

Council To Urge Local Merchants To Voluntary Ban Plastic Bags

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — The township council plans to consider a resolution urging local merchants to voluntarily use re-usable shopping bags and move away from using plastic bags.

At its conference meeting on Tuesday, the council heard ideas for such a ban from Councilwoman Elizabeth Stamler, who noted that a number of towns in New Jersey have banned the use of plastic bags. She listed a series of potential moves that could be implemented, including an outright ban on the use of plastic bags, charging cus-

tomers a fee for using plastic, providing incentives for businesses to not use plastic and a public awareness campaign that would aim to sway consumers away from using plastic bags.

"There's so much plastic. It's everywhere," she said, pointing to the recent news story of a whale found with a large amount of plastic waste in its stomach. She said she hoped the council's actions would "perk up people's ears" about using plastic bags.

Her colleagues were not as enthusiastic about some of the options, with Councilman Roshan White skep-

tical of a total ban or charging consumers extra for using plastic bags. He favored getting feedback from the community before making any moves in that direction. Councilman Ted Spera said he favored creating incentives of some type for businesses to consider and also offering suggestions on more environmentally-friendly practices.

Deputy Mayor Josh Losardo said he liked the public awareness aspect of Ms. Stamler's proposals. "The more people who do it, the better," he said of using re-usable bags.

Mayor Alexander Smith said he favored "lessening and eliminating plastic bags by example" and said he would support a council resolution urging businesses to voluntarily stop using plastic shopping bags and urge customers to use re-usable ones. Holding up a shopping circular wrapped in a plastic bag, which are deposited on people's driveways on a regular basis, the mayor said, "I hate these," and asked why those types of items aren't banned.

He said he'd like the state government to figure out how to implement a statewide ban on plastic bags, but wondered what effect such a mandate would have on merchants and asked how it would be enforced.

Once the council adopts a resolution, the recently formed Green Team will work with local merchants, explain the plastic versus re-usable issues to them, and also recognize those businesses who successfully shift to re-usable bags for their efforts.

The bulk of the council's 90-minute meeting was taken up with presentations to local businesses and residents and other ceremonial proclamations. The council congratulated John's Meat Market—which Mayor Smith called "a township landmark"—on its 80th anniversary. Own-

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FANWOOD IS TREE CITY...The Tree City USA flag is unfurled during last Thursday's Arbor Day program in Fanwood, marking the 26th consecutive year the borough has earned this certification for its efforts at tree conservation, planting and education.

Grand Marshals for Memorial Day Parade Announced by Council

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

FANWOOD — As part of discussions during the Fanwood Council's agenda-setting meeting held Monday evening, it was announced that two longtime Fanwood residents will both be grand marshals at the upcoming Memorial Day Parade.

Joseph Schott, 97, and Joseph Murano, 95, served in World War II and will lead the parade on Memorial Day. Mr. Murano served in the South Pacific during the war and Mr. Schott was stationed in England.

The annual parade is scheduled to start at 10:45 a.m. in downtown

Scotch Plains on Monday, May 27, and will head into Fanwood, where it will conclude at LaGrande Park. A Memorial Day Concert will be held Sunday, May 26, starting at 6:30 p.m. in Alan Augustine Park in Scotch Plains where both men will also be honored.

In other business, it was noted that a Department of Environmental (DEP) Grant of \$5,000 was granted to make a charging station at the municipal parking lot on LaGrande Avenue. The new charging station was reported as taking two parking spots from the lot and will serve to charge electric cars.

In other business, it was revealed that a meeting regarding bike and pedestrian enhancements to the downtown area is scheduled for Tuesday, June 11, at 7 p.m., at Borough Hall.

It was announced that through Union County's Green Acres grant, improvements to both borough parks are currently underway. It was reported that improvements to LaGrande Park have been made including updating the public bathrooms, while updates to Forest Road Park are not yet completed.

It was noted at the end of the council meeting that another event scheduled at LaGrande Park is the Smash Kids Cancer Music and Food Fest set for Saturday, May 18, from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. Three bands plus a DJ are scheduled to perform at the event, plus a choral perfor-

mance by students from the Carl H. Kumpf Middle School in Clark. All proceeds from the event will go to benefit Memorial Sloan Kettering's pediatric cancer research. Admission to the event is free.

It was noted that a resolution that was unanimously passed upon first reading in March to limit the habitable dwelling density for future housing projects within the borough is currently tabled. The resolution, which was tabled in April as members of the planning board wanted to research the resolution further and seek more input from planning and engineering experts before proceeding.

It was stated that other surrounding towns have averaged 40 units per acre and the borough proposes 36.

According to the members of the borough's Downtown Redevelopment Agency, which has the same members as the borough council, the resolution has come about because of recent inquiries regarding dwelling projects that the borough has seen.

The council meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 20, at 7 p.m. at Borough Hall, located at 75 North Martine Avenue in Fanwood.

A public hearing on the adoption of the 2019 municipal budget is scheduled for this meeting.

The mayor and council noted that the 2019 budget included "a small tax decrease for Fanwood residents."



