

## 4 Seek 2 Seats for Scotch Plains Representation on School Board

By PAUL J. PEYTON  
 Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS - Four township residents will battle for two seats on the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education in the Tuesday, April 17, school election. Fanwood resident Rob O'Connor is running unopposed for re-election to his seat.

Two incumbents - BOE President Tom Russo, a local attorney who has served nine years on the board, and Craig Nowlin - will not seek re-election. The candidates for election are: Jane

Costello of Elizabeth Avenue, vice president of the McGinn Elementary School Parent-Teacher Association (PTA); Nancy Bauer of Canterbury Drive, president of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School ice hockey association; John Kubie of Shirwood Drive and David Gorbunoff of Algonquin Drive.

Mr. Kubie and Mr. Gorbunoff ran unsuccessfully last year for BOE seats, receiving 630 and 690 votes, respectively, in a race that involved seven candidates for three seats. Mr. Gorbunoff is a 15-year resident of the

township and has coached the Y's girls' basketball team, served on the Wesley Hall Board of Directors and volunteered at the township library.

Mr. Kubie has been a Scotch Plains resident since 1992 and last year ran on the issue of technology, saying each child in the district should have a laptop.

In Westfield, incumbents Ginny Leiz, the board's vice president, Richard Soloman and Julia Walker, all filed for re-election and will run unopposed. Board members since 2001, Mrs. Leiz and Mr. Soloman seek their third terms. Mrs. Walker joined the board when she was elected to an unexpired term in 2003.

Before joining the board, Mrs. Leiz was active with the Westfield High School Parent-Teacher-Student Organization.

In Mountainside, incumbents Raymond Haggar, Gene Nagel and Carmine Venes will run unopposed. Mr. Haggar, a 15-year borough resident, has served on the board since 2001. He holds a bachelor's degree in engineering and a master's degree in business administration. Mr. Venes, a former elementary-school teacher in Kenilworth and guidance counselor in Rahway, retired in 2003. Mr. Nagel was elected to the board in 2004.

Garwood residents will face a choice of five candidates for three seats, as well as two candidates for an unexpired term. Incumbents Debbie Courtney, Linda Koenig face challenges from Chris LaSpina, John Sullivan and Sandro Villarrut.

Former board member James Matheson opposes board member Lisa Marano in the race for the unexpired term.

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times was unable to reach candidates in competitive races by press time.

## SP Council Passes Parking Restrictions Near SPFHS

By FRED T. ROSSI  
 Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS - The township council, by a 4-1 vote, passed an ordinance Tuesday night following a nearly four-hour public meeting that will restrict parking on multiple streets surrounding Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School. The council said it was taking the action in an effort to spur "serious discussions" about the parking situation with officials from the high school, the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education and Fanwood officials.

Officials have said the ordinance, which will affect Church Street, Portland Avenue, Watchung View Place, West Court, Sunrise Court, Old Farm Road, Cedar Street and Concord Road, is an attempt to address com-



Maria Woehr for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times  
**TO TURF OR NOT TO TURF...** Approximately 100 residents express their opinions, including support and dissent, to the Scotch Plains Recreation Commission regarding the proposal for artificial turf and lighting addition to the Southside Field during a meeting at the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Monday night.

## Scotch Plains Residents Express Cheers, Fears Over Field Plans

By MARIA WOEHR  
 Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS - Close to 100 Scotch Plains residents voiced their opinions Monday night over the proposed renovations of the Southside Field at a public hearing held by the Scotch Plains Recreation Commission at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School.

"I would help roll out the red carpet on this project," said Cory Krutis, a Scotch Plains resident. "This is a much-deserved program for our town and our children."

"Our concerns are that our houses are very close to the field. In the past, we have had an overflow of parking

on Chapel Hill Road, and we would like our property to be respected and our yards not to be used as paths with the increased traffic. We are also concerned about noise pollution and how the renovations will impact the property surrounding it," said James Lee, who lives next to the south side field.

