

## Mayor Marks Vows Enactment Of SID Ordinance by This Year

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — Mayor Martin Marks said Monday that the Scotch Plains Township Council this spring would enact an ordinance establishing a special improvement district (SID), not only in the downtown business district, but also along Route 22.

Nearly four years after the council defeated a similar ordinance in the face of vocal opposition from business and property owners, the mayor and Deputy Mayor Nancy Malool led a



Horace Corbin for The Times  
**SUPER TUESDAY...Dennis Kobitz of the Union County Board of Elections discusses the first-ever February New Jersey Presidential Primary to be held next Tuesday with Times editor Paul Peyton. The interview was videotaped and can be seen at goleader.com.**

meeting on Monday night for downtown business and property owners to again discuss the operations and advantages of a SID.

Calling his 2004 vote against the SID ordinance "one of my biggest regrets," the mayor said in the years since that vote, "there hasn't been a lot of change" in the downtown.

"Having a successful business district is an asset to the entire community," he said, and called the downtown in its present condition "something of a drag on the community."

In 2003 and 2004, prior to the council's formal consideration of the SID ordinance, a steering committee of business and property owners and several residents crafted the details of operating a SID, established its priorities and planned how to assess property owners.

With those basic outlines in place, the mayor told the group of about 45 attendees at Scotch Hills Country Club that "a SID will be established in Scotch Plains by the township council" by June. He called on opponents to "acknowledge that reality and then work with it to make it work best for you."

The mayor cautioned that the matter could become a political issue in a year when township voters will reelect a new mayor and a council

member. "If this gets mired in politics, it doesn't bother me. I believe it's the right thing to do for Scotch Plains," Mayor Marks said.

Both Mayor Marks and Mrs. Malool said a new ordinance would contain most of the provisions of the 2004 ordinance, although some minor changes could be made by a new steering committee that will be formed in the next few weeks.

"But we're not going to reinvent the wheel," Mrs. Malool said. She said she plans to hold three or four meetings in the next month so that the new steering committee can examine the 2004 plans and make any small changes that might be necessary.

In a brief presentation, 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 would be managed by a non-profit corporation, which would hire a professional manager to primarily promote downtown Scotch Plains and conduct business recruitment and retention.

Its annual budget would be funded via a six-tiered flat rate formula, in which properties valued up to \$100,000 would pay an annual assessment of \$250; properties between \$100,001 and \$200,000 would pay \$550; those valued between \$200,001 and \$300,000 would pay \$800; properties between \$300,001 and \$750,000 would pay \$1,250; those valued between \$750,001 and \$2 million would pay \$1,500; and properties valued above \$2 million would pay \$2,000 annually.

It's expected that the initial operating budget would be larger than what was anticipated four years ago due to the additional businesses along Route 22 included in this year's SID ordinance, Mrs. Malool said.

While several property owners voiced opposition to the idea — saying the new assessments would force them to pass that cost on to their tenants, who would then move out — comments were mostly supportive at Monday's two-hour meeting.

Ted Shiller, who owns an office building on Front Street, said a SID is "about making your property more valuable." He said property owners would eventually see "a better quality of tenants" as "more people will want to rent as the downtown becomes more appealing."

Vince Losavio, owner of John's Meat Market on Park Avenue, said some smaller businesses in neighbor-

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Fred Rossi for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times  
**PACKED HOUSE...Scotch Plains business owners fill the room at Scotch Hills Country Club Monday evening to hear Mayor Martin Marks and Deputy Mayor Nancy Malool present details of a Special Improvement District (SID) for the township's downtown area and Route 22 corridor to be formed by the township council this spring.**

## SP-F BOE Moves Middle School Math Leveling to Seventh Grade

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education last Thursday approved a proposal moving middle school math leveling from the sixth to seventh grade. Leveling is used to assign students to class sections based on overall ability.

Board member Sasha Slocum told *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* that advantages of postponing math leveling to the seventh grade include higher maturation levels of students and it encourages teachers "to focus on differentiated instruction for all students, meaning lessons challenge each student to go as far as he or she can go with a concept. This gives all students the opportunity to shine in math."

"All math concepts are not equal and therefore a student may not be strong in one lesson, but he or she may excel in another," Ms. Slocum said. "Differentiated instruction ensures that each student will have the opportunity to experience this."

She said students in lower levels "sometimes believe they are less intelligent, which makes it difficult to assess if they are simply developing more slowly or if they are being hindered by lower self-esteem. I think anything we can do to promote stu-

dents' self-esteem in challenging them academically is important. We will find many more talented mathematicians this way."

