

Former NJ Governors Attend Fanwood Reorganization Meeting

By DEBORAH MADISON
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

FANWOOD — Former Governors Brendan Byrne and Donald DiFrancesco attended Fanwood's reorganization meeting on January 1 at the Fanwood borough chambers. Scotch Plains Mayor Martin Marks and former Fanwood Mayors Lou Jung and Ted Trumpp, who serves as Fanwood's Republican municipal chairman, also attended.

Governor Byrne spoke about his close ties with Mayor Colleen Mahr's family in West Orange before swearing the mayor in to her second term of office. Regarding the more than 60 people who attended the meeting, Governor Byrne said, "If [a candidate] could draw a crowd like this in Iowa, [he or she would] be elected President." He also spoke about the importance of municipal government and council members before swearing in Katherine Mitchell to her fourth term on the council.

Governor DiFrancesco swore in first-time councilman Anthony Parenti, the former Fanwood police chief. He spoke about Mr. Parenti's 30 years of leadership and expertise in traffic and public safety.

Councilman Bruce Walsh, stand-

ing in for Assemblywoman Linda Stender (LD-22, Fanwood), made a presentation of plaques and bouquets as a gift from the Democratic Party in Fanwood to the Democratic council members. Mr. Trumpp made a similar presentation to the Republican council members.

He also said, "It is unfortunate that Councilman Parenti won't be able to lend his expertise to the public-safety committee, but he will lend his expertise and experience in other ways." Mr. Parenti was assigned to chair the health and human services committee.

Mr. Walsh said Mr. Parenti would serve the public-safety committee in an advisory capacity, however.

When asked to comment about Mr. Trumpp's remarks, Mr. Parenti told *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* he did not wish to respond but said he was looking forward to working with multiple committees, to which he would lend his experience.



NEW VOICE ON COUNCIL...Former Fanwood Police Chief and newly elected Republican Councilman Anthony Parenti, center, takes his oath of office during the Fanwood governing body's annual reorganization meeting New Year's Day, administered by former New Jersey Governor Donald DiFrancesco, left. Mr. Parenti was elected to his inaugural council term November 6.

Mr. Trumpp said he was glad to see a bipartisan council in Fanwood and added, "I wish I could say the same for Elizabeth but maybe that will come about some day. He added, "There will be freedom of information now, which has been lacking in the last few years."

tative to the planning board, was unable to attend the meeting due to illness. Mayor Mahr also swore in Lara DiFabrizio as borough prosecutor, Michelle Jaker as public defender and numerous rescue-squad members.

In her state-of-the-borough address, Mayor Mahr talked of the millions of dollars currently being invested in Fanwood and the future of sustainable economic development. "It is important to control our own destiny," she said. "We want to protect its (Fanwood's) future and character."

She also said the borough was facing financial difficulties, with sharp increases in the cost of insurance and a 4-percent cap on the amount that could be raised through taxes. "We will be forced to make some difficult decisions," Mayor Mahr said.

She said the council would propose a bipartisan committee to look at the municipal budget. "It's getting harder to maintain the high level of services you expect and not raise taxes," she added.

Wrapping up the reorganization meeting, Father Donald Hummel of St. Agnes Roman Catholic Church in Clark gave a benediction, and the audience sang "God Bless America." A reception at the Chelsea of Fanwood followed the meeting.

SP Resident Proposes B&B For Union Avenue Home

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — The zoning board of adjustment last week adjourned a hearing on an application to operate the township's first bed-and-breakfast after board members requested further details about certain aspects of the proposal.

Michael Tatsch seeks a use variance to convert part of his home at 233 Union Avenue into a three-room bed-and-breakfast that he and his wife would operate. He told the board at its first meeting of the year last Thursday that he envisions attracting out-of-town businesspeople visiting nearby corporate offices and individuals or families visiting the area for family weddings, reunions or other events.

Mr. Tatsch said his establishment would help promote local businesses that his guests would patronize, such as restaurants, liquor stores and florists.

A bed-and-breakfast, he told the board, would "expose the Scotch Plains lifestyle to more people and provide that little extra when it comes to [a guest considering] relocation." There are only a few bed-and-breakfasts in the area, he said, with ones in Plainfield, Fanwood and Summit being the closest.

After explaining to the board how he and his wife planned to operate and market their business, Mr. Tatsch said he had not yet secured any operating license from any appropriate industry group. He said getting the use variance would be "a first step" in the process of getting the business underway, a process he said would take months.

Board member Ken Anderson ex-



NEW MAYORAL TERM...Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr is sworn in to her second mayoral term January 1 at borough hall. Former New Jersey Governor Brendan Byrne, left, administered the oath of office. Also pictured with Mayor Mahr are her husband, George, and three sons. Mayor Mahr was re-elected November 6.

Mayor Marks Calls for Bipartisan Approach to Selecting SP Manager

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — Mayor Martin Marks, delivering his ninth and final New Year's address at the council's annual reorganization meeting last Wednesday, urged the township council to work on a bipartisan basis to agree on a successor to outgoing Municipal Manager Thomas Atkins and discussed the possible creation of Special Improvement District (SID) in the downtown area and renovations to the township's two firehouses.

The council unanimously selected Councilwoman Nancy Malool to serve as deputy mayor for 2008; it unanimously reappointed Township Attorney Brian Levine, Assistant Attorney Lawrence Woodruff, Municipal Prosecutor Thomas Russo and Public Defender Casey Woodruff to their positions.

