

## Reprint of Letter Mailed to County Residents Re. Certified Deed Copies

*Editor's Note: The following is a reprint of a letter received by certain Union County property owners offering to provide a certified copy of one's property deed for \$79.50. The letter has prompted a notice from Union County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi urging residents to avoid paying an excessive amount for a document readily available from the county.*

National Deed Service, Inc.  
1201 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW - Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20004  
Phone 800-634-7126  
www.nationaldeed.com

RE: UNION COUNTY CLERK DOCUMENT [document number]  
Our records show that property deed document [document number] recorded [date] indicates your ownership interest in the property located at [address]. At the time you purchased your property, a deed was prepared that shows the title was transferred to you. This deed was recorded by the Union County Clerk. The U.S. Government Federal Citizen Information Center website recommends that property owners should have an official or certified copy of their deed. If you don't already have this important document, you may obtain one now. This document provides evidence that your property was transferred to you.

To obtain a certified copy of your deed, complete the order form below and return it in the enclosed postage paid envelope with your payment of \$79.50 which includes postage and handling or fill in the credit card information below and either mail or fax your order to 800-682-1707.

Due to the large number of transactions, this will be your only notice of our service. All orders will be handled promptly.  
National Deed Service, Inc.

National Deed Service, Inc. is not affiliated with any government agency. Many government records are available free or at a nominal cost from government agencies.

\* Below the letter text, an order form requests payment information and includes a section in which an individual can write his or her credit card number with expiration date to mail back to the company.

## Deed 'Scam' Letter

Texas, Nevada, Michigan, Wisconsin, New York and Pennsylvania. He does not service Connecticut.

Mr. Isaacson said his letter includes a disclaimer that reads: "National Deed Service, Inc., is not affiliated with any governmental agency."

"It's really a service (for people) who don't have a copy of their deed," Mr. Isaacson said. He said "independent contractors," who research and obtain certified copies of documents for him, obtain records. Mr. Isaacson said he buys mailing lists for potential customers from another company. "There is nothing criminal involved, but it is, nonetheless, price gouging," Ms. Rajoppi told *The Times*, noting she had inquired about the legality of the letter to Union County Counsel Robert Barry.

She said residents can easily access and obtain records by going on the clerk's website or by writing or

calling her office at (908) 527-4787.

Neil Sullivan, president of Westfield Mortgage and a former Westfield town councilman, said he can gain access to property records and print them for an entire town "in a few minutes," utilizing a number of websites, such as the county clerk's websites in Union and Middlesex Counties.

"So, it's not that difficult to get or produce," Mr. Sullivan said. "The data is all out there and it is all public."

Union County Prosecutor Ted Romankow said his office has assigned an investigator to the case to look at the legality of NDS's operation, including whether the company pays New Jersey's 7-percent sales tax.

"We are looking into this thoroughly," Mr. Romankow said.

Assistant Prosecutor William Kolano, assigned to the case by the prosecutor's office, said the mailing is "probably not in any violation of any criminal laws in New Jersey."

He said Ms. Rajoppi's action to bring the matter to the public and the news media's coverage has helped make residents knowledgeable.

United States Postal Service spokesman George Flood said in an e-mail to *The Times*, "The overwhelming majority of direct marketers are legitimate business people. Unfortunately, there are isolated con artists, who will prey on unwitting victims."

"Accordingly, U.S. Postal Inspectors investigate any crime in which the U.S. Mail is used to further a scheme - whether it originated in the mail, by telephone or on the Internet. The use of the U.S. Mail is what makes it mail fraud."

He said anyone who feels he or she may have been victimized in a fraud scheme that involves the U.S. Mail can submit a Mail Fraud Complaint Form to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. Forms are available online at [usps.com/postalinspectors](http://usps.com/postalinspectors) or by calling the Inspection Service's Newark office at (973) 693-5400.

## Bank Robber

"(In) the majority (of the robberies), he doesn't display a weapon...and that's not to bring attention to himself," Chief Parizeau said.

