of ballfields by Scotch Plains, Fanwood and the joint board of education. Eventually, the software will permit online registration for various recreation programs.

The grant application has been pending in Trenton for about a year and Mr. Rossi thanked Assemblywoman Linda Stender for her assistance in getting the grant approved.

The council also approved an ordinance prohibiting parking on the west side of High View Court between Princeton Avenue and Algonquin Drive and on the north side of the Algonquin Drive cul-de-sac between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. on school days.

In other miscellaneous matters, the Scotch Plains Business and Professional Association will be holding a downtown sidewalk sale today, tomorrow and Saturday. Councilwoman Geri Samuel said letters soliciting donations to pay for a fountain in the Village Green, which will soon be formally renamed Alan Augustine Park in honor of the late Assemblyman and former Mayor, are being sent out. She urged residents to send donations to the Township of Scotch Plains Augustine Park Committee at 430 Park Avenue.

The Fire Department will be celebrating the arrival of a new piece of firefighting apparatus during a wetdown on Saturday at the south side firehouse from noon to 6 p.m. There will be a band, food, drinks and rides for children. Fifty fire departments from around the state are expected to be in attendance.

Mayor Marks said Martine Avenue, in the vicinity of the firehouse, will be closed to vehicular traffic on Saturday afternoon and urged those attending the wetdown to use a shuttle service that will originate from the Union County Vocational-Technical School's parking lot on Raritan Road.

At the end of the meeting, Mayor Marks issued a proclamation declaring July 21 as Harold Goettel Day in honor of a 99-year old resident and his service to the community.

## Mountainside Writer, Artist Wende Devlin Dies at 84

By MICHELLE H. Le POIDEVIN  
Specially Written for The Times

MOUNTAINSIDE -- On November 25, 2001, Wende Dorothy Devlin bid farewell to her partner in both life and art, Harry A. Devlin, as he succumbed to cancer.

Nearly 10 months later, early Tuesday morning at her Mountainside home, the prolific artist and author, Wende, passed away peacefully while surrounded by the family she and Harry lovingly nurtured and inspired for decades.

A mother of seven children, a grandmother to 20 and a great-grandmother to two, 84-year-old Wende, who was struggling with a long illness, maintained her role as motivational matriarch to her family, a welcoming friend to neighbors and strangers and a lover of the arts right up until her death.

"She was an inspiration to her children, as well as artists and writers all over the country," said her daughter, Wende Devlin Gates, during an interview with The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood. "She was a mentor, not only for her art..."

Wende Devlin's son, Brion Devlin, chimed in, "She was a mother to people outside of her family as well. Mother had such a great sense of humor. She just seemed to understand people."

magazine.

In one of her poems, "A Price," Wende depicts the translation of a child seeking some money from

illnesses.

Known for her work as a striking portrait artist in pieces such as "Portrait of Girlie Benou," Wende also created several vibrant and intricately detailed floral paintings, such as "Winter Flowers."

Mr. Devlin related that during wartime, it was so important for his mother to find some form of oil for her paintings, that she would use vegetable oil or a similar variation in order to continue her pursuit of great art.

Both Ms. Devlin Gates and her brother pointed out how important it was to their mother that one hold true to his or her values.

"Mother was a strong feminist," said Ms. Devlin Gates. "She bucked the tide to some degree. She was true to her own values."

Mr. Devlin added, "She was authentic. She never wavered in what she believed was right."

The recipient of the George Arents Medal for Art and Literature, which is the most acclaimed award bestowed by Syracuse University, Wende had her paintings included in permanent collections at banks in New Jersey, as well as in homes throughout the country.

Since 1980, Wende held membership on the Rutgers Advisory Council on Children's Literature and, nine years later, was named to the New Jersey Literary Hall of Fame. The 1970 book "How Fletcher Was Hatched" earned Wende the New Jersey English



Wende Devlin

his/her mother for the ice cream truck:

"Bells herald a running boy.  
His rush of love emblazons an ember pink within my heart.  
Such dearness makes one's sense soar like floats of pigeons

Courtesy of The Devlin Family

Matriarch, Master of the Arts... Wende Dorothy Devlin, renowned artist and author, died early Tuesday morning at the Mountainside home she shared with her late husband, Harry A. Devlin, who passed away on November 25, 2001. At 84 years of age, Mrs. Devlin left behind seven children, 20 grandchildren, two great-grandchildren and a multitude of admiring friends and relatives. Mrs. Devlin is pictured, above, with two of her works, "Portrait of Girlie Benou," left, and "Winter Flowers."



wild and high -  
and yet I know love, ever fragile,  
lies abalance on a silver coin."