Ms. Slocum said another advantage to the postponement is that heterogeneous grouping "challenges the highest achievers by encouraging them to complete supplementary tasks

to the standard curriculum." Ms. Slocum said parents might question how struggling students will keep up and how top students will be challenged.

"I believe both questions will focus teachers on differentiated instruction and assessing the curriculum in an

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## SP Council Hires Firm to Assist In Manager Search

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — The township council on Tuesday approved a resolution hiring a professional recruitment firm to assist in finding a successor to Township Manager Thomas Atkins, who is retiring this summer after 28 years of service.

Jersey Professional Management, a management consulting firm based in Cranford, will be paid up to \$10,500 for its services, which will include active recruitment and interviewing of potential candidates. At the council's regular meeting, Deputy Mayor Nancy Malool said it will be "a monumental task" to find a replacement for Mr. Atkins and that, "considering the time and expertise involved" in the search process, the council concluded that a recruitment firm was needed. Three firms were interviewed in the past month, and Mrs. Malool said JPM has already worked with the township on shared services and the hiring of a new public works director.

In other business, the council approved an ordinance that will allow for permit parking for Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School students at Green Forest Park. Under the ordinance, 28 parking spots will be formally designated for use by high school student drivers between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m. on school days.

Acting in its capacity as local alcoholic beverage commission, the council approved the transfer of the liquor license formerly held by Brian's Discount Liquorland on East Second Street to Win Warehouse On Line, which will open a retail outlet at the same location.

The council also approved a \$9,965 change order for additional electrical work on the township municipal building's new second floor that will house police department offices. Department personnel are expected to be able to move into their new office space in the next few weeks.

The council thanked Joe McCourt and John Kovalchik for their years of service on the Memorial Day Parade Committee, of which Mr. McCourt was chairman for the past seven years. Mayor Marks called the planning for the annual parade "a monumental endeavor" involving "many meetings and a lot of planning and logistics."

Mr. McCourt, calling his efforts "a labor of love," thanked Mr. Atkins and Toni Rollis, who works in Mr. Atkins' office and is a member of the parade committee, for their support and assistance. Mr. Kovalchik called his time on the committee "a lot of fun."

The council also passed a resolution congratulating Alex Kuhn on having attained the rank of Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts of America.



Fred Rossi for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times  
**COMPETING FOR CONGRESS...Republican hopefuls seeking the party nod to replace Rep. Mike Ferguson, who is not seeking reelection, for the 7th Congressional District speak with party leaders in Clark last Thursday at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School students at Green Forest Park. Under the ordinance, 28 parking spots will be formally designated for use by high school student drivers between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m. on school days.**

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## Jersey Voters to Make Voice Known in Presidential Races

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

AREA — Area voters will go to the polls Tuesday to cast ballots in the state's first solely Presidential Primary in state history. New Jersey and 22 other states will be selecting candidates for the nomination for President in the Democratic and Republican races. New Jersey's normal state primary, which includes U.S. Senate, Congressional as well as county and municipal races, will be held on Tuesday, June 3.

According to the Union County Board of Elections website, Union County has a total of 263,756 registered voters as of January 21, up 4,000 from October. Registered Democrats outnumber Republicans, 85,209 to 36,554. There are 142,000 unaffiliated voters in the county.

Westfield has 19,503 registered voters (4,168 Republicans and 3,771 Democrats); Scotch Plains, 14,698 (3,333 Democrats and 2,841 Republicans); Fanwood, 4,764 (1,007 Republicans and 960 Democrats); Mountainside, 4,584 (762 Democrats and 1,379 Republicans) and Garwood, 2,484 (596 Democrats and 377 Republicans).

Going into Super Tuesday's contests, U.S. Senator John McCain led the GOP race with 93 delegates followed by former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, 59, and former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, 40. A total of 1,191 delegates are needed for the Republican nomination

for president, according to realclearpolitics.com. The winner of the New Jersey's GOP contest will be awarded all of the state's 52 delegates.

In the Democratic battle, U.S. Senator Hillary Clinton leads with 256 followed by Senator Barack Obama, 181 and former Senator John Edwards, 64. Mr. Edwards announced he is withdrawing from the race. A total of 2,025 delegates are needed for the Democratic Party nomination, 127 of which are up for grabs in the New Jersey Primary, according to realclearpolitics.com.

Dennis Kobitz, deputy administrator of the Union County Board of Elections, told *The Westfield Leader* that the county has 1,700 poll workers and will have additional workers on standby at locations in Elizabeth, Scotch Plains and Summit. He anticipated that turnout would be between 40 and 50 percent. (Please see related stories on page 2 and video interview with Mr. Kobitz at goleader.com).

