



# THE SCOTCH PLAINS-FANWOOD TIMES

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## Voters to Decide Fate of Local School Tax Levies, BOE Races

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

SCOTCH PLAINS - Area voters along with others throughout the state will vote on the polls Tuesday, April 18, to vote on local school tax levies and to select candidates to boards of education. Polls are open from 2 to 9 p.m. in Scotch Plains, Fanwood, Mountainside and Garwood and 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. in Westfield.

In Scotch Plains-Fanwood, six candidates, including two incumbents, are running for three three-year terms on the board of education for seats representing Scotch Plains. There are no Fanwood seats up this year. Incumbents BOE President Linda Nelson, whose background is in school public relations; Norman "Trip" Whitehouse, a division controller for a steel mill based in Perth Amboy, and Betty Anne Woerner, a chief financial officer for a children's non-profit organization, are all seek-

ing re-election to the three full three-year terms on the BOE.

They are opposed by David Gorbunoff, director of operations for a company that gives money to schools and libraries nationwide for Internet access and telecommunications. George Gowen, semi-retired after 17 years as a vice president of information technology at an investment company, and newcomer John Kubie. Nine-year incumbent Thomas Russo, an attorney, is running unopposed for a one-year unexpired seat currently held by Mr. Whitehouse.

Among the issues discussed in the campaign are current negotiations with the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Education Association (SPFEA) and student enrollment.

Voters will also cast ballots on a proposed \$62.1 million tax levy to support a total spending plan of \$71.4 million. If passed, Scotch Plains

homeowners would pay \$306, or 5.25 percent, more than last year on the average assessed home, while Fanwood residents would pay \$279, or 5.54 percent, over 2004-2005.

In Westfield, voters will cast ballots on a \$68,227,778 tax levy, which represents a 3.85 percent increase, or \$2,805,051, over last year. If the budget passes, the school portion of taxes would jump 14-cents per \$100 of assessed home valuation for an increase of \$253 on a home assessed at \$179,600. The tax levy would support a \$79.5 million budget.

The total budget reflects a 4.06 percent increase, or \$1,579,003, over last year's adopted budget. The tax levy is up \$2,202,777 over last year's adopted school levy. Last year, town voters, for the first time in a decade, rejected the proposed \$66 million school tax levy, 1,528 to 1,463. The town council later reduced the school budget by \$714,543, which was subsequently approved by the BOE.

Voters will also select three people among a field of four candidates for the board of education. Incumbent BOE President Anne Riegel is seeking her third, three-year term. Also seeking reelection to a second term is Beth Cassie, who is chairwoman of the district's Citizen's Advisory Committee on Curriculum (CACE).

Also running is Doug Stokes, a curriculum resource teacher in Edison, and Jane Clancy, an assistant kindergarten teacher at Presbyterian Nursery School in Westfield. Ms. Clancy is a member of CACE.

Among the issues this year are: student enrollment, students per classroom and selection of a new principal to replace the retiring Dr. Robert Petix.

In Mountainside, voters will decide on a tax levy of \$11,276,433 to support the spending of \$13,966,844.

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PLAY BALL... Opening Day for the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Youth Baseball Association faced rain but the ceremonies were not dampened at Booth Field last Saturday. Officials pictured above include Association Commissioner Joseph Sebalo, Fanwood Councilman Joseph Higgins and Scotch Plains Mayor Martin Marks along with other officials and youngsters.

## SP Council Introduces \$22 Million Budget With 4.5 Percent Tax Hike

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

SCOTCH PLAINS - The township council on Tuesday introduced a \$22 million municipal budget, which, if adopted, will result in a 4.5 percent increase in the property tax levy that is earmarked for local government purposes.

This year's budget is about 4.8 percent, or \$1.015 million, higher than last year, and Councilman Frank Rossi, in unveiling the 2006 spending plan, explained that "a substantial majority" of that increase is due to

higher mandated spending in areas such as pension contributions, sewerage fees, debt service, group health insurance premiums and gasoline expenses.

He also noted that "substantial reductions were made in budget requests" during the council's budget meetings in February and March and in the months during which Township Manager Thomas Atkins was preparing his spending proposals for submission to the council.

