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SIXTY CENTS

FILING DEADLINE FOR SP-F BOE SET FOR FEB. 28

Two Incumbents Opt Not to Seek New Terms On Board of Education

By ELIZABETH CORRELL
Specially Written for The Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — Three positions on the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education will be up for grabs in the Tuesday, April 12, school election, with two members leaving the board and one current member hoping to retain his seat.

Scotch Plains resident Edward Saridaki, Jr. and Fanwood resident Susan Dyckman have both decided to end their involvement with the board.

Mr. Saridaki, who has served for nine years, based his decision on the fact that his children are no longer in the school district.

"You need to be in touch actively to be personally involved in the school system, so you can balance (decisions regarding) the educational and the financial," Mr. Saridaki stated in an interview with *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*.

He believes that there are "three fundamental responsibilities" when serving on the board: the curriculum, personnel, and a responsibility towards the taxpayers, who do not necessarily have children in the schools. Ending her first three-year term, Mrs. Dyckman will not run again because she "can't give the board work the attention it deserves due to family and work commitments," she told *The Times*. "I have learned so much from my colleagues and the administration."

Mrs. Dyckman has two children in

Fanwood schools and her older daughter attends Union Catholic High School in Scotch Plains.

After three years as a Scotch Plains representative to the school board, Trip Whitehouse plans to run again in this election. He currently has one child at McGinn Elementary School and two children in middle school.

"I grew up in Winfield, which is located by Cranford and Clark, in a family where my grandfather was mayor and both my parents were on the board of education. I grew up in a culture of being involved. Now as an adult, I appreciate all the time my parents put in," attending school functions and sports events. Mr. Whitehouse's father is currently the mayor of Winfield.

Sasha Slocum has put in her petition to run for the seat left vacant by Mrs. Dyckman.

"I grew up in Scotch Plains, and attended fifth grade onward at Coles, and high school at Wardlaw Hartridge. I am a big fan of public schools. I love the mission of public schools," said Mrs. Slocum.

The candidate, who lives in Fanwood with her husband and three children, worked as an elementary school teacher in the fourth and fifth grades, as well as special needs classes. She has a master's degree in education policy from Harvard University and is currently working towards her doctorate degree in education.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



Fred Rossi for The Times

RUNNING THE TOWNSHIP...Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School DECA students ran the meeting of the Scotch Plains Township Council on Tuesday night beside Mayor Martin Marks, left. Participating students include Dan Birnbaum, Kyle Rzonca, Stefano Gaetano, Caroline L'Heureux, Michael Baumwoll, Eric Ajuluchukwu, Elizabeth Elko and Jay Hankin.

Property Revaluation In Township May Be Near, Mayor Marks Says

By FRED ROSSI
Specially Written for The Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — Mayor Martin Marks believes that Scotch Plains will be compelled in the next few years, likely by the Union County Tax Board, to conduct what could be a costly revaluation of the 8,000 town-

ship properties in order to narrow the disparity between properties' assessed and market values. Presently, the average assessed value of a property is about 30 percent of its market value.

The mayor made his remarks in response to a telephone caller's question at the end of the Township

Council's meeting on Tuesday evening. He said the Council is "starting to have preliminary discussions" about a possible revaluation, and added that, "I suspect it's imminent" that the county will force Scotch Plains to conduct its first revaluation since 1984.

He noted it will be costly, upwards of \$1 million, to hire a private firm to evaluate all township properties. "That's why we're not in a rush to do it," Mayor Marks said.

Township Attorney Douglas Hansen said that "the quality of revaluation is crucial" if the township is to avoid litigation stemming from a sloppily-conducted reassessment.

Mr. Marks stressed that any revaluation would be revenue neutral, meaning that the township government would not automatically see a signifi-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Murphy Visits Area In Quest for GOP Nod

By PAUL PEYTON
Specially Written for The Times

WESTFIELD — Republican gubernatorial candidate John Murphy visited Westfield on Tuesday afternoon as he continues his quest for the GOP nomination. The candidate, a Morris County freeholder, said he is targeting the upcoming Union County Republican Party Convention.

Currently, Bret Schundler and Doug Forrester are considered the front-runners to capture the party's nod to run against United States Senator and Democratic gubernatorial candidate Jon Corzine. Acting Governor Richard Codey has announced he would not challenge Sen. Corzine for the Democratic Party nomination.

Mr. Murphy said he received the endorsement of Clark Mayor Salvatore Bonaccorso on Tuesday and

is also being supported by Scotch Plains Township Council members Nancy Malool, Paulette Coronato, and Carolyn Sorge. He also has the support of all Republican Morris County mayors.

"We are putting it together. Endorsements are key," he said.

Admitting that he is running a "distant third," Mr. Murphy believes that as the only Morris County candidate and with his grass roots effort he is a "direct contrast" to Sen. Corzine and his personal wealth. He said the winner of the June Primary would likely need between 28 and 32 percent of the total vote to become the party's nominee. He envisions at least half of his support coming from his home base of Morris County. In terms of the county GOP conventions, Mr. Murphy said he needs to "make a respectful showing."

"We have been out (seeking party support) for over two years with our toe in the water," said Mr. Murphy, who officially launched his campaign on January 24. He filed his campaign paperwork with the state's Election Law Commission on March 31 of 2004.

"We are in a solid third but at this point it is a distant third," he said.

Mr. Murphy said he was working to target his campaign message to the 350,000 to 400,000 registered Republicans "that have a history of voting in gubernatorial elections."

The candidate recently ran an ad on Fox Cable News and has sent out four mailings of campaign literature to likely Republican Primary voters. Among his campaign platform issues is the creation of an elected auditor general to focus on cutting state spending and property tax relief. He also proposes making the attorney general an elected position.

