



# THE SCOTCH PLAINS-FANWOOD TIMES

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timesnj.com

OUR 46TH YEAR - ISSUE NO. 02-2005

USPS 485200  
Periodical - Postage Paid at Scotch Plains, N.J.

Thursday, January 13, 2005

Published Every Thursday Since 1959  
www.goleader.com

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## Area Neighbors to be Heard At Cooper Hearing in March

By FRED ROSSI  
Specially Written for The Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — The township zoning board of adjustment hearing on an application by a developer to build a single-family home on private property located on an island in the middle of Cooper Road will resume in March, board members announced this week.

At that time, neighborhood residents will have an opportunity to present their reasons for opposing the development and also to question experts who testified in its favor.

A standing-room-only crowd of well over 100 residents filled the hearing room at the Municipal Building last Thursday evening. They listened to more than two-and-a-half hours of testimony from four witnesses on behalf of the applicant, Mark Lustbader of West Orange, and questioning of those four individuals by board members.

The Cooper Road property, which is slightly less than an acre in size, is on the western, or Edison side of the island and is situated on high, wooded ground. AT&T currently owns that half of the property while Scotch Plains owns the other half of the island.

The zoning board's initial hearing on the application was postponed two months ago after a group of neighborhood residents turned out in early

November and asked that they be given more time to prepare a more formal case of opposition to the de-



MAKING A POINT...Bahman Izadmehr, traffic expert for applicant Mark Lustbader, makes a point during last Thursday's meeting of the Scotch Plains Zoning Board of Adjustment. Mr. Lustbader's plan to construct a single-family home on the island in the middle of Cooper Road has drawn opposition from neighbors.

velopment. In the ensuing two months, several dozen neighbors formed a group, "Save The Island," to oppose the development.

Last month, a protest rally was held on the island and numerous lawn signs have appeared urging opposition to the proposed development.

The application requires a variance since the property was originally believed to be 39,338 square feet in area while lots in the neighborhood, which is an R-1 zone, are required to be at least 40,000 square feet in size.

Richard Cohen, the attorney for Mr. Lustbader who represents HUB

Realty, the potential buyer of the property, told the board at the start of last week's hearing that the property was only 662 square feet short of being in compliance with zoning requirements.

Later, it was later announced to a loud round of applause from residents in attendance, that the initial square footage calculation had erroneously included rights-of-way along Cooper Road, meaning that the property is smaller than initially believed and even further from the 40,000 square-foot minimum than first thought.

Mr. Cohen and Chris Kastrud, a professional engineer, both told *The Times* after the hearing last week that they could not yet estimate the additional shortfall in square footage.

Mr. Cohen noted that the township government had

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LISTENING INTENTLY...Township residents listen to testimony concerning a proposal by Mark Lustbader of West Orange to build a single-family home on an island situated in the middle of Cooper Road.

## Ferguson Describes Region Hit By Tsunami Like A War Zone; Proud of Troops for Relief Efforts

By HORACE CORBIN, PAUL PEYTON,  
SUZETTE STALKER  
AND BETSEY BURGDORF  
Specially Written for The Times

COLUMBO, SRI LANKA — In a live telephone interview from South Asia on Monday morning, Congressman Michael Ferguson described for *The Westfield Leader* the devastation

wrought by the tsunami on December 26 and the collective efforts by individuals from around the globe to help victims of the disaster.

Congressman Ferguson and his delegation, which included U.S. Senator Jon Corzine, received a firsthand account of the devastation that struck the region, where "It's as bad as could be imagined — a war zone; everything blown to smithereens," he remarked.

The congressman left Dulles International Airport in Washington, D.C. on Thursday night, traveling all day Friday, and arrived on Saturday to board a military cargo plane for a three-hour trip en route to the aircraft carrier *Abraham Lincoln*.

"This (the air trip) was not for luxury traveling. We had life preservers on, along with helmets, earplugs under our earphones, goggles and we were strapped in so tight I could not get a deep breath," the congressman said. He described the landing on the carrier as, "like a severe roller coaster."

On Saturday, Mr. Ferguson took a helicopter tour of Banda Aceh. "We landed at the airstrip in Banda Aceh, where they are bringing in most of the supplies and then distributing them to the camps which have been set up," he said.

He emphasized that United States military helicopters are getting the supplies where they need to go. The congressman noted that a U.S. Navy Seahawk helicopter carrying relief supplies to the region crashed Monday, but fortunately all 10-crew members survived.

Survivors have been spread out in camps. Officials on the ground feel that by spreading out the camps they will be able to reduce the spread of disease. Congressman Ferguson noted that U.S. helicopters are getting supplies to the victims of the devastated areas.

While in Banda Aceh, Congressman Ferguson met with a high government official/Indonesian minister and some local military and reviewed relief efforts. The delegation then re-

boarded choppers to take another aerial tour of Banda Aceh before heading back to the *Abraham Lincoln*.

Mr. Ferguson and the delegation had breakfast on Sunday with United States Ambassador to the Republic of Indonesia, B. Lynn Pascoe, to discuss relief efforts and the general political situation in Indonesia and what role the U.S. is playing and might play in the future.

Next, the congressman flew to Bangkok, Thailand where he stayed at the U.S. Embassy for meetings that covered a range of topics including malaria-related healthcare crisis in Aceh, anti-terrorism efforts underway countrywide, HIV/AIDS, and the efforts to combat child trafficking.

On Monday, Congressman Ferguson met with Dr. Sandy Waran, a friend from New Jersey who is a native of

Colombo, and others who are coordinating relief efforts of their own.