Mountainside Police Captain Richard Osieja said the three banks in the borough, two branches of Bank of America and Valley National Bank, have seen a picture of the suspect. "And, if they [see] anything suspicious, [they are] to contact us immediately."

Captain Osieja said because the robber has only selected Commerce Banks, "it would make you believe [he] is probably a disgruntled former employee or customer."

Should the robber enter the area, he said, it is likely he would pass through the Mountainside borough given its location on Route 22 and proximity to major arteries, such as Route 78, Mountain and Springfield Avenues.

"Measures are being taken" by the Fanwood Police Department to protect banks and catch the robber should he strike in the borough, said Detective Eugene Chin. He declined to specify his department's actions so as not to impede the investigation.

"We are trying to catch this guy. He is very annoying and you can quote me on that," said Irene Walsh, a spokeswoman for the Union County Prosecutor's Office.

She urged anyone with information to call Union County Crimestoppers at (908) 654-TIPS (8477). A reward may be forthcoming to information "leading to arrest and indictment of criminals." The anonymous tip hotline operates 24 hours a day.



Nordette Adams for *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*

LISTENING TO INPUT...Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education members joined the Parent-Teacher Association and parents for a roundtable discussion on Tuesday, January 30, at Terrill Middle School. Pictured, from left to right, are: Board Vice President "Trip" Whitehouse, President Thomas Russo, Superintendent of Schools Margaret Hayes, and board member Donald Parisi.

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Allstate Life Insurance Company, Home Office: Northbrook, Illinois.  
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Valentine's Love...Fanwood businesses decorate for Valentine's Day. Above, Family Investors adorned trees in front of its building with cupids and hearts.

## WF Council Discusses Conservation Center Permits

By MICHAEL J. POLLACK  
Specially Written for *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*

WESTFIELD—Scotch Plains Mayor Martin Marks and Township Manager Tom Atkins have contacted their Westfield counterparts, Mayor Andy Skibitsky and Town Administrator Jim Gildea, about extending the use of the Lamberts Mill Road conservation center to Scotch Plains residents again this year. Last year's agreement, in which the town sold 26 permits to Scotch Plains residents, kicked in around July.

At the Westfield Town Council's meeting on Tuesday night, Mr. Gildea told the council, "From our perspective, it's a very easy and worthwhile program to make a few dollars...I recommend keeping their permits in there. With a full year, we might have much more usage."

Westfield Third Ward Councilman and acting mayor Mark Ciarrocca said he spoke to Scotch Plains deputy mayor and Councilwoman Nancy Malool and said, "Scotch Plains is very anxious to do it. We're charging Scotch Plains twice what we're charging

Westfield. It has a positive impact on Westfield taxpayers. It's a benefit to Scotch Plains residents. In my mind, it's really a win-win (situation)."

"I would disagree with Councilman Ciarrocca. In my mind, it's a win-lose (situation)," Mr. Foerst replied. Mr. Foerst touted how "shared services can save us money in the future," but said it has a "negative and disproportionate impact on my residents (in the fourth ward), who are going to feel the traffic impact, who are going to see the shrubs on their streets. I voted against it last year; I'm voting against it this year."

Fellow Fourth Ward Councilman Tom Bigosinski suggested a "trial" period, where the practice could be continued with Scotch Plains, but instead of issuing 300 permits, the town would accept 100 to 150.

Mr. Ciarrocca said that anything "significantly" less than 300 wouldn't "be a fair trial," and recommended allowing 300 permits for this year alone. Both fourth ward councilmen said they would not support the measure.

## Fanwood Council

Continued from page 1

gram is implemented, officials said. Councilman Bruce Walsh said he sees a TDR program as a "win-win situation" for the borough, partly because it is voluntary and no condemnation of property is required.

Mayor Mahr agreed, saying the TDR program is "the best opportunity for us to preserve [historic property] without mandating it."

The mayor pointed to the importance of completing the TDR program—even if no one opts to participate—citing "the value of the professional planning services and the South Avenue [visioning] plan" the borough has received.

"We could never have afforded to do this," she said.