"We now know that the Democrats will be running Jon Corzine. I would make the case that we have to run someone who is the sharpest contrast possible," he said during an interview Tuesday in the offices of *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*.

Mr. Murphy said he would focus on grass roots support rather than buying media time to win the nomination.

"While Jon Corzine was making hundreds of millions on Wall Street, I was on Main Street being a mayor, being a fireman, and a freeholder," he

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



Horace Corbin for The Times

SEEKING TO BE GOVERNOR...John Murphy from Morris County, GOP candidate for governor of New Jersey, seeks endorsements and support in Union County in preparation for upcoming Republican party caucuses in March and the primary election in June. Mr. Murphy met with leaders in Clark, Westfield and Scotch Plains on Tuesday. Pictured above, from left to right, are: Westfield Councilman James Foerst and Mr. Murphy.

YMCA Seeks to Expand Parking, Add Mezzanine for Wellness Ctr.

By FRED ROSSI
Specially Written for The Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — The Scotch Plains Zoning Board of Adjustment will hold a special meeting next month to, hopefully, complete hearings on the application by the Fanwood-Scotch Plains YMCA to enlarge its parking lot and also expand its facilities in a multi-phase project.

Last Thursday evening, after nearly

three hours of presentations of revised site plans by YMCA representatives and questions from residents living near the Martine Avenue facility, the board decided to hold a special meeting on Wednesday, March 16, so board members could discuss the application, which first came before the board last October, before allowing time for public comments on the YMCA's proposals.

The YMCA wants to expand its parking lot from 125 spaces to about 180 and also construct a mezzanine inside the facility's wellness center to allow for an increase in available equipment. The organization hopes to begin work on this phase of the project this summer.

The next phases of the YMCA's expansion plans, which are contingent on successful fundraising and other capital efforts, call for further parking expansion as well as the construction of a second floor on the section of the building nearest Martine Avenue. Longer-term plans call for expansion of the parking lot to the north, which would result in parking capacity of close to 300 spaces, and the construction of an addition to the rear existing building to house a gymnasium and gymnastics facility.

At last week's hearing, traffic consultant Harold Maltz, who had testified last year that there would be minimal traffic impact from the YMCA's expansion, specifically addressed concerns from some residents of Peach Court, a cul-de-sac located across from the YMCA, that an increase in traffic would hinder their ability to make left-hand turns from Martine Avenue onto Peach Court and left-hand turns from Peach Court

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



Fred Rossi for The Times

EXPANSION PROPOSED...The Fanwood-Scotch Plains YMCA on Martine Avenue is seeking approval from the Scotch Plains Zoning Board of Adjustment for an expansion of its parking lot, foreground and its facilities.

Redevel. Plan Vote Delayed

By ELIZABETH CORRELL
Specially Written for The Times

FANWOOD — Mayor Colleen Mahr and council members continued to hash out the details of the much-anticipated downtown redevelopment plan at the Fanwood Council meeting Tuesday night. They listened to input from residents, property owners and merchants.

Dave Roberts, from the engineering firm Schoor de Palma made a presentation to inform those watching the meeting on Channel 35, as well as people present at the meeting, of the recent changes made to the redevelopment plan, reflecting the requests of the town's residents, property owners and planning board.

The original redevelopment plan, established five years ago, has been changed in major ways. But one thing remains the same: as with the original plan, the revised plan does not identify any downtown properties for acquisition.

Property owners and merchants had feared that the borough would invoke eminent domain, and take their properties away from them so this will be welcome news to those individuals.

The total number of new units will be 71, with 20 located at the Dean Oil site and a maximum of 35 for the "mixed use" area of residential and retail along Martine and South Avenues.

The committee also heard from the public a "desire to leave Martine Avenue alone," said Mr. Roberts. As a result, those retail stores are going to be rehabilitated, not redeveloped.

The owners are now allowed to decide what improvements they want to do to their property, and choose their own developer to do the work. The rule is that five years from the date that the first project is completed in the area, owners must complete work on their property.

Mr. Roberts believes that after

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

SP-F School Bd. Budget Discussions Highlight Increases for Instruction

By MATT MARINO
Specially Written for The Times

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education held a special budget meeting last Thursday, which focused on the proposed 2005-2006 budget for the instructional component, including areas such as teacher salary, textbooks and special education needs.

Assistant Superintendent in Charge of Instruction, Dr. Margaret Hayes, detailed the various changes to next year's proposed budget. At present, this portion of the budget will see an increase of 6.16 percent over the 2004-2005 instructional budget, or approximately \$3,936,000.

Among notable items, the textbook portion of the budget stands to in-

crease as a result of the purchase of new textbooks for several classes, including social studies in grades three to five and music in grades one to two. Furthermore, the language arts program at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School will be adding three additional electives for seniors next year: "Pens to Lens," "The College Portfolio" and "The Struggle Between Good and Evil." As a result, books will be purchased for each of the new courses.

Spending increases are also expected in other areas, such as teacher salary, special education tuition, basic skills and athletic programs.

The biggest discussion was saved for benefits, which will increase by

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



David B. Corbin for The Times

A PROFESSIONAL DONATION...Former Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School football star Nathan Jones, now playing for the Dallas Cowboys, donated his jersey, No. 33, to his alma mater. Mr. Jones, who graduated from Rutgers University as an Academic All-American, also was a *Leader/Times* Scholar-Athlete of the Year. Pictured, left to right, are: SP-F Athletic Director Rob Harmer, Mr. Jones and SP-F Football Head Coach Steve Ciccotelli.

PAGE INDEX			
Regional	2-3	Real Estate	11-17
Editorial	4-5	Classifieds.....	18
Community ...	6-7	A&E.....	19-20
Obituary	8		
Education	9		
Sports	11-15		