

Developer Opts Not to Rent St. Anne's School to UCESC

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

GARWOOD — Developer James Ward has broken off negotiations to lease the former St. Anne's School on Second Avenue to the Union County Educational Services Commission (UCESC) for the new home of the Hillcrest Academy North. Mr. Ward is the owner by contract of the now-defunct St. Anne's School.

Hillcrest is currently located in the former Lincoln School in Westfield. Earlier this year, the Westfield Board of Education opted not to renew the UCESC lease after four students were arrested in the spring for vandalizing one vehicle and stealing another. The UCESC appealed its case in court, and an administrative law judge gave the UCESC until the end of the school year to find a new home for Hillcrest. The Westfield BOE wants to use the Lincoln School for an early-childhood development center.

"At this time, after having had the opportunity to talk to many residents of Garwood, it has become apparent to me that the people of Garwood do not want the facility to remain a school, but instead would prefer housing specifically tailored for the people of Garwood who wish to remain in the community as they grow older," Mr. Ward said in a letter dated November 20 that was

mailed to 150 Garwood residents.

"I have now decided to continue with my original plans to construct age-restricted housing on this site for the people of Garwood, and I have withdrawn from negotiations with the Union County Educational Services Commission and I will not be leasing the school property to them," Mr. Ward stated in the letter.

Mr. Ward told *The Times* Tuesday that he has submitted an application to construct a 47-unit, 55-and-up restricted-housing development to the borough's planning board and hopes the case would be heard in January. He said construction will take a year. The units, which will be open to Garwood residents first, would have a starting price of \$400,000. He said the units would generate up to \$700,000 in local taxes.

The developer owns the James Ward Mansion in Westfield and is currently building a 35-unit, age-restricted housing development called the Savannah on Prospect Street in Westfield.

"After talking to the people, we thought it was a better fit," Mr. Ward told *The Times*, noting that 50 percent of Garwood homeowners are over the age of 55 and the borough has no age-restricted facility. "So, there is a huge demand for this (type of) housing."



Kathy Marques for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times
SCHOOL'S OUT...The now-defunct St. Anne's facility will not house Hillcrest Academy, developer James Ward informed Garwood residents in a letter. He plans to move ahead with his proposal to construct age-restricted housing at the site.

SP-F Board of Education

board's involvement in remedying the parking problems. Mr. Russo said he was surprised and "disappointed to see this sort of criticism in the local paper."

In the November 30 article, *The Times* quoted township officials and police making critical statements at the township council's November 15 meeting about the board's lack of involvement in remedying the parking situation around the high school.

Mr. Russo cited "numerous" occasions when the board had met with township officials and the police to discuss solutions to the parking situation. He said the board has had professional evaluations of the parking situation and has made "substantial changes" around "several" district schools to alleviate the parking problems.

He said additional spaces have been provided each year and that an updated survey was currently being conducted to evaluate parking needs.

Mr. Del Sordi said he was also "a

little surprised by the criticisms in the paper." He said some remedies have been put into place but that the problem could not be solved all at once.

Mr. Del Sordi said the parking problem is not only a student one. He said that on election days and during conferences there has also been insufficient parking, which, he said, was not covered by the newspaper and was "a bigger problem than indicated."

Board member Craig Nowlin said there has been an enrollment increase of 600 students in the past five years, adding to the present parking situation.

When asked to expound on the board's position, Mr. Russo told *The Times* that he did not intend to insinuate the paper was reporting inaccuracies or misquoting township officials. He said he recognized that the source of the criticisms was not the expressed opinion of the newspaper. Without mentioning the source of the quotes, he clarified that the board disagreed with the content of the criticisms and not the paper's accuracy in quoting township officials.

The board voted to accept a revised version of the district's goals as reported on by Superintendent of Schools Margaret Hayes at its December agenda meeting. A copy of that report can be obtained at the board office.

The board approved the Individuals With Disabilities Act (IDEA) grant, revisions to the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Program of Studies, participation in the ROTC Program, a reading recovery program and the Title I parent involvement policy on second reading.

