



10,000 FEET...The Staple family holds *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* on top of Haleakala crater in Maui. Pictured, left to right, are: Andy, Ethan and Noah.



2012-02-23: FRENZY...The media lined area streets early Sunday morning prior to Whitney Houston's interment at Fairview Cemetery in Westfield. News trucks arrived by 5:30 a.m. and were broadcasting live feeds.



2012-04-19: SEA...Who is reading *The Times*? While visiting Grand Cayman, Jake, Briella and Kapriana Payami of Scotch Plains toured the Turtle Farm. It is an internationally renowned research and conservation center for sea turtles. The interactive experience was fun and interesting — even for this turtle!

2012 Year In Review, Part 1

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officials from both municipalities.

The mayor conceded that, “we still have questions” and are “still grappling” with how a joint police department would be structured. But, Mayor Mahr emphasized, “If we want to get this done, it can be done.”

As progress continued on the mixed-use development, Fanwood Crossing, Mayor Mahr said completing the downtown redevelopment, along with updating zoning on South Avenue, were among her priorities over the next four years.

County

In her annual report, Union County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi said the economic recession continued to impact the housing market and foreclosure rate in the county in 2011. For all property documents, there was nearly a 6-percent decrease in volume, from 72,705 to 68,511.

This number also reflected a decrease in foreclosure recordings due to a court-ordered moratorium on foreclosures, Ms. Rajoppi reported.

Freeholder Dan Sullivan announced that a governmental-efficiency task force put together by Union County Manager Al Faella recommended changes that could save the county \$850,000 in the 2012 county budget.

One area where the task force was looking to save money was the upgrading of the county’s telecommunications infrastructure.

Union County officials learned that dispatch services out of Overlook Medical Center in Summit, known as CenCom, would close on April 1. In response, the county offered to begin servicing towns served by CenCom through the county’s 9-1-1 dispatch operation in Westfield.

Region

Kean University’s Board of Trustees voted in favor of keeping its embattled president, Dawood Farahi. As a result, a group of students marched in the rain from the university, down Morris Avenue, to state Senator Ray Lesniak’s Legislative District Office, speaking out against the retaining of Mr. Farahi despite numerous allegedly falsified claims on his resumé.

Students held signs that read, “Even McDonald’s Has Background Checks,” “Fraudhi Must Step Down” and “I’m Tired of Paying for Farahi’s Ferrari.”

MARCH

Westfield

The town council took the first step in setting up a new fee for sewer usage in order to offset a budget gap of approximately \$1.5 million, passing an ordinance which allowed the town to bill single and multi-family housing units \$170 for the year; condominiums and townhouses \$135 per unit; commercial and industrial uses \$315 and each apartment unit \$100.

Charles Casiere, 84, and John Diaz, 73, both of Westfield, were charged with driving while intoxicated following a fatal pedestrian accident on North Avenue.

After 31 years with the Westfield Police Department, Chief John Parizeau announced his retirement effective August 1.

The council unanimously voted to introduce Westfield’s \$36.95-million 2012 municipal budget.

Freeholder Chairman Alexander Mirabella declined to intervene in the controversy over installation of a HAWK designed mid-block pedestrian crossing signal on Central Avenue. His comments followed pleas by a retired Westfield police officer and resident who asked the county to replace the HAWK signal with a standard traffic signal at the intersection of Central and Clover Street.

The board of adjustment voted unanimously to grant several variances being requested to facilitate a lease agreement between Poly CLLC, Serf Realty LLC, and Urban Outfitters to renovate and occupy the historic Westfield Trust Company building at the corner of East Broad and Elm Streets.

The council heard an update on the progress of deterring geese from nesting in Mindowaskin Park from Alex Tkacenko of Goose Runners, who uses border collies to scare off the geese.

A discussion on whether to go forward with a bond referendum to replace approximately 80 percent of the school district’s roofs was held. The possibility of a \$13,600,000, district-wide roof replacement project had been discussed twice before.

The BOE unanimously passed its 2012-2013 budget in addition to a resolution to seek a bond referendum to replace approximately 80 percent of the district’s roofs. The district’s budget of \$95,360,622 included a tax levy of \$87,194,608, representing a 1.9-percent increase over last year’s budget.

