

## Voters Pass Local School Budgets; Williams, Jakositz Win MS Seats

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — Scotch Plains-Fanwood School District voters approved, on Tuesday, a \$67,753,660 school tax in support of a \$77,775,487 spending plan by a tally of 1,879 to 1,187. The budget passed by a margin of 1,340 to 845 in Scotch Plains and 539 to 342 in Fanwood. Out of 14,903 registered voters, Scotch Plains experienced a 14.7 percent turnout.

Fanwood had an 18.4 percent turnout out of 4,810 registered voters. "We are very grateful for the support of the community, parents and students. It demonstrates that our town supports education in Scotch Plains and Fanwood. We are looking forward to moving forward," Superintendent of Schools Margaret Hayes said.

Re-elected to the board of education (BOE) were unopposed incumbents Donald Parisi, 1,443 votes, and Warren McFall, 1,275, both representing Scotch Plains, and Fanwood resident Sasha Slocum, 601.

Based on the totals, Scotch Plains voters cast 533 less ballots on the school budget than on the unopposed candidates. In Fanwood, 280 more people voted on the budget than for Ms. Slocum.

In neighboring town Westfield, voters passed a \$75,086,661 school tax levy Tuesday. The school tax represents a 4.59 percent increase from last year. The budget was passed by a tally of 2,553 to 1,352, with a turnout of 19.9 percent, or 3,857, out of a total of 19,712 registered voters. Taxes will rise \$324 on a home assessed at \$183,448. The total budget is \$86,585,234.

Re-elected in uncontested races were BOE members Alice Hunnicutt, 2,566 votes; Gary McCready, 2,492, and Ann Ormsby Cary, 2,471.

Write-ins and absentee ballots were not included in the tally.

"It was a very good turnout," Board Chairman Ginny Leiz said.

The polls were open early from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. for the third consecutive year in Westfield.

"I'm really excited. The community came out to support our kids by about a two-to-one [count]. We were able to preserve our programs for our kids in this tough year," said Anne Riegel, board finance chairman.

"I'm thrilled for the students in the district. That's what this is all about," Superintendent of Schools Margaret Dolan said.

The Westfield BOE gathered at board member Richard Solomon's home to await the final vote count. Mayor Andy Skibitsky and councilmen Frank Arena and Mark Ciarrocca came out to the board of education gathering to show their support and offer their congratulations.

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INTERESTED PARTIES...Two dozen business and property owners meet Tuesday at the township's Scotch Hills Country Club to discuss a Special Improvement District for the Scotch Plains business district.

## BOE OK's One-Yr. Pact to Union; Raises from 4.3 to 5.0 Percent Given

By JESSICA E. JASKULA  
*Specialty Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*

SCOTCH PLAINS — The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education (BOE) approved, on Thursday, a new one-year contract for the 2008-2009 school year negotiated with the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Education Association (SPFEA).

This one-year agreement means a 4.25 percent salary increase for teachers, coaches and advisors, a 4.75 percent increase for secretaries, and a 4.97 percent increase for aides.

BOE Vice President Linda Nelson said these numbers are "competitive

with other county settlements." "We were very pleased with the numbers," she said. She called the agreement "very fair."

Ms. Nelson said that the board members "were able to have these [negotiation meetings] very cordially," and that they got "a lot accomplished."

"This sets a good tone going forward," she said.

The agreement and salary guides would be in effect from July 1, 2008, to June 30, 2009.

Board officials also accepted a \$2,500 grant from the Investors Savings Bank Charitable Foundation to go towards a web-based library server for Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School (SPFHS). Arelii Gonzalez, sales manager of Investors Saving Bank's Scotch Plains branch, and Ada Melendez, first vice president for community development of the Investors Savings Bank's corporate office, presented the grant.

"This was such a gracious donation to our school district," Superintendent of Schools Margaret Hayes said.

Board officials were encouraged by the bank's representatives to continue to seek out grants that may be available to the district.

Additionally, Jeannine Liana, a language arts teacher at Park Middle School, and Brad Siegel, supervisor of Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School's social studies department, gave a presentation on the district's professional development committee, which recently received a letter of acceptance from Union County Executive Superintendent of Schools Carmen Centuolo.

Ms. Liana explained the benefit of surveys that the district's teachers are asked to fill out regarding professional development. She said the input helps the professional development committee, made up of four teachers and two administrators, "focus attention for the following year." She added that the survey process is

"very valuable" and helps to "maximize student achievement." Ms. Liana said that they have good response numbers.

Mr. Siegel spoke of the revised summer orientation that he called more of an "introductory program" to classroom topics, as opposed to an "orientation" of the district as a whole. Roundtable discussions will be among some of the exercises. He said the new teachers would continue to get support even in their second year. "That second year support is still crucial."

Board Member Sasha Slocum called the program very "professional" and "cost effective."

Ms. Nelson said that the board greatly appreciated the program and will "continue to support it."

"This is a program that is near and dear to my heart and I've seen it grow throughout the years," Superintendent Hayes said. "Our new teachers, as well as our veteran teachers, are in very good hands in regards to the support they receive."

Edward Braun, assistant principal at SPFHS, presented on the high school's industrial and technical education (ITE) program, sharing examples of students' work from the computer aided drafting and design (CADD) classes and shared some updates to former classes, such as a focus on entrepreneurship. Two proposed business texts will be up for the board's approval.

Future goals for the program, he said, would include integrating a Microsoft Office user specialist certification test into business tech classes that can be used towards credits at participating colleges and universities.

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BUS ACCIDENT...The driver of a school bus lost control of her vehicle Tuesday afternoon after letting out the last students at their homes. The bus plowed through two brick pillars on a resident's driveway on Winchester Drive in Scotch Plains.

