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SLIPPERY MORNING... About four inches of snow fell in Scotch Plains on President's Day causing a slippery commute for those who had to work.

Sunday Hours at Scotch Plains Public Library May Be Near

By FRED ROSSI
Specially Written for The Times
SCOTCH PLAINS — Scotch Plains Library Director Meg Kolaya said she is hopeful that state grant funds will soon be available to allow the library to begin an experimental Sunday hours program. She told the Township Council at its budget meeting last week that the

month period. During that time, Mrs. Kolaya said, the library will track visitor and circulation levels in order to determine whether permanent Sunday hours are needed. The merger of the two libraries' databases will allow patrons to use both facilities, regardless of whether they have a Scotch Plains or a

Former State Senator Joseph Suliga Killed In Car Accident in Hometown of Linden

By FRED ROSSI
Specially Written for The Times
LINDEN — Former State Sen. Joseph Suliga (D-22) was killed in a traffic accident last Friday night in his hometown of Linden. Mr. Suliga, whose career in elective politics ended with his mid-campaign withdrawal from a 2003 re-election bid, was currently serving as chief financial officer in Linden. Mr. Suliga, a former Democratic member of the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the Linden City Council and Board of Edu-

cation, was elected to the State Assembly in 1993 and to the State Senate in 2001, representing the newly drawn 22nd Legislative District, which includes Scotch Plains and Fanwood. In the midst of his re-election bid against Scotch Plains Mayor Martin Marks, Mr. Suliga was involved in a September 2003 incident at an Atlantic City casino that led to his arrest for sexually harassing a woman patron and "fighting" with security personnel in an alleged alcohol-induced incident at the Trump Marina Casino. The casino later dropped the charges.

eral election. Union County Democratic Chairwoman Charlotte DeFilippo called Mr. Suliga's death "a devastating loss," saying he was "a compassionate advocate for those in need."

His former 22nd District colleagues also remembered Mr. Suliga, with Assemblywoman Linda Stender of Fanwood (D-22) calling him "a driving force who exhibited great vision

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SWEARING IN... On January 8, 2002 Senator Joseph Suliga took the Oath of Office from Senate President Dick Codey at the State House in Trenton. His wife Annmarie looks on.

Frazer House Renovation Moving Forward; Museum Eyed for Home

By FRED ROSSI
Specially Written for The Times
SCOTCH PLAINS — The Fanwood-Scotch Plains Rotary Club's planned renovation and restoration of the Revolutionary War-era Frazer House in Scotch Plains is moving forward. The organization has formed a committee to address what needs to be done so that the building on Raritan Road can be reopened.

for meetings, but Mrs. Coronato said she doubts this will be the case due to the size of the house. Instead, the house will be renovated and restored, along with the gardens surrounding

Rick Detwiler, and Mrs. Coronato said it is expected that the house's exterior will be worked on first before the interior is addressed. The Rotary Club hopes to spear-



MORE LIBRARY TIME?... State grant funds may allow the Scotch Plains Public Library to begin a pilot program of offering Sunday hours.

SHARE grant program money would be used jointly by the Fanwood and Scotch Plains libraries as part of a shared services agreement. Fanwood will use its money to pay for the costs of merging its library database with Scotch Plains and Scotch Plains will use its funds to expand its hours to Sundays for a 14-

Fanwood library card. Mrs. Kolaya also spoke to the council about the library's planned building improvements, which include the replacement of the sheet metal roof that has been leaking with increasing frequency in recent years and the installation of thermal-paneled windows. She called these upgrades, which

are estimated to cost \$750,000-\$800,000, "urgently needed," but added that if a large construction bond ordinance is approved by the State Legislature, those repairs could be partially funded by the bond proceeds along with a possible expansion of the Bartle Avenue facility. Mrs. Kolaya outlined two potential expansion projects, including one costing nearly \$2 million that would add an extra children's room near the present children's book area, make improvements near the library's front entrance and add two restrooms that will be fully compliant with federal disability access regulations.

A second, more expensive possibility, costing \$5.5 million, is a significant expansion of the building onto the plaza in front of the library that would include a major overhaul of both the building's interior and exterior, new meeting areas and additional space for bookshelves. Mayor Martin Marks said that before further discussions on either of the two more costly projects, it was important to "get a sense of what Scotch Plains residents want" at the library. At the beginning of her remarks, Mrs. Kolaya provided the council with statistics showing a marked increase in visitors and circulation. She said emphasis is being given to developing new services "to get people to walk in the door."

