

Quattrocchi, Russitano Focus On Spending, No-Bid Work

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

COUNTY — Although Republicans have not held a seat on the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders in 10 years, GOP freeholder candidates Patricia Quattrocchi of Garwood and John Russitano of Westfield are focusing on a jump in county spending, taxes and the awarding of no-bid contracts the past few years by the all-Democrat 9-0 board.

During an interview last Thursday at the offices of *The Westfield Leader*, Mrs. Quattrocchi, making her fourth consecutive run at a board seat, said county spending continues to be a big issue for her.

"[The freeholders] surpassed the mark of over a million dollars a day [in spending]," she said.

"Union County right now is in the number nine position of having the highest county taxes in the country — that's out of 795,000 counties that have over 65,000 residents," Mrs. Quattrocchi said. "I don't want to be number 10 or number nine for highest taxes. I want to be number nine for having great reading scores in Union County; I want to be number nine for providing employment in Union County. I want to be number nine for having the lowest crime rate."

She said the lower increase in the tax levy, 3 percent this year, "doesn't make up for what they have been doing for the past eight, nine or 10 years."

The candidate said the biggest area of spending are the salaries of "middle and upper management."

Mrs. Quattrocchi said a Dunn and Bradstreet retired purchasing agent looked at three months of county expenses on his own and submitted his findings to the board.

"What he found was that, for instance, five different companies that they were buying bottled water from, and four different companies that they were buying supplies from for their computers. So they need to consolidate their spending," she said.

When asked what the role of county government should be, Mr. Russitano said the county "pretty much umbrellas the towns" in the services it offers. He said he does not understand why he pays 18 cents on the dollar in taxes for municipal services but 20 cents for county services. He said the county's role is to provide services in emergencies, such as snowstorms.

"The county should not be so involved and should not be taking so much of your tax money," he said.

Mrs. Quattrocchi said the county is responsible for "the health, safety and welfare of the residents of the county," such as maintaining roads and homeland security, including the Port of Newark/Elizabeth.

"What we really need to take a look at [are] the things that the county is doing that have created unprecedented growth in the size of county government," she said.

On the issue of shared services, Mr. Russitano, employed by the Westfield Department of Public Works, said he would like to see the county help towns in paving roadways to help save money.

"The county absolutely could come in and help towns pave their roads for the cost of what it would cost the county," he said. "The county makes a little bit of money. We [would] pay the bare minimum for the workers, materials and for the use of the equipment," thus eliminating the need for private contractors. "I think it would save individual towns a lot of money."

He said that currently, contractors pave the roads, "and three or four years later, the roads are split. They're not working out."

Mrs. Quattrocchi said she wants the county to produce "an actual plan" with the recently garnered \$300,000 state grant for shared-services initiatives.

She said that residents in small towns "are afraid that they are going to be lost in shuffle if these bigger towns get too involved [in taking over some services]."

Mr. Russitano said the county could help with smaller police departments by patrolling additional streets, while municipal police could do the same on some of the county roads.

Mrs. Quattrocchi said Cranford now operates the Garwood building department, while Westfield runs the borough's health department. She said towns like Westfield, Summit and New Providence could do the same by sharing services like the tax assessor and tax collector.

Both candidates said they oppose laying people off when developing shared-service plans.

They also discussed professional-services contracts.

"They are no-bid contracts. What is disappointing is that the no-bid contracts for professional services are the one area that state law let slide through on the county level," Mrs. Quattrocchi said. She said architectural fees for the new bridge recently installed in Nomahegan Park for bikers and walkers "were almost the cost of the bridge."

She said the building to be constructed on North Avenue across from the Westfield Diner for the new home of the county-clerk annex, county superintendent of schools, etc., and rooftop parking for emergency-services personnel "really doesn't fit in with what the people who are planning downtown Westfield had in mind for their wonderful downtown."

