

Mayor DePaola Does Not Feel Like Unknown As Election Nears

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

SCOTCH PLAINS – Four years ago, she was the newest member of the township zoning board of adjustment and getting set to run successfully for a seat on the township council. Today, Republican Mary DePaola is the mayor and is preparing to run for a full term in November against Democratic Councilman Kevin Glover.

Mrs. DePaola, who became mayor last month after the resignation of Mayor Nancy Malool, had succeeded in March in gaining the local Republican Party's backing

for her November mayoral bid over Mrs. Malool, her 2008 running mate. Mrs. Malool promptly announced a write-in campaign for the June GOP Primary, but that effort was dropped when she resigned as mayor to take a job with the state Department of Community Affairs.

That left Mrs. DePaola, who had served as deputy mayor in 2011 and this year, as the mayor, a post to which she was technically appointed by her township council colleagues upon the recommendation of the local Republican Party.

She said in an interview this week that she does not feel like an un-

known quantity. In local politics, she told *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*, "There should be a lot more unknown people stepping forward to take on public service." The mayor said the "problem in this country is career politicians. It's refreshing to have real people who've done other things in life besides be involved in politics and in government."

She pointed out that she has lived in Scotch Plains for 16 years and her husband's family has been in town since the late 1950s. "I've been involved in taking care of my kids and being involved in their activities," Mrs. DePaola said. She also said she volunteered at her children's schools while they were students. "That's part of serving the community," she noted. And being mayor, she added, "is another way to serve the community."

From now until the November 6 election, she said her main focus will be on trying to effect a merger of Scotch Plains and Fanwood police departments and on hiring a new township manager to replace Chris Marion, who left the position in March. Addressing the latter issue, the mayor said interviews with candidates are continuing, and she was hopeful of having someone in place before the election if the five council members can agree on a candidate.

If there is disagreement, and the dissenters "have good arguments, then we may put it off" until after the election, she said. But, optimally, she told *The Times*, "We need to have somebody come in, get acclimated to the town and really get started."

Speaking of her management style, Mrs. DePaola said her background as an engineer will be helpful. "I look at a situation needing to be resolved, treat everyone involved with respect, give them input and then take the steps required to finish the task, with the end result being on time and under budget. I tend to think mathematically."

As an example, she said that in dealing with the police merger, "We all need to sit in a room, resolve things between the two departments such as personnel, the budget, op-

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STROKE, STROKE...Participants race to the finish line at the Cranford Canoe Club's annual Fourth of July race.

Clark Widow Is Found Murdered In Her Home

By MEGHAN A. CUNNINGHAM
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

CLARK – Longtime Clark resident Vera Pecoraro was discovered dead in her home on Rolling Hill Way around 7 p.m. on Saturday, the victim of a homicide. She would have turned 74 that day, but police suspect she was killed on Friday.

Authorities said Mrs. Pecoraro was found on a couch in her living room with her throat slashed by a serrated knife that was left nearby. After the autopsy and the Union County Medical Examiner's determination late on Sunday, the prosecutor's office is now treating the case as a homicide investigation, rather than a suicide, as authorities originally believed.

At a press conference Monday afternoon in Elizabeth, Union County Prosecutor Theodore Romankow explained that although they have not yet found the killer or a motive, authorities believe Mrs. Pecoraro was targeted, and not the

victim of a random attack or a robbery.

"There are a number of investigative avenues that the Homicide Task Force is pursuing," Mr. Romankow said. "We do not believe that residents in the area are in any danger as we do not believe that this is a random act."

Mrs. Pecoraro, a widow who lived alone in the quiet neighborhood, had three sons, one of whom found her in the house. After not hearing from her for a while, Anthony Pecoraro went to the house to find all the doors and windows locked, nothing ransacked or out of place, and no signs of forced entry. Two of the sons met with detectives from the prosecutor's office, while the other son met with police.

Mrs. Pecoraro and her husband, Anthony Pecoraro, who passed away in 2004, founded TSS (Traffic Safety Service), a family business run out of South Plainfield. The company deals with safety products and services for road construction. Neighbors described Mrs. Pecoraro as a successful, well-known woman who was able to manage on her own following the death of her husband. Mrs. Pecoraro was planning on moving to the Jersey Shore some time in the near future.

News of Mrs. Pecoraro's death spread quickly around the neighbor-

hood as police cars and investigators swarmed the house. The neighbors were distraught and shocked. They described her as well liked and neighborly, and they were nervous and upset about how little official information was given to them while the investigation was occurring within the house, surrounded by police tape.

Clark Mayor Sal Bonaccorso was out of town over the weekend and was not able to comment. The last homicide to occur in Clark was in 2002 at a gas station.

"When an older woman is attacked and lives alone, it's one of the worst things you can conceive of. You should be able to be safe in your own home," Mr. Romankow said.