Congressman Ferguson said New Jerseyans should continue their support of the relief effort through financial donations and by contributing supplies, as well as their prayers for the survivors and those who were lost lives in the tsunami.

He explained that the most serious threats currently are outbreaks of malaria, cholera, and hepatitis. In this regard, the congressman will be in contact with New Jersey pharmaceutical companies to see if they are able to make antibiotics and medical supplies available to tsunami survivors.

The threat of disease is widespread due to the uncharacteristic wet conditions, Congressman Ferguson said.

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## Borough Council to Vote Feb. 8 On Downtown Redevelopment

By ELIZABETH CORRELL  
Specially Written for The Times

FANWOOD — An ordinance finalizing changes to the redevelopment plan for Fanwood's downtown will be up for a vote at the Tuesday, February 8, Borough Council meeting.

The opinions of the mayor, council and two residents on this issue were heard at the televised council meeting on Tuesday night.

Edward Tamallanca, who lives on Second Avenue across from the redevelopment area, spoke in favor of redevelopment, and commended the mayor and Fanwood's Downtown Advisory Committee for the open public forums that were held last fall, allowing residents to "give their two cents."

He feels that the revenue that profitable businesses in the downtown would bring to support the borough's

public schools is essential, citing a responsibility to the town's children.

As for how the downtown currently looks, he said, "You go over the hill by Dunkin' Donuts, and say to yourself 'How can we live like this?'"

Greg Cummings, a resident of Helen Street, was a member of the committee overseeing the downtown redevelopment plan in 1993 and said that this project has been "a long time coming."

Regarding residents being given a forum to speak their minds, Mr. Cummings enthused, "It has been exciting to be a part of the process, and I'm behind it 100 percent."

This level of enthusiasm and support was heard from other members of the council.

Councilman Joseph Higgins, who currently heads the Downtown Advisory Committee, feels positive about the plan being put "through a very

rigorous public input process."

He reported that the two public forums were very well attended, with 125 attendees at the first meeting, and 75 at the second.

Councilman Jack Molenaar said that the consultants were surprised at the high level of turn out at the meetings.

"Opening up this process to the public made a big difference," he said. "We heard that people want to reduce overall density, to be sensitive to the existing neighborhood, and to be pedestrian friendly."

The changes that were made to the redevelopment plan reflect these wishes.

"What I like about this plan," said Councilwoman Donna Dolce, "is that it is a product of the people, a collaborative effort," and that "it returns the responsibility for the redevelopment of the downtown to the land owners."

She pointed out that there is a timeline given to the owners within which they must have the work completed.

In contrast, Councilman Stuart Kline stated he "may support it, but very reluctantly. I have serious reservations."

He said that he had not yet heard what the incentives for the property owners were going to be, and that tax abatements had not been discussed.

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OATH OF OFFICE...Mayor Colleen Mahr of Fanwood administers the oath of office to members of the borough's fire department, above, and volunteer rescue squad members during the annual reorganization meeting January 1 at Borough Hall.



## Township Council Authorizes Deer Hunts In Ashbrook and Watchung Reservations

By FRED ROSSI  
Specially Written for The Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — The Township Council on Tuesday approved resolutions authorizing permit applications for deer hunts in both the Ashbrook Reservation and the Watchung Reservation.

A deer reduction program in the Ashbrook Reservation would be the first effort to thin a herd that has spread in recent years beyond the reservation into adjoining residential neighborhoods and local streets.

By a 3-1 vote, with Councilwoman Nancy Malool voting against the resolutions, the Council authorized Union County, on behalf of the township, to apply to the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife for a special deer management permit to conduct a hunt in both reservations in the next few

months. Acknowledging what he called "a difficult issue," Mayor Martin Marks said the goal of the deer reduction program is to bring the number of deer in both reservations to about 20 per square mile.

He cited a number of reasons for the hunt, including cars colliding with deer near the Ashbrook Reservation; destruction of the underbrush, which the Mayor said can be ecologically damaging; and what Mr. Marks called "the mess left behind by the deer," which he said was "rather unpleasant and perhaps a health risk."

The mayor made his remarks in response to a lengthy plea from Art Lieberman, a Cooper Road resident, for the township to consider other alternatives to a deer hunt. Saying the issue is "full of moral

concerns," Mr. Lieberman said there were other ways to control the burgeoning deer population in the Ashbrook Reservation, including increased road signage warning drivers of deer crossing local streets; the erection of a fence along Martine Avenue between Raritan Road and the Clark border; and a deer sterilization effort.

Mayor Marks said he was not convinced that some of Mr. Lieberman's solutions were viable.

Councilwoman Malool, in voting against the resolutions as she has in prior years, said she was "not comfortable with the hunt taking place close to residential areas."

In other business, Township Manager Thomas Atkins said he has been getting numerous telephone calls from residents about potential changes in the township's leaf collection program, especially the possibility of mandatory leaf bagging.

New federal and state stormwater management regulations are forcing municipalities to address their leaf collection efforts. But while the Township Council has not yet settled on a solution, Mr. Atkins said mandatory bagging, which he called "a tremendous burden," is "the last option I want to bring to the council and ask

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### BREAKING NEWS: Michael Chertoff, Former Westfielder, nominated for Homeland Security Post



HOMELAND SECURITY...This Tuesday, President George W. Bush nominated Westfielder Michael Chertoff to head Homeland Security for the nation. Mr. Chertoff is pictured above with his wife Meryl in 2001. See Page 4.

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