

## SP Fire Department Seeks Major Renovations to Two Facilities

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — Fire department officials presented proposals to the township council on Tuesday for renovations to the department's two firehouses, neither of which have had meaningful upgrades in decades, the officials said.

During the council's conference meeting, Fire Captain Brian Mecca explained the reasons why \$415,000 in improvements to the two facilities — located behind the municipal building and at the corner of Raritan Road and Martine Avenue — are needed. The northside building, which was built in 1948 as a public

works garage and then renovated into a firehouse in 1969, has had "no significant renovations since then," he said. The southside facility was built in 1958 and has undergone "only some minor repairs" over the years.

Fire Chief Jonathan Ellis, in a memorandum outlining the specific needs for both buildings, said some of the upgrade requests, particularly at the northside station, "have a bearing on the structural integrity of the building." He told the council Tuesday that the lists of needs for the two facilities were prioritized from what was needed most urgently down to more miscellaneous items.

Among the upgrades that department officials seek for the northside facility, where a leaky roof is causing cracks in some areas of the building's masonry walls, are a new roof and windows, a new generator for use during power outages, a central air-conditioning system and a new security system. A number of interior renovations are also being sought, including replacement of the ceilings and floors, as well as new lighting and a remodeled kitchen area.

The southside firehouse also needs a remodeled kitchen, Capt. Mecca said, along with a central air-conditioning system and a new security system. He also asked that the building's furnace, which is the original, be replaced.

Capt. Mecca said minor repairs and upgrades to both facilities have been done over the years by fire department volunteers but that it was important department personnel be readily available for emergency calls instead of painting and other activities.

Battalion Chief Mike Cuccurullo said, "We try to do as much as we can on our own." He warned that "we can only put Band-Aids on so much" before the buildings, especially the northside station, begin to become structurally unsound and unsafe. In that instance, the township would be faced with a rebuilding project costing many times the estimated costs of the proposed renovations, he said.

Council members were noncommittal; some expressed general support, and they said they will further discuss the proposals in the coming months. Township Manager Thomas Atkins said a "significant" increase in next year's capital budget would be proposed in part to finance any firehouse renovations that are ultimately approved.

## RVSA Municipal Assessments to Double Over Next 4 Years

By WAYNE BAKER  
*Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*

GARWOOD — The Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority told local mayors last Thursday that municipal assessments would double by the year 2010.

Municipal assessments are expected to rise from \$1,990,000 in 2006 to \$3,846,000 in 2010 for Westfield. Scotch Plains' assessment will grow from \$965,000 to \$1,928,000. Mountainside's share will expand from \$546,000 to \$1,107,000; Garwood's obligation will rise from \$671,000 to \$1,302,000. Similar assessment increases affect other member municipalities, RVSA secretary/treasurer Robert Materna said.

Mr. Materna said the key factor in this cost rise is the expansion and improvement of the RVSA's facilities in response to a judicial consent order settling a lawsuit brought several years ago by the American Littoral Society and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

He said the settlement resulted in the need to increase plant capacity from its current rated 40 million gallons per day to 105. The actual demand on the facility is about 30 million gallons per day. The load on the facility is not expected to change significantly.

The \$176-million court-mandated upgrade includes \$146 million for added sewerage capacity of the plant, a \$21-million co-generation facility and \$9 million for plant improvements.

Roselle Park Commissioner Attilio "Sonny" Venturo in a statement discussed how this current situation de-



ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS... The Christmas spirit was all around Fanwood last Sunday at the borough's annual holiday celebration. The day was filled with music, holiday crafts and refreshments, with a visit from Santa to spread holiday cheer and hear wishes from Fanwood's children and pets.

## Scotch Plains, Fanwood Libraries Examine Possibility of Merger

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — Facing increasingly limited space in which to house their collections and provide adequate room for their growing number of programs and patrons, the directors of the Scotch Plains and Fanwood libraries said they plan to apply for a grant to finance a feasibility study of merging the two systems.

Speaking to *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* earlier this week, Scotch Plains Library Director Meg Kolaya and Fanwood Memorial Library Director Dan Weiss noted that both libraries face a variety of needs related to building upgrades and the efficient use of available space.

Last year, the Scotch Plains library on Bartle Avenue underwent renovations to replace the roof, install new insulated windows and upgrade the restrooms, and it also put forth more ambitious expansion proposals for the future. Meanwhile, officials of the Fanwood library on Tillotson Road found that it required an elevator, as

well as a host of other interior upgrades.

In the midst of considering these needs, both library directors "looked at each other," Mr. Weiss told *The Times*, "and said, maybe we should rethink this." The libraries already are involved in a number of shared-services initiatives, including a partnership that allows residents to reserve and check out books from either library via a combined catalog that now numbers more than 120,000

items. Mrs. Kolaya told *The Times* that this effort "has been successful way beyond what we first anticipated."

