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## Fanwood and Other Towns See Red Over Proposed Municipal Aid Cuts

By DEBBIE HOFFMAN  
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

TRENTON — Under Governor Jon Corzine's proposed state budget, Garwood would lose \$393,138 in state aid, 51 percent of what the borough received last year. Mountainside stands to see a reduction of \$249,939 in municipal funding.

And that does not sit well with Mountainside Mayor Robert Vigilanti or Garwood Council President Kathleen Villaggio.

"I'm still trying to figure out what the Governor wants us to do," Mayor Vigilanti said.

Mr. Corzine is calling for a \$190-million reduction in state aid given to municipalities, known as the Consolidated Municipal Property Tax Relief Aid program. Small towns, those with populations less than 10,000, would take the hardest hit.

Of the 326 municipalities in New Jersey, 323 are considered small towns. Three of those towns fall within The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times' readership area: Mountainside (population 6,602), Fanwood (population 7,174) and Garwood (population 4,153).

The Governor's plan is intended to

prod these towns to find ways to share services with neighboring communities. Examples include consolidating police, fire and public works departments, and sharing municipal courts and health departments. The ultimate goal would be for the smaller towns to merge with their larger neighbors.

William Dressel, executive director of the New Jersey League of Municipalities, said that small-town mayors were "shocked and dismayed" by Mr. Corzine's announcement. "It even rocked an old dog like me."

"I'm trying to figure out how this happened and what I can do to save our small towns," he added.

"I went to a rally of small-town representatives in Trenton last week. We all talked about how we already share services," Ms. Villaggio said. To make up for this reduction, "we would have to make drastic cuts in services. There is no way to make up that kind of cut."

"It just gets worse every day," Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr said at her borough council's meeting, after learning they would lose \$186,669.

Mountainside Councilman Glenn Mortimer echoed the sentiment. "I don't know what they are looking to accomplish by punishing small towns," he said. "I, for one, would fight a consolidation of towns. It would punish our residents."

Mountainside resident Audrey Cunningham said, "One of the reasons why I left Essex County to move to Mountainside was the benefit of lower taxes, as well as the small-town feel of a unique little town, which my kids love. It's nice to know your neighbors and to be able to go to school, participate in sports and share community memories with your fellow Mountainsiders. The librarian, local police officers know my kids. I know the parents of all my kids' friends, which gives me some level of security in this big, impersonal world."

Although a larger town (population 29,944), Westfield stands to see

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## Zoning Bd. Approves SP's First Bed-and-Breakfast

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — The township's zoning board of adjustment last week gave its unanimous approval to an application to open the township's first bed-and-breakfast after board members pronounced themselves satisfied with how the business would be operated.

Michael Tatsch first appeared before the board in January, seeking 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 two months ago that he envisioned attracting out-of-town businesspeople visiting nearby corporate offices and individuals or families visiting the area for family weddings, reunions or other events.

He said only a handful of bed-and-breakfasts operate in the area, with ones in Plainfield, Fanwood and Summit being the closest.

At its January meeting, the board raised some concerns about Mr. Tatsch's plan to have his own living quarters, except for the kitchen, situated mostly in the basement. There were questions about whether it was permissible under local building codes



ON A ROLL...Fanwood Councilwoman Donna Dolce (center) looks for a lucky roll of the bones on March 7 during the Fanwood-Scotch Plains Rotary Club's casino night at Scotch Hills Country Club. The event was held as a fundraiser for the Frazee House Museum renovations.

## BOE to Hold Budget Meeting Next Week, Discusses 'Illegal' Students

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education on Tuesday announced that the public budget meeting would be held on Wednesday, March 19.

Also at this upcoming meeting, the board will vote on a number of policy topics, including advertising corporate sponsorships, pregnant students, recruitment, selection and hiring and student supervision after school dismissal.

Superintendent Margaret Hayes said that the "pregnant students" and "recruitment, selection and hiring" policies are updates in order to "keep our policies in compliance with our comprehensive equity plan."

"Student Supervision After School Dismissal" is a new policy that is "primarily aimed at walkers or students who are eligible but choose not to ride buses," she said.

Board member Jane Costello asked whether there was any public feedback regarding the "advertising corporate sponsorships" policy, but was told there was none.

An audience member asked the board's opinion regarding rumors of "illegal students," those not living in the district, attending the local schools and how such situations are handled.

Thomas Beese, director of Special Services, said that his office does investigate these matters but that he does not investigate "anything that comes to me on an anonymous level." He encouraged anyone with information to come directly to the administration.

Math supervisors Joan Mast and Merrie Snow gave a presentation on Lesson Study at the meeting, a professional-development program that allows teachers to analyze their own teaching methods with the help of

colleagues.

