

Fanwood's TDR Proposal Spurs Questions, Skepticism

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

tions, facilitated by a professional real estate market analyst. Prospective developers and homeowners would be put in touch with each other through a list provided by the borough.

Jeffrey Donohoe of Jeffrey Donohoe Associates, hired as the Real Estate Market Analyst for the program, explained that his role would be to calculate the values of the properties and the credits. A flyer, distributed at the meeting, stated that the TDR could "provide necessary funds so homeowners can maintain their homes appropriately and in some cases restore the historic integrity of their properties," with the money they receive from the developers.

Stan Slachetka, of T&M Associates in Middletown, also hired by the borough as a consultant, said that the project would require the borough to submit the application to the state by August in order to implement the program by year's end. Several public hearings would be slated between now and August to inform the public and to outline restrictions and design standards for the participants.

Borough Councilman Bruce Walsh said that as a member of the Historic Commission he found this to be an exciting concept and this program could be a win-win situation for all parties concerned, if implemented correctly.

Delores O'Brien, Chairwoman of Fanwood's Historic Commission, told the council and planning board members that the commission fought for many years to gain historic registry status to prevent any encroachments on the Historic District and that this proposal sounded like an encroachment by the state and the borough.

She also expressed her dismay that the Borough Council and planning board had not consulted with the historic commission before accepting the grant to launch the program and that the time line was too rushed for a decision of this magnitude.

Mrs. O'Brien also said that she doubted whether many homeowners would want to have a deed restriction placed on their properties in perpetuity. She told *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* that these restrictions would lessen the resale value of these homes, making them very difficult to sell.

She also doubted whether the money paid by developers would be adequate to cover the exorbitant costs of maintaining or restoring historical integrity to homes in the district.

Councilman Joseph Higgins questioned whether the 52 contributing homes in the borough's Historic District could provide enough credits in order to insure consistency of development in the receiving district. This inequality, he opined, could result in an imbalanced receiving district, with some areas overdeveloped and other areas underdeveloped.

Mr. Slachetka said that the borough could expand the sending district to include other homes, outside of the Historic District, if need be.

Mrs. O'Brien told *The Times* that the Historic Commission felt that additional information from real estate analysts and architects should be obtained in order to properly evaluate all of the long-term consequences,

this program could impose on the borough's most valuable properties. Joseph Nagy, Vice Chairman of the Historic Commission voiced similar concerns. Clayton Pierce, a member of the Environmental Commission, who was instrumental in obtaining historic designation for the Historic District, told *The Times* that this decision was far too complex to be rushed without consulting more experts.

Mr. Slachetka admitted that some aspects of this program were untested and that this unique application was groundbreaking. Ms. Mercer stated that Fanwood, being the first in the State to apply a TDR to a historic district, would serve as a role model for future applications.

Mayor Colleen Mahr said that all of these concerns would be addressed at future hearings and that the Historic Commission would be brought on-board to share their expertise with the borough. Mayor Mahr emphasized that nothing had been decided as of yet and that more education was needed.

Joni Scanlon of Scanlon Communications of Metuchen, who also attended the meeting, has been hired by the borough through the TDR grant to facilitate the dissemination of information to the community about the program.

Borough Planning Board Adopts Storm Water Plan

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ings," said Mr. Celardo.

Mr. Lauro explained that his firm chose a design that he calls "traditional" and he didn't want to exactly replicate the train station. Mr. Lauro offered to meet with the Historic Preservation Commission to get a better understanding of their guidelines.

"Without some criteria, this could go on for years," Mr. Lauro said.

Though the parking/RSIS question and the board's request for a minor tweak to the design of the building are what held up the planning committee's ability to accept the application, Mayor Colleen Mahr and Planning Board Chairman Gregory Cummings acknowledged that these minor issues will most likely be resolved at the next meeting.

"Overall, this is a wonderful project. I'm very excited to see this move forward, and I feel that the issues on the table can be resolved in an expeditious manner," said Mayor Mahr.

In reference to correspondence agenda, the Staggard Place zoning issue was mentioned.

According to council member Jack Molenaar, Staggard Place will be reviewed in a similar process as Transfer Development Rights (TDR).

When the meeting was opened to the public, resident Cathy Spagnuolo asked Marcovecchio representatives what the depth of the building is. According to Mr. Watson, the building's depth is roughly 77 feet.

The Marcovecchio plan is of importance to Mrs. Spagnuolo because her husband owns space behind the proposed South Avenue building site, she said.

Resident Joseph Ponzio, who is in



Benjamin B. Corbin for *The Times*

DEDICATED POLICE OFFICERS... Fanwood police officers pose for a picture after the Fanwood Borough Council meeting following an awards ceremony. Pictured, left to right, are: Sergeant Howard Jarvis, who was awarded a meritorious service award; Chief Donald Domanoski; Lieutenant Richard Trigo, who was awarded two letters of commendation; Corporal Stephen Sanisio; Corporal Martin Halausa; Detective Eugene Chin, who was awarded for two letters of commendation; Patrolmen Brian Bartiromo, who was awarded two letters of commendation; Corporal Michael Schilling, who was awarded a meritorious service award and Patrolman Phillip Ugone.

