

Scotch Plains-Fanwood School Bd. Investigates Student Non-Residency

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education (BOE) officials conducted 22 residency investigations of students over the past three months, resulting in four students being removed from the school system, according to Director of Special Services Thomas Beese's report to the school board last Thursday night.

The investigations, conducted between November 2009 and January 2010, also determined that 10 students were residents of the district

while eight other cases are still ongoing, pending further investigation.

"I will be reporting out [to the public] quarterly as the public has expressed concern regarding residency," Mr. Beese said. This was his first public reporting of these investigations.

In other business, board members approved the proposed 2010-2011 school calendar. School will begin on Tuesday, September 7, and end Wednesday, June 22, 2011. Three snow days are included, with students in school for 182 days.

During a public comment portion

of Thursday's meeting, a Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School (SPFHS) student, who commented during a December board meeting that there was some confusion in his classroom during a safety drill, asked Superintendent of Schools Margaret Hayes if there were any updates on previous comments.

Superintendent Hayes said she followed up with SPFHS Principal David Heisey, who informed her that he has made staff aware and that they are working together so that they are clear on what to do and how to handle similar situations in the future.

In addition, Rona Goldberg of Scotch Plains came before the board to comment on a foreign language survey that was recently sent out to parents and guardians who have children in World Language classes.

"It was fabulous," Ms. Goldberg said of the survey. "We're really moving in the right direction and I hope that everyone takes advantage [of being able to take the survey]."

The survey, BOE President Norman "Trip" Whitehouse explained, asks parents questions on their experience with the foreign language program. Standard questions are asked, and then parents are directed to a series of questions that are appropriate for the grade level their child is in. The foreign language survey was a result of the strategic planning process, he added. "We're also going to be surveying our students," he said.

Later in the meeting, Mr. Whitehouse said the PTA Council has chosen the Ronald McDonald House charities as one of its fundraisers for this year. "This will be one of the large fundraising efforts this year for the PTA Council," he said. He added that additional information would be going around soon via fliers, for example.

During committee reports, Board Vice-President Nancy Bauer said the Garden State Coalition of Schools would hold an open membership meeting on Wednesday, February 24, at Summit High School.

The new commissioner of education, Bret Schundler, has been invited to the event, which is meant to be an "open dialogue," with the new commissioner and those in attendance, Ms. Bauer said. Others in attendance will be members of the PTA Council, members of the legislature, board of education members and superintendents, she said.

Board members also adopted on Thursday a resolution proclaiming February 2010 as "Black History Awareness Month."

Additionally on Thursday, board Business Administrator Anthony Del Sordi told *The Scotch Plains-*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

County Acquires Clark Property for \$600,000

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

ELIZABETH — The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders has continued its purchase of land along Madison Hill Road in Clark with the \$600,000 acquisition of a single-family home located next to St. Agnes Parish of Clark. The county is not expected to close on the deal for several months.