The recreation commission proposed enhancements for the field, including building a soccer complex with a turf field to prevent injury and allow more games and practices, lighting for additional games and practices, extending parking to 65 parking spots and building restrooms, a storage area and a playground for children, according to Robert Lyles of Hatch Mott MacDonald, the engineering firm for the project.

The entire project is estimated to cost between \$1.3 to \$1.5 million. Recreation Director Ray Poerio said. The project would be paid for through the \$200,000 the township collects annually through its Open Space Trust Fund.

Residents who live close to the field during the hearing expressed concerns about additional lighting. Officials expect the lighting to add extra practice time and game time for

teams and address safety concerns. The lights would remain on until 10 p.m. every night.

According to Bob Zoeller of Musco Lighting, the lighting consultant on the project, the lights are 40 percent more energy efficient and would address spill and glare concern. "Our system is the most advanced lighting for spill light. Trees will also add buffering during the season," he said.

Scotch Plains has 1,879 players of all ages who play a total of 90 games a week and have 150 practices a week, according to Jim Fawcett, president of the Scotch Plains Soccer Association.

"In 30 years we have not added new fields. We have rehabilitated fields but all of our fields are in dual use and shared with baseball and softball. Our fields are not meant to be used seven days a week," he said. He said house games are reduced by 50 percent due to "rain outs," which include weekend days when games cannot be played because the field is flooded from weekday rains.

"We would really appreciate it if the soccer fields were redone. Sometimes it is really difficult to play on."

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## LaGrande Contractor Could Face Legal Action from FW

By TED RITTER  
 Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

FANWOOD - The borough recreation commission on Tuesday night discussed ongoing delays with LaGrande Park ballfield improvements.

The commission's borough council liaison, Joseph Higgins, said the general contractor, Dumor Contracting, who was supposed to complete the project in October, still has not completed the irrigation system, infield work, sod leveling, installation of foul poles and site cleanup.

Mr. Higgins said borough officials have sent the contractor a formal letter advising the company that it is late and at risk of facing legal action and being "terminated" on the project.

Pointing to the ongoing project delays, Mayor Colleen Mahr said, "They ended up sub-contracting everything out; that's their problem."

While she said she and the borough council are "extremely agitated" with the contractor, she estimated that "no more than a week's work" remains to

be done at this point and the contractor is "not even 50 percent paid yet."

Therefore, the mayor said the borough would like to have the current contractor complete the job before the start of the spring sports season in April, rather than risk delays in pursuing a new contract with another company.

"Our attorney is like a rabid dog [on the contractor] right now," she said, adding, "We're going to give them another week or two."

The mayor said the borough plans to "open [the renovated LaGrande facility] with great fanfare, which it deserves."

On a related note, Mr. Higgins said the borough has had to address another problem with geese feeding on the new sod field at LaGrande Park. "They were loving that [fresh grass],"

Mr. Higgins said borough officials have gone out to the park to "shoo the geese away" several times. "It looks like it might have worked," he said, noting that birds have not returned.

Mayor Mahr said she would "like

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Wayne Baker for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times  
**BEST OF ISRAELI WINES...** Congregation Beth Israel sponsored an Israeli Wine Festival last Sunday. Pictured, Marty Siegmeyer, brand manager with Allied Importers, describes a wine as Robin Sabony of Scotch Plains tastes it. Mel Zakarin of Watchung, right, reviews a description of another wine.

## New Enrollment Provision Cost \$1 Mil., DeSordi Says

By NORDETTE N. ADAMS  
 Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS - Scotch Plains-Fanwood Schools Business Administrator Anthony DeSordi told the public and board of education Tuesday night that the district's "ability to spend has been pared" despite receiving \$123,000 in increased state aid. A new formula from the state for adjusted enrollment alone strips the district of about \$1 million in funding, he said.

