

GOP Congressional Candidates Face Off in Mountainside Forum

By RAYNOR DENITZIO
Specialty Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

MOUNTAINSIDE — With the Primary election now less than a week away, the seven Republican candidates for the congressional nomination in the 7th District gathered at the Mountainside Borough Hall for a debate hosted by *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* last Thursday night. Polls on Tuesday will be open from 6 a.m. until 8 p.m.

The 7th District stretches Union, Hunterdon, Middlesex and Somerset counties.

The hour-long debate was moderated by Fred Rossi of *The Leader* and

The Times and was split into three rounds. The first round of questions focused on domestic issues, the second round on foreign affairs and in the final round candidates spoke on a topic of their choice. Candidates were given two minutes to respond to each question and were offered a two-minute closing statement.

Issues such as the economy, property taxes, illegal immigration, gasoline prices and Social Security were the key topics during the debate's first round. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Middle East conflict and terrorism served as the salient issues of the second round of questions.

Martin Marks, the mayor of Scotch

Plains, emphasized his conservative credentials in an effort to separate himself from the other candidates. Mr. Marks said he is the "across the board conservative" candidate and that the Republican Party has lost its roots. He said voters should not be afraid to nominate a conservative.

"All too often we like to go with the comfortable shoe," Mr. Marks said. "The candidate that might be better known, have a better name, a better political pedigree, one that might be considered moderate, so maybe they would do better in a General Election. And quite frankly, that doesn't work too often."

When asked about how to reform America's image on the world stage, Darren Young said that situations such as the treatment of detainees at Guantanamo Bay and Abu Gharib had made America "hated and feared across the world." He called for rights for prisoners at Guantanamo Bay as one way to improve the opinion of America abroad.

"One of the foundations [of America] is due process of law and we're denying this to these people," Mr. Young said. "And you call them enemy combatants, but still they're deserving of a fair trial like anyone else."

Mr. Young also said that the federal government has lost credibility domestically, citing a recent government report that showed energy prices falling 2 percent last month despite a 10 percent increase in oil prices.

"How can anybody believe anything that comes out of this government?" Mr. Young questioned. "We need a congressman that will insure accountability and transparency and truthfulness from the federal government."

Kelly Hatfield spoke of the danger posed by China, stating that aside from the threat posed economically by China's growing economy, the United States must be mindful of the military threat posed by China, particularly if it attains nuclear capabilities.

"I think that countries like North Korea and Syria and Iran getting hold of nuclear technologies and nuclear arms poses the largest threat to us," Ms. Hatfield said. "China is right along with them."

The tone of the debate was for the

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New Q.U.E.S.T. Unveiled; Coles Staff Cuts Questioned

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — Members of the review committee for The Gifted and Talented department discussed updates to the "Thinking Is Basic" (TIB) program at last Thursday's Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education meeting. The program will now be known as Q.U.E.S.T. (Question, Understand, Explore, Seek, Think).

Rather than completely changing the program, instead the district updated and revised the program. Assistant Superintendent Madeline Meyer said.

"We recognize that the program that's been in effect has been a very good program," she said.

After an overview, Hope Swarts, supervisor of specialized programs of study, said the main differences will be beginning the pull-out program in third grade, adding criteria to the selection process (three benchmarks), teacher input forms (teachers can refer students at any point), a "much more extensive" parent form, and a committee to evaluate the children.

In grades 7 and 8, students can nominate themselves for the program and would have to present a portfolio of work to the selection committee. All changes plus criteria and other information will be accessible to parents online.

"I'm really enthusiastic about this," Board Vice President Sasha Slocum said.

Board President Norman "Trip" Whitehouse shared his enthusiasm for having students nominating themselves to the selection committee, saying that it was a "valuable" life skill.

On another matter, two parents in attendance asked for clarification regarding a staff reduction and increase in class size at Coles Elementary School.

"There have been no decisions



WE REMEMBER... Veterans and citizens are joined by the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Marching Band parading on Park Avenue on Monday to remember American soldiers who have made the ultimate sacrifice to preserve the country's freedom.

Fanwood Council OKs \$1.9 Mil. Livingston-Wilbor Purchase Deal

By RAYNOR DENITZIO
Specialty Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

FANWOOD — The Fanwood Borough Council approved a resolution last Wednesday giving the borough permission to purchase, at a total cost of \$1.875 million, the Livingston-Wilbor property located on South Avenue. The vote occurred during a special meeting of the council, which was held after the meeting of the Fanwood Redevelopment Agency. The council also acts as the borough's redevelopment agency.

The council approved the purchase by a vote of three to two, with council members Joan Wheeler, Kathy Mitchell and Donna Dolce voting yes and council members David Vailian and Bruce Walsh voting no. Councilman Anthony Parenti abstained from the vote under advice from the municipal attorney since he owns property across from the site.

"It wasn't an abstention by choice, it was because I own property too close to the site," Mr. Parenti said.

Mr. Walsh said he understood the reason behind the purchase of the Livingston-Wilbor property, but felt the cost was too much with some of the other issues the borough is facing at this time.

Garry Wilbor, who operates a machine shop at the site, currently owns the property. Mr. Wilbor's shop was damaged last year when a firewall from an adjacent development project,

the Station Mews, collapsed onto the building and has been operating in a reduced capacity since then.

Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr said that the borough was interested in the property as part of its overall redevelopment plan. Ms. Mahr said the rear portion of the property is attractive as shared parking, and that she was concerned that if the machine shop was

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A SPECIAL GROUP OF VETS... Korean War veterans salute the nation's war dead during Monday's annual Scotch Plains-Fanwood Memorial Day Parade.

