

Fanwood Library Board Discusses Strategic Plan, Lists Needs

By CATHERINE WATSON
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

FANWOOD – The Fanwood Memorial Library (FML) board discussed progress on initiatives in its five-year Strategic Plan at its monthly meeting on Monday. The library has selected a new logo, and will commission a designer for an upgraded website in the near future. To facilitate deeper structural changes, the board is reaching out to the Fanwood Council for support and input, as well as soliciting patron and resident input through a public survey.

In a recent press release, the library described the motivations for its five-year plan and survey. While circula-

tion and usage at the library continue to increase, challenges “include deficiencies in ADA-compliant access, lack of usable space, and the aging building and technology infrastructure,” the release states.

To gather feedback on how these challenges affect patrons and what might be done about them, the library has published a survey available on its website, Facebook page, and on Fanwood’s town website, as well as in paper form at Borough Hall. At the time of Monday’s meeting, the survey had been available just short of three days and had already garnered 42 responses.

The library will further disseminate the survey through a mailing to Friends of the Library, residents in its database, through the parent-teacher organizations at local schools, and through local businesses. “It’s going out widely, and I think we’ll get a lot of responses back,” said the library’s director, Dan Weiss.

In the responses already received, comments were plentiful and varied. One common question that seemed to arise was whether or not FML might merge with the Scotch Plains Public Library (SPPL) to form a single library for the two towns. Board member Sheldon Ross noted, “The first thing they always say is, ‘Why can’t we join the library? We did it with the schools.’”

Mr. Weiss said that plans to join the libraries had been broached seriously in the past; a study by a Princeton corporation, Library Development Solutions, was commissioned in 2009 and strongly recommended consolidating the institutions. The libraries currently share many services, but after much consideration, plans to truly merge and operate from one building were scrapped, to Mr. Weiss’ disappointment.

“You don’t have to convince me,” he said, opining that combining libraries would be the simplest and best solution to many of the library’s current problems. Referring to a comment in which a survey-taker adamantly asserted “Bulldoze the current library,” Mr. Weiss suggested, “Get rid of this; like the guy said, bulldoze it; put all our stuff and more importantly our budget into one pot over in Scotch Plains, expand that building to some degree. Done.”

In lieu of that bypassed solution, FML’s board has been approaching the Fanwood Council to seek direction as to the nearly comprehensive upgrade the library building seems to require. Because state library funding decreased drastically in 2010 and

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UCC Adjuncts Face Cut Hours Under Obamacare

By P. JUSTIN FAHEY
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

CRANFORD – A Tuesday afternoon forum of Union County College adjunct professors and the school’s administrators went forward despite some friction before it began. The intent of the meeting was to clarify issues surrounding the implementation of the Affordable Care Act — more commonly known as Obamacare.

School officials objected to the presence of national and state union representatives from the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) saying that it was not the proper forum. Bill Lipkin, the schools AFT representative, objected and threatened to file a grievance, contending that should contractual issues arise, the representatives could not be barred. The two sides agreed that the reps would wait in the hallway and be allowed to return should these issues arise.

At stake were the jobs of 346 adjunct professors, many of whom had been told by their department chairs that their hours might be cut.

Under the Affordable Care Act, colleges with more than 50 employees are required to provide health insurance to all full-time employees. The act defines a full time employee as anyone working 30 hours or more. Adjunct professors — who currently are part-time and do not receive benefits — are now allowed to teach up to 14 hours a week. However, it is unclear whether or not that will remain the case once the law goes into effect.

The problem is that currently, professor’s hours are computed solely



SOUNDS OF SINATRA... The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Chapter of UNICO recently held a fundraiser, “Sounds of Sinatra Dinner Show,” featuring Steve Maglio, at the Scotch Plains Italian American Club. Pictured, from left to right, are: Mr. Maglio, the entertainer; UNICO District X Governor Bob Bengivenga and his wife, April Bengivenga; Scotch Plains-Fanwood UNICO Chapter President Geri Samuel and Scotch Plains-Fanwood members Paul Raphael and Alfonso Gialanella.

County Concludes Hearings; Budget Adoption Set For April 25

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

COUNTY – The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders’ Fiscal Affairs Committee concluded its budget hearings last Thursday on a proposed \$494.5 million budget with \$321.7-million tax levy, representing a \$19-million increase over last year.

At the meeting, Ron Zuber, director of the Department of Parks and Community Renewal, said his budget includes \$3,930,000 in salaries, a decrease of \$190,000, and \$8,575,000 in operating expenses, up \$2 million due to a jump in golf operating expenses, which are climbing from \$3.6 million to \$5.6 million.