If the budget is approved at the council's May 9 meeting, the tax rate for the average taxpayer in Scotch Plains will increase by \$73. Last year's property tax rate for municipal government purposes on an average assessed home of \$121,000 was \$1.33 per \$100 of assessed value, or \$1,609. This year's rate on a similarly valued

home will be \$1.39 per \$100, or \$1,682. To offset the need for a larger tax increase, Mayor Martin Marks said Tuesday that \$2.1 million of township surplus would be used as revenue in this year's budget. The council, at its final budget meeting on March 30, also made an additional \$25,000 cut in appropriations.

Calling the 2006 budget "sound and prudent," Township Manager Thomas Atkins noted that the 4.5 percent property tax increase being proposed was lower than any other community in the area. The municipal government portion of the property tax bill will account for about 17.5 percent of the total levy, Mayor Marks noted. He also said details of the budget will be posted on the township's website sometime in the

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David Gorbunoff, for 3 Years



Linda Nelson, for 3 Years, Inc.



Betty Ann Woerner, for 3 Years, Inc.



John Kubie, for 3 Years



Thomas Russo, Unopposed, 1 Year



Trip Whitehouse, for 3 Years, Inc.

Not pictured: Scotch Plains BOE Candidate George Gowen. There are no Fanwood seats open this year.

## SP Residents' Air Concerns About Mini-Golf Course

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

SCOTCH PLAINS - Township officials said they would discuss with the township council the concerns expressed by neighborhood residents about the proposed miniature golf course at Scotch Hills Country Club.

At what was billed as a "courtesy hearing" at Monday evening's planning board meeting, Assistant Township Attorney Lawrence Woodruff, Recreation Director Ray Poerio and Recreation Commission Chairman Ed Zazzali reviewed some of the details of the 18-hole course, which will be situated on the triangular piece of grassy property at the corner of Jerusalem Road and Plainfield Avenue.

In addition to the mini golf development, the parking lot at Scotch Hills will be expanded along Jerusalem Road, with 44 parking spaces being added. Further, those golfers

playing the regular course will be able to practice their swings and drives in a series of enclosed booths that will replace the present shag field on which the mini golf course will be built.

Saying that the proposed facility will not be "your typical mini-golf course from many years ago," Mr. Zazzali told the planning board that the new course would resemble the Hyatt Hills complex on Raritan Road in Clark.

The new facility will feature tree buffering along Plainfield Avenue and will be fully enclosed by fencing. Several light poles will illuminate the course at night. Mr. Poerio called the facility "a good fit" because there would be "two distinct uses" at the club. The majority of regular golfers use Scotch Hills during the morning and afternoon hours while most mini-golf players tend to play after school

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## SP-F BOE Study Indicates Lower Enrollment Projection

By MEGHAN GILL  
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS - A demographic study, conducted by Richard Grip of Statistical Forecasting LLC., released by the Scotch Plains-Fanwood School District, has indicated the district's enrollment increase will be lower over the next seven years than increases in previous time periods.

This study, costing the district \$4,600, performed three baseline enrollment projections for the elementary, middle school and high school.

Using figures from the previous seven years, the study makes student enrollment projections through the 2010-2011 academic year.

The results indicate that total enrollment may fall somewhere between 5,362 and 5,449 students in 2010-2011, reflecting an increase of between 150 to 237 students from the 2005-2006 academic year.

This figure represents a "gain of approximately .6 percent per year and is also less than the most recent historical increases," the study states. This decline is primarily due to the lower number of births from 2001 to 2003, according to the report.

If the district experiences a greater number of children attending the half-day kindergarten program than historically shown, then the projected elementary enrollment is underestimated in this study, according to the report.

Enrollment in the elementary grades pre-kindergarten through fourth is projected to be 2,022 through 2,057 in 2010-2011, which reflects a loss of 132 to 167 students.

Middle school configuration, containing grades five through eight, will "rise sharply" throughout the entire projection period, with an increase of 210 to 266 students from the 2005-2006 academic year.

The high school is projected to rise the first year, remain constant for three years, and then rise again in the final year. Enrollment is expected to be from 1,542 to 1,585 in 2010-2011, which would be again of 82 to 125 students, according to the report.

Board of Education President Linda Nelson stated that, "Until this year, our enrollment projections had been very accurate, off by only a few children yearly."

"What concerns me is that since I've been on the board, the projections have said that the enrollment growth is temporary and that in five to six years we would be leveling off."

"But that point never seems to come," she explained.

"Conditions keep changing, whether they're live births or increased housing or mobility trends, and our enrollment keeps steadily increasing," she said. "The reality is that every decision the board makes, (such as) staffing, textbooks, playgrounds, parking, sports teams, is impacted by growing enrollment."

