

Blaze Destroys Clyne & Murphy, Five Other Businesses in Westfield

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

WESTFIELD – A six-alarm fire Sunday destroyed Clyne & Murphy Caterers and five other businesses located in a strip of one-level storefronts near the Westfield traffic circle. In addition to Clyne & Murphy, the buildings were home to The Sound Station, Figaro's Hair Styling, Rocky the Taylor, Cobblers Bench Shoe Repair and Unmasked, a collectibles and comic book store. The buildings wraps around the corner of South and Westfield Avenues. Authorities have ruled out arson

as a cause of the blaze, which fire officials have traced to the dining room of the catering business. William Root, the owner of the building, told *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* that a preliminary investigation done by his insurance company, Hartford Insurance, has deemed the cause of the fire to be electrical in nature.

Mr. Root stated that the age of the electrical system varies from store to store. All the stores were closed at the time of the fire, but Clyne & Murphy had been open in the morning filling catering orders, Mr. Root said.

According to Westfield Fire Chief Dan Kelly, the first alarm came in at 3:32 p.m. and Westfield firefighters were on the scene within four minutes.

"There was heavy smoke coming from the entire roof assembly of the main fire building over all five business establishments," Chief Kelly said. "There was visible fire in the rear dining room of Clyne & Murphy's."

Sixteen of 21 fire departments in Union County were either on the scene or providing backup at Westfield's two firehouses. One hundred and twenty-five firefighters were on the scene, including 30 from Westfield. Six ladder companies and 16 engines, including three from Westfield, were on the scene.

When firefighters arrived they had to force entry into Clyne & Murphy to bring a hose line into the main restaurant area, "where they were confronted by heavy fire up in the ceiling assembly," Chief Kelly said. Firefighters had to exit the building after fighting the fire from inside for 40 minutes when "conditions deteriorated rapidly," the chief said.

Chief Kelly said firefighters had to pump water from three different water mains onto the fire. "We had to shuttle water from the north side of town down through the traffic circle to the fire scene. We shuttled water from as far away as Central and South Avenue by the Tiger Mart...in addition to water mains that were used within the close proximity to the fire scene," Chief Kelly said. At the height of the fire he said firefighters "were flowing over 5,000 gallons per minute onto the main fire building."

Chief Kelly said the fire was brought under control by 6:44 p.m. and that firefighters were on the scene for 27 hours.

He said firefighters worked aggressively to stop the spread of the fire to two adjacent two-and-a-half-story, mixed-use commercial and residential, wood-frame buildings on either side of the strip of stores. Residents were able to get out of one of the structures, while firefighters rescued a dog from the other. The American Red Cross relocated two residents from an apartment, the chief said.

The 60-year-old, one-story, tin-lined shared cockloft structure, **CONTINUED ON PAGE 10**



INFERNO...Flames and heavy, black smoke fill the air on Sunday when a six-alarm fire ripped through a row of businesses on South Avenue, West, in Westfield. Westfield Fire Chief Dan Kelly reported that the fire originated in Clyne & Murphy and quickly spread to several other businesses. Photo courtesy of Dan Kelly, Sr.



MUTUAL AID...The Fanwood Fire Department was at the scene to offer mutual aid on Sunday when a six-alarm fire ripped through a row of businesses on South Avenue West in Westfield. Lauren S. Barr for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

County Looking to Speed Up Processing of Prisoners

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

COUNTY – The Board of Chosen Freeholders last Thursday was asked by the county's jail director to move forward with the implementation of a computer software package to help speed up the processing of inmates and reduce the daily prisoner population at the county lockup.

A study conducted by Florida-based Luminosity last year determined that while the number of prisoners being sent to the jail has decreased 23 percent since 2005, the prisoner count at the jail has remained at 900. Altogether, the average jail population averages 1,000 as another 100 inmates in county custody who are nearing the end of their sentences are housed at alcohol and drug rehabilitation facilities in Newark.

Union County Director of Corrections Brian Riordan has said his goal is to reduce the prison population by 10 percent, or 100 prisoners. At last Thursday's meeting, he said the jail was only designed for 520 inmates and now needs major rehabilitation

to the kitchen, currently underway, and the showers. In order to complete the work to the showers, 138 prisoners would be moved to the former county juvenile detention facility across the street from the jail.

Mr. Riordan said he hopes to avoid moving prisoners by reducing the inmate population, as he would need to either hire additional correctional officers at a cost of \$1.7 million, or increase overtime by \$3 million to cover the additional jail housing during the 18-month jail improvement project. Director of Human Services Frank Guzzo said the county could save on the \$3-million contract the county has with Essex County if it did not have to house 100 prisoners daily at Delaney and Logan Halls in Newark.