Tax Forum

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school districts that maintains educational quality," she concluded.

The forum is in the planning stages. *The Times* will keep residents informed as more information becomes available.

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SP Council

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

At its meeting next week, the Council will likely pass a resolution renewing the township's participation in the Union County Cooperative Purchasing Program in which Scotch Plains buys road materials from Weldon Materials at discounted rates.

The township's annual auction of unused and surplus equipment will be held on Saturday, June 18, in the parking lot of the Municipal Building.

The Council also agreed to institute summer hours at the Municipal Building, as it has done for the past several years. Beginning on June 16, Thursday office hours will be extended to 7:30 p.m. with offices closing in early afternoon on Fridays. The new hours will be effective through Labor Day.

On Friday, the township will receive bids for nearly \$4.5 million in notes, about half of which will be used to refund \$2.41 million of current obligations such as roadway and sewer work, park improvements, equipment and the new communications tower at the southside firehouse. The other \$2.1 million will finance various capital projects, including equipment for the public works and recreation departments and Scotch Hills Country Club, improvements to the Township Library and roadway and sewer work.

At its meeting next Tuesday, Police Chief Mark Zyla will present awards to four township police officers in connection with National Police Week.

Westfield Town Council Passes Resolution for School Budget Cuts

By PAUL J. PEYTON

Specially Written for *The Times*

WESTFIELD — The town council approved a resolution Tuesday night to cut the school tax levy by \$714,543, which will reduce school taxes on an average homeowner between \$75 and \$80. The overall tax levy increase will drop four cents per \$100 of assessed valuation to 14 cents.

Westfield Voters rejected the \$66 million school tax levy by a tally of \$1,528 to \$1,463 on April 19. School officials had originally sought to reduce the levy by around \$360,000. The proposed cuts contained some 28 different areas hitting all aspects of the town's K-12 public school system. Town and school officials have said the cuts do not involve any current instructional staff, although several openings due to retiring educators and secretaries would not be filled. Also, new purchases and programs proposed in the 2005-2006 school budget have been cut from the budget.

First Ward Councilman Peter Echausse, Finance Policy Commit-

tee Chairman, said it was important that no existing staff or programs were affected by the reductions. He said staff positions were instead reduced "through either attrition or consolidation of responsibilities or titles."

Councilman Echausse, said it was important that any cuts were not at any particular school but, rather spread throughout the entire school system.

"The budget went down. It was within our control to pass it," said Superintendent of Schools Dr. William Foley. "It was voted down in most precincts throughout the town by parents as well as people on fix incomes."

"I'm not happy about these cuts but I accept these cuts," Dr. Foley said, blaming the budget defeat on residents being upset over rising property taxes and not because they are dissatisfied with the Westfield school system.

He noted that school enrollments, particularly in the first grade, are down

WF Council Awards Contracts for Houlihan As Neighbors Object

By PAUL J. PEYTON

Specially Written for *The Times*

WESTFIELD — The town council Tuesday night approved a resolution to award contracts for synthetic turf at Houlihan Field, to install lights at Houlihan and to resurface the Tamaques Park tennis courts by a vote of 8-1 despite objections from area residents.

Representatives of town sports league favor the Houlihan/Sid Fay projects. Council members indicated their support for the project but vowed to address traffic safety and how much later the lights would be turned off.

Currently, the Recreation Commission has a policy of lighting recreational facilities from May 1 through September 30 from dusk until 10 p.m., Town Administrator Jim Gildea told the governing body prior to the public meeting. He said there is no town ordinance, however, that specifies these hours.

Lucas Electric Company of Windsor was awarded the \$255,300 contract for installing lighting at Houlihan and Sid Fay and the Tamaques tennis courts.

Helecon, Inc. of Bridgewater was given the contract to resurface the Tamaques tennis courts at a cost of \$104,850. A. Juliano & Sons, Inc. of Sterling was hired to re-construct Houlihan Field to pave and triple parking capacity at the park as well as fencing Houlihan and Sid Fay Fields at a cost of \$770,000.

With \$1.1 million budgeted for the two projects, officials have noted that the town would be able to complete everything except the turfing of Sid Fay Field.

Recreation department officials are seeking funding through Union County government grants as well through donations through the various sports associations in town to pay for the project.

At Tuesday night's meeting, numerous neighborhood residents spoke in opposition to the lights citing increased traffic, noise and traffic. Representatives of the various sports leagues in town supported the projects, stating soccer and lacrosse leagues are facing significant registration increases.

Barry Knapp, president of the Westfield Soccer Association, said

half the town's population of children between 5 and 14 - 2,341 kids - are playing soccer with the association. "Every new program we've introduced has just exploded," he said. "We are bursting at the seams."

Tom Maher of Forest Avenue, also supportive of the turf and lights, commented, "This is the right direction for Westfield."

Abby Abramowitz of Summit Court had a differing view, indicating that some neighboring residents will not be able to sit out on their porches during the evening due to the increased use and hours of the field.

"It's just very upsetting to the neighborhood," she said.

Vivian Strano of Summit Court said lights are not needed at Houlihan.

