

Stender, Lance Debate for First Time in Congressional Seat Battle

By RAYNOR DENITZIO
 Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — Locked in a tight race for retiring Rep. Mike Ferguson's seat (R-New Providence), 7th Congressional District candidates Assemblywoman Linda Stender (D-Fanwood) and State Senator Leonard Lance (R-Clinton) faced each other head-to-head for the first time on Tuesday night during a debate at the Wilf Jewish Community Center in Scotch Plains.

The debate was sponsored by the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Central New Jersey and featured questions on both international and domestic issues.

The moderator for the evening was Rabbi Douglas Sagal of Temple Emanu-El in Westfield.

Mrs. Stender, who lost narrowly to Mr. Ferguson in 2006, sought to tie Mr. Lance to what she called the "failures and mismanagement" of President George W. Bush, saying the election in November is a choice between "more of the same or a new direction."

"The fact of the matter is that the party of my opponent is the party that has put us in this mess after eight years and that the so-called moderates have been part of the mess that they have made," Mrs. Stender said.

Mr. Lance spoke of his career in Trenton, saying that he brings a record

of social moderation and reform. The Republican Senator said in order to address issues such as Social Security and rising debt, both parties would need to work together, and that he had a record of doing this in the Statehouse.

"Fundamental reform in Washington will require the good works of both Republicans and Democrats," Mr. Lance said. "I have a proven record of that, a record of contrast with Assemblywoman Stender."

On the international stage, Mrs. Stender said she would like to move away from what she called the "cowboy-diplomacy of the Bush Administration" and that she believed the war in Iraq has made Iran a "bigger player" in the Middle East.

"I think that we need, in fact, to have an administration that says that they will be an active partner and that they will negotiate and be somebody that we can be proud of out there, who's working towards a better world and a more peaceful world," Mrs. Stender said.

Mr. Lance said he would support diplomacy in Iran, but would oppose initial negotiations with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, whom he labeled a "thug."

"I would never want to go to the summit first, without having negotiations at a lower level," Mr. Lance said. "Particularly with somebody who is such a terrible person, who has said that Israel should not exist, and who has denied even the existence of the Holocaust."

Asked what they would do to address the issue of poverty in the first 100 days of their term, Mr. Lance said he would focus on healthcare and that he would like to see accessible healthcare for small businesses and their employees.

He proposed a solution where small companies pool together in buying a healthcare plan for their employees to effectively lower premiums. He envisions a system in which employees could transfer from one company to another within this pooled healthcare group without losing their plan. He also believes companies should have the ability to link with others across state lines to pool healthcare.

Mrs. Stender said she would support organized labor, saying that labor unions played an important role in building the middle class.

The Democratic Assemblywoman also called for an end to the war in Iraq so that resources could be diverted to address issues such as poverty.

"It's about getting out of this war," Mrs. Stender said. "It's about stopping the spending of \$10 billion a month, so that we can change our priorities and invest in people."

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TACKLING THE ISSUES...Asw. Linda Stender (foreground) of Fanwood (D-LD22) and Senator Leonard Lance (R-LD23) in the background display their enthusiasm at the Congressional debate Tuesday night in Scotch Plains at the Jewish Community Center. Both are candidates for Congress in the 7th Congressional District.



SOLEMN PLEDGE...Students at Evergreen Elementary School commemorated the events of 9/11 by gathering on the front lawn of the school. Traditionally, the fourth graders carry out a huge American flag, and the entire student body and faculty recite the Pledge of Allegiance and observe a moment of silence.

Fanwood Ordinance Would Require Soil Removal Permit

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

FANWOOD — Borough residents would be required to submit an application for either a waiver or a permit before moving soil on their properties under proposed revisions to the borough's soil removal ordinance discussed at Monday night's planning board meeting.

The status of ongoing projects for 2008 were discussed at the monthly agenda meeting of the Fanwood Planning and Zoning Board of Adjustments held on Monday, September 15.

The revisions are currently being reviewed by borough engineer Joseph Pryor. Sitting in for Mr. Pryor, engineer Peter Moore, explained that Mr. Pryor has made a recommendation that the soil removal ordinance be renamed the land disturbance ordinance.

Under the new ordinance, residents would be required to submit an application for either a waiver or a permit before moving soil on their properties. After reviewing the application, the borough engineer would grant a waiver for soil amounts under 500 square feet or less than 10 cubic feet.

If significant amounts of soil, larger than 500 square feet or over 10 cubic feet are to be moved, residents will be required to submit a topographical survey along with a description of the action. A permit would be issued and notice would be required to inform adjacent neighbors. If the neighbors wished to appeal or voice their concerns, the applicant would be required to come before the board for

a hearing under the proposed ordinance.

The application that spurred these changes involved a property owner who substantially changed the topography of his yard affecting runoff onto his neighbor's property. The borough attorney will determine the penalties and fines for violations of the revised ordinance.

Board members discussed what types of soil changes would be included. Board members suggested the ordinance needed to be revised to list exclusions, which might include simple tilling and seeding. The board also discussed how successive requests for permits would be handled and how the residents of Fanwood would be notified of the changes. The issue will be discussed at the next regular meeting of the board.

In other business, board secretary Pat Hoynes was instructed by the board to revise the redevelopment district's sign ordinance to be brought into compliance with the sign ordinance in the borough's commercial zone. Board attorney Robert Renaud explained to the board that the redevelopment district's zoning ordinances were to be considered as an overlay to the existing commercial zone ordinances already in place, so that they would supersede, but not replace, existing ordinances in that zone.

