

Letters to the Editor

Scotch Plains-Fanwood School Taxes Higher Than Other Towns

Once again we are confronted with the option if not our civil duty to vote on the school budget for this coming year. The school board did the best they could in keeping the property tax increase in Scotch Plains to 5.25 percent and Fanwood to 5.54 percent. This is commendable but still surpasses the raises that most of us received this past year or likely to obtain this coming year. This year several of our neighboring towns have property tax increases that are less than what we are facing. Examples of these are Livingston at 3.7 percent and Westfield of 3.9 percent.

In the previous five years Scotch Plains residents have experienced 8.7 percent, 7.5 percent, 8.0 percent, 7.1 percent and 5.9 percent increases. How many residents enjoyed these percentage increases from their employers during this period? Taxpayers can only directly vote on one budget in this state, that being the school budget. We cannot vote on the municipal, county or state budgets. Naturally the school board who worked hard on this budget would like it to pass and mention that class size and the on-going negotiations would not benefit from a rejection of the budget. This appears to be true regarding class size, but is questionable regarding the contract negotiations. We as a community can say, "Enough is enough" since we cannot continue to support taxpayer funded benefits and salary raises that we as their employers do not receive in our lives.

During the "Meet the School Board Candidates Night," it was mentioned numerous times to vote "yes" on the budget. This is understandable and we can expect the PTA and the like to make it known to the 25 to 30 percent of our residents with children in the school system that it is imperative to vote "yes." We can rest assured that they are counting on the majority of voters to stay home. Last year the budget was approved by approximately 125 votes.

When one looks at the large volume of homes that are for sale in our town, we can appreciate that a number of homeowners have made a decision that living in Scotch Plains cannot continue. In addition, there are those that are actively looking to relocate out of this state. All we need is a job offer.

We speculate that there are a number of high-income individuals such as lawyers, doctors, company executives, etc. that are residents. However, not all of us are so blessed with this discrepancy income. Then with all the "knock down" mansions going up; we can only imagine that this situation will continue. The bottom line is that some of us feel that we no longer have a place in this town, county or state and are experiencing a type of benevolent eminent domain. A rejection of the budget would give us some breathing

room. Class sizes may suffer in the short term, but down the line our financial situations will not have to be a consideration in raising revenue.

There exists a general feeling that the quality of the school system directly relates to the increased values of homes. This discounts location to the sources of work and have never been qualified as to how much. For those who do not utilize the school system or whose children have long graduated the amount of school taxes paid over approximately 20 years of home ownership would amount to approximately \$100,000. Does this mean that our homes have reaped this benefit dollar for dollar? Some how I doubt it is a good financial investment.

Parents have indicated that should the budget fail there will be cuts in instructional staff and/or extracurricular activities. However, there was no mention of administrator cost or more important the cost of living in this town. The cost of public education is not the only source but is 65 percent of our town's tax burden. Some of the things that were not mentioned as to if the situation will improve when we move out, nor does it address the likelihood that the children in our school system will not be able to afford to live in this town. How many parents who press for passing of our budget have discussed with their children that they should buy a big house in New Mexico because you will be traveling from New Jersey to be with them on holidays?

However, the bottom line is the budget will most likely pass and will only serve to increase the pain. One can hope that you would please give us break and let us get out with a few extra dollars to defray some of the costs of relocation. Basically we are looking at establishing a New Jersey in exile.

Albert Muller
Scotch Plains

PUBLIC NOTICE

TOWNSHIP OF SCOTCH PLAINS PLANNING BOARD

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that at the Planning Board Meeting of the Township of Scotch Plains held on April 10, 2006, the Board adopted the following Resolutions: **MSC, LLC**, for 551-553 Park Avenue, Block 1401, Lot 14, approved Preliminary and Final Site Plan application for construction of an office building with conditions.

WEST END FARM ESTATES, LLC., for 1920 & 1926 West Broad Street, Block 10301, Lots 2 & 3, approved for Preliminary and Final Major Subdivision application for 2 lots into 3 lots with conditions. The files pertaining to this application are in the Office of the Planning Board and available for public inspection during regular office hours.

Barbara Horev
Secretary to the Planning Board
1 T - 4/13/06, The Times Fee: \$20.40

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