

## SPMC Budget Is Presented; Five Board Members Resign

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — On a day that saw the resignations of five members of the Scotch Plains Management Corp. (SPMC) board of directors, Mayor Nancy Malool said she was “really pleased” with the proposed 2010 SPMC budget approved last week by the board. It is expected the township council will vote on the spending plan next month.

At the council’s Tuesday conference meeting, David Biagini, president of FirsTEAMmanagement, which will serve as SPMC manager, outlined the proposed budget, which is a revision of an earlier plan that had drawn the ire of some council members who felt too much money was earmarked

for salaries and administration. FirsTEAMmanagement will be paid \$19,000 this year, which represents 30 percent of the proposed \$67,280 budget. The earlier proposal had earmarked more than 40 percent for salaries, with FirsTEAMmanagement sharing managerial responsibilities with Lisa Schiller.

A revised proposal weeks ago called for Mrs. Schiller to instead bid to lead promotion efforts for individual SPMC events on an event-by-event basis, but Mr. Biagini told the council on Tuesday that she had since decided not to participate. He said 58 percent of the budget will be spent on programs and marketing this year, including a retail promotion in May or June, a fall festival, printed adver-

tising and marketing, recruitment and retention, a business directory and the weekly television program on Scotch Plains Television. Another \$11,000 is earmarked for general operations and a reserve for unanticipated expenses.

Mr. Biagini also said that, if what he described as a “tight budget” gets council approval, commercial property owners in the special improvement district (SID) would get a break later this year on their assessment. SPMC already has cash on hand of about \$67,000 from the \$400 per-property assessments in 2008 and 2009, a sum that will essentially cover this year’s budget. Assessments for the first half of this year have already been billed, totaling about \$32,000. Mr. Biagini proposed to cancel the second half of 2010 billings and carry over the already-billed \$32,000 to 2011.

Mayor Malool said the council would introduce the SPMC budget at its Tuesday, April 6, meeting, with a formal vote occurring later next month. She said all property owners would receive a copy of the budget via mail.

She said she and the council “look forward to progress being made” in “providing some life in our downtown.”

Mr. Biagini also announced that five SPMC board members, including Chairman Jim Watson, have resigned from the 13-member board, prompting Mayor Malool to again say that the council needs to examine the ordinance creating the SID to determine if the board should be pared down to seven members, as she had urged in recent weeks. In addition to Mr. Watson, who was unavailable for comment, Ted Schiller, Frank DiLollo, Tom Cusmano and Tom Britt also resigned. Vice-Chairman Jeff Kowalczyk resigned from his post, but will remain on the board.

She said the resignations were “unfortunate,” adding, “I appreciate the work they put in” over the past 15 months.

### BOE’s Brace for Deep Aid Cuts

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

AREA — School districts are bracing for deep cuts in state aid. *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* placed calls to local districts at press time for comments. Districts had anticipated a 15-percent cut in aid, but now believe the number could be as high as 90 percent.

Mountainside School Business Administrator Roderic McLaughlin said Governor Chris Christie in his budget speech alluded to the fact that the aid cut would result in a 5-percent total budget reduction. Statewide, Mr. McLaughlin said, this would reduce school budgets by more than \$1 billion; locally, Mountainside could stand to lose almost all of its \$780,000 in aid.

“It’s a scary... You would like to think the state wouldn’t put us that far off the mark [in terms of aid expectations],” he said. “We are waiting with baited breath.”

Scotch Plains-Fanwood Superintendent of Schools Margaret Hayes and Business Administrator Anthony Del Sordi were meeting when *The Times* called Wednesday morning.

At Tuesday night’s Westfield Board of Education (BOE) meeting, Superintendent of Schools Margaret Dolan said, “The rules changed today. Based on what we heard, our state aid will be cut 92 percent,” or \$4,250,000.

The Garwood BOE approved a tentative budget Tuesday night. Its budget committee is scheduled to meet tomorrow to recalculate aid numbers, which were to be released yesterday by the Department of Education after press deadline.

### Correction

A candidate’s name for the Mountainside Board of Education was misspelled in last week’s edition. The correct spelling is Jim Ruban. We regret the error.



ALOHA AND WELCOME ABOARD...Second- and third-grade Brownie Girl Scouts of Scotch Plains-Fanwood and their “special guys” board a faux cruise ship February 28 at Union Catholic High School in Scotch Plains for the Me and My Guy Dance Cruise to Hawaii. Each couple had a photo taken in front of tropical scenery and enjoyed dance music, limbo and Hula-Hoop contests, along with a buffet.

## Freeholders OK \$900,000 In Contracts for 2010 Elections

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

ELIZABETH — The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders approved \$900,000 in funding for elections to be held throughout the county this year.

B&B Press of Somerville was given a \$149,569 contract to print absentee and provisional ballots for this year’s Primary and General elections. Full Service Mailers, Inc. of Garfield was given a \$65,781 contract to mail sample ballots for this year’s School, Primary and General Elections.

Royal Printing Services of West New York was given a \$474,240 contract to print ballots for School Board, Primary and General Elections, and a \$110,000 contract to print voting authority books, poll books “and all other printing needed to run an election within the county” for the 2010 election cycle.

In addition, the freeholders approved \$40,000 contracts to Liberty Transport of Union, University Van Lines and Princeton Van Service of Ewing to transport voting machines to and from the polling locations.

Freeholder Al Mirabella asked if the county could save money by combining printing contracts. “Maybe we can get a reduced cost?,” he said.