Other states holding primaries or caucuses on February 5 are Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho (Democratic), Illinois, Kansas (Democratic), Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana (Republican), New Mexico (Democratic), New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Utah, and West Virginia (Republican).

Polls are open Tuesday from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

## SP Police Officer Delivers Baby in Back Seat of Car

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — One of Scotch Plains Township's newest residents arrived last week in a most unconventional setting, delivered in the middle of a freezing night by a township police officer in a makeshift delivery room - the back seat of a car.

The baby boy was delivered by Police Officer Brian Cheney early last Tuesday morning after a 911 call, placed at 3:30 a.m., alerted police that a pregnant woman had gone into labor at the Country Club Village apartments on Country Club Lane.

"My shift had ended and I was finishing my paperwork in the car," Officer Cheney told *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*. "I heard the call and said I would go down there."

When Officer Cheney arrived, he was flagged down in the parking lot by the expectant father, who led him to his wife in the back seat of their car.

Fellow officers Edward Budzinski and Stan Pearson arrived immediately to assist Officer Cheney, who had observed that the baby's head was already crowning, signaling an imminent delivery.

"I was standing outside the only open door," he said, "barking out

things I needed" to Officers Budzinski and Pearson.

Besides the car's interior dome light, the only other illumination during the birth was from Officer Pearson's own flashlight.

With the temperature in the mid-teens, Officer Cheney said he had little conversation with the expectant parents during the delivery, except telling the father to start the car and turn on the heat.

"I wasn't nervous," said Officer Cheney, who had delivered babies before while on duty, most recently about seven years ago. "I didn't even realize how cold it was until after the baby was born and I started shaking."

He said his biggest concern was that "the baby was all right" and that there were no complications.

The baby boy was born less than 10 minutes after Officer Cheney's arrival at the scene. The baby was eventually transported to JFK Hospital in Edison.

Officer Cheney said while they awaited the arrival of rescue squad personnel, the newborn had its umbilical cord clamped, was wrapped in sheets and blankets, and was given oxygen by mouth.

He said doctors at the hospital asked him to come in to sign the baby's birth certificate as "attending physician."

## FW Planning Board Okays Two Projects

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

FANWOOD — The Fanwood Planning Board approved a "minor" subdivision on Pleasant Avenue and a "raze-and-rebuild" project for a property on North Avenue at its regular meeting on January 23. Both are residential projects.

Regarding the proposed subdivision at 167 Pleasant Avenue, the applicant's planning zoning consultant, Paul Szymanski, called the property "highly unique and extraordinary," adding that it appears to be the "only through-lot in the borough."

There is currently a two-story house on the property fronting Pleasant Avenue, but the lot backs all the way out to Montrose Avenue; that portion of the property is currently wooded and "overgrown," officials said.

Mr. Szymanski theorized that when the area was mapped and developed, two separate lots were envisioned and, he said, that is what the subdivision application now seeks.

"I think it was the intention all along that there would be a house built on this property," planning-board member Matthew Glennon said.

"I do think it maintains the integrity of the neighborhood; I think the lot would be enhanced by having a house on it with some nice plantings," said Borough Councilwoman Joan Wheeler, the council's representative on the board.

The board granted a lot-area variance for the Pleasant Avenue lot and a lot-width variance for the newly approved lot on Montrose Avenue.

"We're taking care of a potential problem with future rear-yard uses at

the property," said pro-tem Board Chairman John Deitch.

Borough Engineer Joseph Pryor said the applicant will be required to submit a lot-grading plan when applying for a construction permit for the Montrose lot, in addition to a tree-replacement plan since about a dozen trees will be removed from the wooded lot.

The approved "raze-and-rebuild" project is located at 180 North Avenue.

Michael Mastrocola, a professional architect, represented the applicant, also his father, and said the application seeks "existing non-conformity variances" for the property on which a two-family house is currently located.

Mr. Mastrocola said his father would like to replace the home with a new, single-family home, including a driveway and attached garage.

Responding to questions by planning-board members and Mr. Pryor, Mr. Mastrocola said the new house would result in a smaller impervious surface area than the current house. He also agreed to review plans for the driveway with Mr. Pryor to insure that it is built in accordance with a proper dimensions "template."

Mr. Deitch said the new house planned by Mr. Mastrocola for the property "would definitely be an improvement over what's there now."

In other business, the board approved four administrative Stormwater Management Plan revisions, which Mr. Pryor characterized as required "housekeeping" changes that will also be amended into the borough's Master Plan.