The library's 2004 circulation goal of 100,000, she said, was easily exceeded while the goal of having 14,000 library cardholders was also exceeded last year. Interlibrary loans and DVD/video loans were also far beyond the levels of recent years. Initially, there were proposals to sell the house to a private developer so that it could be refurbished while the remainder of the former zoo property, which is now owned by the township, was converted into a park. Mrs. Coronato said that the thinking now is to turn the house into a museum-type building. Originally, plans called for a refurbished Frazer House to be available to local groups

Scotch Plains Council Eyes Ordinance To Implement New Clean-Up System

By FRED ROSSI
Specially Written for The Times
SCOTCH PLAINS — The Scotch Plains Township Council introduced an ordinance on Tuesday evening that modifies the township's spring clean-up program by instituting a user fee-based system that will require residents to purchase an annual permit if they wish to dispose of large household items. The council will hold a public hearing on the ordinance at its Tuesday, March 8, meeting.

the program could cost the township more than \$300,000 this year and as much as \$500,000 in future years. At the council's meeting on Tuesday, Councilwoman Paulette Coronato said the increasing cost of the program "has become quite a concern" to the governing body. Mayor Martin Marks pointed out that the cost of the program rose 60 percent last year from 2003. Mrs. Coronato said continuing the program was "not fair to those who don't use this service."

Each permit will entitle the holder to dispose of up to 750 pounds of bulky waste, and township officials will encourage neighbors with less than the maximum weight of items to share the cost of the permits. Bulky waste will not be allowed to be placed at curbs any earlier than the Wednesday prior to the following Monday start date of a designated collection period. Fines for violating the weight limit, the permit system or the time limit for setting out items will be subject to fines of \$100 for the first offense, with second offenses punishable by fines of \$200 to \$1,000 and, possibly, five days of community service.

The revamped program became necessary, township officials have said, because its cost has become prohibitive in recent years due to a number of factors, including the lack of qualified bidders to perform the service and problems involving out-of-towners dumping their own household refuse at Scotch Plains curbs. It was estimated that maintaining

The new structure will be financed only by those homeowners with a need to dispose of bulky household items instead of being funded by all property owners via property taxes. "It's a fairer way of doing it," she said. Residents wishing to take part in the program, which occurs in June, will have to purchase a permit that

ment would probably double in 2006 while the PARSA payment should be lower next year. There is also a \$208,760 increase in group health insurance premiums for township employees and an increase of more than \$132,000 in police department salaries likely to result from negotiations currently underway on a new police contract. There will be several significant capital improvement projects this year, including improvements to the municipal building, the public works building and the township library. Mr. Atkins said his goal is to have these three projects underway or at least out to bid this year. With the council deciding to alter the township's bulky waste clean-up program to a fee-based system, Mr. Atkins' budget proposal is at least \$200,000 lower than it would have been had the program of past years been continued. The council introduced an ordinance this week changing the program, which takes place in June. It was anticipated that maintaining the program would have cost the township more than \$300,000 this year;

Introduction of Scotch Plains Budget Scheduled for March

By FRED ROSSI
Specially Written for The Times
SCOTCH PLAINS — Scotch Plains Township Council members, at their first budget meeting last week, voiced few if any disagreements with the 2005 municipal spending recommendations proposed in late January by Township Manager Thomas Atkins. Mr. Atkins is proposing a \$20.5 million budget for 2005, which is 3.98 percent higher than last year. While the council last Wednesday did not discuss any preliminary revenue figures or potential municipal property tax levels, it spent more than an hour reviewing several sections of the spending plan, including some of the areas accounting for much of this year's \$785,000 spending increase. Payments to the Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority (RVSA), the Plainfield Area Regional Sewerage Authority (PARSA) and the Plainfield Municipal Utilities Authority are increasing a combined \$163,875 this year. Mr. Atkins said the RVSA pay-

head public interest in the project before beginning a fundraising effort that will likely involve a mix of public donations and grant money. Last October, the Rotary Club held a reception to begin the process of raising public interest in the Frazer House project. And a video promoting the

As a result of what he admitted were annual budget recommendations that "may be too austere," Mr. Atkins said numerous responsibilities that could perhaps be handled by separate departments and offices had been spread among the existing staff at the municipal building. He said the township presently has about \$14 million in outstanding bond

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EXTRA TRAFFIC... North Avenue was slowed down for construction for a few days last week causing traffic delays.

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