

SP Council Passes SID Ordinance Following Four-Hour Hearing

By KATHERINE VOWELL
 Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS - The Scotch Plains Township Council approved an ordinance to create a downtown Special Improvement District by a 3-1-1 vote following a four-and-a-half-hour public hearing Tuesday night.

Councilman Kevin Glover voted against the ordinance, and Councilwoman Nancy Malool abstained after it was suggested in the open session her vote could be conflicted because she operates a legal practice within the district.

Mrs. Malool, who was the only member of the council to vote in favor of the SID ordinance four years ago, said that this is a "horrible ironic twist." The councilwoman told the

audience that her support of the ordinance was not "politically or economically motivated," but decided to withhold her vote on the "off chance" that there were conflicts of interests.

Tensions had arisen earlier in the meeting during the first public discussion, after Dick Samuel, the chairman of the Scotch Plains Democratic Party and a candidate for township council, criticized Mayor Martin Marks for suggesting individuals wait until further in the agenda to discuss matters related to the SID ordinance.

"Nine years ago, people could talk about anything at this time, not just about things on the agenda," Mr. Samuel said. "This is the third time in three meetings that I've heard you tell people they couldn't talk about cer-

tain topics when in fact they could."

This public hearing quickly transformed into a bickering war between Mayor Marks and Mr. Samuel, repeatedly telling each other "you are out of order."

Mayor Marks said "the tone has been set by one who has set the tone many times before." He asked for cooler heads to prevail in the course of the meeting, and told the public made if anyone got out of control they would be asked to leave.

Before opening the SID ordinance to a public discussion, Mrs. Malool specified that for the good of the town, "this should not be a political discussion."

"The Special Improvement District is a partnership between the local government and the business community," Mrs. Malool said. "Its purpose is to enhance and improve the business district. It enables the council to give the business community some control to determine what the future of the (downtown) district will be."

The ordinance calls for a \$400 flat fee per property for the first year and the township will contribute \$5,000 in six months for a budget totaling \$75,000. Mrs. Malool predicted that the funds would be used for a part-time downtown manager to help bring in new businesses.

The manager and the budget would be overseen by a 13-member board of directors for a district management corporation. Members of the board, which were named later in the meeting, include: Nick DeNegro, Greg Bisson, Jim Watson, Tom Britt, Alex DiPace, Dominick Verdic, Ken Marke, Theodore Schiller, Shana Coelho, Jeff Kowalczyk, Mrs. Malool, Frank DiLillo and Steve Goldberg. Mr. Verdic is chairman of the Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC), that town's SID. They were appointed to staggered terms of two and three years. Mr. Verdic, a Scotch Plains resident, owns the building that houses the DWC.

The council asked the board that it

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Katherine Vowell for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times
 PUTTING POLITICS ASIDE...The public continues discussion on the Special Improvement District ordinance at Tuesday night's council meeting while the council was in a brief closed session.

He's Going to Jail July 29, Christie Says of Sharpe James

By HORACE CORBIN
 Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

WESTFIELD - U.S. Attorney Chris Christie said, "He's going to jail, July 29" referring to the sentencing of former Newark Mayor, and State Senator, Sharpe James, in an interview last Thursday with publisher, Horace Corbin, of *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*.

"We're asking for ten to 15-year sentencing from Judge (William) Martini who presides over the case," Mr. Christie said. "That sends a message to all other politicians in New Jersey who think they are untouchable."

Unlike in state prison, federal prison inmates are not eligible for parole. 72-year-old James would likely be spending most, if not all, of the remainder of his life in jail.

When asked about James' two Silver Cloud Rolls Royce's, yacht and shore estate, and if the taxpayers will ever see any of their money back, Mr. Christie said, "Unlikely. What we've convicted him of is relatively small in the context of what you're talking about."

The 40-minute interview with Mr. Christie can be viewed at goleader.com/video.

For seven years, Mr. Christie has served as U.S. Attorney with his office located in Newark and branches in Trenton and Camden. He said even his mother confuses his job with that of state Attorney General (AG).

The U.S. Attorney is appointed by the President of the United States, confirmed by the Senate and is responsible for enforcing federal laws. The AG is appointed by the Governor of New Jersey and is responsible for

enforcing state laws.

Mr. Christie said he has a close relationship with recently appointed AG Anne Milgram. They confer once a week. He said she is a true professional and clearly understands the basis of prosecution. They often work together, as exemplified by the James conviction.

He publicly admitted to not always having a good relationship with the AG's office, so referring to those formerly in the position, Peter Harvey and Zulima Farber.

Mr. Christie said his opinion changed when Stuart Rabner was appointed as AG for one year, and now is Supreme Court chief justice. Mr. Rabner had worked for Mr. Christie in the U.S. Attorney's office.

With a 128-0 record of convicting corrupt public officials, Mr. Christie said he is proud of the accomplishments of his office. When asked why he did not press for more convictions, Mr. Christie said his office prepares a case and when they are absolutely sure they can get a conviction, they present the case to a jury.

"An indictment damages a person's reputation, so we want to be sure beyond a reasonable doubt," he said.

Mr. Christie said his office pursues cases regardless of political affiliation, a tactic that helps him to avoid the reputation former governor Eliot Spitzer developed as attorney general in New York, with his aggressive style.

Mr. Christie said he does not believe the state has turned the corner yet on the culture of corruption; however, the issue is foremost on many minds.

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David Samsky for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times
 WHO'S GOING TO JAIL?... Horace Corbin, publisher of *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*, interviews U.S. Attorney Chris Christie on June 19 in the newspaper's office on North Avenue in Westfield.