Ms. Mast said groups of teachers "collaborate and analyze what's happening in the classroom." A new element includes a child study in which multiple students are interviewed, helping teachers understand how their students make sense of certain topics.

Lynn Sanders, a kindergarten teacher at Evergreen School, said that the best part of the experience was having the "opportunity to really step back from my teaching and become an observer of the children."

Her class was videoed for Lesson Study, and she was able to watch her students' ability to grasp a concept.

Charlene Hall, a third-grade teacher at Brunner Elementary School, congratulated the "dynamic teaching taking place in our district" and said that she enjoyed having the opportunity to meet with teachers in different grade levels to see how students evolve.

Teachers from different grade levels work together to see how a certain subject matter, such as fractions,

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HEAVILY ARMED IN IRAQ...Lieutenant Colonel Tim Whalen, right, is accompanied by a heavily armed companion (name tag Patter) while walking in Iraq. The colonel provided his thank you to citizens in the Scotch Plains area for their letters during a phone call from Baghdad to the newspaper last Friday.

## Live from Iraq: Col. Thanks Community for Support

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

IRAQ — The "great people at home keep us going," Lieutenant Colonel Timothy Whalen, out of Fort Stewart in Georgia, told The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times on Friday afternoon. "We could not do what we do without the support we get back from home."

Interviewed from Baghdad, Col. Whalen spoke to the newspaper for nearly an hour, discussing a range of topics surrounding the war in Iraq. He talked about the downward trend in violence and the impact of the surge, as well as the focus on "capacity building" while securing the population.

The interview can be heard in its entirety at goleader.com.

Born in Brooklyn, N.Y., the colonel said he spent a lot of time in Westfield with his aunt and uncle, Alice and Bill Kelly, in the early 1970s.

He then left for West Point and, eventually, active duty. His wife, a high school teacher, and his four elementary school-aged children live in Texas.

Col. Whalen lauded the "unbelievable outpouring of generosity" from area towns and thanked all local houses of worship. Col. Whalen said the donations have a "tremendous impact" on the troops, specifically mentioning the work of St. Helen's Roman Catholic Church, which he remembered was "only being built" in 1972 when he spent time in Westfield.

Col. Whalen discussed topics ranging from the exit strategy, the difference in Iraqi and American culture

and the danger of pulling troops out too soon.

The colonel said attacks in the southern belt of Baghdad, Iraq comprising eight provinces, had decreased from 27 attacks a day in 2007 to less than five recently.

He said during the last few days, the southern belt, "about the size of West Virginia," had experienced no attacks.

"Believe it or not...this is the first time that's happened in the 12 months we've been here," he said, noting an 80-percent drop in attacks in the area and a 65-percent reduction throughout the country.

"It's truly amazing to see the change that has taken place," he said.

He said the "window of opportunity" is the best and most open it has been for the solvency of economic and agricultural institutions in the region. However, in order for that to happen, "security had to be in place before...We had to get the Iraqi army, the Iraqi police and the institutions viable enough so they can sustain this thing over the long haul."

In terms of "the surge," the increasing of troop levels to 165,000, the colonel said it has led to successes.

He said because of the increased numbers, the military has been able to go into "AQI (Al-Qaeda in Iraq) sanctuaries" and clear them out. The surge has allowed the military to go on the "offensive" in these regions. The difference now, however, is that the military stays in these regions.

"We're living in 57 outposts [in the southern belt]," he said. "We don't commute to work." We know we're

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BEAUTY IN IRAQ...Baghdad is a metropolitan area of eight million people with many mosques, canals and palaces.

## Council Approves Expanded Surveillance For Town Hall

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — The township council on Tuesday approved a resolution releasing \$17,102 to purchase a state-of-the-art surveillance camera system to be installed inside and outside of the municipal building. Saying he hoped the new system "is the final piece" to the renovation of the municipal building, Councilman Kevin Glover said the system will "provide extensive coverage to our building and the surrounding area."

The system, which will be provided by Advanced Video Surveillance Inc. of Fairfield, will expand surveillance from several areas inside the police department to interior hallways and entrances to the building, the public and police parking lots

and the courtroom and court-related offices. The courtroom cameras will help meet security-related mandates recently issued by the state Administrative Office of the Courts, which oversees courts throughout New Jersey.

In other business, the council approved a salary ordinance establishing the part-time position of station manager for TV-34. The salary range for the new employee, who has yet to be hired, will be \$28,000 to \$36,000. The council also approved a resolution releasing \$3,213 to be paid to Bruce Eisenstein, a consultant on cellular technology issues. Mr. Eisenstein met with the council last month to discuss cell tower issues and the feasibility of enacting an ordinance prohibiting such towers in

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DISTINGUISHED VOLUNTEER...Fanwood Police Sergeant Thomas Jedic (center), with his family is honored by Councilman Bruce Walsh Tuesday night as the borough's volunteer of the month.

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