

## SP Eyeing Budget Reductions Between \$135,000 and \$140,000

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — With municipal budget discussions moving into a fourth month, the township council was set to meet last night to further discuss possible cuts to the \$24.9-million executive budget submitted in February. At a budget meeting two weeks ago, Deputy Mayor Nancy Malool submitted a list of 20

specific areas of proposed appropriations cuts totaling \$140,000. After reviewing Mrs. Malool's proposals, Township Manager Thomas Atkins submitted to the council last week a list of 21 areas for possible cuts — some that duplicated Mrs. Malool's plan and others being new ideas. Mr. Atkins' list called for cuts totaling \$135,000.

Both proposals call for cuts in en-

gineering, police operating expenses, streets and roads, parks and recreation and the municipal court. Mr. Atkins' proposal did not include as deep a cut in legal services as Mrs. Malool's plan.

Mr. Atkins said he did not feel that an across-the-board flat percentage cut in the 2008 budget was a good idea. There are a number of budget accounts, he said, "where it would be impossible to make any cuts on a percentage basis that would even make sense or have any effect in trying to reduce the tax levy."

He said such areas as general insurance premiums, fees paid to the two sewerage authorities, emergency management, the municipal library, debt service payments and contributions to pension funds — most of which are areas with mandated appropriations levels.

Mr. Atkins, who is retiring this summer, said he wants to avoid reductions in personnel. "We are not heavily staffed, so mandatory reductions in force would not have a positive impact on our residents and taxpayers or [the township government] as a whole for that matter."

With proposed state aid cuts totaling \$271,000, or nearly three tax points, and several other revenue sources expected to be lower this year than in 2007, the local government is facing municipal property tax increases this year of 3.5 to 5.5 percent, not including the three additional tax points resulting from the state aid cut. Under the state's new tax levy cap, the amount to be raised in taxes for local government purposes cannot exceed \$15.439 million this year, which would equal an 11.2-point property tax increase.

Regardless of how quickly the council moves to finalize the budget, the earliest this year's spending plan could be formally adopted is early June, officials said. This year's budget "is most challenging," said Mr. Atkins. But he expects that 2009 and 2010 "will be even more problematic."



Jessica Jaskula for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times  
**GETTING ORGANIZED...**Sasha Slocum of Fanwood, and Warren McFall and Donald Parisi, both of Scotch Plains, take their oaths of office, at the April 24 re-organization meeting, to begin their new terms on the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education.

## Whitehouse Elected BOE President, Slocum Named Vice-President

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — At Thursday's annual re-organization meeting for the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education, newly elected board members Warren McFall, Donald Parisi and Sasha Slocum each took an oath of office for their three-year term. All were unopposed in their re-election bids.

Later in the meeting it was announced that the new turf field would not be installed until the district verifies that the materials used in the turf for the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School athletic field does not pose a health danger.

Following the induction of the re-elected BOE members, nominations were heard for both president and vice president of the board. Norman "Trip" Whitehouse was unanimously elected to another term as board president.

"I'll do my best to stay up to your standards," Mr. Whitehouse said.

Ms. Slocum was unanimously elected to succeed Linda Nelson as board vice president.

"I want to thank everyone for supporting me in this new position," Ms. Slocum said.

As Ms. Slocum took her new seat, Mr. Whitehouse thanked Ms. Nelson for her service. "I truly want to thank

you for what you bring to the board," he said.

Election results for the 2008-2009 school budget were detailed later in the meeting during the board secretary's report. It was announced that the 2008-2009 school budget was approved with 1,902 residents voting in favor of the \$67,753,660 school tax school tax levy and 1,203 residents voting in opposition out of 19,713 registered voters in the two towns.

"Thank you to the voters for supporting the budget," Mr. Whitehouse said.

Board members also approved during Thursday's meeting two new business and marketing textbooks for Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School titled "Microsoft Office 2007: Real World Application" and "Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management." The district's professional development plan was also approved.

Business Administrator Anthony Del Sordi commented on the current situation with the turf field projects at the high school. The two fields, he said, were in line to finish on time. On April 14, Mr. Del Sordi said he received a notice from the New Jersey Department of Education regarding an investigation of turf surfaces being done by the state's Department of Health.

In a test done on 12 artificial turf fields, two were found to have high levels of lead. High lead levels were

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**BUSINESS AWARD...**Fred Chemidlin, CEO of Family Investors in Fanwood, accepts the Business of the Year award from Steve Goldberg, scholarship chairman. The award presentation was made at the Westwood in Garwood by the Scotch Plains Business and Professional Association and by the Fanwood Business and Professional Association.

## FW Board Rejects Proposed Home Over Safety Concerns

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

FANWOOD — The Fanwood Planning and Zoning Board of Adjustment voted, on April 23, to unanimously reject an application for a new, single family home.

The applicant, builder Paul DiFrancesco, proposed to construct, on a subdivided lot, behind an existing home at 85 Woodland Avenue, a home fronting onto the dead end street of St. John's Place. After hearing hours of testimony, in January and again at the April 23 meeting, from experts in civil engineering, traffic and fire safety, board members cited fire safety concerns as their chief reason for rejecting the application.

Rick Regenthal, the borough's fire safety officer and former fire chief, asked the board to reject the application for lack of proper access to the house by fire engines and trucks.

Mr. Regenthal explained the difficulty of accessing the house with hoses and ladders in the event of a fire.

He cited problems as the setback of the house from the street at the end of a long driveway and the narrow width of the dead end street, resulting in a lack of frontage. Fire trucks, fire engines, police cars and ambulances would have to line up behind one another down the street, rather than park in front of the house, Mr. Regenthal said. An ambulance could get stuck in front of fire engines, depending on which arrived first, he added.

