

Pace of Downtown Redevelop. Plans to Quicken for '20 Deadline

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

SCOTCH PLAINS – Township officials will now be working overtime on planning for the coming phases of downtown redevelopment due to a judge's order giving the township until June 2020 to comply with various aspects of its affordable-housing settlement reached a year ago with builders.

At the downtown redevelopment committee's reorganization meeting January 9, professional planner Katherine O'Kane of Harbor Consultants provided some details about the steps that Scotch Plains must take in the wake of a December afford-

able-housing compliance hearing. Besides shielding the township from builders' remedy lawsuits until 2025, the court order also states that the township examine the remaining six phases of the downtown redevelopment plan and identify additional properties where higher-density housing units could be built. The committee, she said, has a "heck of a lot of work to do" in the next year and a half.

Development of the first phase, centered on the central business district, has already been endorsed by the township council and developers will be submitting proposals in the coming weeks. The second phase,

which runs along Park Avenue from Front Street to Route 22, is dominated by the Snuffy's Pantagis property, which has already been declared an Area in Need of Redevelopment and may be developed into a transit hub that would serve NJ Transit bus commuters and also include housing and commercial buildings.

The third phase extends south on Park Avenue from Westfield Avenue to Park Middle School. Phases four and five include East Second Street from Senger Place to Terrill Road, while phases six and seven encompass Terrill Road from the Watchung border to the Fanwood border.

The downtown committee will have to decide which phases and which properties to prioritize for evaluation for possible designation as Areas in Need of Redevelopment and higher-density housing development. The properties in phases three are few, so it is very likely that larger tracts of land along East Second Street and Terrill Road, such as the former Jade Isle property, will be seriously looked at. At the committee's meeting, Steve Goldberg, a committee member, suggested looking at the Terrill Road corridor for high-density housing, which would be close to the new shopping center and movie theater being built on the former Sears Roebuck properties.

The court's mandate to have these properties identified and redevelopment plans drawn up by the end of June 2020 "speeds things up," admitted redevelopment coordinator Thomas Strowe. But he told *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* he does not feel the faster timetable necessarily frustrates what was first planned to be a more deliberate and multi-year process. He said the need to quickly prioritize areas for development will mean that the non-prioritized areas

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Paul Lachenauer for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times
BASKETBALL CLINIC...Retired New York Knicks player Larry Johnson, center, and the Junior Knicks offered a free basketball clinic to kids in grades 2 through 8 on Saturday at the Westfield YMCA. The Junior Knicks recently donated an electronic scoreboard to the Y.

New Housing Committee Seeks Legislative Assistance

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

SCOTCH PLAINS – The newly-created affordable-housing advisory committee held its first meeting on January 9, with members agreeing to draft a mission statement for the group and seek a consensus on ways the State Legislature can help municipalities deal with their court-mandated affordable-housing obligations.

The 19-member committee is chaired by Mayor Alexander Smith with Deputy Mayor Joshua Losardo serving as vice-chairman. Other members include township redevelopment coordinator Thomas Strowe, Zoning Officer Robert LaCosta and planning board member Paulette Coronato. Bill Picard represents the environmental commission and Deanna Dell Bene of the recreation commission also will serve on the committee. In addition, six residents from the north side of town and six residents from the south side of town have been named to the committee.

The township council created the committee last month to advise and assist the council about affordable housing, related regulations and leg-

islation and the township's affordable-housing obligations that were agreed to a year ago in a court settlement with a group of developers.

At the inaugural meeting, committee members talked in general about legislative solutions to the affordable-housing numbers imposed on Scotch Plains, which will result in several large new housing developments being built at the former Parker Gardens property on Terrill Road, the Bowcraft Amusement Park property on Route 22, the downtown business district, the Amberg Garden Center on Lamberts Mill Road, a tract of land on North Avenue and several properties on or near Jerusalem Road and Plainfield Avenue.

Mr. Picard raised the question of the environmental impact of what could be 3,000 new housing units being built in the coming several years and urged that green space be preserved. Ms. Dell Bene spoke about the potential impact of new developments on the township's park and recreation facilities. Mayor Smith spoke of bringing busloads of residents to Trenton to lobby state legislators about a legislative solution.



Fred T. Rossi for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times
BOWCRAFT SALE...With the Bowcraft Amusement Park set to be developed into an apartment complex, the owners of the landmark Route 22 property are putting items up for sale, including the rides.

Walsh Selected Again to Chair Rec. Commission

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS – Recreation Commission Chairman Michael Walsh was re-nominated and approved by fellow recreation commissioners to continue serving as the 2019 commission chairman at Monday's meeting. Commissioner Alfonse Akins was re-approved to continue serving as the recreation commission's vice-chairman. Two Scotch Plains residences and one Fanwood residence were selected as the winners for the Holiday Home Decorating Contest.

The first-place winner is a Fanwood residence located at 83 Pateron Road. The first place winner received a \$100 gift certificate to Grillestone Restaurant and Bar in Scotch Plains.

Recreation Commissioner Deanna Dell Bene said the commission is grateful for Grillestone's continued support of the community. Ms. Dell Bene stated for two years in a row Grillestone has donated \$100 gift certificates for participant prize money.

The residence at 432 Henry Street in Scotch Plains won second place, stated Ms. Dell Bene. The second-place winner received a \$50 gift certificate to Darby Road.

Third place went to the residence at 1516 Ashbrook Drive in Scotch Plains. A \$25 gift card to Fabio's Bistro was awarded, stated Ms. Dell Bene.

Recreation commissioner Colleen Gialanella said the Holiday Home decorating contest is not only promoting community building and holiday festivities, but coincides with a food drive for those in need.

"We received a significant amount of food through donations. Which



Fred T. Rossi for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times
ASSEMBLY SPEAKER IN SCOTCH PLAINS...Scotch Plains Mayor Alexander Smith, left, greets Assemblyman James Kennedy (D-22nd, Rahway) at the Tuesday's township council meeting where state Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin (D-19th, Woodbridge) spoke about anti-hunger initiatives along with Assemblywoman Linda Carter (D-22nd, Plainfield).

Police Chief Promotes Two; State Leaders Laud Twp.

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

SCOTCH PLAINS – Police Chief Ted Conley on Tuesday announced two promotions in his department and also led a sendoff for an officer who is being deployed overseas.

At the township council's first business meeting of the year, Chief Conley promoted Matthew Fugett, a 22-year veteran of the police department, to the rank of lieutenant, and Bradley Belford, a 13-year veteran, to the rank of sergeant. Mr.

Conley and the governing body also paid tribute to police officer Richard Sopko, who will be leaving for an overseas military deployment.

In other business, at a meeting with a brief agenda, State Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin, along with Assemblyman James Kennedy and Assemblywoman Linda Carter, attended the council's meeting to speak about an array of anti-hunger bills that currently are being considered by state legislators. Mr. Coughlin said he wanted to "recog-

nize the great work" being done in Scotch Plains by the government and residents to fight hunger.

"Even in wealthy communities, hunger does exist," he said. Mr. Coughlin also lauded Mayor Alexander Smith's mayor's wellness campaign and presented the council with an Assembly resolution honoring the township's anti-hunger efforts.

Later, the council passed its own resolution supporting the 13 anti-

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LEADER IN SPAIN...Shanna Kelly, a Westfield Leader and Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times 2017 summer reporter, currently is a student at James Madison University. Shanna is a copy editor for the school paper, *The Breeze*. She is a double major in SMAD (journalism) and Spanish with a double minor in translation and interpretation and honors disciplinary studies. Shanna spent the fall semester in Spain at Salamanca University.

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