The mayor also noted that, in terms of redevelopment, "Old South Avenue has the greatest potential for larger-scale redevelopment," either by individual property owners pooling their TDR credits or by a builder buying the credits for a single project.

Mayor Mahr said the borough's planning board would receive an "even more extensive" update on TDR "mechanisms and how we plant to implement them" as its meeting on Monday.

Ultimately, the planning board will hold a final TDR public hearing, decide whether to approve a Master Plan amendment and make a recommendation to the mayor and council.

If the governing body approves the TDR program, Mr. Slachetka said the state's Office of Smart Growth and State Planning Commission would take up to three months to review the borough's program and decide whether to approve it.

At that point, the borough could adopt TDR-implementing ordinances, he said. "We're looking at June of this year to have those ordinances adopted and implemented."

The governing body discussed the ongoing LaGrande Park project. Officials said—despite an expected completion date of last October 14—the contractor has not completed certain parts of the project, including installation of the irrigation system and infield dirt. In addition, officials said underground pipes damaged by the contractor now need to be repaired.

Councilman Joseph Higgins joined other borough officials in expressing frustration with the delays, noting that the contractor plans to finish work by March 2 and have the field "playable" by April 7.

"There's no room for leeway," Mr. Higgins said, referring to the start of upcoming sports season. "If we don't make this date, I think we're in trouble."

Mayor Mahr directed Borough Attorney Dennis Estis to speak with the contractor. "I think we're at a point where we have to be a little more heavy-handed," she said. "This has been going on too long for us to jeopardize the start of the [spring sports] season."

The mayor said there has been "no discussion among any governing bodies" regarding finances and related plans to install artificial turf on the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School football and soccer fields. "There's no dollar amount that we're committing to," she said, saying Fanwood would like "some indication" from the board of education as to a possible bond referendum.

The issue is slated for the agenda for action at the Thursday, February 15, school board meeting. It was also scheduled for discussion at Tuesday night's Scotch Plains council meeting.

## Kasko

Continued from page 1

standing matters between Kasko vs. The Town of Westfield, including the disciplinary hearing and the lawsuit." Mr. Gildea said the agreement is "between all parties in the settlement, including myself, the labor attorney, the attorney for the joint insurance fund, Former Chief (Bernard) Tracy, the council, the PBA, Mr. Kasko and his rep."

Concerning a financial settlement, Mr. Gildea said, "I can't say. There is a financial piece of this. It's very fair for both sides."

Mr. Gildea said the disciplinary hearing's recommendation is "part of the agreement, but will not be carried out, assuming all performance measures will be agreed upon between Kasko and the Town of Westfield."

"Performance measures," include handling "all outstanding issues," of the disciplinary hearing, the lawsuit against the town and Mr. Kasko's agreement to submit a letter of retirement "that is irrevocable."

*The Times* has filed an Open Public Records Act (OPRA) request to the Town of Westfield in regards to copies of the settlement, all correspondence, e-mails, hearing officer and expert reports, meeting minutes, taped sessions and overall cost to the taxpayer.

*The Times* made calls to Mr. Kasko's attorney, Anthony Pope, Mr. Kasko and Mayor Andy Skibitsky, but none were returned as of press time.

## POLICE BLOTTER

### Scotch Plains

Wednesday, January 31, a resident of Donamy Glen reported that someone threw a rock at the house and broke the front window.

Thursday, February 1, a resident of Grenville Road reported someone smashed the windshield of his vehicle while it was parked in front of his house.

Friday, February 2, an employee of a South Avenue business reported receiving terroristic threats from an unidentified person demanding money over the phone.

Friday, February 2, a Mountain Avenue resident reported that someone threw a rock through his windshield.

Friday, February 2, Dejon Williams, 33, of Newark was arrested following a motor vehicle stop for an outstanding warrant out of Union County.

Saturday, February 3, Cornelio Cojun, 25, of Plainfield was arrested for police impersonation. According to police, the suspect stole the Social Security number of an unidentified victim and obtained a job under the victim's name. Police said Cojun failed to pay income tax on the income earned. The suspect is being held on \$15,000 bail.

