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SIXTY CENTS

Council Introduces Ordinance To Streamline Regulation Of Signs

By FRED ROSSI
Specially Written for The Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — The Township Council will hold a public hearing later this month or early in August on a new sign ordinance that was introduced at Tuesday evening's council meeting.

The proposed ordinance "updates and streamlines" the regulations for any new signs put up in Scotch Plains, said Councilwoman Nancy Malool. She said the new guidelines, which were developed by the planning board over the past several months, contain "uniform standards" for all types and sizes of signs that businesses may want to erect.

Calling the new ordinance "a pretty major overhaul" of regulations that have not been reviewed in 40 years, Township Attorney Douglas Hansen said the new ordinance would also lessen the burden on the Zoning Board of Adjustment, which currently must approve all new signs. In many instances under the proposed ordinance, new signs will require a permit instead of a costly and time-consuming hearing.

The council will hold a special meeting on Tuesday, July 26 at 7 p.m. to allow public comments and

a council vote on the ordinance. If a meeting is not held then, the council will hold a public hearing at its regular Tuesday, August 9 meeting.

In other business, several parking and traffic ordinances were introduced Tuesday night by the governing body. One will prohibit parking on the north side of Allenby Lane, 25 feet on either side of the footpath to Coles School, on school days. The second will prohibit truck traffic from the entire length of Stout Avenue. Public hearings on these ordinances will be held at the

council's August 9 meeting.

The council also passed a resolution authorizing the township tax collector to prepare and deliver estimated third quarter property tax bills in the event that those bills are delayed due to state aid figures not being available.

Given the state government's annual last-minute budget deliberations, aid figures are not always available to municipalities in a manner timely enough to allow those figures to be incorporated into local property tax calculations.

Former Resident Sues Lab on Flawed Test

By DEBORAH MADISON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — Former Scotch Plains resident Margaret Mignano, who was wrongfully charged with the murder of her disabled daughter, is suing the medical laboratory that produced the faulty test results that led to those charges.

Four days after moving to Tennessee in July of 2004, Mrs. Mignano's 15-year-old daughter, Ashley, passed

away. Ashley, who was born two and a half months premature, suffered from a number of illnesses including restrictive pulmonary disease, Cerebral Palsy and seizures, Mrs. Mignano said.

After Ashley's death, the medical examiner that performed the autopsy, Dr. Charles Harlan, sent Ashley's blood work to ToxMed Reference Laboratory at Meharry Medical College in Nashville. The toxicology report from ToxMed incorrectly indicated an overdose of Phenobarbital, which Ashley's mother routinely administered to her daughter for seizures. The test was repeated a second time with the same results showing an overdose of the drug.

In August, Mrs. Mignano was handcuffed, arrested, fingerprinted and jailed. She spent a week in jail before being able to raise the \$500,000 bail. Her bank accounts were frozen because she was considered a flight risk, Mrs. Mignano said, making it very difficult for her family to raise the bail or maintain their financial needs.

In November, a grand jury indicted Mrs. Mignano for first-degree murder, her attorney, Robert Peters of Winchester told *The Times*. Several days later, a new toxicology test was performed at a different lab and all charges against Mrs. Mignano were dropped. The test was repeated for a third time by ToxMed, which confirmed the corrected results. Once the correct test results were revealed, the cause of Ashley's death was changed to "restrictive pulmonary disease" Mrs. Mignano said.

"My daughter was greatly loved by our whole family," she said. "She was a blessing and every one of her small achievements was a joy to our family. She taught my other children so much and helped bring us together. I could never think of harming her," Mrs. Mignano said.

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Fanwood CERT Teaches Citizen Emergency Prep.

By MEREDITH MANNINO
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

The Fanwood Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) is teaching citizens how to be prepared for an emergency. With that goal in mind, disaster prevention/reaction and first aid were the first of two sessions of a free eight-week course.

The Fanwood CERT is an organized team that is available to assist first responder services and is an outgrowth of the national CERT program, which was founded in California in 1985 to teach private citizens life saving skills in the event of a fire or other crisis.

"The whole idea behind CERT training is for citizens to operate like a well-oiled machine by the time EMTs and police officers arrive to the scene of a disaster," Sergeant Tom Jedic of the Fanwood Police Department told attendees at the June 23 training that launched the eight-week program. "Team work and camaraderie are crucial components in CERT training," he said, noting that the CERT team is both a reactionary and preventative group.

According to Sergeant Jedic, being at the ready for an emergency by safeguarding homes and planning for events like power outages and hurricanes is both imperative and invaluable in the event of an emergency. It's important to put together an emergency bag/first aid kit containing a flashlight, sunscreen, an extra supply of prescription medications, aluminum foil, pliers, duct tape, a whistle,



BEAUTIFUL FLOWERS...Last Saturday was a perfect day for the ladies at the Farmers Market in Scotch Plains. In addition to a large assortment of fresh fruits and vegetables, stunning flowers are on display.

Gas Station Application Will Be Resubmitted to SP Zoning Bd.

By FRED ROSSI
Specially written for The Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — The Scotch Plains Zoning Board of Adjustment last week approved several homeowner variances but rejected an appeal by Cumberland Farms, the owner of the Gulf gasoline station between Route 22 and Mountain Avenue.