The board's next agenda meeting will be held on Thursday, December 7, and the next regular monthly meeting will be tonight, Thursday, December 21. Both meetings will be held at the administration offices in the Evergreen School at 8 p.m. following executive sessions at 7:30 p.m.

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Courtesy of Lisa McNally
SOUNDS OF THE SEASON...Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School instrumentalists entertain the crowd at Fanwood's annual tree-lighting ceremony with the sounds of the holiday season.



Greg Ryan for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times
BURSTING WITH CHRISTMAS SPIRIT... (Left to right) Fanwood's Christmas tree will glow brightly throughout the month of December. Also in Fanwood, Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School students, under the direction of SPFFHS Choral Director John Brzozowski, sang Christmas carols to the crowd during the borough's tree lighting on Sunday afternoon. The ice sculpture and petting zoo were two attractions in downtown Scotch Plains last Sunday, as residents of both Scotch Plains and Fanwood gear up for Santa to come down their chimneys.

Fanwood Council

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

like a [new] ball field out there."

He anticipated the fields would be ready in time for the spring sports season.

Mr. Pryor asked the council to draft a resolution authorizing the borough to apply for next year's Safe Routes to Schools grant.

He said that "about \$100,000" in funding could be available to construct or replace sidewalks along the whole length of Midway Avenue from Terrill Road to the Scotch Plains border.

"A lot of the existing [Midway Avenue] sidewalks are asphalt, narrow or chewed up," Mr. Pryor said. He pointed to the success of a similar project along the key north-south Martine Avenue corridor this year, and said the Midway project, expected to cost about \$400,000, would enable the borough to make needed improvements along a key east-west route.

Councilman Jack Molenaar noted that NJ Transit buses use Midway Avenue, and he advised borough officials to reference that fact in the grant application, which is due before the end of this month.

The borough council's next regular meeting will be Tuesday, December 12, at 7:30 p.m. at borough hall.

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Victoria McCabe for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times
The Fanwood (above) and Scotch Plains (below) public libraries are examining the possibility of merging together and sharing services. The two independent locations currently offer a combined catalogue of more than 120,000 items to members of both municipalities.



SP, FW Library Directors Discuss Possibility of Merger

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

libraries are participating in a pilot program — NextRead — an advisory service in which residents can sign up for e-mail alerts containing reading suggestions from their favorite genres.

When the merger idea was first presented to the trustee boards of both libraries, members were receptive, the directors said. Mrs. Kolaya and Mr. Weiss said they received similar sentiments in a meeting between themselves, the president and vice-president of each board and the mayors of Fanwood and Scotch Plains.

The Fanwood Library was built in the 1950s, with an addition constructed in 1980, according to Mr. Weiss. The Scotch Plains facility was built in the 1960s. Fanwood has about 6,000 square feet of usable space, while Scotch Plains has about 14,000 square feet. The Scotch Plains library system is about 200 years old, while Fanwood's is about a century old.

Addressing some of the thinking behind a potential merger, Mr. Weiss pointed to the cost savings that would result by eliminating the duplication that now exists in a number of areas, including magazine subscriptions, book purchases and the expense involved in maintaining two separate buildings. He also noted that "half of Scotch Plains is closer to the Fanwood Library."

He said that among the things a consultant would look at during the months-long process is, firstly, an appropriate centrally located site for a joint library, while other experts would examine issues such as parking and traffic. Mrs. Kolaya added that a consultant would not only examine the libraries' present needs but would also try to anticipate what the library of 30 or 40 years hence would require.

Mr. Weiss said with the renewed

emphasis in Trenton on towns merging or sharing services, such a move would allow both towns to retain their autonomy while sharing a service that's beneficial to the 30,000 or so residents in both communities.

"We have dreams of becoming a cultural center for the two communities," Mrs. Kolaya said.

It's the lack of space at both libraries, however, that's delaying the realization of that dream. She said the limited amount of room often means juggling and switching of rooms for different groups and activities. Mr. Weiss said he faces similar constraints in Fanwood.