There may be some discrepancies with the report, such as mobility rates, future home resale market, the possibility of a large employer entering or leaving town, housing development,

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## FW Renovation Project To Begin Next Two Weeks

By MARIA WOHR  
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

FANWOOD - Mayor Colleen Mahr announced at the Fanwood Borough Council meeting Tuesday night that renovations along South Avenue as part of the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) project will begin in the next two weeks.

The mayor said revitalization is part of a project to rebuild the downtown area that has many depreciated buildings and runs along South Avenue to the south of the Fanwood Train Station and downtown north of Martine Avenue, between South and

LaGrande Avenues.

TDR is the transfer of development potential from one piece of property to another. A TDR program permits developers, in a receiving zone, to purchase TDR credits from property owners in a sending zone. Property owners in the sending zone agree to place certain development restrictions (easements) on their properties in order to preserve the property's historical integrity. There will be a meeting at Forest Hill's Park building on Monday, April 27 for residents to discuss what they want the outcome

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## Where To Vote in the Area

**WESTFIELD**  
First Ward:  
Districts 1 and 2: Roosevelt Intermediate School Gym, 302 Clark Street.  
Districts 3, 5 and 7: Franklin Elementary School Auditorium, 700 Prospect Street.  
Districts 4 and 6: Westfield Memorial Library, Program Room, 550 East Broad Street.  
Second Ward:  
District 1: Union County Annex, 300 North Avenue.  
District 2, 3 and 6: Washington Elementary School Auditorium, 900 St. Marks Avenue.  
District 4 and 5: Wilson Elementary School Auditorium, 301 Linden Avenue.  
Third Ward:  
District 1: Westfield Rescue Squad, 335 Watterson Street.  
Districts 2, 3 and 4: Edison Intermediate School Gym, 800 Rahway Avenue.  
Districts 5, 6 and 7: Jefferson Elementary School Auditorium, 1200 Boulevard.  
Fourth Ward:  
Districts 1 and 2: McKinley Elementary School Auditorium, 500 First Avenue.  
Districts 3 and 4: Westfield High School Lobby, 550 Dorian Road.  
District 5: Jefferson Elementary School Auditorium, 1200 Boulevard.

**SCOTCH PLAINS**  
Districts 1, 2 and 3: Park Middle School Boy's Gym, 580 Park Avenue.  
Districts 4 and 5: Scotch Plains Library, Children's Room, 1927 Bartle Avenue.  
Districts 6, 7 and 8: Evergreen School, Third Grade Hallway, 2280 Evergreen Avenue.  
District 9: Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School, Front Hall by Auditorium, Westfield Road.  
District 10: Brunner Elementary School, Front Lobby, Westfield Road.  
District 11: St. John the Baptist Church, 2387 Morse Avenue, Fellowship Hall.  
Districts 12 and 13: McGinn Elementary School, Room 10, Roosevelt Avenue.  
Districts 14 and 15: Union Catholic High School Lobby, Martine Avenue.  
Districts 16 and 21: Union County Vocational-Technical Schools, 1776 Raritan Road, Baxel Hall (The Commons).  
Districts 17 and 18: Terrill Middle School Auditorium Lobby, 1301 Terrill Road.  
Districts 19 and 20: Coles Elementary School, Lobby, 16 Kevin School.

**FANWOOD**  
Districts 1 and 2: Fanwood Borough Hall, 75 North Martine Avenue.  
District 3: Children's Specialized Hospital, 330 South Avenue.  
District 4 and 5: Terrill Road Bible Chapel, 535 Terrill Road.  
District 6 and 7: Fanwood Memorial Library, North Avenue and Tillotson Road.  
**GARWOOD**  
District One - Firehouse Building, 415 South Avenue  
District Two - Borough Hall, 403 South Avenue  
District Three - Lincoln School, 400 Second Avenue  
District Four - Lincoln School, 400 Second Avenue  
**MOUNTAINSIDE**  
District 1 and 6: Municipal Building, Court Room, 1385 Route 22.  
District 2, 7 and 8: Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Church, 300 Central Avenue.  
District 3, 4 and 5: Presbyterian Church, Assembly Room, Deerpath and Meeting House Lane.  
**Correction**  
In last week's issue, in the article on candidates night in Scotch Plains and Fanwood, it should have stated that Mrs. Woerner also noted that she has coached the Y's girl's basketball team in Brooklyn, was on the Wesley Hall Board of Directors, has participated in the PTA and has volunteered at the local library.

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