

Sewer Rates to Increase to Fund Pump Station Upgrades

By FRED T. ROSSI

Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS – Municipal sewer utility rates are set to increase this year for the first time in 10 years due to a need to upgrade two aging pump stations on the south side of town.

Township Engineer Bob Lynes briefed the township council at its conference meeting on Tuesday, saying that “significant improvements” are needed at the two facilities located on Lamberts Mill Road and Raritan Road, both of which are 25 years old, and estimated that an additional \$180,000 in revenue will be needed to finance the project. Besides the up-

grades, the township also is facing an increase in fees paid to the Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority.

Township Manager Al Mirabella recommended that the rates be adjusted “minimally” to finance the work. Sewer utility rates have been level in the 10 years since the utility was established amidst a municipal budget crunch in 2009 and separated from the general township budget. Instead of sewer fees being incorporated into the general budget and paid via the overall property-tax levy, homeowners and businesses have been billed since 2009 for their actual sewage use. Mr. Lynes said stable rates for such a lengthy time was

“unheard of” for most communities.

Mr. Lynes estimated that most of the 7,000-plus households in town will see an annual increase in their base sewer rate of \$15 to \$20. Mayor Alexander Smith said that while it was “unfortunate” that rates have to be increased, “it’s something we have to do” to pay for the pump station upgrades.

In a related move, the council passed a resolution authorizing Investors Bank to accept sewer utility payments starting on Saturday, June 1.

The council passed a resolution urging the state to restore funding to municipalities from local energy taxes on gas and electric utilities that were originally collected by local governments and used for local purposes. Mayor Smith explained that in the mid-2000s, the state decided to collect the tax revenue itself and then 10 years ago decided to keep a large part of the revenue for state use.

“We’ve never recouped the full amount” of revenue that Scotch Plains should have been entitled to, the mayor said, estimating the amount to be in the neighborhood of several hundred thousand dollars. “This kind of revenue would be helpful.”

The council also approved a resolution backing the addition of a NJ Transit bus stop along Martine Avenue at Country Club Boulevard eastbound and Lake Avenue westbound. Another resolution was passed appointing Rutland “Skip” Paal as fire official. Councilman Ted Spera, the council’s liaison to the fire department, said Mr. Paal had done an “excellent job.”

Earlier in the meeting, a Westfield Road resident complained about the possibility of LED signs being placed in front of schools along Westfield Road, saying it would affect the residential character of the neighborhood. “This is supposed to be suburban Scotch Plains,” she said, adding that she did not want to see “lighted signs every time I pull in my driveway.” She also sarcastically called the signs “a great use of public funds.”

At the start of the meeting, Matthew Akins, a seventh-grade student at Holy Trinity Academy, read an essay he wrote about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Councilman Spera

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Susan M. Dougherty for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

ACCIDENT SCENE...No one was injured in this single-car crash that blew out the front window of a van that landed on its side around 2 p.m. on Monday in Scotch Plains. The unidentified female driver said she just did not know what happened, stating, “it’s all a blur.” Local police and the Scotch Plains Fire Department were on the scene cordoning off the road near Cooper Road.

Scotch Plains Receives Redevelopment Proposals

By FRED T. ROSSI

Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS – Three proposals for redeveloping four publicly-owned parcels in the central business district were received and opened last week, and township professionals will now spend the next several weeks reviewing the documents before the downtown redevelopment committee reviews and discusses the proposals.

Township officials formally opened the bids on Friday, and Redevelopment Coordinator Thomas Strowe said it is expected the redevelopment committee will briefly discuss the three proposals at its monthly meeting next Wednesday, February 13, but will not take a bigger role until after the preliminary evaluations are completed.

The redevelopment plan endorsed last fall by the township council centers on the township-owned properties where the municipal building, the firehouse and the library are located, as well as the parking lots adjacent to

the municipal building and library, behind the stores that front Park Avenue and the parking lot behind the row of businesses on East Second Street adjacent to the CVS drug store. Redevelopment of these properties is expected to result in about 48,000 square feet of new retail and office space, more than 1,400 new parking spots and 177 new housing units, 35 of which will be set aside as affordable-housing units.

Mr. Strowe told *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* that submissions were received from Advance Realty Investors, a Bedminster-based developer that has been involved in similar-type redevelopment projects in Harrison and Bridgewater; A. Gonsosa Development from Springfield, and Arkade Residential Holdings, a Plainfield-based residential developer.

He said that “nothing surprising” was seen in his initial look at the proposals, adding that the township will interview the three developers and then ask the committee, probably next month, to weigh in.



Courtesy of Scoutmaster Seth Brugger

COMMUNITY SERVICE LESSON...Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr recently met with members of Scout Pack 277 Webelos Arrow of Light Den. The boys learned about community leadership and earned their community service badges. Pictured with Mayor Mahr, from left to right, are: Noah Brugger, Max Pressman, Danny Zuberko and Ethan Fellen.