CLEAN COMMUNITIES DAY...Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr, with members of the borough council, welcomes residents to the Clean Community event at the Fanwood train station on April 27. This marked the 30th consecutive year Fanwood's citizens, volunteers and the Clean Community Committee came together to pick up trash and celebrate the environment for Earth Day.

Board to Continue House Addition Hearing In June

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — An application to construct an addition to an existing two-family house will be continued at the zoning board of adjustment's Thursday, June 6 meeting so that the applicant can submit more details about the proposal.

At the board's May 2 meeting, it heard from Morks Soorial, who is seeking to build an addition to a two-family house he owns at 1970 Grand Street. The expansion would add slightly more than 1,400 square feet of space to the 120-year-old house, which currently measures close to 2,000 square feet in size. He sought to expand both living units into four-bedroom, two-bathroom homes.

Board Chairman Ken Anderson noted that the proposed addition would almost double the size of the building, while the board's engineer raised concerns about the amount of property the addition would cover. He also asked whether there were other houses in the neighborhood approaching 3,000 square feet in size.

The board was provided several documents in support of the application, but found they were not to scale,

thus making it difficult to accurately gauge building setbacks and other details such as the proposed expansion of the driveway to accommodate four vehicles.

Mr. Soorial's architect, Robert Wanhouse, gave the board a brief overview of the proposed addition, but board members and board professionals ended the presentation with a plea that more details be submitted before a decision could be made. Board Vice-Chairman Rich Duthie said he would be unable to consider the application "based on what's been submitted." He told Mr. Soorial and Mr. Wanhouse that "this is a significant application for the neighborhood" and that he wanted to receive a "a more complete, more detailed" submission before proceeding.

In other business, the board gave its approval to an application by Jose and Jessica Lopes of 2214 Mountain Avenue to replace the four-foot-high fence along the Pearl Place side of their property with a six-foot fence. And a long-pending application by Gad Magdieli to install a deck in the back yard of the property at 215 Throwbridge Drive has been withdrawn, Mr. Anderson announced.



HOW TO MULCH A TREE...Park Middle School students demonstrate how to properly mulch a tree during last Thursday's Arbor Day observance in Fanwood.

Freeholders to Vote on Reso. Re. PSE&G 69kV Lines

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

COUNTY — The Union County Freeholder Board will vote on a resolution in support of municipal officials to relocate PSE&G's high-voltage power lines outside of residential areas. PSE&G is replacing 26kV lines with 69kV power lines as part of a statewide initiative. The resolution will appear on the agenda for the board's regular meeting on Thursday, May 16.

According to last week's freeholder agenda, the resolution also will recommend "a period of public comment and investigation before increasing the voltage in the lines through Union County."

The resolution is sponsored by Freeholder Chair Bette Jane Kowalski, a Cranford resident, and Freeholders Kimberly Palmieri-Mouded of Westfield and Chris Hudak of Linden.

During last Thursday's agenda meeting, Freeholder Hudak said the board has "received a number of emails from residents in Cranford and Westfield who were concerned about the placement of the lines."

PSE&G held a workshop for Westfield residents to learn more about the project and will hold a meeting for residents in Cranford on Wednesday, May 8 (after press deadline), from 6 to 8 p.m., in the Cranford Community Center. Residents will be able to address their concerns with PSE&G representatives at that meeting.

"We're supporting municipalities in their efforts to get answers for their residents...regarding the upgrade and the ability to provide more information," Mr. Hudak said in explaining the purpose of the resolution.

Freeholder Angel Estrada said he

feels the county "might have a bigger role in saying something about the cell towers in Cranford (at Union County College) than we do about Public Service Electric & Gas Company high-voltage lines."

"I truly believe there is a need to have this capability because you don't have enough voltage, and guess what, the power goes out or too much consumption, and then you have problems," Mr. Estrada said.

Mr. Hudak agreed that there may be a need for the added power. But he said the utility needs to be accessible to towns and provide information to residents.

The board also will vote to settle a lawsuit entitled Valerie Fischbach versus Union County for \$375,000, of which the county will pay \$246,467, with the remainder paid from a joint insurance fund. County Counsel Robert Barry said the lawsuit involved a personal injury case where the plaintiff sustained "significant leg injuries."

At the start of Thursday's meeting, Freeholder Kowalski and Freeholder Vice-Chairman Alexander Mirabella presented a resolution to Lauren O'Brien and Tammy Bowling that declares May as "Cancer Awareness Month" and the Week of May 12 through 18 as "Metastatic Breast Cancer Awareness Week."

Freeholder Mirabella said Union County will send the resolution to the other 20 counties in New Jersey in the hopes that "they will take this up and raise the awareness" of metastatic breast cancer.

Ms. O'Brien, founder of Moms Demand Action, a group that supports "common sense" gun reform, said she hopes to see "the same kind of drive and movement in the meta-

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PROJECT GRADUATION...Rain on Sunday afternoon did not keep people away from the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School's annual Project Graduation Food Truck Festival fundraiser.

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