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SIXTY CENTS



STATE RECOGNITION...Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr, holding her son Daniel, is presented with a \$60,000 check from New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Susan Bass Levin for Fanwood's inclusion in the DCA's Transfer of Development Rights demonstration project.

Fanwood Chosen As Part of State's New TDR Program

By PAUL PEYTON
Specially Written for The Times

FANWOOD — Fanwood was chosen last week as one of six towns statewide to participate in the state's Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Demonstration project. The borough intends to utilize the program to preserve the borough's designated historic district, a Victorian neighborhood located around Martine and North Avenues.

Developers will purchase rights from property owners in the historic district and instead build in the business district, which has been targeted for growth and which includes Martine, Terrill and South Avenues. Under the program, developers purchase development rights to build

in a "receiving area" — an area that is targeted for growth, in this case the downtown business district. The funding is then used to permanently preserve land in a "sending area" — Fanwood's historic district — at no cost to taxpayers. Mayor Colleen Mahr told *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* that the exact receiving area has as yet to be identified. The Department of Community Affairs (DCA), which is running the program, has given the borough \$60,000 to offset consulting and other costs associated with the program.

"We are going to look at the whole downtown (as a receiving area)," she told *The Times*. She said the TDR program will "ensure the quality and integrity" of the historic district.

Fanwood was chosen as part of the program announced by Department of Community Affairs Commissioner Susan Bass Levin at a press conference on February 10 in Trenton, for its plan to place permanent restrictions on structures in the borough's historic district in exchange for greater density in a proposed downtown redevelopment area near the borough's historic train station.

"The (Fanwood) proposal promotes redevelopment and transit-oriented development," according to a press release issued by the DCA.

Continued on page 10

Continued on page 10

Town Eyes March For Ashbrook Hunt

By FRED ROSSI
Specially Written for The Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — The deer management program in the Ashbrook Reservation in Scotch Plains will likely take place in the middle of March, township officials announced Tuesday night.

The Township Council, by a 4-1 vote, awarded a contract to Wildlife Management Services (WMS) of Mountaintop to operate the program, which seeks to reduce the burgeoning deer population in the reservation.

Councilwoman Nancy Malool, who last month voted against applying for a deer hunt permit, voted against the awarding of the contract.

After consulting with Union County officials, who called both WMS and the other bidder, Deer Management Systems of Hampton, "well qualified," Township Manager Thomas Atkins told council members that the bids from the two companies were similar. The bid from WMS, a newer company whose principals had considerable experience working for Deer Management Systems, was slightly lower at \$11,460, half of which will be reimbursed by the county.

WMS will now spend the next three to four weeks preparing for the program, which seeks to reduce the deer herd to about 20 per square mile. Township officials are awaiting a permit from the state Division of Fish and Wildlife; once

that is received, it's hoped that the hunt can be conducted in the middle of March.

Mr. Atkins said that about 130 adjacent property owners would be notified in advance of the program. He also said that there would be communication between WMS and township officials during each day's hunt.

In a related matter, the council will introduce an ordinance, either next week or in early March, that will prohibit the feeding of certain wildlife such as deer, squirrels and geese, except for birds via birdfeeders, on public and private property.

The ordinance is needed to comply with the recently-issued stormwater management regulations. It is hoped the new rules would also lessen the tendency of deer to wander off both the Ashbrook and Watchung Reservations and onto nearby streets and residential properties, where homeowners sometimes place food for wildlife.

At its conference meeting, the council agreed to introduce an ordinance to set a four-ton truck weight limit on Hunter Avenue. The police department has received complaints about large commercial vehicles traveling on that street.

It was found that many large trucks coming from Route 78 that want to get to Terrill Road turn right onto Mountain Avenue after

Continued on page 10

Mahr Provides Update on Grants, Borough's Communications Tower

By ELIZABETH CORRELL
Specially Written for The Times

FANWOOD — As the mayor and council work on the borough municipal budget and an application for extraordinary aid, Fanwood begins 2005 with a new communications tower and several grants to perform improvements in the borough.

In an interview with *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*, Mayor Colleen Mahr provided an update on what is going on in the borough.

"Regarding the budget, we have just started the meetings between the council and the CFO (Chief Financial Officer). We are working on the appropriations side; we have not done the revenue side yet (of the budget). Fanwood is going to apply for extraordinary aid again this year, and we will need to introduce the budget in order to meet the statutory deadline, which is March 11. I expect the budget will be done no later than the first week of March."

The extraordinary aid that was received by Fanwood last year resulted in a lower than anticipated increase in property taxes.

"We are currently reviewing the 2005 budget and we have yet to come to an estimated rate. We already see costs that are beyond the borough's control that will have an impact on the municipal tax rate, for example health insurance, utilities, and pension contributions," stated Mayor Mahr.

The borough received "a \$130,000 grant from the Department of Treasury for field alignment, upgrade and beautification of La Grande Park," announced Mayor Mahr. "It will go towards the tennis courts, ball fields, play area, the parking situation, and maybe incorporate a picnic area."

Pleasant Avenue, which runs from Martine Avenue to Westfield Avenue, will have the resurfacing and storm water management projects completed that have been needed there for some time, but have "been stalled," said Mayor Mahr.

The borough received an \$180,000 grant from the Department of Transportation, which will go towards the projected \$800,000 total cost of the work.

"It is not nearly as much as we need, so we are about to put in for a secondary discretionary aid grant for \$200,000," explained Mayor Mahr. "We'd like to see Pleasant Avenue

happen this year."