The grant application, which would be made through the state's SHARE (Sharing Available Resources Efficiently) program, is for \$90,000, with the two libraries contributing a combined \$10,000. Mr. Weiss said he was hopeful that a "good portion" of the costs associated with any future construction would be from grant money, to which Mrs. Kolaya added that the state has to provide some financial incentives for such a sharing of services for things to move forward.

The Scotch Plains Township Council briefly discussed the application at a conference meeting last month, with Mayor Martin Marks saying that the merger idea was still "very conceptual." A merger, he said, would require both towns' voters passing referendums dissolving the two present library boards and creating a new single board. That, the mayor said, "is still years away."

"Our only goal," Mr. Weiss said this week, "is more service and better service" for the residents. And Mrs. Kolaya said, "In the long run, the only responsible thing to do is examine" the possibility of a merger.

POLICE BLOTTER

Scotch Plains

Tuesday, November 28, a resident of O'Donnell Avenue reported a theft. According to police, the front bumper was removed from the victim's car while it was parked in the street.

Tuesday, November 28, a resident of Raritan Road reported a burglary. According to police, the victim's unlocked garage was entered and a snow blower was removed. The value of the snow blower was \$1,600.

Wednesday, November 29, a resident of Westfield Road reported being the victim of identity theft. According to police, someone used the victim's Social Security number to obtain insurance.

Thursday, November 30, a resident of East Second Street reported being the victim of harassment. According to police, a former friend called the victim several times and left messages on his answering machine.

Thursday, November 30, an employee of Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School reported being the victim of criminal mischief. According to police, while the victim was at work, someone scratched the side of his vehicle.

Thursday, November 30, Tyler Smith, 21, of Plainfield was arrested and charged with criminal trespassing. According to police, a call was received reporting a suspicious person. Police found the suspect sitting behind the wheel of a car that did not belong to him. Smith was transported to police headquarters where he was processed and released.

Fanwood

Thursday, November 30, Darryl J. Chapman, 49, of Plainfield was arrested on outstanding warrants out of Glen Ridge and Irvington following a motor vehicle stop on LaGrande Avenue.

Thursday, November 30, Gary Jones, 46, of Plainfield was arrested on an outstanding Fanwood warrant after a field investigation.

Thursday, November 30, Bernard Jennings, 50, of Plainfield was arrested on an outstanding Jersey City warrant after a field investigation.

Friday, December 1, Thomas J. Wolfe, 31, of Clark was arrested on an outstanding warrant out of Leonia after a motor vehicle stop on Patterson Avenue.

Saturday, December 2, Akbar Muhammad, 34, of Plainfield was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on Terrill Road, which revealed an outstanding no-bail warrant issued by the Essex County Sheriff's Department. He also was charged with outstanding warrants out of Newark and Watchung.

Saturday, December 2, Lewis Balcom, 2nd, 27, of Scotch Plains was arrested and charged with driving while intoxicated following a motor vehicle stop on Martine Avenue.

Saturday, December 2, a patron of a Martine Avenue restaurant reported a theft. According to police, the victim left her cellular telephone on her table and someone removed it.

Saturday, December 2, a resident of Bach Avenue reported being the victim of criminal mischief. According to police, several juveniles attending a party at the home caused several thousand dollars worth of damage to the residence. Police are investigating the incident and have identified several youths attending the party.

Monday, December 4, Keena A. Rudolph, 28, of Plainfield was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on Midway Avenue, which revealed outstanding warrants out of North Plainfield, Westfield and Watchung.

Westfield

Sunday, November 26, a Plainfield resident reported the theft of his motor vehicle, a white, two-door 1994 Mazda, from a municipal lot at the north-side Westfield train station. He told police the vehicle was removed between approximately noon on November 24 and 11 a.m. on November 26. The vehicle had not been recovered.

Monday, November 27, Hugo Araujo, 40, of Westfield was arrested on the 800 block of Summit Avenue on two outstanding Teaneck motor vehicle warrants totaling \$850. He was released after posting bail.

Monday, November 27, Lamar Bracy, 24, of Plainfield was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on the 900 block of West South Avenue on an outstanding Plainfield criminal warrant. Bracy was released after posting \$500 bail.