Gary Rosensweig, attorney for Cumberland Farms, requested the board to reopen and reconsider an application that had been turned down last month. Mr. Rosensweig told *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* that a new application would be filed with the board.

Cumberland Farms had sought to expand the Route 22 facility by adding four additional gas pumps to the existing two pumps, covering the pumping area with a canopy and replacing three underground gas storage tanks with three new ones that will provide expanded capacity and lessen the frequency of deliveries.

During two hearings in June, a number of residents living near the gas station voiced concerns about the present condition of the property, saying that an excessive number of cars waiting for service are parked, not only on the site, but also on Mountain Avenue.

Residents opposed to the expansion plans also cited other reasons, including their lack of faith that Cumberland Farms would follow through on its promises to clean up the site, concerns about the effect of

a more expansive gas station on property values, an increase in vehicular traffic in the area, the fact that the property is located in a residential zone and the feeling that an expanded station would offer no positive benefits for Scotch Plains.

Last week, Mr. Rosensweig, in his unsuccessful request for the application to be reopened, presented revised site plans that included closing off all access to Mountain Avenue via landscaping and fencing. Residents had earlier voiced concerns about gasoline delivery trucks possibly using Mountain Avenue as an exit route to return to the highway. To address the concerns of some residents about excessive lighting from an expanded

pump station, the new plans also included a provision calling for a nighttime test of the lighting and, if necessary, a downward adjustment in the lights' wattage output.

Mr. Rosensweig said a new application would be filed as soon as the revised plans are completed.

In other business, the Zoning Board approved several variance applications, including a rear yard setback variance for Robert and Sally Rowland, who plan to expand a portion of their 14 Johnson Street home. Douglas and Joanne Layne of 1129 Lincoln Avenue were also granted a rear yard variance so they could extend part of the second floor of their home.



MANFRA WAY...Retiring Fanwood Public Works Director, Ray Manfra stands on a ladder above Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr next to the new street sign that changed Fanwood Avenue to Manfra Way to honor Ray for forty three years of service to the borough. Also pictured, from left to right, are: new Public Works Dir. Clinton Dickson, Borough Administrator Eleanor McGovern and Councilwoman Donna Dolce.

Borough Renames Street After Retired DPW Director

By MEREDITH MANNINO
Specially Written for The Times

FANWOOD — Fanwood Avenue has been renamed Manfra Place in honor of Ray Manfra, who recently retired after serving 47 years as the borough's public works director (DPW). The street leads into the DPW's building.

Clinton Dickson, former employee of Garwood's DPW, is replacing Mr. Manfra.

"Ray Manfra's dedication and passion for the community will certainly be missed," Councilwoman Donna Dolce said at Tuesday's council meeting. "We're confident in the success of Clinton Dickson."

In other news, it was announced that former Fanwood Mayor Lou Jung and Plainfield Area Regional Sewerage Authority representative Rob Valet would address the council at its Tuesday, August 2 meeting concerning an increase in stipends to PARSAs commissioners.

Mr. Jung is the liaison between PARSAs and the council. In June, Mayor Colleen Mahr and other council

members expressed their frustration that PARSAs didn't notify them prior to making the increases.

"I'm very pleased that Mr. Jung will have a chance to present his point of view regarding the PARSAs salary increase," said Mr. Kline. He also noted that the increase was not very substantial.

Borough resident Michael D'Antuono addressed the council regarding a contract concerning the redevelopment of the Dean Oil lot.

Raj Mukerji and the Landmark Corporation have received a 90-day extension to submit their financial statements to the borough concerning the development of the lot.

"I'd like to see the LLC documents that show who the managing members are and the financial statements of the LLC. As a 36-year resident, I feel have the right to see this information," said Mr. D'Antuono.

The Marcovecchio plan for 221 South Avenue has been approved by the borough's planning board.

The often complicated and very detailed issue of Transfer of Devel-



side entrance stairs to the Westfield train station platform.

The bag was spotted and reported to command authorities by Westfield Police Officer Frank Schmitz during a routine inspection of the train station shortly before 8 a.m. Within minutes, passengers were cleared from the platforms and police secured the area. Firemen used their trucks to block the entrances to the north side train station parking lot, and they remained on standby for support.

The Union County Bomb Squad arrived with instruments and equipment a dozen minutes later. As part of the equipment, an explosive containment sphere was brought on site should it had been necessary to place the bag within it.

The bag in question was lodged behind a two-foot-high wall next to the tracks and adjacent to the concrete stairs leading to the platform on the north side of the station. Upon



of the charge.

All spectators and personnel were cleared from the area (a distance across the street from the parking lot). At 9:15 a.m., the charge was detonated, yielding a sharp boom, but without further incident. The bag was shredded and the content was determined to be harmless.

Train service resumed by 9:20 a.m. and the area quickly returned to normal. For more information, please see goleader.com/photos.



CIRCUS ACT...On Monday evening, the Juggling Hoffmans, a husband and wife duo, performed on the lawn outside the Fanwood library and entertained the children.