The total tentative maximum budget for next year is \$70,898,166. However, the optimum proposed budget total that Mr. DeSordi presented at the BOE's first budget meeting is \$72,278,554, a 4.73-percent increase over last year's budget. The adjusted enrollment formula changes, combined with the 4-percent tax levy cap, results in a budget deficit of about \$1.4 million to the latest tentative budget, he said.

He said the state's new adjusted-enrollment formula affects how much money districts receive from the state for increased enrollment. The new formula uses a weighted average that no longer increases school funding directly in proportion to school growth. Funding for districts with increased enrollment is no longer based on an even student-to-dollars ratio, Mr. DeSordi said.

The district anticipates "145 more students" in 2007-2008, but it will only receive funds for 49 more students, he said. At approximately \$11,000 per additional student on an even ratio, the school system would receive about \$1.6 million. Under the weighted-average system, the district receives \$561,883, about \$1 million less.

Speaking of the \$1.4-million deficit, Mr. DeSordi said the district might be able to eliminate about half without much difficulty, but trimming the other half from the budget would mean cutting programs and staff. According to Randall Kanter, director of human resources, and Mr. DeSordi, 78 percent of the district's budget is for salaries

and fringe benefits. Increased enrollment drives increasing staff, they said.

"Our 4-percent increase is basically eaten up by increases to our staff," Mr. DeSordi said.

Board member Rob O'Connor asked, "So, if we don't make some hard choices this year, each year it's going to get progressively worse?"

Mr. DeSordi said, "Yes." Board member Linda Nelson said Governor Jon Corzine and the state legislature say the tax-levy cap is designed to make school districts operate more effectively, but said she doesn't think ineffectiveness is an issue for SP-F. "We will not look at how we can operate more effectively because we feel we've been operating effectively. We will have to look at how we can operate differently."

"We get so little outside funding. We rely on taxes," she said, adding that unlike middle-income districts, SP-F does not receive "hefty" state funding. Board members pondered how the district would deal with asking for more funds in the future using "second questions" on budget election ballots. Beginning in the 2008-2009 school year, a new state law will re-

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## SP-F BOE Approves Next Year's School Calendar

By NORDETTE N. ADAMS  
 Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS - Last Thursday night, at its regular meeting, the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education approved next year's school calendar. The board also authorized M. Disko Associates, an engineering firm, to perform initial services for improving the athletic fields and the track at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School.

The approved 2007-2008 school calendar - known as draft B - marks

Thursday, June 19, 2008, as the last day of school, March 21 to 28 as spring break and school as open on Election Day, November 6, this fall. The rejected calendar, draft A, marked Tuesday, June 24, as the last day of school, placed spring break in April and slated Election Day as closed for students but open for staff as a professional-training day.

Rearranging staff professional-training days and keeping school open for both students and staff on Election Day contributed to making June 19 the last day rather than June 24. Superintendent of Schools Margaret Hayes said that in planning the year, the administration tried to balance such factors as sensitivity to religious holidays, the desire of having staff training on days earlier in the school year when they would be "more useful" and the dates the state scheduled standardized testing. While considering the calendar at BOE meetings in the last month, board members agreed, "No calendar will please everybody."

In previous meetings, both parents and school board members objected to school closing later in the year. They cited reasons such as the latter part of June being too hot and that many local summer camps opened before June 24.

The administration had both calendar drafts posted to its website during the month of February and received e-mails from parents expressing concerns about everything from the tim-

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MEET YOUR CONGRESSMAN... Scotch Plains' Evergreen Elementary School's staff and students recently welcomed Rep. Michael Ferguson (R-7) to their school. In an informal question-and-answer setting, they discussed New Jersey state government and politics, as well as national political issues.



David Samsky for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times  
**TALKING HISTORY...** The Scotch Plains Historical Society met at the Scotch Hills Golf Club House to hear Joseph Qutub of Fanwood speak about his life from Palestine to America. Pictured, left to right, are: Connie Klock, Historical Society vice president, Mr. Qutub and Richard Bousquet, Historical Society president.

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