Mayor Mahr feels that "these two grants speak to how important it is to work with our elected officials, assembly people and senators. Fanwood and its residents benefit from the mayor having an open line of communication with our assembly people and senators so our needs can be addressed."

Towards the goal of gaining future grant monies, the borough has hired

a grants writer.

The county will be rolling out a new program in March which will make available to senior citizens a \$5,000 grant for making home improvements, inside or outside the home, such as new windows or water heaters. Seniors must meet certain eligibility requirements. Mayor Mahr said she encourages all borough seniors to contact her at Borough Hall to

Continued on page 10

Continued on page 10

School Board Updated on Progress Of High School's Diversity Council

By MATT MARINO
Specially Written for The Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education was updated last Thursday evening by the newly-formed Diversity Council as to the status of several events.

Board members also learned of a telethon, the proceeds of which will benefit victims of the tsunami disaster in Asia that occurred in December 2004.

Amber Porter, a student at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School (SPFHS), discussed the early stages of the council. The council was formed in the wake of several racial incidents at the high school, but as Ms. Porter explained, it also was created to educate students about different perspectives and ideas.

"We wanted something to happen...we wanted something done," she said.

The council additionally announced it is planning an all-day event scheduled for Tuesday, April 5. According to members, the event

will be a "convention" designed to show members of the high school and other communities what the council seeks to accomplish.

Speakers from Chubb and PricewaterhouseCooper are expected to attend the convention, with several other speakers and activities also being planned.

Candace Barnes, a SPFHS student and council member, explained that the Diversity Council has a goal for the future, which she defined as "engaging as many students as possible."

Included in that goal is discussion of topics that, while sensitive to many, encourages new ideas and positive changes where necessary.

"Our purpose is to break down the comfort zones," said Ms. Barnes.

Board member Trip Whitehouse commented that the development of the Diversity Council has been amazing, particularly because it represents a totally new concept and had no previous model to work from.

"It's quite an undertaking to have pulled it together...without a model,"

commented Mr. Whitehouse. "I applaud you."

Board President Linda Nelson added, "The students have really taken the initiative in running this (council)."

She recognized the fact that oftentimes, it takes negative moments to create positive ones.

"Sometimes, bad things happen and we turn them into positives," she said.

In addition to the Diversity Council discussion, two members of the Asian Student Association — Liliana Lee and Ian McNally — announced a telethon to be held at SPFHS on Saturday, February 26, from 8 to 10 p.m.

Continued on page 10

Raritan Road Minor Subdivision, Fitness Ctr. Addition OK'd by Bd.

By FRED ROSSI
Specially Written for The Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — The township planning board on Monday evening approved two applications, began hearings on another and put off a hearing on a fourth application.

The board gave approval to an application by Bill Wilkins of 1650 and 1640 Raritan Road for a minor subdivision and lot line change that required a front yard and two side yard setback variances.

Mr. Wilkins is proposing to expand the property and double the size of the home presently situated on the Raritan Road lot. Prior to giving their approval, board members expressed some concerns about the narrowness of the side yards on both sides of the house and wondered whether it would be better if the house was razed and replaced with a new one with wider side yard setbacks.

The board also approved an application by E-2 Willow LLC, the owner of a building at the corner of East Second Street and Willow Avenue, to construct a second floor addition. The building houses Athletic Edge fitness center, and owner Ben Scheer told the board the second floor addition would be used to provide better service for his clients, in particular to permit them to practice sprints and other running exercises.

The 3,000-square foot addition would be a single large room with no



HELPING SENIORS...Fanwood Police Sergeant Thomas Jelic speaks to seniors at All Saints Church in Scotch Plains on Monday regarding Operation Vial File. Under the program, seniors place the vials, which contain important medical and contact information, in their refrigerators to assist emergency services personnel. Please see story on Page 2.

equipment, he explained.

The board also spent an hour of informal discussion on an application by Esther Stuart of 2 Balfour Lane, who is seeking to subdivide her irregularly-shaped property, which is situated at a bend in the road where Balfour Lane meets Allenby Lane.

Ms. Stuart's attorney, Robert Kraus, attempted to convince the board that a variance for a front yard setback was not needed because, he believed, her house should be seen as facing Balfour Lane outright instead of fronting on the bend that connects the two streets.

Doing this, he said, would put the

house more in line with neighboring homes on Balfour Lane. The board disagreed, however, and also raised issues of side yard setback measurements. Since revisions to the application will need to be made, the board will consider it at its February 28 meeting.

The board began consideration of an application by Needle Peluso Homes LLC, which is seeking to subdivide a lot at 816 Cleveland Avenue and build a new home on the second lot. A new attached garage will be built onto the existing home in order to conform with local regulations.

The board will resume the hearing at its Monday, February 28, meeting.



INTENSE FOCUS...Scotch Plains Planning Board members Paulette Coronato, left, and Chairwoman Maria Sartor listen to testimony on subdivision applications at Monday night's meeting.



SEEKING SUPPORT...Republican gubernatorial candidate Doug Forrester, center, is greeted by, from left, John DeSimone and Robert Tarantino of Clark and William McClintock of Scotch Plains during the Lincoln Day Reception fundraiser held in Mountaintop last Thursday. Please see more photos and story on Page 2.

PAGE INDEX
Regional 2-3
Editorial 4-5
Community ... 6-7
Obituary 8
Education 9
Sports 11-15
Real Estate 12-16
Classifieds..... 18
A&E 19-20