Despite the applicant's traffic engineer and fire safety expert's testimony that the house was adequately accessible to emergency vehicles, the board agreed with the borough safety officer's assessment that the configuration was an unsafe fire hazard.

Another issue extensively discussed concerned the configuration of the driveway. Expert witnesses testified that the proposed driveway would encroach into the public right-of-way in front of the adjacent property, at right angles with their driveway, an unusual configuration, which would require an easement or consent agreement, as well as a variance from the board.

Several neighbors testified that they had concerns regarding the line-of-sight safety issues of the driveway, which is across the street from an entrance to Forest Road Park. During the public comments portion of the meeting, half a dozen neighbors voiced their objections to the application, stating that the proposed house would compromise their quality of life.

Snow and leaf removal on the dead end street was also addressed. Due to the lack of frontage for this house, board members and neighbors had concerns that there would not be adequate space for this property owner to place leaves, debris and snow at the curb, as well as problems with the maneuverability of equipment.

In their final comments, board chairman Gregory Cummings, Mayor Colleen Mahr and other board members all agreed that the detriments outweighed the benefits for this proposal. Joan Wheeler, council representative to the planning board, said she was moved by the fire department's plea that the proposal would be a danger to firemen and a potential hazard to any family living in the house.

Board members voted "yes" to reject the application as opposed to voting no to its approval, as an added emphasis of their opposition.

## SPFHS Freshman Stabs Fellow Classmate During Art Class, Placed on Home Detention

By MICHAEL J. POLLACK  
*Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*

SCOTCH PLAINS — A stabbing occurred at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School (SPFHS), last week, leaving one student with multiple wounds.

Last Tuesday, April 22, at 2:20 p.m., Scotch Plains police received a 911 call from SPFHS that a freshman boy had stabbed a fellow classmate.

Reached this Tuesday, Scotch Plains Detective Lieutenant Brian Donnelly said an argument that began in art class "escalated way too far."

According to Lt. Donnelly, one student spilled paint on another, and a

verbal disagreement ensued, leading to a "pushing and shoving match."

As the altercation grew more heated, one student picked up an Exacto knife from a table in the classroom, stabbed the victim, 15, once in the arm and slashed him across the stomach.

Lt. Donnelly said the victim suffered "serious injuries" and lost a significant amount of blood.

The rescue squad transported the victim to University Hospital in Newark, where he was released the same day.

Police apprehended the suspect, who remained in the classroom, and charged him with assault and a weapons offense.

The assailant, a Scotch Plains resi-

dent, was taken to the juvenile detention center in Elizabeth, and the case has been handed over to the Union County Prosecutor's Office.

"We take the safety of all students seriously," Lt. Donnelly said.

He said this marks the first and only incident of the 2007-2008 school at SPFHS.

Executive Assistant Prosecutor Eileen Walsh told *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*, Tuesday, that the SPFHS student is no longer being held in Elizabeth.

The boy, 14, has been placed on "home detention," according to Ms. Walsh, meaning he "can't be roaming the streets."

He is allowed to leave home only to see a doctor, go to church or attend school, she said.

Ms. Walsh said it is up to the individual school to ban a student.

"Typically," she said, "a student is suspended and on home instruction." Calls to SPFHS have not been re-

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## Planning Board Approves Cooper Road Subdivision

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — The township's planning board on Monday gave unanimous approval to a major subdivision application on Cooper Road despite opposition from a resident, who contended that an approval would make it difficult for him to subdivide and develop his own property.

In his hour-long summation, Mr. Butler said that ending the cul-de-sac at Mr. D'Amore's property would prevent Mr. DeLisi from developing the rear of his property. The only alternative, he said, would be to create a flaglot in the rear, with the only access being a long driveway from Cooper Road. Flaglots have been generally discouraged in Scotch Plains in recent years.

At the board's prior hearing on March 24, Hal Simoff, an engineer, planner and expert on street design and traffic who testified on behalf of Mr. DeLisi, said extending Eton Row would be "much safer from a planning perspective" than creating a flaglot.

Mr. Butler reviewed court rulings and local ordinances in an effort to show that the board could compel Mr. D'Amore to extend the cul-de-sac into Mr. DeLisi's property. But near

der questioning from his attorney, William Butler, said he had expressed to Mr. D'Amore a willingness to buy the land from the end of the Eton Row cul-de-sac on the D'Amore property to the rear of his own property in order to extend the cul-de-sac. Mr. DeLisi said he had also offered to sell Mr. D'Amore small portions of his property in order to make the newly-created lots conforming.

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Raynor Dentizio for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times  
**TALKING HEALTH ISSUES...**Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL) poses with New Jersey Assemblywoman Linda Stender (LD-22, Fanwood), the Democratic candidate for the 7th Congressional District seat. Ms. Wasserman Schultz toured the Chelsea at Fanwood and discussed health care issues with Mrs. Stender on Friday. See story on page 3.



Courtesy of Caitlin Campbell  
**HIGH FIVE...**On April 17, Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School's Student Movement Against Cancer (SMAC) celebrated its fifth annual National High Five Day. Filling the halls of the school with countless high fives, this year's event raised over \$1,000 for pediatric cancer research. SMAC thanks everyone for purchasing t-shirts and attending the concert. Pictured, left to right, are: SMAC board members Zach Feldman, Amelia Brause, Diana Ferrante, Caitlin Campbell, Lauren Hirschhorn, Erica Nadal and Shannon Reimers.

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