

## Officials React to Report Citing Towns for 'Ineligible' Pensions

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

REGION - Local towns and state lawmakers this week reacted to a report by state Comptroller Matthew Boxer that 202 part-time municipal officials (none of whom were named) in 57 of the 58 towns surveyed in the report are in the state pension system when they are ineligible. The comptroller said those benefits could result in state-funded pension benefits of \$1.9 million per year.

"(The Office of State Comptroller) found, however, that an overwhelm-

ingly majority of surveyed local government entities failed to comply with the statutory mandate to determine whether these professionals are independent contractors or employees. As a result they have failed to remove ineligible contractors from PERS (Public Employees Retirement System)," Mr. Boxer said in his report. (Please see page 4 for Mr. Boxer's transmittal letter to the Governor).

While not named in the actual report, a list of the 57 towns that was referred to the state's treasury department includes Fanwood,

Mountainside and Westfield.

"We want to let our residents know that we were well aware of the 2007 pension law reform and that we know that the State of New Jersey is actually the one who actually mandates who is enrolled in the system and in what plan," Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr told *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*. She said the borough also was aware of new pension enrollment thresholds that were established in 2007 along with the creation of a new pension plan for new employees and appointments.

"And we followed that in good faith," the mayor said. "Everything we've done, we believe, was operating the way the State of New Jersey thought we should be." She called any comments that the borough was not operating in good faith "completely incorrect."

The mayor said Borough Administrator Eleanor McGovern contacted the state comptroller's office on July 18, when she learned, "That while we were not mentioned in the final report, it was the belief of the comptroller's office that we had individuals in the pension plan that should have not continued in the pension plan after 2007."

Mayor Mahr said the borough would work with the state's pension division, "to understand exactly where our issue is to rectify because we don't want to have any issue, perceived or otherwise, with how we operate in town."

"I would hope there would not be rushes to judgment that something was done in a woeful manner (by Fanwood) because that would be not the case," Mayor Mahr said. "We take this very seriously here and we are going to rectify it... We will work our way through whatever we have to do to make sure that every borough employee is in compliance in whatever system they should be in."

Westfield Councilman David Haas said he has argued before, "the practice was wrong and unethical long

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## WF Residents Complain To Freeholders About Ped. Light

By SARA MAGNOLA-TANER  
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

COUNTY - During the public comment portion of their July 19 regular meeting, the Union County Freeholders heard from three Westfield residents regarding the HAWK pedestrian traffic light on Central Avenue.

Retired Westfield police officer, Greg Kasko, said he was advised by a Westfield councilman to "go to the county and complain" about the HAWK pedestrian traffic light, which was installed mid-block between Cambridge Road and Clover Street last year.

"He is quoted as saying, 'If this was my house, I would go to the county and complain. This is a county road [and] they can do what they want with that light,'" Mr. Kasko said.

Mr. Kasko told the board that back in December, the mayor of Westfield, Andy Skibitsky, had presented the board with a stats sheet containing all of the motor vehicle accidents that happened between Cambridge and Central and Clover and Central.

"I obtained every single one of those accident reports," Mr. Kasko said. "The [mayor's] report has false information on it. Perhaps he did not check his facts - I did."

The board also heard from Maria Carlucci, who lives on Central Avenue near the pedestrian light.

"I have lived [on Central] for eight years and had never seen any accidents," Ms. Carlucci told the freeholder board. "And now it's just frightening. People aren't even us-



ENCHANTED LADIES...Customers admire the merchandise at Enchantments on Wednesday night at the Fanwood Ladies' Night Out.

Paul Lachenauer for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

## Westfield Native to Compete On U.S. Olympic Judo Team

By CHRISTIE STORMS  
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

WESTFIELD - When Joyce and Dominick Delpopolo of Westfield adopted a 2-year-old boy from a small orphanage in Niksic, Montenegro, they had no idea his future would include becoming an Olympic athlete. But next week their son, Nick Delpopolo, now 23, will compete in London after securing a spot on the U.S. Olympic Judo Team in May. He is one of 19 Olympic athletes whose hometowns are in New Jersey.

"Our whole family is very proud of Nick's achievement; it has been a

very long and arduous journey," Mrs. Delpopolo said.

That journey began at the Cranford Judo and Karate Center in Cranford, when Nick was 5 years old. He quickly excelled and impressed his Judo coach, Yoshisada "Yone" Yonezuka, who participated in the 1988 and 1992 Olympics himself.

In Nick's early years attending McKinley Elementary School in

Westfield, he also began wrestling in the Police Athletic League (PAL).