Wende also penned the beloved "Cranberry" series of children's books, such as "Cranberry Thanksgiving" (1971). The great "Old Black Witch" adventures came to life through her words in titles such as "Old Witch Rescues Halloween."

Daughter Wende counted nearly 26 "imaginative, humorous and entertaining" children's books to her mother's credit.

"I tried to write stories that I would enjoy," Wende Devlin told The Leader/Times during an interview in February of 1999. She had stated that combining, "personality, color and all of the elements which would make a story unforgettable," were vital ingredients for her volumes.

During Tuesday's interview, Ms. Devlin Gates added that her mother had one of her books, "Hang On, Hester!," distributed to hospitals all over the world in order to encourage the youngest of patients to stay strong and persist despite their

Teachers Award. She also received the Chicago Book Fair Award for Excellence for "Old Witch Rescues Halloween."

Of their parents' famously close and reciprocally artistic relationship, Ms. Devlin Gates said, "Since their early 20s, they were inseparable from that moment on. They went through a great deal together."

In a previous interview with The Leader and The Times, both Harry and Wende had expressed that working together as artists allowed them to be "marvelous critics for each other." They had described their relationship as "easy and pleasant," with a mutual respect, adding, "we do feel fortunate that we're both involved in the same things."

On August 30, Wende and Harry would have celebrated their 61st wedding anniversary, related Ms. Devlin Gates.

"Maybe, she wanted to spend it with him," she said.

A special service, during which remembrances of Wende will be shared, is scheduled for tomorrow, Friday, August 16, at noon, at the First Congregational Church on Elmer Street in Westfield.

## Scotch Plains Planning Bd. Approves Commerce Bank

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

drivers from making a sharp left-hand turn onto the Route 22 ramp.

John Harter, a traffic engineer of Atlantic Traffic in Watchung, spoke as one of the bank's witnesses. Mr. Harter explained that the bank would generate traffic through its three drive-through lanes and 28 parking spaces.

To combat problems, Mr. Harter suggested additional traffic signs for speed limits, children at play, and driveway warnings at both the bank and neighboring Sunset Place. One Sunset Place resident asked the board to keep in mind that the street already has additional traffic from the American Legion, the Scotchwood Diner, and the Italian-American Club. The possibility of making Sunset Place a one-way street will be further looked into.

The bank will make efforts to shield its additional lighting and noise by adding shrubbery and fencing, to act as a buffer, along the edges that border residential areas.

Since the bank would add grass and other landscaping to the properties, drainage would not be a problem, according to Bret Skapinetz of Bohler Engineering. The bank would have on-site drainage with a lead into county runways.

John Madden, a specialist in planning and landscape architecture, of Madden and Associates in Flemington, spoke as another witness. Mr. Madden explained that the bank would act as an anchor store for the downtown because of its "gateway location."

Mr. Madden stated that because of its corporate backing, the bank would have economic stability and remain in town for a while.

The bank is seeking variances from the required 10-foot setback for off-street parking and from the required truck loading/unloading zone. Commerce Bank has proposed a five-foot setback and claims it will not have trucks loading and unloading.

While town ordinance specifies that no advertising on directional "in" and "out" signs are permitted, the bank hopes that the board will approve a variance on this issue as well.

Commerce Bank originated in Mount Laurel and has since spread north in the state and west into Pennsylvania. The bank has more than 100 branches in New Jersey, including one location on the corner of North and Hetfield Avenues in Fanwood.

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## Douglas M. Fasciale

Certified Civil Trial Attorney  
by the Supreme Court of New Jersey

Concentrating in personal injury and malpractice cases.

Hoagland, Longo, Moran, Dunst & Doukas, LLP  
Attorneys At Law - A Full Service Firm

40 Paterson Street  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
(732) 545-4717

116 S. Euclid Avenue  
Westfield, NJ 07090  
(908) 232-9944

DFasciale@hoaglandlongo.com  
www.hoaglandlongo.com