

Two SP Developments Opposed by Neighbors

By DEBORAH MADISON
Specially Written for The Times

MM Real Estate Developers, Inc., owned by Michael Mahoney, brought an application for a major subdivision off of Raritan Road before the Scotch Plains Planning Board on Monday, July 22. Mr. Mahoney's application, for Cherry Blossom Estates, proposed to divide six lots into ten lots and to build six new homes, while retaining four existing houses on Raritan Road.

A few neighbors, whose properties abut the proposed development, also attended the meeting. Several of the residents told the Board and *The Westfield Leader and The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwoods* that they objected to the development's density and potential for drainage and traffic problems.

As explained to *The Leader and The Times* by Planning Board Secretary, Barbara Horev, four homeowners, whose properties front onto Raritan Road sold Mr. Mahoney a portion of their land to the rear of their properties, which will be included in the new development. Another property owner sold Mr. Mahoney two lots that run perpendicular to Frank Street behind the Raritan Road properties, creating six existing lots. Mr. Mahoney proposed to build six new homes on a new cul-de-sac, which will extend from Frank Street running parallel to Raritan Road. The four original homes on Raritan Road must also be included in the new development, bringing the total number of lots to ten.

Westfield Attorney, Charles Brandt, who represents Mr. Mahoney, told the Board that all of the lots conformed to zoning ordinances and all of the variances requested are for pre-existing conditions. Three witnesses for the applicant, including an Engineer, a Planner and a Land Surveyor described different aspects of the development to the Board and the public.

According to the Land Surveyor, James Watson of EKA Associates, the size of the homes have not yet been determined and will be adjusted depending on the size of the lots in the final plans. They are planning on building six, two-story homes, with single-car driveways facing the proposed cul-de-sac.

All of the homes would drain into an underground storm-water pipe to mitigate standing water problems in the low-lying area.

During the public portion of the meeting, neighboring residents addressed their concerns to the Board that the development was too dense and would create potential problems in the neighborhood, including increased flooding from run-off and traffic congestion on the quiet dead-end of Frank Street.

Frank Street resident Walter Babich told the Board that the neighbors would not have a problem with three houses, but that six was too many.

"We came to stop this project. It's our town, and we don't want this in our neighborhood," Mr. Babich stated. He asked the Board to help them stop the development.

Board Chairman, Robert Doyle explained to Mr. Babich that the Board was restricted by existing laws and not able to stop a conforming development. "We can't stop a plan that meets all

of the legal requirements," Mr. Doyle said. "What we can do is to refine the plan so that it works for both you and the developers," he added.

Frank Street resident Deanna Jascur told *The Leader and The Times* that neighborhood children would be at risk by the increased traffic that this development would bring to the quiet, dead end street. Ms. Jascur also relayed that most of the houses on Frank Street had much larger lots than those proposed, which in her opinion, did not conform to the character of the neighborhood.

Consulting Engineer for the Planning Board, Paul Ferraro requested that the applicant return with more detailed plans, including the placement of fire hydrants and lighting fixtures at the next hearing, which will take place on September 9. The Board also suggested that the neighbors meet with Mr. Watson to discuss their concerns about run-off and potential flooding onto their properties.

The continuation of an application for a major subdivision on King Street was also heard at Monday's meeting. The applicant, Ernest Fantini, applied for several variances to turn four lots into six, single-family residential lots and to construct a private access road off of King Street.

At previous Planning Board meetings, between March and June of 2002, the applicant presented testimony from an engineer, a professional planner, a fire safety expert and a traffic consultant. According to the Board's minutes from previous meetings, Mr. Fantini's plan is to raze the one existing house and subdivide the four lots into six, with three houses fronting onto King Street and three fronting onto a private access road.

According to Planning Board Attorney, Daniel Bernstein, municipal land use law (MLUL) permitted a private road over a public road only in certain situations, such as a "practical difficulty, a hardship or special circumstances." Lawrence Vastola of Middlesex, Attorney for the applicant, suggested to the Board that the special circumstances of the shape and size of this lot warranted the municipality's approval of this nonconforming road.

The Board discussed that a private road would permit the developer to build six houses, while a public road would only permit four or five conforming houses.

At previous meetings, Tom Demerest, a Freehold attorney representing neighboring Edison residents, objected to the development on behalf of his clients, stating that the circumstances did not warrant the increased density or the private road. Neither Mr. Demerest nor any neighbors attended the July hearing.

Mr. Ferraro told the Board that in his opinion, there were substantial benefits to a private roadway and that the Board would have to weigh the benefits against the detriments.