Deputy Clerk Alan Falcone said the Clerk’s Office put out a request for proposals for bids on all three contracts, and noted that B&B, Full-Service and Royal Printing came in with lower bids in the areas they were granted contracts. He said Full-Service also sorts the ballots and brings them to the Post Office.

“Over the years we found this was actually the cheapest way of doing it, was to split it up in this manner and bid it out separately,” Mr. Falcone told Mr. Mirabella.

In other business, the board approved a resolution to have the county award contracts to agencies under the Peer Grouping Aging grant. A half million dollars will be funded to the county for this grant from the state with additional funds sought for the second and third years of the program.

Human Services Director Frank Guzzo said the state provides peer-grouping monies to counties that either operates a county hospital, as Union county does with Runkells Specialized Hospital in Berkeley Heights, or a county-run nursing home. Those counties that receive these funds are “required to provide only 10 percent of revenues towards home-health services and hospice

care,” he said. Mr. Guzzo said the remaining funds from the grant can go into the county’s general fund “and be used for any purpose.” In Union County’s case, up to 70 percent is dedicated to “general human services” including hospice and home healthcare with the remainder going to services such as Paratransit.

“These dollars plug gaps in services that would be unfunded because there are no other dollars to fund them,” Mr. Guzzo told the board.

Under the state’s 10-percent minimum, Mr. Guzzo said the county would only be required to fund \$200,000 for home-health services and hospice care. “With the allocation that we are expecting it is closer to \$2 million,” Mr. Guzzo said.

He said pending legislation would remove the 10-percent requirement, meaning counties would not have to fund anything to home-health and hospice services. “That would surely break the backs of the social services agencies in this county and others particularly in times as difficult as they have been over the last two or three years,” Mr. Guzzo said.

Mountainside resident Gerry Gallagher of the Center for Hope Hospice said the board awarded Hope Hospice \$204,000 in 2008, \$189,000 in 2009, and \$180,000 this year.

“This is a very important source of funding for those that provide this care. While this year is \$9,000 less

than last year, we are grateful for whatever you can provide us,” Mr. Gallagher said.

The board also approved, on second reading, an ordinance to appropriate \$200,000 to construct 10 to 12 bunkers at the Galloping Hill Golf Course in Union.

Garwood resident Bruce Paterson said the county took out bunkers years ago to speed up play. He said, by putting them back, golf will be slowed and revenues would be reduced.

“This (additional bunkers expenditure) is loony,” Mr. Paterson said.

Cranford resident Jim Buettner suggested the golf operations staff or prisoners in S.L.A.P. (Sheriff’s Labor Assistance Program) install the bunkers to save money.

John Bury of Kenilworth announced that as chairman of a budget panel for the Union County Watchdog Association he has developed a review of the county budget whereby he questioned \$5.8 million in expenditures of the \$469-million county executive budget. Among them is \$200,000 in lobbying costs and \$250,000 in legal fees.

The board also approved a resolution, sponsored by Freeholder Chairman Dan Sullivan, that opposes Senate Bill 201, which would require local governments to place all documents on their websites. Mr. Sullivan said he opposes the legislation because no funding has been provided to offset the costs.



THE POWER OF WATER...A young man at Valley Road in Clark gazes at the flood waters of the Rahway River last Sunday after the storm deluge of Saturday.

## Mayor Lauds Staff Efforts During Weekend Storm

By FRED T. ROSSI  
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SCOTCH PLAINS — Mayor Nancy Malool this week lauded the efforts of township emergency services personnel for their efforts during last weekend’s heavy rainfall. “It was a tough weekend for everyone,” she said at the township council’s regular meeting on Tuesday night.

The storm, which began last Friday night and lasted into Monday, dumped five to six inches of wind-driven rain, according to Township Manager Chris Marion. He said several main roadways were closed during the weekend due to flooding, including a segment of Route 22, Park Avenue, Terrill Road, Raritan Road, Front Street and Cooper Road. Several south-side houses reported sewers backing up into the residences. Mr. Marion said the fire department had responded to some 80 calls reporting flooded basements.

In other business, the council approved bids totaling nearly \$56,000 for the provision of various chemicals and seeds for Scotch Hills Country Club and other municipal parks. A bid totaling \$200,000 was approved for the provision of gasoline and diesel fuel for 2010.

Mr. Marion announced that the Federal Emergency Management

Agency and the Department of Homeland Security had awarded a \$63,360 grant to the fire department for the replacement of firefighting gear. The township will match the federal grant, he said.

The council also approved a resolution authorizing the signing of an agreement with the Union County Division of Emergency Management for the issuance of laptop computers to the fire department.

Mayor Malool said the budget message delivered on Tuesday by Governor Chris Christie was centered around “shared sacrifice,” including proposed cuts in state aid to municipalities and school districts. She said the state-aid figures will be provided to the municipality later this week, and will average about 20 percent. As for the effect of a state aid cut on Scotch Plains’ budget, the mayor said 2010 “will not be an easy year,” warning that “not everybody’s going to be happy.” But, she said, “We will get through it like we did last year.”

At the start of the meeting, four members of Girl Scout Troop 441 led the council in the salute to the flag and then accepted a proclamation from the mayor designating March 17 as Girl Scout Day in Scotch Plains. The council’s next meeting is Tuesday, April 6.



FLOODING...The parking lot of the Bayberry Gardens apartment complex in Scotch Plains begins to flood and submerge vehicles on Saturday night, at the height of the five-inch rainstorm the area experienced over the weekend.



CUB SCOUTS RULE...Cub Scouts from Den 6 at Scotch Plains’ Evergreen Elementary School visit *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* office in Westfield on March 11 to learn how newspapers are made.

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