

## Council Fails to Name New Member; GOP Will Make Appointment

By FRED T. ROSSI

Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — The township Republican Committee will meet on Friday to formally appoint Edward Saridaki to the township council after the council on Tuesday failed to muster enough votes to name Mr. Saridaki to fill a vacancy. Mr. Saridaki was already running this year as a candidate for the council seat.

Moments after former Governor Donald DiFrancesco swore in Mayor Mary DePaola to succeed Nancy Malool, who resigned last month, the council turned to ap-

pointing a replacement for Mrs. DePaola's council seat, which she vacated to fill the mayor's slot. Mr. Saridaki's name was among three submitted by the local GOP, the others being Llewelyn Jones and Marc Ginsberg.

Democratic Councilman Michael Marcus announced he would abstain from the vote on Mr. Saridaki — unlike his vote earlier this month to appoint Mrs. DePaola as mayor. Democrat Kevin Glover, who is running for mayor this November, said he would vote against Mr. Saridaki's appointment because the council had not been given the chance to

meet with any of the three candidates. With three affirmative votes required, the council vote fell short, with Mayor DePaola and Republican Councilman William Vastine voting for Mr. Saridaki, Mr. Glover voting against and Mr. Marcus abstaining.

Under state law, then, the matter returns to the township Republican Committee, which has the authority to make the appointment itself.

At the end of the meeting, former Mayor Martin Marks, who was recently selected as township Republican chairman, criticized council Democrats for what he described as a "petty and embarrassing political maneuver" in not backing Mr. Saridaki's appointment. He noted that Mr. Saridaki's family was in attendance, in anticipation of his appointment and swearing-in ceremony.

"This was an inevitability," Mr. Marks said as he recounted how in 1999 and 2000, when he was on the council, vacancies created by the deaths of two Democratic council members had been filled without any political wrangling among the political parties.

Councilman Glover — with whom Mr. Marks had verbally sparred, loudly and publicly at times, during their time together on the council in 2007 and 2008 — swatted back at the former mayor, calling his remarks "regrettable." Mr. Glover said there were "serious issues about background" in considering Mr. Saridaki's appointment. He called on Mayor DePaola to continue the policy of Mayor Malool, who Mr. Glover said had fostered a more civil atmosphere than he felt existed under Mayor Marks.

In other business, the council approved an ordinance formally appropriating \$155,000 in state Department of Transportation grant money that will be used for the milling and repaving of a section of Raritan Road from the Edison border to Rahway Avenue. The work

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## Mayor Mahr Notes FW Redevelopment Progress

By TED RITTER

Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

FANWOOD — Mayor Colleen Mahr, at Tuesday night's regular borough council meeting, pointed to "a very historic moment for the Borough of Fanwood" regarding downtown redevelopment. The governing body, during the meeting, endorsed a "redevelopment agreement" for the next phases of the downtown's makeover. Elements of the agreement were discussed in executive session and then during a general discussion at a special borough Redevelopment Agency meeting immediately prior to the regular council meeting.

Once it is finalized within the next two weeks, the mayor indicated, the agreement essentially will facilitate the planned redevelopment of the former Livingston-Wilbor and Sovereign Bank properties and other pieces of adjacent borough-owned property, parts or all of which will be sold to the developers who will build it up similar to other neighboring properties. The borough will retain some of the properties for parking and other purposes, including pedestrian amenities.

Mayor Mahr said, "Five years, maybe six years since the first shovel hit the ground, we are very close" to seeing the redevelopment through to its final phase. The mayor also said the 24 two-bedroom apartment units of the Fanwood Crossing development at South and Martine Avenues are now ready to be shown and "will probably go pretty quickly." But, the mayor indicated, "there is no tenant signed on the dotted line yet" for Fanwood Crossing's



Fred T. Rossi for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times  
NEW LEADERSHIP...Former Governor Donald DiFrancesco swears in Mayor Mary DePaola as mayor of Scotch Plains at the start of Tuesday's township council meeting.

## SP-F BOE Hears Reports; Recognizes PTA Presidents

By KIMBERLY A. BROADWELL

Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — To begin the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education (BOE) meeting last Thursday evening, students from Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School's (SPFHS) Minority Achievement Council gave presentations to the audience.

Student William McDuffy, a freshman at SPFHS, stated, "it was shocking to see the factual data of the national minority's drop-out rate." He then stated that through the Minority Achievement Council he and other students wanted to encourage everyone to "pursue their education." He noted that "education is powerful and everyone needs it."

Students Andrew Hall and Quaman Jeter spoke about their experiences in the Black Achievers Program held at the Westfield Area "Y." Quaman noted

that even as a freshman he took advantage of the SAT prep course offered through the program, stating, "it really helped me and opened many doors."