A final approval for a major subdivision application for 7 Beverly Drive was placed on the agenda for the next meeting. The board discussed that the applicant need not be present for the discussion and hearing and

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WE WILL NEVER FORGET...Between 150 and 200 people turned out for the seventh anniversary of 9/11 last Thursday evening at Westfield's 9/11 memorial. The terrorist attacks on New York and Washington killed over 3,000 people including 60 Union County residents, 14 of which lived in Westfield and Scotch Plains.

Three Workers Injured in SP Fire in Critical Condition

By PAUL J. PEYTON
 Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — Three workers seriously injured in a fire, Wednesday, September 10, at the Lamberts Mill Village Garden apartments on Spruce Mill Lane in the township, remain hospitalized in critical condition in the burn unit at Saint Barnabas Medical Center in Livingston.

Lieutenant Brian Donnelly of the Scotch Plains Police Department said the most seriously injured worker, identified as Jose Ramiro Orellana, 25, of Plainfield, sustained burns to 80 percent of his body, while the other two workers, Freddy Garcia, 33, and Antonio Orellana, 25, both of Plainfield, sustained burns to over 20 to 30 percent of their bodies.

The three men are hospitalized in the burn unit at Saint Barnabas Medical Center in Livingston.

"They are all doing well," Scotch Plains Police Lieutenant Brian Donnelly said Tuesday afternoon. "(Although they) are not out of the woods yet."

According to Lieutenant Donnelly, the 9-1-1 call came on September 10 at 11:20 a.m. He said the three workers, employees of the complex, were using acetone, which he described as a "highly flammable vapor," to remove varnish from the flooring of the first-floor apartment, unit 256 in building 22, of the complex. He said someone reported seeing a "wall of fire."

Seven apartments sustained damage from the fire, with four units destroyed, Lieutenant Donnelly said. Four buildings in the complex were

Township Pension Payments To Rise Nearly 15 Percent

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — Township Manager Michael Capabianco said Tuesday that the township's contributions to the state's two pension programs would increase nearly 15 percent in 2009, nearly double the statewide average.

At the township council's conference meeting, Mr. Capabianco said the township's pension contributions next year will increase by \$85,184 to the state's public employees retirement system (PERS) and by \$85,277 to the state's police and fire retirement systems (PFRS).

Both increases — 9.75 percent for PFRS and 32 percent for PERS — are less than this year's, but the overall 14.95 percent increase is well above the statewide average of 8 percent.

Mr. Capabianco, who said he will begin work on the 2009 municipal budget early next month, told the council the \$170,000 boost in pension contributions on top of the expected \$600,000 increase in fees to be paid to the Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority is "already technically putting us in a hole of \$770,000" for next year's budget.

He added that the state's investments have lost money in light of the troubles in the financial services industry, most notably with Lehman

Brothers, Merrill Lynch and American International Group (AIG).

"It's going to be rough financially in the state," he said.

Mayor Martin Marks said township residents should realize "that we're in a rather difficult situation" when it comes to next year's municipal budget.

At the start of the meeting, Fire Chief Jonathan Ellis gave the council an update on last Wednesday's fire at the Lambert's Mill Village apartment complex, in which three workers were seriously burned.

Chief Ellis said the three men, who had been refinishing a floor in an apartment, were using a solvent containing acetone, which was ignited by a pilot light from a water heater. He said 80 percent of one man's body was burnt, while the other two men sustained burns on more than 30 percent of their bodies.

Fire departments from five nearby towns — Westfield, Cranford, Summit, Plainfield and Springfield — assisted, Chief Ellis said. Two state police helicopters and an Atlantic Health Systems helicopter transported the three victims to Saint Barnabas Medical Center.

Chief Ellis said the county mutual aid system "worked wonderfully" in ensuring that Scotch Plains' own fire department needs were covered while the fire was being fought.

He said the fire wall between the apartments "did what it was supposed to do" in preventing the fire from spreading. He said the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Agency (OSHA) has requested a copy of the fire department's report on the blaze.

Councilman Kevin Glover commended the department on its response, saying, "You guys were unbelievable."

Deputy Mayor Nancy Malool said she had been contacted by a displaced resident who wants to return to her apartment to catalog items for her insurance company but has been unable to do so.

Chief Ellis said that issue needs to

be worked out with the apartments' management.

The chief said the fire department had no reason to keep the resident from re-entering her apartment because "our investigation is done."

Rounding out the brief conference meeting, Mr. Capabianco said he, Township Engineer Joseph Timko and Public Works Director Kevin Ward had met recently with residents of Channing Avenue to discuss complaints about flooding on that street during rainstorms.

"They have a valid point," Mr. Capabianco told the council, saying that many of the driveways on one side of the street take on water during rainfalls due to their pitch.

He said residents favor the installation of granite block curbing and improved catch basins as a way to alleviate flooding, and said further decisions would be made once township engineers complete a report in the next few weeks.

Volunteer Nominations for Mayor's Gala Open

SCOTCH PLAINS — Nominations for the Scotch Plains Volunteers of the Year and Volunteer Organizations of the Year are now being accepted at the Scotch Plains Recreation Department.

Members of the community are encouraged to nominate those individuals and groups who have displayed extraordinary community service. The recipients of these awards will be recognized at the 18th annual Mayor's Charity Gala on December 5. The categories for awards are: Male Volunteer of the Year; Female Volunteer of the Year; Volunteer Couple of the Year, and Volunteer Organization of the Year.

Nomination forms can be picked up in the Scotch Plains Recreation Department located in Town Hall or online at scotchplainsnj.com. Nominations are due by September 30.

The Gala will take place at Shackamaxon Country Club in Scotch

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CROWDED DEBATE...There was an overflow crowd of more than 200 people Tuesday night in Scotch Plains at the Jewish Community Center as the candidates for Congress in the 7th Congressional District, Asw. Linda Stender and Sen. Leonard Lance, presented their views.

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