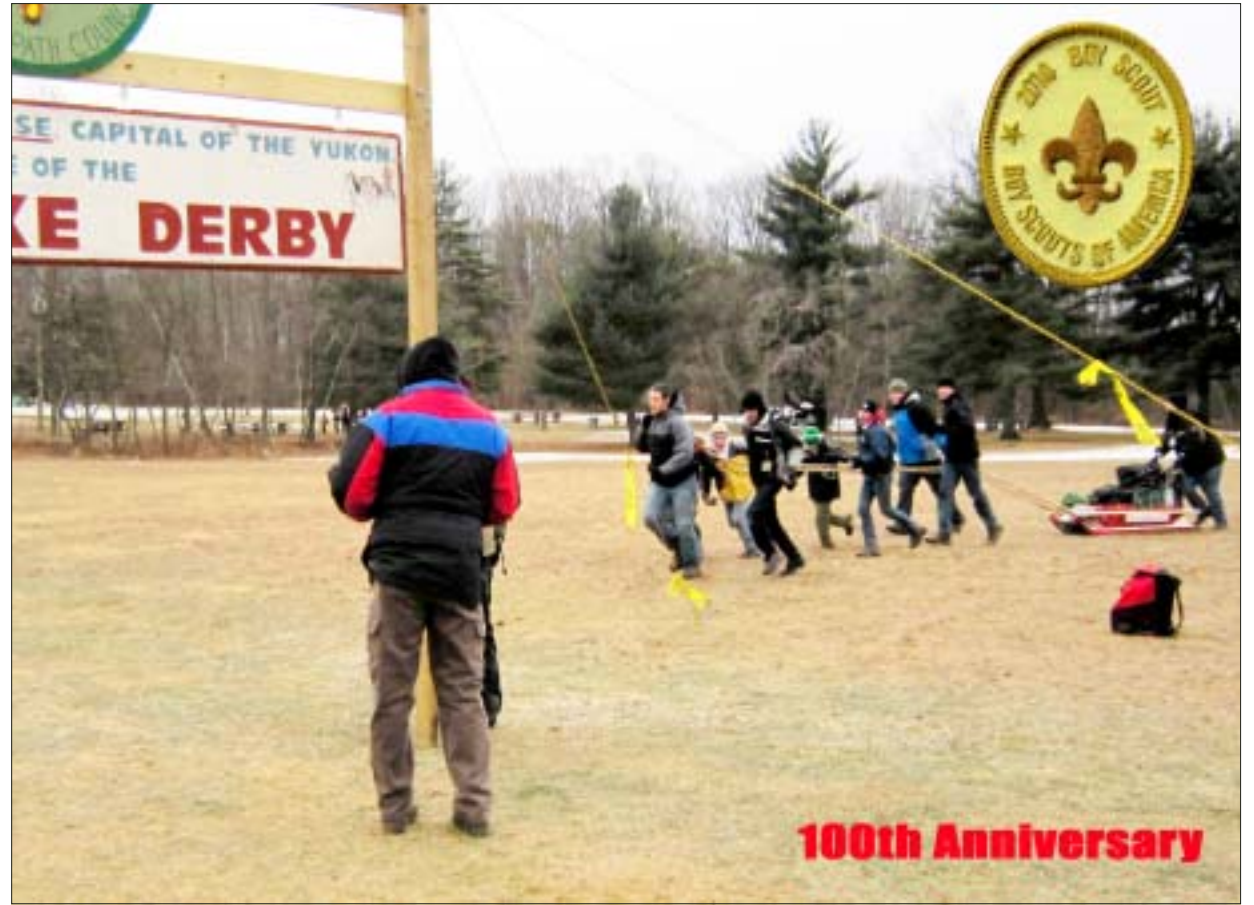
Vicki Drake Durbin, open space coordinator for the county, told *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* that the .8 acre of land is surrounded by the St. Agnes and county-owned properties. "The house is old, to say the least," she said. "The assumption was that two building lots would be approved for the lot," said Mrs. Durbin, noting that the house will be demolished.

Mrs. Durbin said the home's owner recently died. According to online records operated by the New Jersey Tax Assessors Association, the property was owned by Eric C. Miller and was assessed at \$124,300 and garnered \$8,700 in property taxes.

She said two appraisals were completed on the property by the county, along with a third by the state's Green Acres program, with the average appraisal coming in at \$700,000.

"It [the purchase] completes the St. Agnes property [purchase] for the county," Mrs. Durbin said. The county purchased 13 acres of undeveloped land behind St. Agnes Parish for \$8 million in 2007.

Mrs. Durbin said the county is currently in its "due diligence" phase and completing the required environ-



100TH ANNIVERSARY...Last Saturday, district Boy Scouts held their 55th Annual Klondike Derby at the Watchung Reservation. Troop 104 of Scotch Plains had the fastest time, as well as a 99 out of 100 score. Troop 73 Senior sled from Westfield was also a winner. This week marks the 100th Anniversary of Boy Scouts in America.

Scotch Plains Council Disputes SID Hiring; Forewarns Action

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — The township council will meet with officials from the Scotch Plains Management Corp. (SPMC) later this month to discuss possible changes to the ordinance that created the special improvement district two years ago and also to hear from SPMC board members about last week's hiring of two managers to oversee the business district.

At Tuesday's conference meeting, Mayor Nancy Malool said some changes to the ordinance are needed for several reasons, including a change in the official tax-exempt designation of the entity, other fine-tuning to ensure the SPMC's by-laws accurately reflect the ordinance, and the ability to have fewer members serving on the SPMC's board of directors. This is necessary, she said, because the present 13-member board often lacks a quorum and is "unmanageable" as presently constituted. She also feels the council, not the board itself, should have reappointment power for board members.

The bulk of the council's discussion, however, centered around the SPMC board's decision last week to hire a consultant and a township resident to serve as co-managers of the

business revitalization efforts (see related story). Mayor Malool said the approximately \$44,000 being expended on salaries, fees and other administrative costs for FirsTEAM and for Lisa Schiller represented more than two-

thirds of the SPMC's \$64,000 annual budget. She said FirsTEAM was willing to do the entire job of managing the SPMC's efforts for \$22,000 a year. "The board was hell-bent on giving [Mrs. Schiller] a job and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

SPMC Hires Two Managers To Oversee Business District

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — The Scotch Plains Management Corp. (SPMC) last week hired a professional consultant and a township resident to serve as joint managers of the commercial business district.