Mr. Russitano said he feels no-bid contracts has gotten "so out of control" whereby the cost have jumped due to overpricing and additional costs. Mrs. Quattrocchi said campaign-

finance reports as published on the state's ELEC webpage show significant amounts of donations "by the guys who are actually getting the contracts." She called this practice "mind-boggling" and "blatant" by the firms getting county contracts.

"I think sometimes some of these people who have been awarded some of these contracts get too comfortable. Their work gets sloppy...because they know they are going to get the contract regardless of whether they turn it in on time," she said.

She said she would like county contracts evaluated with "some new faces being awarded."

On the education front, Mrs. Quattrocchi said the county needs to develop more secondary-education options for students not attending four-year colleges. She said the county is concentrating more on the Magnet High School and a new medical-training program than on vocational-technical programs such as carpentry, dry-wall and auto mechanics.

"I mean when your car breaks down, who are you going to call? Are you going to call your accountant?" she asked. "Somebody has to prepare the kids for the future in these areas."

Mr. Russitano said lowering the school tax burden would be a big help to towns in reducing school taxes.

Mrs. Quattrocchi said she would "like just once" for the county not to increase its budget. "Here in New Jersey, we are taxed to death," she said.

She said the Democratic freeholders should have gone after additional grants, such as ones for homeland security, and gone on record as disagreeing with Governor Jon Corzine on his plans to lease or sell state assets, as well on the Governor's 2006 sales-tax increase.

"The squeaky wheel gets oil first," she said.

Freeholder hopeful Robert Reilly of Winfield Park and county sheriff candidate Peter Ljoi of Summit join Mrs. Quattrocchi and Mr. Russitano on the GOP's county ticket.

To see full interviews and candidate bios, visit goleader.com/07election.



DRUMROLL PLEASE... The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Music Boosters Association and Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School music department invite community members to the ninth-annual marching-band festival and competition next Sunday, October 14, at 1 p.m. at the SPFHs football field. The day features area marching bands that will compete in the United States Scholastic Band Association circuit. The SPFHs Raider Marching Band, whose drum line is pictured above, will perform its 2007-2008 show, "Quest," highlighting music from *The Man of La Mancha* and *Zorro*. For more information, visit spfk12.org/musicboosters.

DesRoches Runs for Assembly

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cent hike in toll costs.

On the state debt, he said the state borrowed \$2 billion this year for the Homestead Rebate program, which he referred to as an "election-year bribe" to win votes. He blamed a lack of oversight on the School Construction Corporation and its debt-ridden operation as another reason for the debt.

Mr. DesRochers said the state pension system "needs to be funded" but that abuses on the system must be stopped. He cited Rahway business administrator Peter Pelissier, also the head of the city's redevelopment agency, who state officials ordered to pay back more than \$300,000 in pension funds. Officials discovered that Mr. Pelissier had retired but was still receiving significant fees as a consultant for the redevelopment agency.

The candidate said some 700 state officials collect a pension from another job. He said he supports a "one job, one [state] pension" rule.

He said a new school-aid formula that is "fairer" to districts would help ease the property-tax burden. Mr. DesRochers said funding for Abbott Districts was not intended for the construction of a \$1.5-million football field in Newark. "You need to cut the abuses out of that system and make sure it is

more equally distributed to places like Westfield and Clark, Scotch Plains and Fanwood and Cranford," he said. The candidate said cutting funding to Abbott Districts that are failing "is the only way to get these towns to wake up" — it would increase their taxes, thus forcing a community response, he said.

Mr. DesRochers also said weeding out "patronage and nepotism" in local and county government is needed to reduce taxes.

"I wouldn't be 100-percent opposed to saying [let's] limit county government's role, because what they are essentially doing [are] the same services the towns are supposed to provide," Mr. DesRochers said.

On the issue of corruption among those state legislators arrested and either convicted or facing trial, Mr. DesRochers said he is disappointed with Governor Jon Corzine and Senate President Richard Codey for failing to stand up to their party and force the resignations of Democratic Senators Sharpe James and Wayne Bryant. Both senators have been indicted and face trial on corruption charges; party officials, including the Governor, forced two assemblymen caught in an FBI bribery sting to quit.