Courtesy of Borough of Fanwood

HEART HEALTHY...The mayors of Scotch Plains and Fanwood kicked off the annual Go Red for Women’s Heart Health Fair, held at the Jewish Community Center of Central New Jersey in Scotch Plains last Saturday. Event organizer, Fanwood’s Melissa Padulsky, pictured at left, owner of Little Hearts Big World CPR Instruction, brought together health advocates from Union County and the American Heart Association along with healthy food and a variety of regional vendors for an event that had something for everyone. Pictured at right is Union County Health Director Annie McNair.

Board of Ed. Talks About STEM Grant; Thanked By PTAs

By KIMBERLY A. BROADWELL

Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS – To start the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education meeting held last Thursday evening, K-12 District Science Supervisor Guida Faria talked about the Union County Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) grant that was received through Union County. According to a listing from the county, the district received a total of \$1,800 to be split between three projects.

The first, according to Ms. Faria, is a 3D printer for the Park Middle School’s extracurricular after-school club, in the amount of \$800. The second is for a fossil dig entitled “Written in Stone: A Geologic History of New Jersey,” for \$500, also slated for students at Park

Middle School. The third is for an aquaponics aquarium program at Terrill Middle School, in the amount of \$500.

According to Ms. Faria and articles from the Internet, aquaponics refers to any system that combines conventional aquaculture (raising aquatic animals such as snails, fish and crayfish) with hydroponics (cultivating plants with water) in a symbiotic environment.

It was further explained that normal excretions from the animals being raised can accumulate in water, therefore increasing toxicity. However, in an aquaponics system, water from an aquaculture system is fed to a hydroponic system where the byproducts are broken down by nitrifying bacteria, initially into nitrates, which are then utilized by the plants as food. The water is then recirculated back to the aquaculture system.

Another presentation was made by Regina Gannon, Scotch Plains-Fanwood Parent Teacher Association (PTA) president, who, along with all the PTA school presidents, honored members of the board of education in appreciation of their

volunteer efforts to the district.

Ms. Gannon noted that January was designated as School Board Appreciation Month and that currently there are 581 school districts in New Jersey. She said there are approximately 2,500 public schools serving 1.4 million New Jersey students. She also noted that the tradition of the district’s PTAs honoring Scotch Plains-Fanwood school board members dates back to 2010.

In her presentation to the board she stated, “We wanted to publicly thank you for your hard work and volunteerism.”

Each member of the board was then given a small token of appreciation by the president of each school in the district.

Board members also adopted a resolution honoring February as Black History Month, in recognition of the civil, social and religious contributions made by African-Americans, including residents of both Scotch Plains and Fanwood.

The next board of education meeting will be held on Thursday, February 21, at 7:30 p.m., in the administration building at Cedar Street and Evergreen Avenue in Scotch Plains.

Fanwood Urges Congress To Support Gun Control

By KIMBERLY A. BROADWELL

Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

FANWOOD – In support of a resolution urging Congress to support gun-control measures, members of the borough council put together a resolution and discussed it at Monday’s governing body meeting.

The Fanwood resolution is in support of a previous resolution drafted and adopted in the fall by the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders to support gun control on a national level.

According to the resolution, members of Congress are asked to enact a ban on the sale, importation, transfer and ownership of “assault firearms” (as defined in New Jersey Law at N.J.S.A. Section 2C:39-1-w as including a semi-automatic shotgun with either a magazine capacity exceeding six rounds, a pistol grip, or a folding stock, a semi-automatic rifle with a fixed magazine capacity exceeding 15 rounds; a part or combination of parts designed or intended to convert a firearm into an assault firearm or any combination of parts from which an assault firearm may be readily assembled if those parts are in possession or under the control of the same person and a firearm with a bump stock attached.)

Also, a buy back program for reducing the number of assault firearms and raising the minimum age for owning a gun from 18 to 21 years old is outlined in the resolution.

In addition, the resolution asks for adoption of requirements for thorough background checks for all gun purchases without loopholes and thus including private transactions and gun show sales. The resolution also supports funding gun-violence research.

Council members also discussed approving new fire department members Dante V. Clausen, Nicholas Tripoldi and Adam Miksis.

In other business, the council discussed the borough’s readiness to go out for bid to make the entranceway

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Correction

A page one story in the January 24 edition of *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* on coverage of the January Fanwood Recreation Commission meeting incorrectly reported department budget figures. The article should have reported that the 2018 Easter Egg Hunt cost \$81 more than the previous year’s event, and brings in zero dollars in revenue. The summer park program made about \$1,600 less than the previous year. The Movies in the Park series cost about \$60 more than the previous year, and brings in \$0 in revenue. The 5K Race made \$7,400 more than in 2017. Halloween festivities cost \$14 more than in 2017 and the Holiday Celebration cost \$123 more than in 2017. The senior programs cost \$1,994.74.



Courtesy of Borough of Fanwood

HOP TO IT...Wellness Director Deborah Price of the Jewish Community Center of Central New Jersey in Scotch Plains leads an exercise session at last Saturday’s Go Red for Women’s Heart Health Fair. The event brought together health advocates from Union County and the American Heart Association along with healthy food and a variety of regional vendors.

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