A software package, called Jail Population Analysis Wizard, is to be implemented as part of a new \$158,304, one-year contract with Luminosity, which is expected to be voted on tonight, January 26, by the freeholder board. Also included in **CONTINUED ON PAGE 10**



MARCH FOR LIFE...While thousands joined House Speaker John Boehner and Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee in Washington, D.C. for the 39th annual March for Life weekend, January 21 to 23, the Evangel Church in Scotch Plains adds its support with colorful flags on the church lawn. Susan Dougherty for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

CF Mayor Vows to Block Birchwood Development

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

CRANFORD – Mayor David Robinson said on Tuesday that he personally was "not hopeful" that Cranford would prevail in its bid to have a judge reconsider her December ruling that the controversial Birchwood Avenue housing development could go forward. But he said the township's recent legal maneuverings and efforts were part of the municipality's strategy for "building the best case we can for any appeal" if its bid for reconsideration is turned down. "We want to win," the mayor said at Tuesday's township committee meeting. "We want to prevail." He said the township government will "exhaust any remedy we have" to prevent the development from proceeding.

Last Friday, Superior Court Judge Lisa Chrystal heard arguments from the township and from Cranford Development Associates LLC, the Birchwood Avenue developer, in the latest round of the municipality's opposition to the plan to build 360 housing units in what local officials and many residents see as a severe flood zone. At Tuesday's committee meeting, Township Attorney Phil **CONTINUED ON PAGE 10**

Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education Hears Projection Report

By KIMBERLY A. BROADWELL
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS – A demographic report given by Joseph Richardson of Whitehall Associates was outlined at last Thursday's regular Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education meeting.

The 13-page report was requested as part of the district's long-range plan to help predict enrollment numbers for upcoming years. According to Mr. Richardson, the report begins with the 2006-2007 school year and ends with the 2011-2012 school year. The report also gives projections through the school year 2016-2017.

In his report, Mr. Richardson stated that through reports submitted by Eleanor McGovern, the Fanwood borough clerk and through Robert LaCosta, the Scotch Plains construction/zoning officer, the school year 2016-2017 may see an additional 38 students because of the "residential developmental impact." This, he reported, involved projects that had

been applied for through the two town's planning or zoning boards. In all, of the 11 development projects reported, most resulted in single-family dwellings. The two exceptions included a 24-unit project in Fanwood that was estimated to generate a total of seven students and a 60-unit townhouse project in Scotch Plains that is an age restricted development. It is projected that development will not bring any additional students to the district.

The other notable impact that Mr. Richardson reported on was the increase in enrollment in the district's pre-school program over the last three years. He noted that in the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years the district's pre-K program total enrollment was 71 students. Mr. Richardson reported that the next year the total was 83 students. He stated there was a jump in the 2009-2010 school year of 126 students, and kept a steady increase until the current school year of 153 students. Mr. Richardson at-

tributed this to "a direct result of economic downturn." He noted that during the last three school years, fewer residents were utilizing private pre-school programs.

In the report it was also noted that the historic data of Scotch Plains-Fanwood's birth rate reports a steady decline in births from 2006-2007 to the present. In 2006-2007 the births recorded in the district equaled 449, while the births given for the 2010-2011 year equaled 400.

The conclusion of Mr. Richardson's report noted a projected district total of enrollment at 5,312 for the 2016-2017 school year, which is down from the district total of 5,497 reported for this year. Mr. Richardson also stated that to remain accurate in enrollment projections, a report should be done on a yearly basis.

PTA Council President Gina Giacoma, along with parents and students of all the district's schools, gave a presentation to board members **CONTINUED ON PAGE 10**



CIVIC DUTY...Freeholder Chairman Alexander Mirabella recently spoke about county government and his responsibilities as an elected official before members of the Teen Action Service Corp of the Jewish Community Center (JCC) of Central New Jersey in Scotch Plains. The high school students, under the supervision of Lindsay Napchen of the JCC, perform 30 to 40 hours per year of community service, have leadership meetings and examine aspects of Jewish identity and youth issues. Pictured, from left to right, are: Back row, Zach More, Jonathan Belfer, Jordan Bernstein, Andrew Wheeler, Scott Flanzman, Mike Rosenheck, Freeholder Mirabella, Alyssa Leyden, Derek Weisman, Hannah Nizri, Nick Verderamo, Rachel Armus and Mitch Naveh, and front row, Abbie Goldring, Julie Queller, Maddie Rosenberg, Alex Ehrenthal, Haley Needle, Alyssa Hartstein and Ms. Napchen.

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For Listings Yolanda Escobar-Flores

Congratulations to Our Sales Associates of the Month!

For Sales Jill Skibinsky

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