In addition, the two libraries expect to unveil next month digital archives containing high-school yearbooks, various historic books and about three decades' worth of back issues of *The Times*. The two facilities would also make available new sets of updated travel guides. And the

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## Fanwood Council OKs Library-Merger Study

By TED RITTER  
*Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*

FANWOOD — The borough council Tuesday night took the first step toward the possible sharing of public library services with Scotch Plains.

Council President Donna Dolce, who presided over the meeting in the absence of Mayor Colleen Mahr, said the governing body's approval Tuesday night allows the borough to apply for grant money that will finance a consultant study.

Ms. Dolce said that the study would help the borough "get facts together" and determine options for possibly establishing a joint Fanwood-Scotch Plains library in "the near future."

Borough officials said one possible site that could be considered for such a facility is Fanwood's Borough Hall on North Martine Avenue, although significant renovations and expansion of the current building would "almost certainly" be required.

Ms. Dolce said if the borough de-

veloped.

"In my opinion, this huge indebtedness was not necessary. We're doing this to handle storm water, and storm water should never be in a sanitary sewer, and if we kept it out, we'd have no problems," Mr. Venturo said during Thursday's forum at The Westwood in Garwood.

Part of the settlement required that the authority close two overflows that permit untreated sewage to flow into the Rahway River. Permitting overflow into waterways ceased to be acceptable several decades ago, Mr. Brinker said. The overflows were needed due to spikes in flow following storms, he said.

Mr. Brinker said that storm water enters the sanitary sewer system in two ways — through infiltration of groundwater into seams or cracks in pipes and by inflows such as sump pumps and downspouts emptying into the sanitary sewer system rather than storm sewers.

The need to process storm water, which can triple or quadruple demand on the system, has forced the authority to build a plant that is vastly oversized, Mr. Brinker said. This judicially mandated expansion forced the authority to spend \$176 million to add capacity in order to treat storm water, he said.

These expenditures caused the debt service portion of the RVSA's total operating budget to grow from about \$100,000 on a total budget of \$8.2 million (1.2 percent) in 2000 to \$2.5 million of a \$15.6 million total (16 percent) in 2006, and to a projected \$13.7 million on a \$30.5 million total (44.9 percent) in 2010. The actual debt service load will be higher in

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MAYOR-A-MAYOR... Scotch Plains Mayor Martin Marks talks with Westfield Mayor Andrew Skibitsky at the Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority meeting last Thursday. At the meeting, the RVSA told local mayors that it expects municipal assessments to double by the year 2010.

## BOE Receives Clean Audit, Defends Parking Remedies

By DEBORAH MADISON  
*Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*

SCOTCH PLAINS — Accountants for the Scotch Plains-Fanwood school district gave a presentation to the board of education last Thursday after conducting an audit of the district's finances.

Richard Barre, a certified public accountant with the Union-based Barre and Company, reported that there were no improper practices, instances of fraud or misappropriations of funds, giving the district a "clean" bill of health.

Mr. Barre reported there were a few instances of what he characterized as "sloppy bookkeeping" and made recommendations to remedy those problems. The corrective action plan he outlined included obtaining proper signatures for certain expenses, making timely payments to the state for unemployment benefits, maintaining records for special grants and verifying opening balances with the auditors.

Board secretary and business administrator Anthony Del Sordi will

report back to the board at its next meeting on the status of those corrections, which were already being implemented, the board said.

Fine Arts teachers Stephanie Hanemann and Vincent Turturiello gave a presentation on the high school's digital photography class. Ms. Hanemann told the board that fine art credits were now required by the state. The presentation included a slide show of the students' work and an explanation of the course's curriculum.

In addition to learning the history of photography, the course includes the dynamics of composition and a study of master works of photography, Ms. Hanemann explained. She added that she hopes to add an advanced digital photography class and a ceramic class to the fine arts curriculum.

BOE President Thomas Russo said that a November 30 *Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* article regarding plans to restrict parking around the high school contained unfounded inaccuracies about the

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DECK THE HALLS... Scotch Plains welcomed the holiday season last Sunday. With horse-drawn carriage rides, below, throughout the afternoon and the lighting of the Christmas tree on the Village Green, above, at the end of the day, there was lots of holiday cheer all through Scotch Plains.



ALWAYS REMEMBER... Sixty five years ago, on the morning of December 7, the United States was attacked by Japan at Pearl Harbor, bringing the U.S. into World War II. After two waves of attacks, 21 ships of the U.S. Pacific Fleet had been damaged, 347 planes were either destroyed or damaged, 2,403 people were dead and another 1,178 were injured.

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