His PAL coach, Al Rabinowitz of Westfield, said Nick's talents were "very obvious right from the start" with his strong desire to win and work as hard as necessary to achieve success.

Mr. Rabinowitz described a match where Nick's opponent became in-

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## FW Rec. Discusses Programs, New Irrigation System

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

FANWOOD - On Tuesday night, the Fanwood Recreation Commission discussed the logistics of past and upcoming events as well as proposals including a new baseball team and irrigation system for fields.

Director Bob Budiansky discussed the balance at the end of June, which amounted to \$104,303. The list of events and programs that contributed to the June trust included the summer camp program and Party in the Park.

It was announced that the Fanwood 5K and Family Fun Run, which will

be held on Sunday, October 21, will start with the fun run at 9 a.m. and the 5K at 9:30 a.m. Treasurer Willie Green said the update was a productive meeting that mostly discussed the logistics and responsibilities.

Regarding fundraising for the run, it was reported that there is currently \$8,900 raised, which is better than the sponsorship from the first year. In its third annual year, they need more race marshal volunteers. Last year, they had volunteers from the Girl Scouts and the Italian-American Club.

Secretary Anthony Carter said the

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GOOD TIME...Funktions 11 entertains the crowd at the Scotch Plains Cultural Arts Committee Summer Concert Series held July 19 on the Alan Augustine Village Green in Scotch Plains. The concert series continues tonight, Thursday, July 26, with children's act, Matthew Sawchuk, at 6:30 followed by the McLean Avenue Band at 7:30 p.m.

Paul Lachenauer for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

## Saridaki Joins SP Council; Bid Awarded for Park Repairs

By P. JUSTIN FAHEY  
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS - Ed Saridaki was sworn in by former Governor Donald DiFrancesco Tuesday night, filling the seat that was left vacant when Councilwoman Mary DePaola became mayor. Ms. DePaola filled the vacancy left when Mayor Nancy Malool resigned to take a position with the state. The swearing in was the end of what just a week before had been a contentious, partisan, meeting in determining who would replace Ms. DePaola.

"I want to thank Governor DiFrancesco for coming down to swear me in and thank the Republican Committee for putting their trust in me," said Mr. Saridaki, a former member of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education.

The council then discussed bids related to repairing lighting and resurfacing courts at Kramer Manor Park and Jerseyland Park. The town-

ship engineer estimated the project at around \$317,000. Two bids for the project were received, one for \$117,580 and another for \$296,756. However, the lower bid was only for one aspect of the project and did not comply with the request for bids, which required bids on both aspects of the project. The bid was awarded after consulting engineer, Hatch Mott McDonald, and the Director of Parks and Recreation Ray Poerio, determined that Halecon Inc. was the lowest responsible bidder after DiMilia Inc.'s bid was deemed incomplete since DiMilia did not submit a base bid on the second of the two items in the bid.

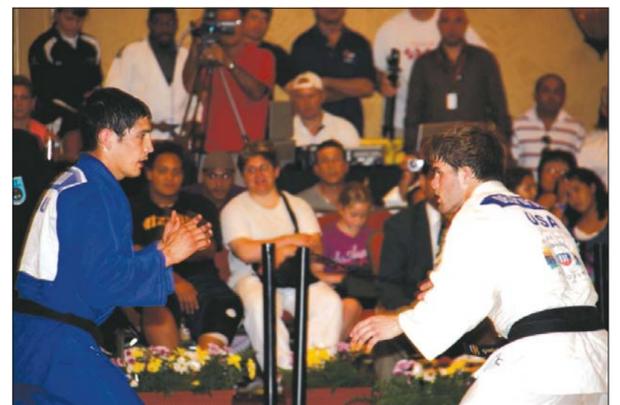
Before the bid was accepted, Councilman Kevin Glover questioned the recommendation, noting that the accepted bid was significantly higher than the rejected bid. It said the rejected bid was for only half of the work. Mr. Glover then asked if all bids could be rejected

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LAWN PARTY...Supporters of the re-election campaign of Fanwood Republican Councilmen Robert Manduca and Mike Szuch gather at the third annual summer lawn party at the home of Jason and Jennifer Benedict of Fanwood on July 19.

Laurie Schwartz for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times



MAKING THE OLYMPICS...During the Olympic Trials in May, Westfield native Nick Delpopolo, right, defeated rival Michael Eldred, left, to secure a spot on the U.S. Olympic Judo Team this summer. The 2012 Summer Olympics begin tomorrow, Friday, July 27.

Photo courtesy of Doral Family Journal

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