The 13-member board's decision to retain two managers was not unanimous, with Mayor Nancy Malool and Dominic Verdic opposing the move.

FirsTEAM, with offices in Plainfield and East Orange, will "help us from the corporate side," explained SPMC Board Vice-Chairman Jeff Kowalczyk. He said the firm, which is involved in managing several business improvement districts in Union, Essex and Hudson Counties, will assist in day-to-day administration of the township's special improvement district (SID), which was enacted in 2008 and formally began operations early last year.

Meanwhile, Lisa Schiller, who coordinated much of the Memorial Day 2009 Music Festival that was the SPMC's maiden effort, will serve as the organization's "face on the street," Mr. Kowalczyk told *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*. "It'll be helpful having somebody with a face that people know, walking around. Lisa has proven herself; she has tons of energy."

He added that FirsTEAM Founder David Biagini has "lots of knowledge and lots of expertise" in commercial district management, adding that the

company is familiar with various cost-saving programs that can be offered to Scotch Plains businesses to help them save some money. In addition, Mr. Kowalczyk said Mrs. Schiller "will be getting valuable training" from the FirsTEAM management group. "Eventually, it will probably make sense for us to have our own manager," Mr. Kowalczyk said, although he added that it will also be beneficial to retain the services of a consultant such as FirsTEAM for various needs.

SPMC Board Chairman Jim Watson told *The Times* the board opted for two managers instead of one because "we get the expertise [of FirsTEAM] at a much reduced rate as well as a local person out on the street who knows people." Neither Mr. Watson nor Mr. Kowalczyk provided salary figures for Mrs. Schiller, but Mr. Kowalczyk

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



LIFE LESSONS...The Mini-Leadership Training Conference (LTC) program, Many Stars - One Universe, was held last Saturday at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School. Middle school students were taught public speaking, effective communication and leadership, team building and problem solving through collaboration. More than 100 middle school students from Park and Terrill schools attended.

Mr. Cummings Resigns After 20 Years on FW Planning Bd.

By SUZETTE F. STALKER
 Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

FANWOOD — After 20 years of service on the Fanwood Planning Board, 17 of those years at the head of the dais as chairman, Greg Cummings resigned from the nine-member body last month.

"I'd been there for many, many years and I thought it was time to move on," Mr. Cummings told *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* in an interview last Friday. "I thought it was time to turn it over to other people."

Mr. Cummings stepped down January 19, during the planning board's annual reorganization meeting. Former board vice-chairman, Jack Molenaar, who Mr. Cummings nominated to succeed him, is the new chairman. Dale Flowers is now vice-chairman. The board usually meets twice monthly, on the third Monday and fourth Wednesday, in the council chambers at Fanwood Borough Hall.

A Fanwood resident for 21 years, Mr. Cummings retired for the second time last July after a 35-year career in sales and marketing. He was first drawn to community service in the borough while still a new resident — successfully working to save a historic local home from demolition. The house, known as "The Burton Hall Home," still stands on North Avenue opposite the Fanwood train station.



Greg Cummings

A developer was seeking to raze the home in order to pave the way for a 20-unit townhouse complex. Such action was permitted under Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) regulations — superceding local zoning ordinances — so long as 20 percent of the new housing units were earmarked for low- and moderate-income housing.

Mr. Cummings organized a citizens group of some 70 people whose efforts, with the support of elected officials from the municipal to the state level, led to passage of legislation that became known as the Fanwood Bill. An amendment to the Fair Housing Act of 1985, it prevents developers from destroying sound housing on lots of two acres or less for the purpose of increasing density by designating 20 percent for low- and moderate-income housing.

"It was a great win for New Jersey," said Mr. Cummings, who noted the group was not against affordable housing but simply advocating responsible development. He also had coordinated a coalition of grass-roots efforts involving other New Jersey communities, among them Westfield and Scotch Plains, in support of the Fanwood Bill. Then-Mayor Patricia Kuran appointed him to the planning board following conclusion of the campaign to have this legislation passed.

While his role on the planning board involved many volunteer hours

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



FUTURE PARKLAND...Union County has purchased the property at 370 Madison Hill Road in Clark, pictured above, currently occupied by a single-family home. The property, acquired for \$600,000, is located adjacent to St. Agnes Parish of Clark, and is earmarked for additional parkland.

Demolition Set To Begin at Two Downtown Fanwood Properties

See Fanwood Council Story On Page 2



A GOOD USE...The former Terry Lou Zoo property in Scotch Plains, owned by the township, is put to good use with an obstacle course for training and exercise of its police K-9 units.

PAGE INDEX			
Regional	2-3	Obituary	14
Editorial	4-5	Education	13
Community	6-7	Sports	9-12
		Real Estate	9-12
		Classifieds	13
		A&E	15-16