The mayor said he considered rethinking his plans not to seek reelection for a third term this year. But, "with recent developments in New Jersey politics that have specifically touched my life," namely his campaign for the 7th (Congressional) District seat vacated by Rep. Mike Ferguson (R-7, New Providence), "it appears that this will in fact be my last

Scotch Plains reorganization speech."

Last month, Mr. Atkins announced his intention to retire this summer after 28 years in his position. While Mr. Atkins' decision "came as a shock and disappointment to most," Mayor Marks said last week he was "pleased to report that Tom's decision was indeed on his terms."

Mr. Atkins "has been the object of respect and admiration not only by this and numerous past township councils, but also by his peers in municipal government throughout New Jersey and beyond," the mayor said.

He said, "There is no doubt that the

most important function" of council this year will be finding a successor to Mr. Atkins, a process he said has already started. The mayor said he had "personally seen the benefit of having a nonpartisan municipal manager at the helm, so there is no question in my mind that this ought to be the way to continue on into the future."

The mayor said the present council, with three Republicans and two Democrats, proved in 2007 "that it can function in a bipartisan manner, albeit not necessarily unanimously, on the important issues of the day." He said he

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Bramnick, Munoz Question State School-Funding Formula

By WAYNE BAKER
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

AREA — Despite the efforts of local state legislators to delay passage of Governor Jon Corzine's new formula for distributing state aid to schools, the Senate and Assembly passed the measure on Monday night.

The Senate approved the proposal 23-13, and the Assembly approved it 41-36, both with the minimum number of votes needed for passage. Eleven senators did not vote.

Among those opposing the bill were Assemblymen Jon Bramnick and Eric Munoz (LD-21, Westfield and Summit, respectively). At a press conference in Long Hill on the Friday before the vote, the men had described their desire to have more time to understand the new school-aid formula.

"My message to the governor is simple," Mr. Bramnick said. "Hold the bill."

Mr. Bramnick, who called the

school-funding bill "a moving freight train," acknowledged at the event that it was unlikely that he, Mr. Munoz and Senator Tom Kean Jr. (LD-21, Westfield) would be successful in stalling the bill long enough for "effective evaluation" of the impact of the legislation.

During the conference, Nanette Harrington of Long Hill's board of education described part of the problem lawmakers faced, showing how similar municipalities appear to encounter different increases in aid. Westfield, like Long Hill, will see the lowest aid increase, at 2 percent.

Long Hill Mayor George Viturera said the increase works out to about \$18,000 over last year for his town, or roughly \$6 per household, an amount he described as "insulting."

Although the presentation centered on Long Hill, Ms. Harrington said it demonstrated the difficulty in understanding the state's new formula. Ms. Harrington showed her analysis of the data, and after multiple methods of analysis, she concluded, "There is no discernible correlation between the funding increase and relative property-value growth, income growth, enrollment growth or percent of funding from the state."

Westfield Board of Education President Ginny Leiz said the bulk of Westfield's aid is "categorical," meaning it is directed toward students with "special needs." She said two thirds of the aid would be rolled into the wealth-based formula, putting Westfield at risk for cuts, directly affecting its special-education program.

Chris Connor, a Long Hill resident and former board-of-education member, asked where the \$532 million to fund this bill was coming from in this time of a state budgetary crisis.

SP Council to Vote on Ashbrook Reservation Deer-Reduction Effort

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — The township council next week will vote to award a contract to Wildlife Management Services to conduct a deer-reduction program later this winter in the Ashbrook Reservation.

The program to reduce the burgeoning deer herd began in 2006 after years of increased traffic accidents involving deer and incidents of deer straying off the reservation and onto adjacent neighborhood properties. The Mountaintide firm has conducted

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INCOMING FRESHMAN...Rayland Van Blake takes the oath of office as the newest member of Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders from attorney Mohammed Jaloh while his mother, Claire, looks on. See story on page 3.

Mayor Mahr to Form FW Budget-Review Committee

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

FANWOOD — At the regular monthly borough-council meeting Tuesday night, Council President Joan Wheeler announced that Mayor Colleen Mahr would form a budget-review committee as the governing body prepares to craft the municipal budget.

Presiding at the meeting in place of Mayor Mahr — who was in Trenton for the Governor's annual address — Mrs. Wheeler said the bipartisan committee would "continue the transparent process" of developing the borough's annual fiscal plan.

Mrs. Wheeler said the mayor would select members of the community to serve on the panel, noting that a series

of budget meetings are scheduled for the coming weeks.

Residents interested in serving on the committee should send their résumés to borough hall on North Martine Avenue to the attention of Borough Clerk Eleanor McGovern "as soon as possible," Mrs. Wheeler said.

The council approved a series of administrative resolutions; these included a measure to hire a contractor for the reconstruction of Russell Road between Paterson Road and Midway Avenue at a cost no greater than \$35,000.

The governing body also hired a

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SECOND IN COMMAND...Mirabella of Fanwood is sworn in as Union County Freeholder vice chairman by State Senator Nick Scutari (LD-22, Linden) as his wife Phyllis and children, Alex and Micayla, look on during Sunday's reorganization meeting at the Union County Courthouse in Elizabeth. See story on page 3.

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