The board of directors of the Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC) ratified its 2012 budget of \$409,605, which was slightly greater than last year’s budget of \$409,484.

Scotch Plains

It was revealed that by updating its insurance procedures last year to require organizers of township parks to complete hold harmless agreements, the township might have inadvertently caused the cancellation of St. Bart’s Old-timers Softball League. The league has been in existence since 1978 and features 150-plus players.

Township Municipal Manager Chris Marion announced his resignation on March 12, effective March 30, to take the position of business administrator in Old Bridge Township.

Councilman Kevin Glover made a motion to move \$100,000 from the town’s sewer utility surplus to its municipal operating budget. His motion passed by a 3 to 2 vote, with Mayor Nancy Malool and Councilman Mickey Marcus supporting, and Deputy Mayor Mary DePaola and Councilman Bo Vastine opposed.

The proposed 2012 municipal budget called for a \$34 increase to \$1,777 for the average assessed property of \$122,800.

The Scotch Plains Management Corp. (SPMC) announced that it would embark on a major business recruitment effort, including having a representative attend the premier retailing trade show in Las Vegas in May.

Members of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood BOE unanimously passed the 2012-2013 \$85,690,101 budget, which was up \$3 million from last year. The overall tax-levy increase was 1.6 percent, which was within the state-mandated 2-percent cap. Scotch Plains taxpayers pay 77.8 percent of the tax levy, while Fanwood residents pay 22.1 percent.

Fanwood

The Fanwood Planning Board talked about making changes to the existing ordinances in the borough, and explored ideas for the downtown commercial district.

While the mayors of Scotch Plains and Fanwood were discussing a merger of the towns’ police departments, a citizens group pursued a study that could lead to a complete consolidation of the two municipalities.

The borough council introduced its \$8.8-million budget, which provided the same level of services and did not result in any municipal layoffs. Fanwood residents saw overall property-tax bills increase \$55.

Garwood

A recall petition was circulated throughout the borough to unseat Councilman Jim Mathieu following Borough Clerk Christina Ariemma’s lawsuit against Councilman Mathieu.

The borough’s planning board voted, 7 to 2, with Bill Nierstedt and Georgia MacIndoe dissenting, to approve the application of Andrea Lopez to operate a permanent cosmetics business.

The council unanimously introduced a \$7.16-million budget that managed to stay within the state-mandated 2-percent ceiling, but resulted in a \$105 municipal increase per household.

Borough resident Angelo Alimonte asked the borough council why Councilman Louis Petruzzelli was receiving \$22,000 in healthcare benefits. Mr. Alimonte stated his opposition to paying benefits to council members and the mayor.

Mountainside

The BOE asked parents to consider waiving district-provided transportation if it is not needed, or it would be forced to increase its budget by \$95,000.

Cranford

Two weeks after the surfacing of an eight-year-old Internet audiotape, in which he uttered an off-color joke in a telephone conversation with his son, township Police Chief Eric Mason said those comments were “not indicative of the career I have had or

the person that I am.” He said he regretted if anyone had been offended by his remarks and lamented that a tape of “a private conversation” had been “exploited” by someone in order to “divide the community and to embarrass me.”

After receiving comments from residents concerned about the scope of a proposed ordinance that would sharply limit the feeding of wildlife on public and private property, the township committee put off a vote on the ordinance so that its language could be more closely examined and fine-tuned.

County

The Board of Chosen Freeholders introduced two ordinances and passed a resolution regarding construction of a \$45-million, 78,000-square-foot family court building being constructed at 10 Cherry Street in Elizabeth. The new building will include a 150-space parking deck.

The first estimate for a skating center at Oak Ridge Park in Clark, which would replace the Warinanco Skating Center in Elizabeth, was \$8.8 million, according to a copy of a feasibility study recently completed.

Union County officials announced the cancellation of Union County MusicFest and Rhythm & Blues by the Brook for 2012 due to budgetary constraints.

Union County sent layoff notices out to 236 employees, on top of 44 notices delivered in February, as the county looked to trim its payroll by June 1 to close what Freeholder Fiscal Affairs Committee Chairman Dan Sullivan described as a “very significant budget deficit.” In addition to the layoffs, another 72 vacant positions are being eliminated.

Region

Since CenCom, the medical 9-1-1 dispatch center for multiple area rescue squads and paramedic units, announced its impending closure, it was still unknown who would take the 9-1-1 calls in the region.