### Fanwood

Thursday, February 1, Kathryn J. Connelly, 24, of Weehawken, was arrested on an outstanding warrant out of Fanwood after a field investigation.

Friday, February 2, Carlos M. Garland, 35, of Somerville, was arrested and charged with DWI after a motor vehicle stop on Martine Avenue. Hew was released to a responsible adult.

Saturday, February 3, Dominique C. Ellis, 19, of Plainfield, was arrested for DWI after a motor vehicle stop on South Avenue. She was released to a responsible adult.

Saturday, February 3, Elijah D. Trammell, 19, of Plainfield, was arrested on outstanding Plainfield warrant after a motor vehicle stop.

Sunday, February 4, Francesca L. Albano, 19, of Scotch Plains, was arrested and charged with possession of a controlled dangerous substance after a motor vehicle stop.

Tuesday, February 6, Kevin M. Coleman, 48, of Plainfield, was arrested on an outstanding Union County Sheriff's body warrant after a motor vehicle stop on South Avenue.

### Westfield

Saturday, January 27, a Union resident reported that his motor vehicle was damaged through criminal mischief while parked in a municipal lot behind businesses along East Broad Street. The passenger side mirror on the vehicle was removed and the driver's side mirror was broken.

Saturday, January 27, Christopher Hopke, 35, of Cranford was arrested at Gallows Hill Road and Fairacres Avenue for alleged DWI. Hopke was released to a responsible individual.

Sunday, January 28, Davidson Seide, 21, of Elizabeth was arrested during a motor vehicle stop at South and Windsor Avenues on an outstanding Elizabeth criminal warrant with \$100 bail. He was released on his own recognizance per the Elizabeth Police Department.

Sunday, January 28, a resident of the 200 block of Watchung Fork reported that two flower planters situated in her front yard were damaged as a result of an apparent act of criminal mischief.

Sunday, January 28, Jeffrey Velez, 31, of Kenilworth was arrested during a motor vehicle stop in the 700 block of North Avenue on a contempt of court motor vehicle warrant issued by Kenilworth. Velez also was cited for operating a motor vehicle with a revoked driver's license. He posted the \$282 bail on the warrant and was released.

Monday, January 29, an East Broad Street business reported that a basement area was unlawfully entered. Nothing was reported missing, but a door and handle were damaged.

Monday, January 29, Charles Newsome, 21, of Elizabeth was arrested following a motor vehicle stop at East South and Windsor Avenues. He was charged with possession of a prohibited weapon, described by police as a gravity knife, and with hindering apprehension for allegedly providing police with a false name and age.

Newsome also was wanted on an outstanding Elizabeth traffic warrant for \$380. Released on his own recognizance per the Elizabeth Municipal Court on that warrant pending a future court date, he was released with summonses on the Westfield charges with a February 5 court date.

Tuesday, January 30, Jennifer L. Terry, 27, of Linden was arrested at Central and Lenox Avenues on a motor vehicle warrant issued by the Westfield Municipal Court. She posted the \$225 bail and was released.

Wednesday, January 31, David Napiorski, 23, of Westfield was arrested at Westfield police headquarters on an outstanding Scotch Plains traffic warrant with \$120 bail. He was released on his own recognizance per the Scotch Plains Police Department.

Wednesday, January 31, Gerald Thompson, 42, of Westfield was arrested at Plainfield police headquarters on open criminal warrants from Westfield and Middlesex Borough with bail amounts of \$500 and \$43, respectively. He was committed to the Union County jail on default of bail.

Wednesday, January 31, Emily Smythe, 23, of Westfield was arrested in Scotch Plains on an outstanding Westfield criminal warrant. She was released after posting \$500 bail.

Thursday, February 1, Colin Faust, 19, Evan Pantano, 19, Nicholas Johnson, 19, and Scott Steinbrecher, 20, all of Westfield, were arrested for alleged possession of less than 50 grams of marijuana.