Tuesday, November 28, Garth Ebanks, 36, of Plainfield was arrested following a motor vehicle stop on the 600 block of West South Avenue on outstanding criminal warrants from Annandale and Elizabeth, each with bail of \$500. Ebanks posted bail on the Annandale warrant and was released on his own recognizance on the Eliza-

beth warrant.

Wednesday, November 29, David Samsonia, 20, of Scotch Plains was arrested on open motor vehicle warrants from Plainfield, for \$283; Green Brook, for \$300, and Fanwood, for \$81. Unable to post bail, he was turned over to the Green Brook Police Department.

Wednesday, November 29, Brian A. Mundy, 19, of Scotch Plains was arrested in Westfield Municipal Court on an open criminal warrant from Union Township for \$250. He was released after posting bail.

Thursday, November 30, Peter Cacciuto, 18, of Fanwood was arrested at Brightwood Park on Prospect Street during a motor vehicle stop and charged with possession of drug paraphernalia. He was released on his own recognizance.

Thursday, November 30, Steve McIntyre, 22, of Roselle was arrested on a disorderly person charge in a municipal lot to the rear of a Central Avenue business. According to police, McIntyre was part of a group of young people that had congregated around the door to the establishment, blocking the entrance. He allegedly refused multiple requests by a police officer to move away from the door and then pushed the officer with his guitar. McIntyre was released on his own recognizance.

Saturday, December 2, a Mountainside resident reported the rear view mirror on his motor vehicle was shattered while the vehicle was parked at the south-side Westfield train station.

Saturday, December 2, a Westfield resident reported that the windshield on his motor vehicle was cracked while the vehicle was parked at the south-side Westfield train station.

Sunday, December 3, Jill Veltri, 23, of Westfield was arrested during a motor vehicle stop at Boulevard and Park Street and charged with possession of less than 50 grams of marijuana. She was released on her own recognizance.

Mountainside

Monday, November 13, a resident of Force Drive reported being the victim of criminal mischief. According to police, someone threw an unknown substance against the side of her house. The victim also stated she has noticed a group of juveniles frequently loitering on her property and leaving behind trash including alcohol containers, condoms and food wrappers.

Friday, November 17, a patron of a Route 22 muffler shop reported being the victim of assault. According to police, the victim was standing outside the shop when someone in a passing motor vehicle struck him in the neck with a paintball. The victim stated that two shots were fired, with one striking the building and the other striking him.

Saturday, November 18, Rodney W. Johnson, 37, of Piscataway was stopped on Route 22 for speeding and later arrested for allegedly driving with a suspended registration. He was processed and released.

Monday, November 27, a driver on Route 22 reported being the victim of a hit-and-run. According to police, the victim was slowing down for a red traffic signal when the driver of a silver or grey pick-up truck struck the victim's car in the rear bumper. The suspect then fled the scene, police said. Anyone with any information about this incident is asked to notify the Mountainside Police Department at (908) 232-8100.

Tuesday, November 28, Daniel K. Lytwyn, 52, of Newark was arrested at the Essex County jail on an active Mountainside warrant in the amount of \$335.

Thursday, November 30, Keith Lewis, 48, of Plainfield was arrested and charged with eluding police and numerous motor vehicle offenses. According to police, a report of a pursuit of a motorcycle on Route 22 was received from the Springfield Police Department.

Mountainside police picked up the pursuit and observed the operator of the motorcycle driving erratically, including driving on the grass median and the shoulder in excess of 90 mph. According to police, the chase was called off because of the danger of the high speed. The Plainfield Police Department later apprehended the suspect after he crashed the motorcycle into a parked vehicle.

Sunday, December 3, Michael D. Buffardi, 22, of Scotch Plains was arrested and charged with DWI following a one-car motor vehicle accident on Route 22 in which he rolled his car.

Sunday, December 3, David Curiel, 21, of Jersey City was arrested and charged with driving with a suspended license. He also was arrested on outstanding warrants in the amount of \$748.