Armando Sanchez, director of golf

operations, said the increase is due to additional staff and food and beverage costs associated with the new clubhouse/banquet facility opening this month at Galloping Hill Golf Course in Kenilworth. He said the additional revenue from the facility would more than offset golf operations, putting it in the black by about \$400,000. He anticipates \$6 million in golf operations revenue: \$4.2 million from golf and \$1.8 million from the clubhouse/banquet facility, which also includes a pro shop and restaurant. He said 70 events have been

booked to date for 2013 at the clubhouse.

The parks and community renewal director’s budget is \$2.8 million, which includes \$1.9 million in salaries for 85 employees and another \$919,000 for operating expenses including Trailside Nature and Science Center, Watchung Stable and the Summer Arts Festival.

Another \$206,296 is budgeted for cultural and heritage affairs, down \$33,000 from 2012. The information technologies budget is \$2.5 million,

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Neighborhoods Seek to Stop SP Cell Tower

By DELL SIMEONE
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS – The Scotch Plains Township Council on March 27, held a four- and a half-hour special meeting with neighbors (Stop The Cell Tower) of the Hillside Cemetery who are upset by a recent March 13 state Appeals Court decision to overturn a January 2012 decision made by state Superior Court Judge Karen M. Cassidy to uphold the board of adjustment’s denial to allow T-Mobile and Verizon to install a 125-foot monopole in the cemetery. The cemetery borders Scotch Plains, Plainfield, Edison and South Plainfield.

The meeting ended with Mayor

Kevin Glover saying the township would commit to paying for the group to consult with the Zoning Board Attorney Vincent Loughlin, but could not commit any more monies toward an appeal of the latest decision.

Judge Cassidy’s decision was to write, “The zoning board’s decision to deny the variance was well grounded in light of evidentiary support and was well within the discretion of the board in keeping with the Municipal Land Use Law.”

In overturning that decision the appellate panel of three judges, Clarkson H. Fischer, Carmen H. Alvarez and Jerome M. St. John, found, “The board’s

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EARLY MORNING FIRE...A house on Byrd Avenue at Mountain Avenue in Scotch Plains was destroyed in an early morning fire on April 3. The Fanwood and the Scotch Plains Rescue Squads were at the scene, but no injuries were reported.

Photo courtesy of John Panosh

SP Zoning Board Okays Outside Dining for Grillstone

By DELL SIMEONE
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS – The zoning board of adjustment last Thursday night approved an outdoor dining patio for the Grillstone Restaurant on Route 22, a small home addition and a backyard pool.

Attorney Jeffery Lehrer represented Apollo 22, Grillstone LLC. Mr. Lehrer said the restaurant was seeking a non-conforming use for a pre-existing non-conforming space.

Mr. Lehrer said the patio will contain a bar with a television set that will only be visible to those at the bar. He also said the space will accommodate 70 diners, including 10 spaces at the bar. Mr. Lehrer stated that the patio will have a fire pit that will use natural gas. The number of spaces in the parking lot will increase from 127 to 129.

Board members expressed concerns about two trailer storage units now on the property, which the owner agreed to move off of the property.

Board member Brian Doyle asked about noise in the evening. “I don’t

want the neighbors to be disturbed,” he said.

Board member Rich Druthie asked how many feet from the property line the patio will be. Robert Freud, an engineer and planner representing Grillstone, said 175 feet.

Dan Sullivan, a board member, asked, “How high are your plantings, and will there be a wall?” Mr. Freud responded, “There will be an eight-foot fence.”

Jose Santos, an architect representing Grillstone, said the exterior of the patio will match the stone on the restaurant and there will be opaque lighting surrounding the patio. He also said the fire pit will be made of stainless steel and there will be a water wall.

Mr. Santos said there will be 325 seats with the restaurant and the patio. Mr. Santos said Scotch Plains Fire Chief Jonathan Ellis had inspected the area on March 25. He also said there will be a 16-foot-high, tempered glass screen to keep children safely away from the fire pit.

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RUGBY DAY...The Union County Rugby Mudturtles sponsored “Rugby Day 2013” on April 7, at Kehler Stadium in Westfield. Rugby Day is a celebration of all aspects of the sport, along with lots of food and fun. Pictured, U19A takes on Princeton, in black.

Paul Lachenauer for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times



ADJUNCTS’ FORUM...Adjunct professors gather in the Roy Smith Theatre at Union County College in Cranford on Tuesday evening for a forum they believed was for Obamacare and the cutting of their hours.

Benjamin B. Corbin for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

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