The four, arrested after being stopped in a motor vehicle operated by

### WANTED



Courtesy of Berkeley Heights Police Detective Sergeant Stephen Stamler

**BANK ROBBER...Video tape captures robbery in action last Saturday at the Commerce Bank in Berkeley Heights. The middle-aged, white male of average build is believed to be the same person responsible for 10 recent bank robberies in the region. The robber wears a hat, blends in with the crowd, is polite and exits in three to four minutes.**

Steinbrecher at East Grove Street and Grandview Avenue, were transported to Westfield police headquarters and later released with summonses pending their court appearance.

Thursday, February 1, a resident of South Avenue, West reported an unlawful entry into her motor vehicle and the subsequent theft of a Motorola Bluetooth headset, a cellular telephone charger, multiple compact disks and \$2 in coin change. The vehicle was parked in her driveway and unlocked at the time the break-in occurred.

Thursday, February 1, Stephanie Gabriel, 41, of Westfield was arrested at Westfield police headquarters on an outstanding Fanwood traffic warrant for \$500. She was released after posting bail.

Thursday, February 1, Alyson Mannino, 30, of Westfield and David Saez, 28, of Queens, N.Y. were arrested in the 200 block of Orchard Street for alleged possession of less than 50 grams of marijuana. Saez also was held on two open criminal warrants from Paterson with a total of \$652 bail. He was committed to the Union County jail on default of bail, while Mannino was released with a summons.

Friday, February 2, Kenneth Harmon, 27, of Plainfield was arrested for alleged possession of cocaine and alleged possession of less than 50 grams of marijuana. Stephanie Johnson, 26, of Plainfield also was arrested for alleged possession of less than 50 grams of marijuana.

Both were arrested during a motor vehicle stop at North Scotch Plains Avenue and Drake Place and both were released on their own recognizance.

Sunday, February 4, David Rudnicki, 28, of Westfield was arrested and charged with shoplifting \$12 in candy from an establishment in the 1200 block of South Avenue. He also was charged with criminal mischief after he allegedly kicked and shattered the mug shot lighting system at Westfield police headquarters. Rudnicki was released on his own recognizance on both charges.

Monday, February 5, Jose Funes, 26, of Cranford was arrested during a motor vehicle stop at Springfield Avenue and Unami Terrace on an outstanding Fanwood traffic warrant. He was released after posting \$250 bail.

**Mountainside**  
Thursday, February 1, Charles A. Hilliard, 40, was arrested at the Irvington Police Department and charged with an outstanding warrant out of Mountainside in the amount of \$730.

Friday, February 2, Hodis Jackson, 42, of Summit was arrested and charged with resisting arrest, eluding police and possession of drug paraphernalia. According to police, Jackson was stopped for a motor vehicle violation in Scotch Plains and fled the scene when police approached the vehicle.

A pursuit by Mountainside police ensued ending in Hodis losing control of the vehicle after striking a curb, police said. Hodis exited the vehicle and a foot pursuit occurred with police taking Hodis into custody, police said. Hodis' wife and two infant children were passengers in the vehicle during the pursuit, but were uninjured, police said.

Saturday, February 3, a contractor working on a vacant house on Knightsbridge Road reported that \$2,950 worth of tools were taken from the job site sometime overnight.

Sunday, February 4, Adham M. El-Sherbini, 20, of Plainfield, was arrested following a motor vehicle violation for failure to wear a seatbelt and charged with driving with a suspended license. He was also charged with an outstanding warrant out of Berkeley Heights for \$81, police said.

Sunday, February 4, a resident of Robin Hood Road reported that someone broke into the home and stole approximately \$10,000 worth of jewelry.

## SP Budget

Continued from page 1  
he said would be "a huge challenge in 2007" since the township will no longer use the Jerseyland Community Center after March 31.

There are alternatives for leaf disposal, he said, including renting large containers that could be filled on the street or utilizing the two-acre site across from the Public Works facility as a temporary holding location.

He told the council that he would recommend mandatory bagging of leaves "as an absolute last resort."



David Samsky for *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*

**COUNTY GREEN...Diane Coloney of Scotch Plains and Tom Lestrangle enjoy the festivities of the St. Patrick's Day Parade fundraiser celebration at the Kenilworth Veterans Hall Tuesday night.**