Mr. Romankow asks that anyone with information about Mrs. Pecoraro's death notify the Clark Police Department or the Homicide Task Force.

According to her obituary, Mrs. Pecoraro was born in Newark and had lived in Clark for the past 38 years, where she was a member of St. Agnes Roman Catholic Church.

She is survived by her sons, Anthony, Theodore and Michael Pecoraro; their wives, and six grandchildren. Funeral services were held yesterday, July 11, at St. Agnes Church.



Photo Courtesy of Marty Marks

FREE AND INDEPENDENT...Scotch Plains Mayor Mary DePaola reads the Declaration of Independence as part of the club's July 4th activities at Shackamaxon Golf Club.

SP Planning Board OKs New Japanese Restaurant

By LISA HAGEN
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS – The Scotch Plains Planning Board on Monday night reviewed and approved an application for a Japanese restaurant at 427 Park Avenue.

Applicant Xian Lin, owner of Main Star Chinese Restaurant at 429 Park Avenue, told the board he wants to open the new restaurant, Osaka, adjacent to his existing property. He said that this new restaurant would give people more choices, including a different menu.

"I have been serving the Scotch Plains community for more than 10 years," Mr. Lin said. "People have different choices and they can order sushi."

His attorney, Jay Lin, said that since he is already in the restaurant business, he is familiar with how to run such an establishment.

"This would be good for Scotch Plains," he said. "The surrounding

neighborhood already has notice of it."

Scotch Plains Construction Official Robert LaCosta, who also is acting co-manager for the township, asked if the building would look any different or what changes would be made. Xian Lin said that things would mostly "remain the same" with no changes to the windows and just a new door with the name of the restaurant above it.

He said the new restaurant would have seven tables that serve two people. The board inquired whether it could also have four-person tables, which Xian Lin said is a possibility.

Under a parking agreement from 1988, the restaurant gets one space for every two employees, and in the plan, three employees are proposed. From the calculations, there would be five parking spaces, one space per three seats. Mr. LaCosta said there would be enough parking spaces for

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Courtesy of Joanne Kinsella

BORN TO TRI...Friends from Westfield and Scotch Plains relax with a cold one after completing the NYC Triathlon fundraiser last Sunday. They swam the Hudson River, biked in Manhattan and ran through Central Park in the event. The group raised \$40,000 for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Pictured, left to right, are Gary Zanfagna, Jo Kinsella, Luke Williamson, Roselle Schong, Team Captain Mark Shore, Dave Sutton, Sean O'Brien, Linda Habgood and Josie O'Brien. Missing from the photo but included in the insets are Lori Bennett and Kirsten Fallon.

CF Board OKs Amended Two River Bank Plan

By CHARLOTTE MURTISHAW
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

CRANFORD – Medi Weightloss Clinics and Two River Community Bank came before the Cranford Zoning Board of Adjustment Monday night, each seeking board approval for their respective plans. Both met with positive rulings.

Two River Bank came before the board to procure approval of a revised site plan. The bank first gained board approval in 2005 with an expanded version of today's project, which involved two additional floors on the now one-story building, although that meant bypassing concern over the height, which required an exception from a town variance. The property is located at 245-249 North Avenue, West.

"We had envisioned banking on the first floor, mortgage offices on the second floor, and storage space on the third," explained Two River's lawyer, Joseph Triarsi. However, economic turbulence and other factors meant the project was pushed to the back burner, and now the bank is interested in the Cranford site primarily as a branch office.

Several experts from the original project plan were called to testify regarding the changes to the original plan. Besides the elimination of four parking spaces and the reduc-

tion in scale, there have been few, mostly aesthetic, alterations to the building. The footprint and floor plan remained the same.

"We have already approved this [plan]," said board member Robert Bovasso. "If anything, what has been proposed today is better than what was proposed before."

Two River Senior Vice-President Robert Werner addressed the board briefly to close out the application. "Cranford is an important market for our bank," he said. "We want to make sure the brand of our bank, as well as the brand of Cranford, remains strong."

Another board member, Chuck Higgins, said that he thought "the town has waited a lot of time for this lot to be developed."

Zoning board members responded positively to the application, and the new plan was approved on the conditions that a pedestrian walkway be added, and that the lights around the 24-hour ATM not exceed the federal minimum standard.

The Medi Weightloss Clinic, located at 198 North Avenue, East, applied to construct a three-foot by four-foot sign, visible from the road, to advertise the business in an exception to a town variance. The board unanimously approved that application.



SAD ENDING...Longtime Clark resident, Vera Pecoraro, was discovered dead in her home on Rolling Hill Way on Saturday, the victim of a homicide. Pictured, at a press conference Monday afternoon in Elizabeth, Union County Prosecutor Theodore Romankow addresses the press. Clark Acting Police Chief Alan Scherb is at left.

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