"I don't thank they (children) should be playing after dark," said Ms. Strano.

Resident David Sanders of Genesee Trail said he believed a lighted field would give local kids something to do at night other than hanging out in the downtown.

Gio Palatucci of Washington Street and a senior at Westfield High School at soccer team member, said the student athletes "need a safe place to play" and that turfing Houlihan Field is one solution to the problem.

Michael Giordano of Summit Court said area residents "have some serious issues" with the lights at Houlihan such increased traffic safety issues at the intersection of Rahway Avenue and Lamberts Mill Road. He said the lighted field would not solve the problem of additional usage on town fields. He said the town should instead increase its inventory of fields.

"We are a bedroom community. We would like to stay that way," said Mr. Giordano.

Former Mayor and current Democratic contender for his old job, Tom Jardim of Walnut Street, urged the council to sit down with area residents impacted the most by the project prior to voting to approving the lights.

Fourth Ward Councilman Larry Goldman, the lone dissenter on the Houlihan project, said lighting both fields but only turfing Houlihan "to me does not make a lot of sense."

Councilman Goldman favored rebidding the project to turf both fields and to remove the lights from the scope of the work or at least postponing the vote on the project until the officials could meet with neighbors.

"There are numerous ways we can compromise and make the residents of that area a little more comfortable about the noise and the lights," he said.

Councilman Goldman requested that the council consider specific lighting restrictions for the park prior to the installation of the lights.

Fourth Ward Councilman Jim Foerst, in voting in favor of the project, said he weighed the positive impact of the project would have on the town versus the detriment it might have on the surrounding neighborhood. In the end he felt the turf and lights were "best for the town as a whole."

Mayor Greg McDermott said he felt it was important the project is completed to gain additional usage for games for the various leagues while allowing time for some fields be taken out of use temporarily to improve their playing condition.

Town officials have asked the recreation department to look for other sources income such as Union County grants and donations from sports organizations that utilize the fields.

Mr. Gildea said both the Tamaques and Houlihan/Sid Fay projects would begin by June and with a completion deadline at the end of August in time

FANWOOD POLICE BLOTTER

WEDNESDAY, MAY 11

Reginald Robinson, 49, of Rahway was reportedly arrested and charged on numerous warrants following a motor vehicle stop.

Regina Eure, 44, of Newark was arrested and charged on warrants.

Terrence Barfield, 32, of Roselle was arrested and charged with possession of a controlled and dangerous substance, possession of drug paraphernalia and possession with intent to distribute. He was remanded to the Union County jail. Bail was reportedly set at \$35,000.

THURSDAY, MAY 12

Bobby Blackwood, 19, of Plainfield was arrested and charged on warrants.

Brandon Pretlow, 27, of Westfield was arrested and charged on warrants following a motor vehicle stop.

Ivani Morales, 32, Hillside was arrested and charged on numerous warrants after a motor vehicle stop.

FRIDAY, MAY 13

John Ruffino, 36, of Long Island, N.Y., reportedly came to Fanwood Police Headquarters to turn himself in on a Fanwood warrant.

SATURDAY, MAY 14

Jamie J. Johnson, 27, of Bangor, PA, was arrested and charged on warrants and in subsequent investigation was also arrested for possession of drug paraphernalia.

SUNDAY, MAY 15

Rashan Baker, 29, of Plainfield, was arrested and charged on a no bail warrant after a motor vehicle warrant.

MONDAY, MAY 16

Angel Serrano, 34, of Colonia was arrested and charged with driving under the influence and also charged with possession of drug paraphernalia.

Adam Sylvester, 22, of New Brunswick was arrested and charged on outstanding warrants following a motor vehicle stop.

Albet Banks, 34, of Linden was arrested and charged following a motor vehicle stop for outstanding warrants.



Benjamin B. Corbin for *The Times*

ATTIC ABLAZE... A fire in the attic of a home located at 602 Stanley Avenue in Westfield on Wednesday morning required the assistance of numerous surrounding towns in an act of mutual aid. The cause of the fire is under investigation.

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A physical education teacher at the intermediate grade level will be eliminated to save \$94,000, and an administrative secretarial position of \$42,079 will not be filled following a retirement. An unfilled vacancy for a gifted and talented teacher will also be eliminated from the budget.

Of the total reductions, \$403,235 will come through budgeted staff positions, \$72,446 in classroom technology, and \$25,032 in fine arts technology and \$71,450 in equipment, uniforms and textbook purchases.

The BOE was to have voted on the proposed tax levy reductions on a resolution last night, Wednesday, May 18, after *The Leader* went to press.

Endless Blooms

Hydrangea Q & A
Sat 11-3pm

Hydrangeas are one of the most beautiful plants that you can put into the landscape. The hydrangeas of today are not like the hydrangeas of yesteryear. Varieties such as "Endless Summer" flower on old and new wood, so you don't need to be concerned about when you prune the plant. They will produce flowers all summer long.

This May 21st from 11-3pm we are proud to have Pler Davis, a horticultural craftsman of Monrovia Nursery, on hand to talk about everything hydrangea. Monrovia is the country's best grower of quality nursery material.

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