New Jersey is the least corruptible U.S. state, according to a report by the Center for Public Integrity. New Jersey merited a B-plus, the highest grade, ahead of Connecticut, which earned a B, and Washington, California and Nebraska, which each received B-minus. Nineteen states received C’s and 18 received D’s, while eight states received failing grades, according to news reports.

Union County Republicans gave the party line in the Tuesday, June 5, Primary Election to the two-term Rep. Leonard Lance from the 7th District by a 139-16 vote over businessman David Larsen. Delegates also gave the Republican Party organizational line to former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney for president; to Monmouth County state Senator Joseph Kyrillos for the United States Senate; and to Middlesex County businessman Eric Beck in the race for Congress from the 12th Congressional District. Also, Diane Barabas of Westfield, Chris Nowak of Cranford and Stephen Kozlovich of Union were selected to run for three seats on the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders.

The state Senate Judiciary Committee defeated Governor Chris Christie’s nominee for the state Supreme Court, Executive Assistant Attorney General Phillip Kwon, in a 7-6 vote.

APRIL

Westfield

Union County Prosecutor Theodore Romankow announced the arrest of a 51-year-old man in connection to the brutal rape and murder of 57-year-old Lena Triano of Westfield that occurred in 1976. The twist in the case, however, is that the man arrested was 15 at the time and cannot be charged as an adult and his name was being withheld. In a report published by *The Star-Ledger*, the suspect had been identified as Carlton Franklin, Westfield High School Class of 1979, and at the time, a neighbor of the victim, who lived at 617 Stirling Place.

The board of adjustment granted preliminary approval, with conditions, for a new veterinary hospital at 562 Springfield Avenue. The current facility at that location will be demolished and replaced with a new three-story, 6,800-square-foot building.

The town council voted unanimously to make Captain David Wayman Westfield’s new police chief. Chief John Parizeau was honored for his 31 years of service with the department at a town council meeting.

Barbara Ball presented a report to

received a \$180,000 award from the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) Municipal Aid Program for total road reconstruction work the borough will do on Farley Avenue.

It was announced that incumbent Republicans Robert Manduca and Mike Szuch would attempt to fend off the challenges of veteran Democrat Jack Molenaar and relative newcomer Daniel Levine in the November election.

Garwood

The BOE unanimously approved a proposed budget for the 2012-2013 school year totaling \$8,349,831, including a general fund of \$7,682,554 and special revenues of \$134,160, with \$7,258,780 to be raised in taxes.

The borough council adopted a \$7,160,257 municipal budget, with \$5,415,039 to be raised in taxes, in a 5 to 1 vote. Councilman Jim Mathieu was the sole dissenter. The tax levy is \$46,368 under the 2-percent mandated tax-levy cap. Homeowners saw a municipal tax hike of \$105 per \$100,000 of assessed value.

The borough council unanimously voted to approve a resolution to establish a compensation review procedure for the purposes of determining salaries and wages for full-time employees of the borough who are not the members of any employee bargaining unit, are not afforded compensation protection by law and whose compensation is solely with the discretion of the mayor and council.

Residents of The Pointe, a newly built condominium complex located along North Avenue in the borough, voiced their opposition to The Pointe residents paying what they said was double the taxes than the average taxpayer in the borough.

Mountainside Residents who live near the new Triboro Sports Complex gave comments to the borough council in opposition to the new facility.

The BOE discussed the imminent departure of Acting Business Administrator Daniel Saragnese. Mr. Saragnese was appointed as the acting business administrator and board secretary for the district in June 2010.

Cranford The township’s zoning board of adjustment approved two applications from homeowners who decided to raise the height of their homes to avoid future flood damage to their first-floor living space, after floodwaters from Hurricane Irene last year destroyed their main living areas.

The township committee, under protest, introduced a court-ordered ordinance that would formally permit the Birchwood Avenue property to include multi-family affordable housing. The ordinance was part of the township’s compliance with a state Superior Court Judge’s December order allowing Paramus-based S. Hekemian Group, which owns the property, to move forward with its plans to build 360 housing units.