"At this point [James and Bryant] are still receiving a salary, they are still earning pension credits and they've been indicted by a prosecutor who is 108-and-0 [in gaining successful convictions]," Mr. DesRochers said.

He said the Democrats' dual-office-holding ban, signed by Governor Corzine, has "no teeth" because it grandfathered incumbent legislators. He said the dual office holdings go along with the Christmas-tree grants that help local officials gain re-election.

On legislators holding positions or contracts within their district, the candidate said, "No senators should be able to enrich themselves based on [their] position as senators above and beyond what [their] salary is."

He said "clamping down on corruption" and eliminating campaign contributions for lucrative state contracts, a system known as pay-to-play, would cut annual state spending by up to 10 percent. Mr. DesRochers also said professional services should be sent to bid like any other contract, with a requirement that a minimum of two to three bids be received.

For complete interviews and candidate bios, see goleader.com/07election.



FANWOOD FIRST COUPLE... Mr. and Mrs. Fanny Wood — rescue-squad volunteer Bob Kruthers and his wife Grace — lead the bicycle parade down Martine Avenue during the Fanny Wood Day celebrations on Sunday. Mr. and Mrs. Kruthers, who both volunteer in the borough, have been married for 59 years.

Rec. Commission Reports Low Signups for Classes

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

FANWOOD — Borough Recreation Director Bob Budiansky reported at Tuesday's recreation commission meeting that fall classes in comic-book illustration for children and teens, belly dancing for adults and chair yoga for seniors have been cancelled due to low registration.

In addition, he said, line dancing has five seniors registered. Water exercise is abundant with senior interest with about nine people, up from last spring, which had been cancelled for only having three people enrolled.

Tai Chi, taught by instructor Sue Chow, has a high registration of seniors; however, only three are Fanwood residents. Due to Ms. Chow's following, students come from neighboring towns.

"Tai Chi is a disappointment," said Mr. Budiansky. "We're not pulling in the residents."

Still, non-residents are allowed to join, he said.

"Fanwood does it because Fanwood cares," said Commissioner Bruce

Zakarie.

Mr. Budiansky said he hopes to increase awareness and interest, specifically for adult classes. "It's really hard to get adults to sign up," he said. "You have got to offer things that are a little different."

Children and teen programs offer a variety of classes, and it works, he said. The robotics and control-systems workshop club, which teaches kids in grades 5 through 8 to build and program autonomous robots and user-controlled systems using LEGO education materials, is sold out. Art club for kids is a success, with 13 children, and video-game-creation workshop club has about 12 kids learning the fundamentals of software design and video-game creation, Mr. Budiansky said.

Junior jazzercise and fashion illustration have only about two to three young people signed up for each class.

The two parent-and-child classes have a fair attendance. Mommy-and-me art, with two adults and three children, allows mothers and their children to bond while creating art using markers, paint, collage and sculpture. The mommy-and-me belly-dancing class has four adults and five children signed up.

Fall classes have already begun, but residents can log onto visitfanwood.com/recreation for more information on the next session.

To understand residents' interests in classes and activities, the commission is working with the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School DECA chapter, a marketing association, to formulate a survey to determine the awareness of the sports leagues available to residents, understand the leagues they want and the sports they want for children, adults, teens and special-needs people, along with the desired types of recreational clubs. Through the project, for school credit, students will research how to conduct a survey, formulate questions and tabulate results, officials said.

Plans are underway for the annual Halloween parade and costume and jack o' lantern contest. Parade participants will meet October 31 at 5:30 p.m. at the library parking lot, with the parade beginning at 6:15 p.m., ending up at the circle in LaGrande Park on 2nd Street, where contests will ensue at about 6:30. The commission will have 250 \$2 bills on hand to give to those with the best costumes and decorated pumpkins.