Rahway's Pelissier Resigns As RVSA Commissioner

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

RAHWAY - Rahway's current Business Administrator Peter Pelissier has resigned from the Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority (RVSA). Last year, Mr. Pelissier, who also serves as a consultant to the Rahway redevelopment agency, was ordered to repay \$330,000 in pension payments after state officials discovered he had retired to a 23-acre Montana ranch but was receiving almost the same income as a consultant to the redevelopment agency. He then returned to New Jersey.

In a front-page story on November 22, 2007, *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* reported that Mountaintide commissioner Clark Landale took issue with Mr. Pelissier's efforts to push through privatization of the RVSA.

After Mr. Pelissier accused Mr. Landale of violating a government-ethics law, Mr. Landale said the positions Mr. Pelissier held "create a conflict, or the appearance of a conflict, in his duties as a member of this authority."

Other commissioners and authority employees had taken issue with Mr. Pelissier's previous efforts at privatization.

An authority employee, engineer Anthony Gencarelli, had criticized the efforts to privatize the facility, telling the newspaper that he feared doing so would bring "opportunities for corruption at the expense of the ratepayer."

Documentation provided by Mr. Gencarelli showed that Weiner-Lesniak, serving as RVSA's counsel, made more than \$600,000 in 2007. Senator Ray Lesniak (LD-20), a partner in the law firm, is a long-time Democrat state senator from Elizabeth, an RVSA member town.

"I see that as a conflict," Mr. Gencarelli said.

Joan Papan of Scotch Plains, who earlier this year was named the 2008 chairman of the RVSA's board of commissioners, said in a November 1, 2007, letter to the newspaper that she "can't help wondering what is the rush [to privatization]. Who is going to benefit from this? It certainly is not our taxpayers."

Paul Sefranka has taken over as the



Martin Sweeney for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times
 HATS OFF TO THE GRADUATES...The Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School graduating class celebrates four years of hard work finally paying off. The class of 327 seniors held its commencement ceremonies on June 19. See more at goleader.com/photos.

Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Graduates 379 in Class of 2008

By RAYNOR DENIZIO
 Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS - Three hundred and seventy nine students became the newest Raider alumni Thursday night as Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School (SPFHS) honored the class of 2008 graduates.

The mood for the evening was festive, as students bounced beach balls in to the crowd and cheered during the hour-and-a-half-long ceremony, held on the new turf of the school's football field. Following opening remarks from Principal David Heisey, class valedictorian Ming Lu and salutatorian Lindsay Traiman addressed their classmates.

Ming, who will attend Princeton University in the fall, spoke of the future during her speech, encourag-

ing the graduates to look forward to what they will achieve, rather than focus on the end of high school.

"They say these are the best times of our lives," said Ming. "I don't know who 'they' are, but for our sakes, I hope they are wrong."

Lindsay, who will attend Northwestern University, discussed the excitement of "entering into the unknown." Lindsay also said that although the graduates are moving on from Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School, they should always remember their roots.

"Always know that you came from SP-F High," said Lindsay.

Following a performance of the song "In Whatever Time We Have" from the musical "Children of Eden," Board of Education President Trip Whitehouse and Superintendent of Schools Margaret Hayes addressed the graduates.

Mr. Whitehouse discussed the trails blazed by candidates Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton during the presidential primary. Mr. Whitehouse said that many of the graduates will be eligible to vote for the first time in November's presidential election and urged them to "take advantage of this and become involved." Mr. Whitehouse also encouraged the graduates to be agents of change in the world themselves.

"Our paradigms are changing," Mr. Whitehouse said. "Continue to change them as you move along and reach your potential."

Before presenting the graduates, Ms. Hayes spoke of the challenges facing students. She noted that many of the jobs and problems that students will face after college do not even exist yet.

"You'll need to be constantly learn-

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Area Fourth of July Firework Celebrations

Cranford: Fireworks at 9:15 p.m. at Nomahegan Park, located on Springfield Avenue.

Mountaintide: Fireworks behind Our Lady of Lord Church at dusk, located on Central Avenue.

Kenilworth: June 29, at David Brearley High School on Monroe Avenue. There will be music and food beginning at 6 p.m., and fireworks will be displayed at 9 p.m.

Roselle Park: From noon to 5 p.m. on West Colfax Avenue. There will be a street fair held with food and craft vendors, games and contests. Local bands will perform live during this time. At 6:15 p.m., The Magic Touch will play live music, and pony rides will be available for children. Fireworks will be held at dusk on the Roselle Park High School football field.

Summit: From 9:45 a.m. to 1:30 pm there will be various rides, games and a

bicycle parade. There will also be an annual softball game played by the Summit Police, Fire and First Aid squads. There will be an evening concert, and fireworks at the Soldier's Memorial Field on Myrtle Avenue.

Springfield: At 5 p.m., at Meisel Avenue Park, there will be fireworks, food, drink, live music, a 50/50 raffle, pony rides and a petting zoo.

Union: There will be a day program on July 4, at Biertuempfel Park on Winslow Avenue, which includes rides, clowns, pony rides and face painting activities. Then, beginning at 7:30 p.m., the Party Dolls will perform live, followed by a fireworks display.

Plainfield: A daytime parade will be held on East Front Street at 10 a.m. At 6 p.m., a live concert will be held at Cedar Brook Park, followed by fireworks at dusk.



David Samsky for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times
 PROTEST FOR BENEFITS...Representatives of the teachers, including those from Scotch Plains-Fanwood, picketed outside Senator Nicholas Scutari's office in Linden last Friday. The New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) launched a statewide protest at the local offices of state senators on June 20 against three bills that would change pensions as the Legislature wrestles with balancing the budget, minimizing layoffs and stemming tax increases. Among the school districts attending were Clark, Linden, Scotch Plains, Rahway and Plainfield.

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