County Union County Manager Al Faella released a proposed budget of \$483.9 million for 2012 with \$303.5 million to be raised in county taxes, an increase of \$12.4 million over last year. Last year’s tax levy increase was \$13.8 million over 2010. The county is looking to reorganize and privatize Runnells Specialized Hospital, as well as privatize Watchung Stables, both of which the county reported were operating at deficits.

The county freeholders took action on a resolution to enter into a three-year shared-services agreement with the Borough of Roselle to provide fire and emergency medical basic life support dispatch services. The resolution followed the shutting down

Mayor Mahr said the borough had

of CenCom.

Union County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi threw the Democrats For Change’s (DFC) proposed slate of candidates off the June 5 Primary Election ballot after questioning the authenticity of signatures on their nomination petitions.

Westfield Board of Education (BOE) members unanimously voted to add a \$3.3-million additional turf field to a proposed \$13.6-million bond referendum going before voters in September.

The Westfield Town Council unanimously adopted its amended \$36.95-million 2012 municipal budget. The average assessed home of \$182,300 saw an increase of \$79 in the municipal portion of its property-tax bill. The state reviewed and approved the town’s sewer utility ordinance and fees. Residents were charged a sewer fee, which is expected to generate over \$1.3 million to offset the town’s \$3,548,584 bill from the Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority (RVSA).

Following a house fire on Barchester Way, approximately 20 members of the Westfield Fire Department (WFD) were present at the Westfield Town Council meeting in support of increased staffing.

Scotch Plains Michael Bennett, 44, of Scotch Plains was arrested after allegedly attacking a high-school baseball player who came onto his property to collect a foul ball. Bennett reportedly ran out of his home, located on Dutch Lane, adjacent to the field, and grabbed the 18-year-old Union Catholic High School student.

The township Republican Committee was set to decide on three names to submit to the township council to replace Nancy Malool as mayor until the November election. Republican Chairman William McClintock told *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* that deputy mayor, and now acting mayor, Mary DePaola “will be on top of the list” of the three names to be submitted to the council.

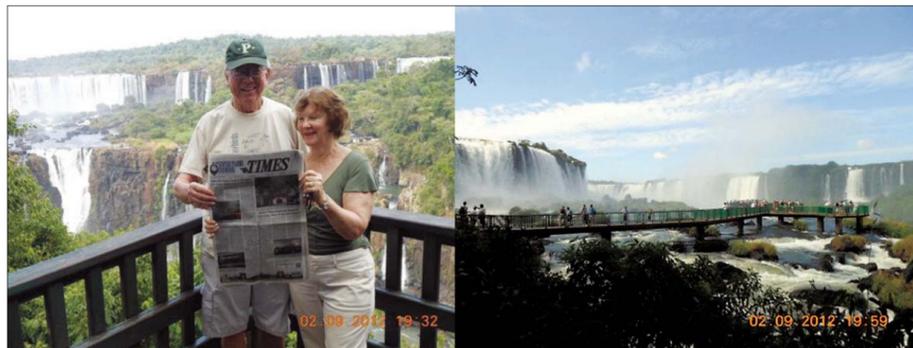
In three separate pre-parade memorials, hundreds of residents of Scotch Plains and Fanwood expressed their gratitude to the many men and women who have given their lives in the defense of their country.

Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr revealed that ongoing committee discussions regarding a potential joint Scotch Plains-Fanwood police department “have started to pick up steam,” indicating that chief financial officers from both municipalities had met to review the two police departments’ budgets and that they would next meet with the two police chiefs. Some of the topics still being discussed include department operational issues, potential development of a joint meeting budget and service levels.

Cranford The township committee gave final approval to an ordinance regulating the feeding of wildlife on public and private property while admitting that enforcement of the new law, particularly the feeding of birds, will be somewhat vague.

The Cranford Planning Board adopted an ordinance amending its Master Plan to include a Housing Element and a Fair Share Plan. The move was the first step in complying with a court order issued by state Superior Court Judge Lisa F. Chrystal on December 20, 2011. The court order was issued in response to a builder’s remedy suit brought against the township by Cranford Development Associates, L.L.C., a subsidiary of the S. Hekemian Group of Paramus.

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12-05-10: BREATHTAKING VIEWS...Ed and Kathy Sjonell of Scotch Plains took time to review *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* while on a recent trip to Chile, Argentina and Brazil. Uguassu Falls can be seen in the background. Magnificent!