## Business, Property Owners Discuss SP SID Proposal

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — About 25 individuals met for 90 minutes on Tuesday evening with Deputy Mayor Nancy Malool and Edward McManimon, a consultant who has assisted New Jersey towns in establishing special improvement districts (SID), about the creation of such a district within Scotch Plains.

Scotch Plains business and property owners will meet again at the end of the month to further discuss the establishment of a SID.

Much of the discussion centered on what the benefits of a SID would be to individual businesses and property owners, and how some of those benefits would be quantified, particularly for businesses located on the

periphery of the SID. In 2004, the council defeated a SID ordinance in the face of vocal opposition.

At a meeting with business and property owners three months ago, Mrs. Malool outlined some of the benefits of a SID, including an increased customer base, improved advertising and promotions, access to grants and recruitment of new businesses.

The SID, which will be managed by a nonprofit corporation that would hire a professional manager, would be involved, at the outset, primarily in promoting downtown Scotch Plains, business recruitment and retention.

Its annual budget would be funded

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## Township Council Searches For 2008 Budget Answers

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — During an hour-long examination of the 2008 municipal budget on Tuesday night, township council members discussed possible changes to appropriations levels contained in the \$24.9 million executive budget submitted to them in February by Township Manager Thomas Atkins.

At a budget session last Thursday — which was devoted mainly to the revenue side of the ledger and, specifically, to the new state-mandated 4 percent property tax cap — Mayor

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## Construction Co. Seeks Nod On Two-Story Offices in SP

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — The planning board will continue a hearing next month to consider a site plan application to construct a two-story office building on South Avenue. D. Villane Construction is seeking approval for the building at the corner of South Avenue and New Jersey Avenue to house its offices and a meeting room for clients.

Two years ago, the board prepared to turn down a similar application. D. Villane withdrew it and, instead, submitted a new plan for a 1,580-square-foot building to be situated on the property, which is across from the county's public works facility on South Avenue.

Mr. Villane's attorney, Robert Kraus, in explaining the plans at the board's meeting on Monday, said five parking spaces, plus one handicap space, would be included to serve the building on what he called "a cockamamie triangular-shaped lot." The applicant's architect, Roger Winkle, testified that the building is designed to look like a house in order to "fit the character" of the mostly residential neighborhood.

The hearing will continue at the board's Monday, May 12 meeting when an engineer and professional planner will testify and neighborhood residents will have a chance to offer their views on the proposed building.

The board also approved two minor subdivision applications from Messercola Brothers Building Co. that will become part of the planned Hidden Meadow development. Single

lots at 2221 and 2241 Morse Avenue, which are located on either side of Hidden Meadow Drive, will each be split into two new conforming lots, with four new homes to be built. In 2005, the board approved a major subdivision application to create six new lots off Morse Avenue at the rear of the Hidden Meadow Drive cul-de-sac.

At Monday's hearing, several residents expressed concerns about increased vehicular traffic in the area, especially on Crestwood Road. Westfield Road resident Jim Fawcett asked about a tree removal plan for the new properties, saying that a number of trees on the six lots that were approved three years ago are in poor condition. The board agreed to have the trees re-assessed prior to any homes being built.

At the beginning of the board's meeting, representatives from Union County Vocational-Technical Schools briefed the board about plans to develop a building to house a new Union County Academy for Performing Arts. The 39,000-square-foot building will be situated in front of the magnet high school building and include a 4,000-square-foot theater, performance studios and classrooms. Plans call for completion of the building by January 2010.

At its next meeting on Monday, April 28, the board hopes to finish its hearing on a major subdivision application on Cooper Road that has drawn opposition from an adjacent neighbor, who claims an approval would make it difficult for him to subdivide and develop his own property.

## RVSA Elects Papan Chair, Lombardo, Vice Chairman

RAHWAY — Joan Papan of Scotch Plains has been named 2008 chairman of the Rahway Valley Sewer Authority (RVSA) Board of Commissioners and Charles Lombardo of Garwood has been named vice chairman. In addition, two new members have joined the board this year: Richard LoForte representing Kenilworth and Maria Abram representing Springfield.

Ms. Papan was appointed to the RVSA in 1995, and served one previous term as chairman. She has been a four-time mayor and deputy mayor of Scotch Plains during her 16 years on the township council. She initiated the municipal TV programming, environmental commission and the Downtown Business Alliance.

She served on the planning board, master plan review committee, library board of trustees and local assistance

board. Ms. Papan was president of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood PTA Council and the Union County Women's Political Caucus and vice chairman of the Union County League of Municipalities and Union County Republican Committee. She is presently vice chairman of the Scotch Plains Republican Committee.

Mr. Lombardo was appointed to the RVSA in 1995 and served one term as chairman. He is employed by the County of Union, Department of Public Works as the safety coordinator. He served six terms as a councilman in Garwood, and served as council president, police and fire commissioner. He has been a liaison to the Union County Solid Waste Authority, the board of education, planning board, the shade tree commission and the Union County Air Traffic Noise

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NEWLY ELECTED...The RVSA 2008 Board of Commissioners is led by Chairman Joan Papan of Scotch Plains and Vice Chairman Charles Lombardo of Garwood.



MULCH SPREADERS...Hannah Glock, Samantha Bordman and Raina Tellado of the Park Middle School Environmental Club demonstrate the proper way to mulch trees by spreading the mulch in a doughnut shape around the tree. Piling mulch up against the trunk can cause decay and eventually kill the tree. The club members participated in a tree-mulching workshop at Carriage House Park, sponsored by the Fanwood Shade Tree Commission.

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