The Service League Thrift Shop on 2nd Street in Scotch Plains has a fresh stock of children's and adult costumes for sale, officials said.

The commission also began discussing the winter holiday celebration. This year's event will not take place inside the Fanwood Museum. The Historic Preservation Commission drafted a letter to the recreation commission stating since the building is officially a museum, it cannot grant its use for the holiday celebration.

The lack of a location for Santa to greet kids for photos is holding up the scheduling of an official date, which usually falls on the first Sunday of December. This year, the first Sunday is December 2. The alternate date is December 9. The date will depend on the availability of renting tents from the National Guard and the JCC.

Residents will gather at the train station from 3 to 5 p.m., for live music from the high-school band, craft sales, refreshments and the usual finale of the lighting of the tree will occur.



Linda B. Condillo for The Times
MUM'S THE WORD... The Deacon Andrew Hetfield House in Mountainside displays mums and pumpkins for sale. Proceeds support the historical site, which dates back to 1760. The public can tour the Hetfield House and other Union County historic sites during the annual "Four Centuries in a Weekend" open-house event on October 21 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and October 22 from noon until 5 p.m.

POLICE BLOTTER

Scotch Plains

Wednesday, September 26, a resident of Westfield Road reported that she received several threatening phone calls over the last few weeks at all hours of the day and night.

Thursday, September 27, a resident of Plainfield Avenue reported that someone accessed her bank account and made several withdrawals totaling \$900.

Friday, September 28, Linsey Lofton, 27, of Hillside was arrested for possession of a weapon and making terroristic threats. According to police, officers responded to a report of a fight in an East Second Street apartment and arrested Lofton, who police said was attempting to hit the victim with a baseball bat. He was transported to the Union County jail after he failed to post bail.

Saturday, September 29, Carlos Pacheco, 19, of Ridgewood was arrested for driving while intoxicated after a motor vehicle stop, at which time officers detected a strong odor of alcohol. Pacheco was transported to headquarters where he was processed and released, police said.

Saturday, September 29, Shawn Smith, 35, of Plainfield was arrested on an outstanding warrant after a motor vehicle stop. He was transported to headquarters where he was processed and released on a summons, police said.

Saturday, September 29, Drew Miller, 22, of Scotch Plains was arrested for possession of a weapon after officers responded to a report of suspicious activity. He was transported to headquarters, where he posted bail and was released.

Fanwood

Tuesday, September 25, a resident of Westfield Road reported that someone used her credit card to purchase \$284 worth of merchandise without her authorization. According to police, someone also attempted to open a store credit card using her name. Police are investigating the matter.

Wednesday, September 26, Trevald S. Parrish-Lyles, 18, of Plainfield was arrested and charged with providing police with false information after a motor vehicle stop.

Friday, September 28, Sharell O. Gaddy, 18, of Plainfield was arrested on outstanding warrants out of Bridgewater and South Plainfield after a motor vehicle stop on Terrill Road.



VIEW FROM THE TOP... Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times photographer David Samsky flies 1,000 feet overhead of the Festival Fair, last Sunday, capturing Westfield at the intersection of Broad and Elm streets.

SP-F Board of Education

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potential before-and-after programs.

"[The creative summer workshop is] an enriching program and is helping the district with its mission of creating lifelong learners," Mr. Torella said.

He said a goal for the upcoming year would be to get fliers and information out to parents by January, so that families who want to plan in advance for the summer could do so.

"It's amazing to see the energy and enthusiasm throughout the summer. My thanks to you and your staff," Superintendent Schools Margaret Hayes said. The board authorized holding the summer workshop program again in 2008.

Thomas Beese, director of special services, gave a report on Resolve, the counseling services for elementary-level students. The program has run for five years, and Mr. Beese said that the organization uses feedback from students, parents and staff to "tweak the program each year." Current additions to the program include e-mail access for faculty members, enabling them to respond to parent questions or concerns, and more individual-session time for students.