SP SID Ordinance Set For Introduction On June 10

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — An ordinance to create a Special Improvement District (SID) in two commercial business districts will be introduced at the township council's June 10 meeting and voted on two weeks later, Deputy Mayor Nancy Malool said on Tuesday night.

Reporting on a meeting held last week, with about 45 business and property owners, the third such meeting in the past two months, Ms. Malool called that final session "productive" and "informative." The council's consideration of the SID ordinance will come four years after its June 2004 rejection of a similar proposal in the face of vocal opposition from business and property owners. Opposition this year, while vocal at times, has been somewhat muted in recent weeks.

The proposed SID would encompass business and commercial properties located on Park Avenue, Front Street, Terrill Road, East Second Street, a portion of Westfield Avenue and on both sides of Route 22.

The ordinance to be introduced next month will include a provision calling for a first year tax assessment of a flat \$400 on each property within the SID boundaries to fund the SID. Ms. Malool said this was in response to concerns raised by downtown property owners about the exact level of tax assessments being considered to finance the initial year of the SID's

operations. The original proposal called for a six-tiered formula depending on a property's assessed value, with the assessments ranging from \$250 to \$2,000 per year.

In other business at its 45-minute meeting, the council approved a special use permit allowing Stage House Restaurant to place six tables and chairs in front of the tavern section of the building on Park Avenue and a few tables under the porch area along Front Street for al fresco dining.

Scotch Plains-Fanwood Youth Baseball Association President Mike Dempsey presented Parks and Recreation Director Ray Poirio with a check for \$9,500 to pay for additional fencing at the new fields at the Union County Vocational-Technical School. The facility, which includes a lit soccer field and 90-foot baseball diamond, was formally opened last night. Mr. Poirio told the council the additional fencing was needed because players were hitting baseballs farther than first anticipated.

The council's conference meeting next week will be held on Wednesday instead of Tuesday, due to the June 3 Primary election.



By Fred Rossi



David Samsky for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

PRIMARY DEBATE... The GOP Candidates for Congress, 7th District, debated their positions at Mountainside Borough Hall on May 22 in an election event sponsored by *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* and *The Westfield Leader*. Pictured, left to right, are: A.D. Amar, Kelly Hatfield, Darren Young, Sen. Leonard Lance, moderator Fred Rossi of *The Times*, Tom Roughneen, Mayor Martin Marks and Kate Whitman. See the one hour video at goleader.com.

Voters to Decide Senate, 7th Dist. House Races

By LAURA MORKOWITZ
Specialty Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

AREA — This Tuesday, June 3, area voters head to the election polls to select candidates in the Democratic and Republican Primaries for New Jersey Senate, members of Congress for the 7th District, and three seats for Union County freeholder. There are no competitive Primary races at the local municipal level.

Polls on Tuesday will be open from 6 a.m. until 8 p.m.

The most hotly contested race locally is the Republican race for Congress in the 7th District, where seven candidates are vying to fill Republican Rep. Mike Ferguson's seat. They are: Seton Hall University business professor A.D. Amar of Watchung; former Summit councilwoman Kelly Hatfield; State Senator Leonard Lance (LD-23, Clinton); Scotch Plains Mayor Martin Marks; former assistant prosecutor in Essex and Union counties and Iraq War veteran Tom Roughneen of Watchung, the daughter of former Governor Christine Whitman, Kate Whitman of Peapeack, and Darren Young of Summit.

Three other candidates — former Watchung Mayor Victor Sordillo, Bridgewater Councilman Michael Hsing and former Hillsborough Deputy Mayor Chris Venis — had sought Republican support but declined to file nomination petitions by the April deadline to participate in the Primary.

On the Democratic side, Assemblywoman Linda Stender of Fanwood is running uncontested. She came within a percentage point of unseating Mr. Ferguson two years ago.

The Democratic Senate race is between incumbent U.S. Senator Frank Lautenberg of Cliffside Park, who is seeking a fifth term, Rep. Rob Andrews (D-1st, Haddon Heights) and

Morristown Mayor Donald Cresitello.

The Republican Senate race is between former Rep. Richard Zimmer, Delaware Township, State Senator Joseph Pennacchio (LD-26, Pine Brook) and Ramapo College professor Murray Sabrin of Fort Lee. Businesswoman Anne Estabrook had to withdraw from the running after suffering a minor stroke in March. Her replacement, former Goya Foods executive Andy Unanue, dropped out of the race on April 11, and was replaced by Mr. Zimmer.

In the race for Union County freeholder, incumbent Democrats Angel Estrada of Elizabeth, Rick Proctor of Rahway and Nancy Ward of Linden face opposition in the June Primary from Carmen Southward of Linden, Carlos Cedeno and Marlene Abitanto, both of Elizabeth and running under the banner "Democratic Change for Elizabeth," Armando Burgos of Elizabeth, under "The Time is Now" ballot slogan, and Diane Murray of Hillside, running under the "Insure Your Future" name.

On the Republican side, Roselle Park Councilman Michael Yakubov, John Russitano of Westfield and Joseph Franchino of Berkeley Heights, endorsed by the Union County GOP organization, face opposition from Krzysztof Nowak of Cranford, Dolores Makrogiannis of Scotch Plains and Jeffrey Payer of Summit, who are running under the "Constitutional Republicans Protecting the Liberty Platform," a ballot line aligned with Mr. Sabrin.

Tuesday's Primary is predicted to have a low turnout with some candidates saying the move of New Jersey's Presidential Primary to February will reduce turnout.

Paul J. Peyton contributed to this story.



Fred Rossi for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SALUTING OUR HEROES... A member of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Raider Marching Band plays "Taps" during Monday's Scotch Plains-Fanwood Memorial Day parade in remembrance of those United States servicemen and women who died in service to our country.

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