The Board requested that the applicant develop plans for both a public road and a private roadway in order to compare the two proposals before making their decision. Mr. Vastola told *The Leader and The Times* that the applicant's Engineers would draw up both sets of plans to be presented at the next hearing. Notice will be given to neighboring residents once that date is set.



GENEROUS DONATION... Barbara Thiele, Director of the Westfield Memorial Library, pictured right, accepts a \$27,200 donation from Eleanor Senus, President of the Friends of the Library. The donation represents funds raised at the Friends' Annual Book Sale and other activities.

Westfield Library Friends Make \$27,200 Donation

WESTFIELD - The Friends of the Westfield Memorial Library recently presented a donation of \$27,200 to the library for various projects.

The funds were raised at the Friends' Annual Book Sale in April and other fundraising endeavors.

The money will be directed as follows: \$9,000 towards the cost of the computer system upgrade; a Books on CD display and paperbacks as prizes for the Summer Reading Club in the Children's Department; six reference sets, including Grzimek Animal Life Encyclopedia,

Great American Writers: Twentieth Century and the Encyclopedia of American Crime for the Reference Department; English as a Second Language materials; compact disks, DVDs and videos for the Adult Department; display cubes; a computer; self-end displays; a directional sign; potted plants and a chalkboard/marker board.

Now in its 30th year as an organization, the Friends has donated more than \$300,000 to the library. New members are welcome and membership forms are available at the library.



PROTEST SYMBOL... Union workers protested against the SP-F Board of Education for hiring non-union workers for asbestos removal at SPFHs. Union workers put up a giant rat in front of SPFHs and passed out flyers to the public last week.

Many Renovations Are Planned By SP-F Recreation

By JEREMY LIPSTEIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

As per the 1999 Open Space referendum and a council bond ordinance of \$950,000, the Scotch Plains Recreation Department will be adding a park facility and renovating several of the current ones beginning this Fall.

The site for a new park facility sits on Jerusalem Road, behind Scotch Hills Country Club, on a plot presently referred to as Lot 12. The township has owned the property for quite a while, but has only recently decided to use it. The new park, yet to be officially named, will have a little league field with dugouts, a soccer field inlay, parking and bathroom facilities.

Kramer Manor Park, located on Evelyn Street, will be among the parks to have major renovations. The township has almost finished replacing the sod and refurbishing the baseball field with a new infield, irrigation, benches and bleachers. The township plans to resurface two basketball courts and three tennis courts at Kramer Manor Park.

Similar improvements will be made at Farley and Jerseyland Fields located on Farley Avenue and Beryllium Road, respectively. The changes to be made at these two parks will include resurfacing of the basketball courts and renovations on the baseball diamonds, but new sod will not be added at these fields.

With plans to construct a new clubhouse at Scotch Hills Country Club in place, the old clubhouse will be renovated with new windows and a heating/air conditioning system. A pro-shop, snack bar, storage facility for golf carts and a meeting area will be included at the new clubhouse. The new clubhouse will be located on part of the shag field, next to the first tee. Once renovations are complete, the old clubhouse will continue to be used for parties, meetings and other functions.

In an agreement made with the county, the town will reposition

fields at the County Vocational-Technical School. At this facility, an adult sized baseball field - 90 feet between bases - and a full size soccer field will be constructed. In order to make this possible, part of the parking lot will be used as field.

At the facility known as the Route 22 Field, a new backstop, irrigation system, benches and bleachers will be added to the little league field. This facility remains as a possibility for lighting, to enable night games.

Other tentative sites for lighting are the Union County Vocational-Technical School, South Side Field on Martine Avenue, and Brookside Park on Hetfield Avenue.

"We're trying to be very conscientious with the neighbors feelings," said Director of Recreation Ray Poerio about the sometimes-negative sentiments on lighting. "Everyone wants lights and recreation facilities, just not in their backyard."

Plans for the "Field of Dreams" project are getting under way as well. The plan is a cooperative effort from the Township of Scotch Plains, The Borough of Fanwood, The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education, SP-F-Board of Education, and Union County. The project will mainly take place at Park Middle School, where the adult sized baseball field will be relocated at that facility and two new little league baseball fields will be constructed. New backstops, bleachers, benches, irrigation and sod are all in the works for this project, in addition to the possibility of lighting. To fund this project, the county will supply matching funds of \$300,000 to the \$300,000 that Scotch Plains, Fanwood and the SP-F-Board of Education raised, \$100,000 each.

Within the next two years, the Recreation Department estimates it will spend two to four million dollars in renovations and additions. After these projects are complete, further renovations will be planned for South Side Field and Brookside Park.

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EJ Victor Loose Pillow Sofa	3897	1900
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