In other news, the board received a \$3,000 grant from the state-based, anti-tobacco organization REBEL ("Reaching Everyone By Exposing Lies") to be used toward different educational programming demonstrating the dangers of smoking to students beginning at the elementary schools. More information on REBEL can be found at njnotforsale.com, the organization's official website.

During the public comments section of the meeting, Robert Papen questioned the status of lights for the SPFHs field.

Board President Trip Whitehouse responded that, at the time, the board had not approved any lighting or budgeted money for it. He said residents would have time to address the board if the possibility of lighting came up in the future.

"There has not been any discussion, and a future decision will not be made in one night," Mr. Whitehouse said.

In addition, resident Myrna Gordon expressed concern over the turfing project taking place on the high-school field, saying there could be health hazards and that the materials used could be carcinogenic.

"We're trying to protect our children," she said. Saying "a lot" of major universities have switched back from turf to grass, she provided the board with information on the topic and asked that it "delay [the project] until you really understand what it is about."

The board also approved various textbooks for the 2007-2008 school year, including "Neighborhoods: Near

Saturday, September 29, a business on the 100 block of South Avenue reported that a black male, in his 30s, with a slim build, light complexion and dreadlocks shoplifted approximately \$219 worth of merchandise. According to police, witnesses obtained the license plate of the get-away car and charges are pending.

Monday, October 1, Michael J. Hooks, 52, of Englewood was arrested and charged with DWI after a motor vehicle stop on Terrill Road. Hooks was transported to headquarters where he was processed and released to a responsible adult.

Monday, October 1, Gildardo E. Jimenez, 54, of Colonia was arrested on an outstanding Newark warrant after a motor vehicle stop on the 100 block of North Avenue.

Clark

Monday, October 1, a man allegedly attempted to run down two police officers in Clark, prompting the officers to fire their weapons at the vehicle before apprehending the suspect a short time later near the Garden State Parkway entrance ramp.

The suspect, Donald Andrews, 41, already had been sought for allegedly attempting to run over two Newark police officers in September.

According to a report published in *The Star-Ledger*, Andrews stopped at the Clark home of an off-duty Plainfield police officer about 2:30 p.m. The officer apparently informed Andrews he was wanted in the Newark case, and when he attempted to arrest him, the suspect fled in his truck.

A 911 call brought two Clark police sergeants to the scene, who Andrews allegedly attempted to run down with his truck, the *Star-Ledger* report stated. Police fired several shots at Andrews' vehicle as he drove away en route to the northbound Garden State Parkway. He was apprehended, as he reached the ramp when three police cruisers surrounded his truck.

Andrews was transported to University Hospital in Newark, where he was treated for minor injuries to his right arm and released, according to police. The *Star-Ledger* report said authorities do not believe any of the police officers' bullets struck the suspect, but that his arm injury may have been caused by shattered glass from the truck. The suspect was in the custody of Clark authorities.

SP Council

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ment and second floor and limited use available elsewhere inside.

"It's not a historic site," he added, saying that it would be expensive to renovate the existing building, but "we would still have a limited facility."

Senior and recreation programs, he said, have "outgrown the [existing] facility's ability" to provide adequate space.

Councilwoman Nancy Malool said it was important not to "dismiss the sentimental factor held by some [residents] about the existing building. We hope to capture the spirit and meaning of the existing facility in a new building."

Councilwoman Paulette Coronato agreed, saying, "There is great history there that can be celebrated in a new building."

Mr. Strauss said it was very possible that the new building's exterior could be designed to look similar to the white clapboard appearance of the existing facility.

Councilman Kevin Glover, liaison to the senior advisory committee, said township seniors presently "lack a place where they can go and get together," and said it was important to remember "that we're building a senior citizen center" at Scotch Hills.

He said from his conversations with senior citizens, it seemed they favored locating a senior center adjacent to the township's library near downtown, but Mr. Poerio said that idea had never come up at senior-advisory committee meetings.

Mayor Martin Marks said that RBA must know that "there needs to be a part of the [new] building dedicated exclusively to senior citizens."