Sophomore Andrew Hall said he enjoyed the guest speakers at Black Achievers meetings. He also stated that he appreciated the volunteer opportunities the program has brought to him.

Finally, senior Ruby Marshall spoke, saying she appreciated the diversity that she found at the high school, especially coming from a small Catho-

lic grammar and middle school. She noted that she became active in the Black Students Union and appreciated the special college fair that the organization brought to the students, saying, "schools were brought in that are not usually found at a Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School College Fair." She then told audience members she would attend Howard University in the fall.

BOE member Douglas Lane commended the students for their participation in extra-curricular activities.

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## Ponderosa Farm Park Opens in Scotch Plains

SCOTCH PLAINS — Union County and Scotch Plains officials unveiled the newly completed Ponderosa Farm Park at 1600 Cooper Road in Scotch Plains at a ribbon-cutting ceremony Tuesday afternoon.

Prior to its purchase by Union County in September 2003, the 23-acre farmland property had been the estate of the late Norman "Dutch" Sevell, who founded and owned Sevell's Auto Body and Towing on South Avenue in Westfield.

At the time of its acquisition, the property tract was the largest farm remaining in Union County. It was purchased for \$10 million with combined funding from the Union County Open Space, Recreation and Historic Preservation Trust Fund and the New Jersey Department of Environmental

Protection's (DEP) Green Acres Program.

The new park, designed by T&M Associates of Middletown, includes walking trails, two multipurpose athletic fields and farm-themed playgrounds with spray fountains. The park also has restroom facilities, a picnic area and ample parking. It will be maintained by Scotch Plains but will remain part of the Union County Park System.

The park development project, which totaled approximately \$3.7 million, was executed through Turco Golf Inc. of Suffern, N.Y., with funding from the Open Space Trust Fund, the Green Acres Program and a small shared-services grant from Scotch Plains, Fanwood and the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education.



Sara Magnola-Taner for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times  
FUN TIMES...Ponderosa Farm Park at 1600 Cooper Road in Scotch Plains officially opened on Tuesday. The new park includes walking trails, two multipurpose athletic fields and farm-themed playgrounds with spray fountains.



Alex Taner for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times  
PARTY IN THE PARK...The Scotch Plains Business and Professional Association and the Fanwood Business and Professional Association presented scholarships to several seniors graduating from Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School at its annual barbecue held June 13. Pictured, left to right, are: Louis Zambrio, Lauren Eckert, Megan Allen, Raushan Palejuala, Ian Johnston, Steve Goldberg, Lisa Mohn, Maria LaMorte, Peter Chemidlin.

## Freeholders OK \$488 M Budget; WF Taxes to Jump

By PAUL J. PEYTON

Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

COUNTY — The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders adopted a \$488.9-million county budget last Thursday that calls for \$302.5 million to be raised in taxes, an increase of \$11.3 million over last year.

According to information released by the county's public information department, Cranford, Scotch Plains, Summit and Westfield will see increases of over \$1 million in county taxes this year. Taxes in Elizabeth, Plainfield and Roselle will decrease.

The county tax will be \$31.9 million in Westfield, up \$1.9 million over 2011 and the highest in the county. County taxes will be \$17.7 million in Scotch Plains, up \$1.3 million; \$5.1 million in Fanwood, up \$317,000; \$17.9 million in Cranford, up \$1 million; \$3 million in Garwood, up \$199,300, and \$7.6 million in Mountainside, up \$547,500.

Freeholder Dan Sullivan, chairman of the board's fiscal affairs committee, said the average county tax for homeowners would increase \$90 countywide.

According to the tax impact spreadsheet, the average home in Westfield will pay \$3,088 in county taxes, an increase of \$188 over last year. Scotch Plains homeowners will pay an average of \$2,174, a \$163 hike, while Fanwood residents will pay \$1,874, up \$115. Taxes in Cranford will rise \$124 to \$1,991, while Garwood residents will pay \$1,665, an increase of \$107, and Mountainside residents, \$2,589, for an increase of \$194. Summit homeowners will pay the highest county tax of \$3,994, an increase of \$381. The county will collect \$30.7 million in county taxes from city homeowners this year, third highest behind Westfield and Elizabeth.

As previously reported, Mr. Sullivan said the county faced a \$36-million budget hole when officials started putting the spending plan together. To close the gap, lay-off notices were sent to 280 employees, 44 of whom were taken off the payroll as of May 1, with another 100 on June 1. The 280 number has since been reduced to 231.

Matthew DiRado, director of per-

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David B. Corbin for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times  
RETIRING HIS JERSEY...Former Raider running back and NFL player Nate Jones, left, stands with Director of Athletics Ryan Miller before having his high school jersey number retired at Meet the Coaches Night on June 13. See story on page 12.

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